

Codes of Conduct in a Web of Prevention: Questions and Choices

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A Codes Typology

Main Aims	Type	Typical Designation
Alert; Set realistic or idealistic standards	<i>Aspirational codes</i>	‘Code of ethics’
Provide guidelines, raise awareness & debate; foster moral agents	<i>Educational/ Advisory codes</i>	‘Code of conduct’
Prescribing or proscribing certain behavior	<i>Enforceable codes</i>	‘Code of practice’

A Code of Conduct could...

- ... 'aim to prevent the involvement of defence scientists or technical experts in terrorist activities and restrict public access to [WMD] knowledge and expertise...' *Working Group of the United Nations and Terrorism (2002)*
- ... entail 'an overt ethical code of conduct linked to professional membership analogous to the Hippocratic Oath' for those working with dangerous substances or pathogens. *British House of Commons Science and Technology Committee (2003)*
- ... provide 'a solid framework for bioscientists ... that would have universal recognition.' *President George W. Bush (2001)*

Current BW Specific Code Activities

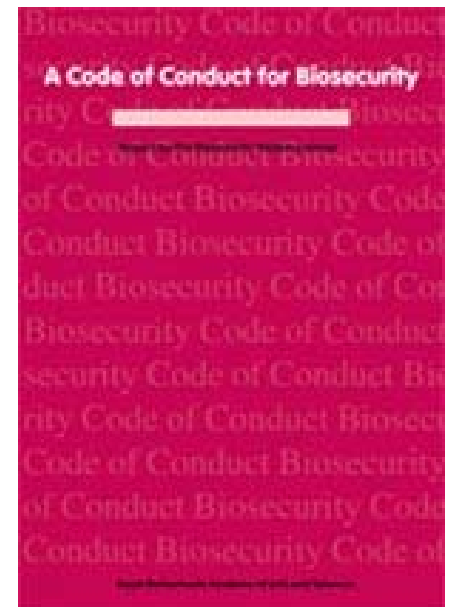
A three part breakdown:

1. **Advisory:** Official possible principles for a code
 - E.g., IAP, ICRC, ICGEB, BTWC, NSABB
2. **Advocacy:** Proposals for what a code should entail
 - E.g., Council for Responsible Genetics, Somerville and Atlas, Pax Christi, FAS et al., International Network of Engineers and Scientists for Global Responsibility, Rappert
3. **Accepted:** The (professional) codes in place
 - E.g., IUBMB, IUMS, AMA, Society for General Microbiology, ASM, Dutch Biosecurity Code

Inter-Academy Panel *Statement on Biosecurity* Questionnaire

Developments mid-2007

- 94 members of IAP; 69 signatories to Biosecurity statement; 22 responses to questionnaire
- 13 academies distributed statement locally
- 5 established working groups
- 3 considering national code (Albania, France, Netherlands)



Comparative National Approaches to Codes

The Netherlands	United States
<ul style="list-style-type: none">* Lead by Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences at request of Ministry of Education, Culture and Science * Background: IAP role * ‘Code’ as main vehicle for initiating activities * Code consolidates & extends * Leadership: KNAW * Compliance through local officer and possibly National Biosecurity Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none">* Lead by advisory board to federal government (NSABB) * Background: ???? * Code as sideline to other NSABB activities * Code summarizes & reiterates * Leadership: ????? * Indirect compliance through other compliance with other measures but code advisory

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Assessing BW Code Initiatives

Signalling & Enrolling

- With some further engagement fostered, what now?

Some Key Questions

- Have code activities helped clarify matters of uncertainty or disagreement?
- Have code activities added to the existing understanding of what constitutes appropriate practice in the governance of the life sciences?
- Are codes being made into living documents relevant for practical action?

‘Codes of Conduct’ In Progress Conclusions

- Good Signals, Questionable Destinations
- What about Awareness Raising Role?
- Output/Input Ratio
- Question of Leadership

Questions for Discussion

- What (distinctive?) functions might codes play in Australia (and its region)?
- What are the conditions that make codes meaningful in professional life?
- Who would be the audience for any code?
- Who could take a role in making them living documents? If no one in the life science communities does this, could anyone else?

For more information about codes, visit:

<http://www.ex.ac.uk/codesofconduct/>