



**CODE OF ETHICS
AND PROFESSIONAL
CONDUCT**

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1. This Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct governs the activities of members of the Public Relations Society of Malawi (PRSM). It is a condition of PRSM membership that members understand, adhere to, and observe this code, any amendment to it, any other codes which shall be incorporated into this code, and to remain up-to-date with the content and recommendations of any guidance or communication issued by the Society.

1.2. Adopted in 2019, the PRSM Code of Conduct is an affirmation of professional and ethical conduct by members of the Public Relations Society of Malawi in line with international best practice.

1.3. This Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct defines what a member shall and shall not do

2.0 PREAMBLE

2.1 RECALLING sections 34, 35, 36 and 37 of the Constitution of the Republic of Malawi which state that:

34. Every person shall have the right to freedom of opinion including the right to hold opinions without interference, receive, and impart opinion

35. Every person shall have the right to freedom of expression

36. The press shall have the right to report and publish freely within Malawi and abroad and to be accorded the fullest possible facilities for access to public information

37. Subject to any act of parliament, every person shall have the right to access all information held by the state or any of its organs at any level of government in so far as such information is required for the exercise of his right .

2.2 RECALLING the 1948 'Universal Declaration of Human Rights' and especially recalling Article 19 which states that:

19. Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

2.3 RECALLING the Charter of the United Nations which reaffirms "faith in fundamental human rights, and in the dignity and worth of the human person";

2.4 RECOGNISING that public relations, by fostering the free flow of information, contributes to the interests of all stakeholders;

2.5 RECOGNISING that the conduct of public relations and public affairs provides essential democratic representation to public and other authorities;

2.6 RECOGNISING that public relations practitioners, through their wide-reaching communication skills, possess a means of influence that should be restrained by the observance of a code of ethics and professional conduct;

2.7 ACKNOWLEDGING that channels of communication such as the internet and digital media are channels where information is widely disseminated and erroneous and misleading information remains unchallenged, and therefore demand special care and attention in how they are used in public relations practice;

2.8 RECOGNISING that the internet and digital media demand special care with respect to the personal privacy of individuals, clients, employers and entities and colleagues.

3.0. GUIDANCE ON PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

3.1. This code of ethics shall serve to guide members of the Public Relations Society of Malawi in their pursuance of professional practice.

3.2. Areas covered by this code of ethics and professional conduct are as follows:

3.2.1. Aims of the PRSM code of ethics
Pillars of PRSM practice and
professional conduct

3.2.2. General ethical obligations

3.2.3. Conduct towards the public, the
media and other professionals

3.2.4. Conduct towards clients

3.2.5. Conduct towards colleagues

4.0. AIMS OF THE PRSM CODE OF ETHICS AND PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

4.1. To serve the public good

4.2. To preserve the integrity of Public Relations as a profession

4.3. To prevent the exploitation of clients and employers

5.0. PILLARS OF PRSM CODE OF ETHICS AND PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

5.1. Trustworthiness: honesty, integrity, reliability, loyalty

5.2. Respect: civility, courtesy and decency, dignity and autonomy, tolerance, acceptance

5.3. Responsibility: accountability, excellence, self-restraint

5.4. Fairness: impartiality, equity pursuit

5.5. Empathy: Concern for society, clients and other PRSM members

5.6. Citizenship: Upholding the values of the Malawi society

6.0. GENERAL ETHICAL OBLIGATIONS

6.1. In practicing within general ethical obligations members shall be expected to:

6.1.1. Have a positive duty to observe the highest standards in the practice of Public Relations.

6.1.2. Uphold this code and any other codes that PRSM has and co-operate with fellow members in enforcing decisions on any matter arising from its application.

6.1.3. Desist from knowingly causing or permitting a colleague to act in a manner inconsistent with this code as such action shall cause a member to be deemed in breach of the code.

6.1.4. Deal fairly and honestly with fellow members and other professionals including suppliers of services and products, intermediaries, the media and the public.

6.1.5. Conduct their professional activities with proper regard to the public interest.

6.1.6. Take reasonable measures to ensure that while executing PR duties when working in association with other professionals, there is mutual understanding and adherence to this code of conduct and those of the other professions.

6.1.7. Not engage in any practice nor be seen to conduct themselves in any manner detrimental to the reputation of the Society or the reputation and interests of the Public Relations profession.

