

COLLABORATIVE DISCUSSION 1:  
CODE OF ETHICS AND PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT  
INITIAL POST

Maria Ingold

12693772

Unit 1

Research Methods and Professional Practice

University of Essex Online

3 May 2024

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## INITIAL POST

The Association for Computing Machinery (ACM) (N.D.) “Abusive Workplace Behaviour” case study discusses the breach of six codes from the ACM (2018) Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct.

Table 1 lists the key points violated in the case study, their respective ACM Code, and how they map to the British Computing Society (BCS) Code of Conduct.

**TABLE 1** | Relevant ACM and BCS Codes

<b>Case Study</b>	<b>ACM Code</b>	<b>BCS Code</b>
Verbal abuse ( <i>social, professionalism</i> )	<b>General Ethical Principles</b> Principle 1.1 Societal and human well-being	<b>You make IT for everyone</b> PUBLIC INTEREST 1) Due regard for well-being of others
Unprofessional communication ( <i>professionalism</i> )	<b>Professional Responsibilities</b> Principle 2.2 Professional competence, conduct and ethical practice	<b>Show what you know, learn what you don't</b> PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE AND INTEGRITY 5) Offer honest criticisms of work
Removal and blocking ( <i>legal</i> )	<b>General Ethical Principles</b> Principle 1.5 Respect work and innovation	<b>Show what you know, learn what you don't</b> PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE AND INTEGRITY 6) Avoid reputation damage by malicious action
Targeting women ( <i>legal</i> )	<b>General Ethical Principles</b> Principle 1.4 Be fair and avoid discrimination	<b>You make IT for everyone</b> PUBLIC INTEREST 3) Without discrimination
Failed psychological safety ( <i>social, professionalism</i> )	<b>Professional Leadership Principles</b> Principle 3.3 Manage to enhance working life	<b>Respect the organisation or individual you work for</b> DUTY TO RELEVANT AUTHORITY 3) Professional responsibility for those under your supervision
Failure to support ethical principles	<b>Professional Leadership Principles</b> Principle 3.4	<b>Keep IT real. Keep IT professional. Pass IT on.</b> DUTY TO THE PROFESSION

<i>(social, professional, legal)</i>	Apply and support Code policies and processes	2) Develop, use, and enforce professional standards
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Comparing the two codes, the ACM uses the word “ethic”, while the BCS does not. Furthermore, ACM seems more concerned with psychological safety, professional leadership, and respect for the individual, while BCS appears to focus more on legal compliance. For instance, the BCS discrimination wording appears mostly designed to comply with the UK’s 2010 Equality Act (Wadham, 2021). However, as the ACM is a global organisation, it makes sense that its wording is more general.

Psychological safety at work is key to facilitating performance, goal achievement, successful teamwork, knowledge sharing, and innovation (Edmondson & Bransby, 2023). While the abusive behaviour of the team lead violates ethical and professional principles, the enabling behaviour of the team manager perpetuates it. Bancroft (2003) describes abuse as coming from entitlement, control, and ownership, and notes that changing abusive behaviour requires calling it out by peers and superiors, as well as being held accountable with consequences. As raised by the ACM, having and enforcing ethical policies would help the team manager to enable psychological safety.

## References

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