



Code of Conduct for Human Factors/Ergonomics (HFE) Practitioners

Approved on July 9, 2006

Introduction

High standards are important for the effectiveness and credibility of the HFE profession. Codes of conduct help to set out the standards required of practitioners in terms of professional practice and research ethics. Federated societies of the International Ergonomics Association (IEA) and professional certification organizations should demand their members to abide by a code of conduct. Any reported violations must be addressed through disciplinary procedures.

The IEA seeks to promote the ergonomics discipline and the consistent application of standards in ergonomics practice within and between countries. The IEA Code of Conduct provides a model document for federated societies and professional certification organizations that are developing or revising their own codes.

Ethical Principles

The IEA Code of Conduct for HFE practitioners is based on fundamental ethical principles relating to:

- beneficence – do good
- veracity – truthfulness, accuracy and integrity
- autonomy – respect for persons
- justice – fairness

Professional Conduct

In the conduct of their profession, HFE practitioners shall:

1. maintain at all times personal integrity, objectivity and respect for evidence.
2. not lay false claim to educational qualifications, professional affiliations, characteristics or capacities for themselves or their organizations.
3. refrain from making misleading, exaggerated or unjustified claims for the effectiveness of their methods, and they shall not advertise services in a way likely to encourage unrealistic expectations about the effectiveness and results of those services.

4. conduct themselves in their professional activities in ways which do not damage the interests of the recipients of their services or participants in their research and which do not undermine public confidence in their ability to perform their professional duties.'
5. limit their practice to those areas of ergonomics for which they are qualified by virtue of training and/or experience, and endeavor to maintain and develop their professional competence. Any work taken outside the competence must be conducted only with proper professional supervision or they shall give every reasonable assistance towards obtaining the required services from those qualified to provide them.
6. always value the welfare of all persons affected by their work, protecting the privacy of individuals and organizations and follow ethical principles when conducting or reporting on research involving human participants.
7. not use race, ethnicity, disability, gender, sexual preference, age, religion, or national origin as a consideration in hiring, promoting, or training in any situation where such consideration is irrelevant.
8. avoid all situations that contain elements of conflict of interest and provide full disclosure of those conflicts to all potentially affected parties.
9. take all reasonable steps to preserve the confidentiality of information acquired through their professional practice and to protect the privacy of individuals or organizations about whom the information was collected or held. Furthermore, they shall not divulge the identity of individuals or organizations without permission from those concerned.
10. neither solicit nor accept financial or material benefit from those receiving their services beyond what was contractually agreed. Furthermore, they shall not accept such rewards from more than one source for the same work without the consent of all parties concerned.
11. when becoming aware of professional misconduct by a colleague, that is not resolved by discussion with the colleague concerned, they shall take steps to bring that misconduct to the attention of appropriate authorities in the professional organizations to which they belong.
12. take all reasonable steps to ensure that those working under their supervision act with full compliance to this code of conduct.

Research

HFE practitioners who conduct research should follow ethical guidelines including:

A. Conduct of research

All HFE practitioners shall comply with the Geneva Convention and Helsinki Accord in treating both human and animal participants, in addition to obeying national and local laws, and generally accepted procedures within the scientific community. In particular, HFE practitioners shall:

1. where there is any potential for harm, seek and act on guidance from a competent ethics advisor or committee.
2. identify all potential sources or causes of harm in the research they are conducting. These hazards must then be effectively managed, including compliance with any requirements of the ethics advisor, to ensure that the risk of harm to participants is minimized.
3. ensure that participants are fully informed of the outcome of the risk assessment and of any requirements identified by the independent ethics advisor before seeking informed consent.
4. obtain prior written informed consent from human participants. Information must be provided in writing and orally to human participants in plain and clear language indicating the terms of participation, particularly about any hazards involved. Occasionally there may be exceptions in which the human participant is not able to consent. In such cases prior informed consent should be obtained from a person with (preferably legal) responsibility for the participant.
5. empower human participants to terminate their involvement in the research at any time without prejudice.
6. terminate any research process or experiment immediately if the participant's exposure to hazards exceeds commonly accepted thresholds. Further, if necessary, medical treatment must be provided.
7. keep the identity of human participants confidential unless permission is obtained from the participants.
8. not coerce anyone to participate in research nor use undue monetary reward to induce participants to take risks they would not otherwise take.
9. ensure these ethical guidelines are followed by collaborators, assistants, students, and employees.

B. Reporting of research

In pursuit of their profession, HFE practitioners who are engaged in research and scholarly activities have an obligation to report their work to the scientific community. In particular, HFE practitioners shall:

1. ensure the integrity and accuracy of the data recorded before reporting results and conclusions to the scientific community.
2. identify original sources (i.e. not plagiarize) and give credit to those who have contributed on a professional level to the work.
3. pay special attention to the communication of research findings to facilitate their practical application.
4. maintain the highest degree of objectivity when they are reviewing or editing works of other colleagues. In particular, they must ensure that their objectivity is not impaired by their own views even if the data and results reported conflict with their own previously published work.