7.0. SPECIFIC ETHICAL OBLIGATIONS

7.1. Observance of legal principles:

7.1.1. Observe the principles of the constitution of the Republic of Malawi, the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

7.2. Integrity:

7.2.1. Act with honesty and integrity at all times so as to secure and retain the confidence of the stakeholders the practitioner engages with.

7.3. Dialogue:

7.3.1. Seek to establish the appropriate moral, cultural and intellectual conditions for dialogue, and recognise the rights of all parties involved to state their case and express their views.

7.4. Transparency and Disclosure:

7.4.1. Be open and transparent in declaring their name, organisation and the interests that they represent.

7.4.2. Have a duty to ensure that the actual interest of any organisation with which they may be professionally concerned is adequately declared.

7.4.3. Not create or use any organisation to serve an announced cause but which actually serves an undisclosed interest.

7.5. Conflict:

7.5.1. Avoid any professional conflicts of interest and disclose such conflicts to affected parties when they occur.

7.5.2. Not represent conflicting or competing interests without the complete consent of those concerned.

7.5.3. Not engage in the practice of public relations and at the same time be employed full time by any media nor offer his clients or employer any special access to the media by virtue of any special relationship with media.

7.6. Confidentiality:

7.6.1. Safeguard present and former clients' or employers' confidential information obtained in an official capacity. Such information can only be disclosed upon an order of a court of competent jurisdiction.

7.7. Accuracy:

7.7.1. Take all reasonable steps to ensure the accuracy of all information they provide.

7.8. Truth and Falsehood:

7.8.1. Make every effort to not intentionally disseminate false or misleading information, exercise proper care to avoid doing so unintentionally, and correct any such act promptly.

7.8.2. Avoid extravagant claims or unfair comparisons.

7.8.3. Fully acknowledge ideas and words borrowed from others.

7.9. Honesty and Deception:

7.9.1. Not obtain information by deceptive, manipulative or dishonest means.

7.9.2. Not engage in any practice that tends to corrupt the integrity of channels of public communication.

7.10. Profit:

7.10.1. Not sell to third-parties information or copies of documents obtained from public authorities or the practitioners' clients.

7.11. Remuneration:

7.11.1. Not accept any form of payment in connection with their professional services from anyone other than the principal.

7.12. Inducement and influence:

7.12.1. Neither directly nor indirectly offer nor give any financial or other inducement to public representatives, the media, or other stakeholders.

7.12.2. Neither offer nor give any inducement to persons or bodies with the aim of obtaining special favours.

7.12.3. Not make any inducement or other valuable consideration to any Member of Parliament to represent in Parliament the interests of any client or employer without revealing the full circumstances to the Society.

7.13. Competitors:

7.13.1. Not intentionally injure the reputation of the competitor of one's client or employer.

7.13.2. Not seek to secure another practitioner's deceptive means.

7.14. Respect:

7.14.1. Take all reasonable care that professional duties are conducted without causing offence on the grounds of gender, sex, race, religion, ethnicity, disability or any other form of discrimination or unacceptable reference.

7.14.2. Not intentionally damage the professional reputation or practice of another member.

7.15. Service to foreign entities:

7.15.1. Not serve the interests of subversive foreign governments or agencies, whether paid or unpaid without revealing the full extent of the relationship to the Society.

8.0. ENFORCEMENT

8.1. The implementation or enforcement of this Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct shall lie primarily with individual members of the Public Relations Society of Malawi.

8.2. While PRSM does not currently have the statutory mandate to mete out any punitive measures on members who violate this Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct, the Ethics and Disciplinary committee shall review reports of any breach of this code by any member of PRSM and provide feedback and recommendations when required.

8.3. Notwithstanding subsection 6.1, PRSM shall have the right to suspend or terminate membership. Membership fees shall forfeit where membership has been terminated in violation of this code.

8.4. Suspension or termination of membership shall be preceded by an opportunity for the concerned member to be heard by an Ethics and Disciplinary Committee constituted by the National Governing Council.



INQUIRIES AND FEEDBACK

All inquiries or clarifications regarding this document, or any business about the society should be addressed to the The President, Public Relations Society of Malawi, via prsm@prsm.mw