

# CODE OF ETHICAL CONDUCT

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“The time is always right to do  
what is right”  
~ Martin Luther King



# THE IMPORTANCE OF ETHICAL CONDUCT

Ethical conduct is at the core of bookkeeping, it is not an optional extra.

Bookkeepers hold a significant position of trust with their clients. They are required to apply their skills and reach informed decisions in relation to the work they do. The decisions they make and the services they provide will likely not impact just themselves and their clients but may have wide-reaching effects on other parties.

The actions of members as individual bookkeepers plays an important role in how the ethics of the profession are viewed by the public. If we do not behave ethically, we lose the public's trust and confidence, and our standing and influence.

The Code of Ethical Conduct / Ngā Tikanga Matatika (the Code) outlines and defines our obligations as bookkeeping professionals, and the responsibilities we have to others. The Code guides us in 3 key ways:

- It defines what an ethical bookkeeper looks like
- It tells us what we need to do to be ethical practitioners (for example, keep our knowledge and skills up to date); and
- It helps us decide what to do in difficult ethical situations by reference to agreed standards of behaviour.

# OUR CORE PRINCIPLES

The Code provides standards of conduct based on six core principles which are expected to be upheld at all times, by all members of the Institute of Certified NZ Bookkeepers (ICNZB).



**Practice Competence**  
Ngā Pūkenga Mah



**Confidentiality**  
Tūmataititanga



**Embracing Diversity**  
Taurima Kanorautanga



**Integrity**  
Ngākau Pono




**Objectivity**  
Tōkeketanga



**Professionalism**  
Ngaiotanga







# PRINCIPLE 1

## Practice Competence

### Ngā Pūkenga Mahi



**Our members have and maintain a combination of knowledge, skills, and abilities in Bookkeeping practices.**

This includes:

- Undertaking assignments only within their skill set.
- Making sure anyone performing bookkeeping activities under their supervision or authority is competent to do the work they are doing.
- Participating in the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) program and other personal development training to ensure their knowledge is kept up to date.

Our members also understand and agree to the following guidelines within Practice Competence:

- Understanding the limits of their competence. If a bookkeeper does work they are not qualified or experienced enough to do, then they deceive their client, risk harm to others and potentially damage both their own reputation and the profession's reputation.
- Taking personal responsibility for work. This includes both the work they do, and the work done by bookkeepers they supervise. It means ensuring that anyone they supervise is competent to carry out their tasks.
- Making sure they do not misrepresent their area of expertise, level of experience or level of competence.





## PRINCIPLE 2

### Confidentiality

Tūmataititanga



**Our members are bound by professional duty to maintain confidentiality of information acquired in all circumstances.**

Professional business relationships are one of the core functions of bookkeeping services. As an integral and trusted individual, bookkeepers can be privy to sensitive information, whether it be commercial or personal.

This principle requires members to maintain confidentiality in all circumstances, including discussions with prospective and current clients and employers. Clients and employers have a right to expect that their bookkeeper will not reveal anything about their personal or business affairs, and this expectation should remain after any relationship has been terminated.

If a member obtains confidential information in the course of their bookkeeping activities, they must not use the information for any purpose other than the purpose for which the information was obtained.

If a member is required by law to disclose confidential information, or there is a professional duty or right to disclose, it is strongly advised to first obtain legal advice.





# PRINCIPLE 3

## Embracing Diversity

Taurima Kanorautanga



**Our members value and embrace diversity in all aspects of their business practice.**

They treat all prospective and current clients, employees and contributing professions in an inclusive, cooperative manner and with respect without regard to race, colour religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, or political affiliation.

They refuse to engage or tolerate any other form of discrimination or harassment.



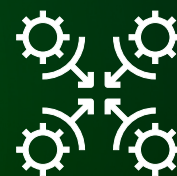




# PRINCIPLE 4

## Integrity

### Ngākau Pono



**Our members are professionals who act with honesty, fairness and are of sound moral character.**

This principle covers all professional relationships members have, across all areas of bookkeeping activities.

This includes identifying and managing and disclosing conflicts of interest. Conflicts of interest are situations where your personal or business interests may conflict with, or affect, your professional judgement in relation to a specific project or client. A conflict of interest may be actual, potential or perceived.

