

Evolving Profession, Anchored in Ethics

Knowledge equips a professional with the ability to perform, but ethics gives that knowledge its purpose, direction and credibility. In a world marked by constant change, increasing complexity and evolving expectations, progress of the professionals must remain firmly anchored in the values that endure—Integrity, Freedom and Ethics. The foundations of ethics are laid early in our lives, when we first learn to distinguish between right and wrong. Yet, as we navigate the complexities of life and professional responsibilities, the choices before us are seldom always so clearly defined. It is in these moments that ethical consciousness becomes our moral compass, guiding us not merely towards what is permissible, but towards what is right.

For the Chartered Accountancy profession, technical competence and professional excellence are indispensable; however, they alone cannot sustain a profession entrusted with such profound public responsibility. The strength of the profession lies not merely in what its members know, but equally in the principles that guide how that knowledge is exercised. It is this ethical foundation that transforms professional competence into credibility and professional responsibility into enduring public trust.

As the guiding ethical framework of the profession, the Code of Ethics must remain firmly anchored in its fundamental principles while continually evolving to address the complexities of an increasingly dynamic professional environment. The Revised Code of Ethics, (13th Edition), 2026 marks a significant milestone in this continuing evolution. It has been structured across three volumes, bringing together the domestic provisions governing the profession; converging the ethical requirements of the profession with the 2024 edition of the International Ethics Standards Board for Accountants (IESBA) Code; and incorporating, significantly, the Ethics Standards for Sustainability Assurance, including the International Independence Standards. The revision, therefore, goes beyond a mere updation of standards; it responds to the changing contours of professional practice by strengthening the ethical and independence framework. It also reflects the profession's preparedness to embrace emerging opportunities, including contemporary and digital-age services, without compromising the fundamental principles.

Yet, the true strength of the ethical framework lies not merely in the comprehensiveness of its provisions, but in the consciousness with which those provisions are embraced. The Code may prescribe standards and establish the boundaries of acceptable professional conduct, but ethics demands something deeper—a commitment to uphold the spirit that animates those standards. Professional life frequently presents situations where the answer may not lie in a simple distinction

between what is permissible and what is prohibited. It is in such moments that ethical judgement assumes its greatest significance. The transition from mere compliance to ethical consciousness, therefore, calls upon every Chartered Accountant to look beyond the letter of a requirement and exercise professional judgement guided by integrity and the larger public interest. A Code can provide direction, but it is the conscience of the professional that ultimately transforms ethical principles into conduct.

The CA of today is increasingly required to navigate situations that may not have conventional precedents, where technology can process information and support decisions but cannot assume moral responsibility for their consequences. As automation expands the possibilities of professional practice and AI influences the way information is analysed, interpreted and communicated, the need for sound ethical judgement becomes even more fundamental. Technology may enhance professional capability, but it cannot substitute human conscience; nor can innovation diminish the responsibility that accompanies professional judgement. The future of the profession is shaped by a harmonious convergence of technological competence and ethical wisdom, ensuring that progress remains aligned with responsibility and innovation continues to serve the larger public good.

India's journey towards a stronger, more prosperous and globally influential nation calls for professionals who are not only technically accomplished and globally competent, but also ethically steadfast. It calls for a community of professionals capable of inspiring confidence, upholding transparency and placing the larger public interest above narrow considerations. In this transformative journey, the profession shoulders a responsibility which extends well beyond numbers and compliance. As custodians of public trust, the profession is entrusted with responsibilities that demand independence, objectivity, transparency and commitment to the public interest. Trust is neither created through a single assurance nor secured by a solitary professional opinion; it is earned over time through the consistent ethical conduct of every member of the profession. Though intangible and absent from any balance sheet, trust remains among the most valuable capital of a profession. Ethics, however, is larger than any individual, profession or institution; the profession is but an agent and custodian through which these enduring values are translated into action. As ultimately, when ethics guides the profession, the profession becomes a force that strengthens trust, institutions and the nation itself.

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