Members do not:

- Offer, or promise to give to any person anything intended to improperly influence a decision relating to your bookkeeping activities; or
- Accept from any person anything intended to improperly influence your bookkeeping activities; or
- Otherwise engage in or support or be complicit in corrupt or illegal practices.

This principle also applies to communications in any form, whether face-to-face, by phone (including voicemails) or otherwise including email, text messages and social media posts.





# PRINCIPLE 5

## Objectivity

### Tōkeketanga



**Our members are professionals who base their work on facts and are not influenced by personal beliefs or feelings**

This principle imposes an obligation on all members to not compromise their own professional or business judgement due to bias, conflict of interest, or under the influence of other parties.

Should a member be exposed to a situation that may impair their professional judgement and objectivity, they shall not be permitted to perform any professional services for that client.







# PRINCIPLE 6


## Professionalism

### Ngaiotanga



**Our members are proud of their profession and conduct themselves in a manner that exemplifies the principles of this Code and the Mission, Vision and Purpose of the ICNZB.**

Members must comply with relevant laws and regulations to ensure their duty to clients, employers, the public and the profession are upheld.





# Compliance to the Code

Adherence to the Code is vital to the reputation of our profession, our members, and the Association. This Code gives the public confidence that our members have agreed to uphold high standards of ethical behaviour, and it is a benchmark by which we can measure expected conduct.

Members of ICNZB are subject to the Code and are required at their annual membership renewal to declare compliance with the Code. Every three years members are required to complete and pass an ethical assessment in order to continue their membership.

As the leading professional body for bookkeepers in New Zealand, ICNZB sets high standards for its members ethical conduct and strongly encourages any individual working as a bookkeeper who may not be a member, to follow the key principles of practices.

“Ethics is knowing the difference between what you have a right to do and what is right to do”

~ Potter Stewart, Former Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States

# Breaching the Code of Ethical Conduct

If a person has reasonable grounds to believe that any member of ICNZB has, or could have, breached the Code of Ethical Conduct, they must bring the matter to the notice of ICNZB.

If a member, client, or non-member are involved in a dispute with a member and have been unable to resolve this directly with them, they are able to lodge a formal complaint and request the matter be investigated.

Formal complaints are only able to be actioned by ICNZB against members if they have breached one of the six core principles of the Code of Ethical Conduct. Examples of this includes, but is not limited to:

- a. If you feel your privacy and/or the confidentiality of your business or personal affairs has been broken.
- b. You receive a poor, non-competent and/or unprofessional service.
- c. You feel your bookkeeper has failed to conform to compliances.
- d. Your bookkeeper has stolen/embezzled money.
- e. Your bookkeeper has knowingly presented incorrect information/reports.
- f. You think your bookkeeper is involved with criminal activity.
- g. You have evidence that the bookkeeper is/has been declared bankrupt.





# FORMAL COMPLAINTS PROCESS



Any formal complaints submitted to ICNZB will be received by the Secretary ("the Investigations Officer"). Upon receipt of a formal complaint, the Investigations Officer will:

- Review the complaint, and if it appears to the Investigating Officer that the complaint breaches the Code of Ethical Conduct, the Investigations Officer shall convene a meeting of not less than two members of the Executive Committee to consider the accusation ("the Disciplinary Panel").
- Write to the member notifying him/her of the substance of the complaint and inviting them to comment upon it within 21 days of the written notification.
- If warranted, and after the 21 days written notice period, schedule a hearing before the Disciplinary Panel. The notice shall be in writing and sufficient service shall be made by sending it by tracked courier to the address shown on the member's membership records.

The Investigations Officer shall attend the hearing to explain the substance of the complaint, present the evidence of any complaint and ask questions of the member (should that person elect to give evidence) before the Disciplinary Panel, but shall not participate in the considerations of the Disciplinary Panel.

On finding by a majority of the Disciplinary Panel present that a complaint is proven on the balance of probabilities, they may deal with the complaint by making either no order, or by any one or more of the following penalties in respect of that complaint:

- Be given an informal or formal warning.
- Be suspended from all or any of the privileges of membership for a stated period.
- Be expelled from the Institute and immediately forfeit any interest and privileges in the Institute without further claim for calls, and for any other money paid to the Institute, but will remain liable for any calls, annual membership fees or other money outstanding at the date of expulsion.

There is no cost to lodging a formal complaint with ICNZB, however if you seek professional assistance with your complaint, such as advice from a lawyer or accountant, this will be at your own cost.



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