

Our Code of Conduct: Professionalism

PraxisGRC has a Code of Conduct that is a living document. It lays out the elements of the approach to our coach's relationship with clients: the "relationship is built on trust, confidence and mutual confidentiality to create a safe space where individuals and groups can explore the skills and behaviours that support best practice in conducting governance, risk and compliance activities". The Code consists of 9 criteria:

1. **We will always act in a professional manner**
2. *We will comply with applicable laws and regulations*
3. *We will manage actual or potential conflicts of interest*
4. *We will maintain confidentiality*
5. *We will never use information gained for any purpose other than that for which it is intended*
6. *We will be truthful in all our communications*
7. *We will only promise what we can reasonably expect to deliver and will strive to meet our commitments*
8. *We will never engage in unfair competitive practices*
9. *We will never, whether directly or indirectly, offer, solicit or receive any advantage of any sort in order to obtain or retain business*

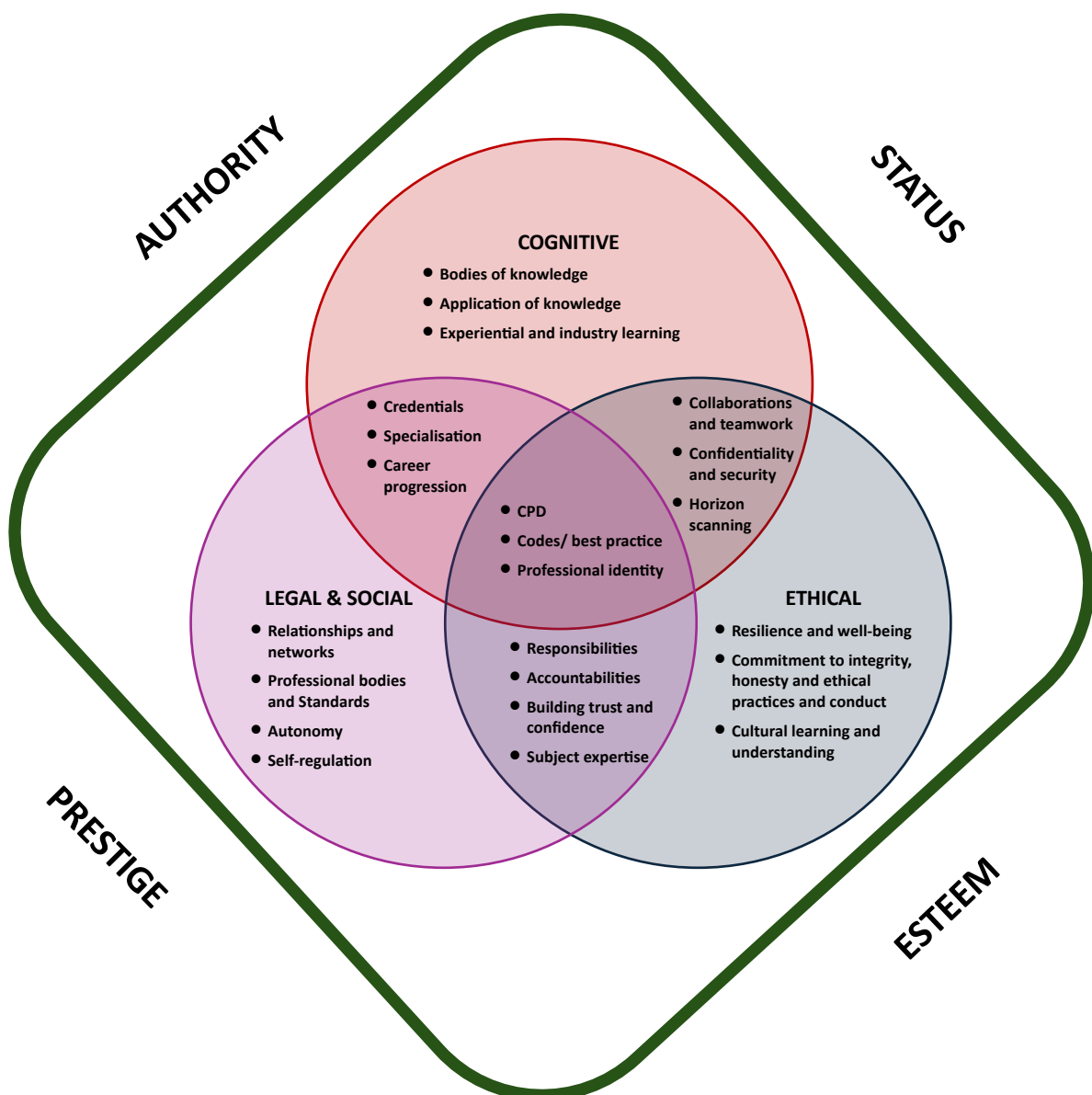
The first criterion begs the question 'what do we, as PraxisGRC practitioners, mean when we talk about professionalism?' PraxisGRC takes the view that while everyone will have a slightly different definition or their own emphasis on a specific aspect of a definition of professionalism, PraxisGRC believes that professionalism can be characterised as including "*the skill, good judgment and polite behaviour that is expected from a person who is trained to do a job well*" and that this includes the "*aims, or qualities that characterise or mark a profession or professional person*" (Merriam-Webster Dictionary). Included within the scope of professionalism for GRC professionals is the **protection of both the individual's and the company's reputation** by maintaining the ethics and integrity that is an essential component in the GRC practitioner's role. This is evidenced in the transparent way in which we, as PraxisGRC coaches, mentors, consultants and advisers, conduct all our tasks and activities, and in the respect with which we treat our stakeholders.



Michael Boyles describes why the failure "to understand and apply business ethics can result in moral disengagement". Unethical behaviour may lead to, questionable decision making with consequences that includes serious allegations of misconduct.ⁱ

Is professionalism just a work-based set of behaviours? In the 21st century, professional roles extend to social media platforms, or wherever an individual has a public presence, where they may be judged on the things they say, like or support. This is certainly true for individuals seeking a new professional position, where statements made on social media could influence professional reputation and standing, but is also likely to be an important place to build a professional network, to seek and gain support, and to connect with peers. There are many challenges in creating a professional persona that extend far beyond the workplace.

A comprehensive illustration of how professionalism can be usefully characterised has been developed by Dr Lisa-Maria Müller and Dr Victoria Cook for the Chartered College of Teaching, which focuses on the positive impact that professionalism has on recruitment and retention.



Specifically, by influencing:

- *the perceived status of the profession through professional autonomy and the required knowledgebase*
- *teacher professional identity*
- *job satisfaction*
- *levels of self-efficacy (OECD, 2016; Suarez and McGrath, 2022).*ⁱⁱ

This working definition of teacher professionalism applies more broadly to professional practitioners across many sectors.ⁱⁱⁱ Keeping informed about how the perception of professionalism has changed over time and within different industries and sectors, is helpful in concluding what professionalism means to you as a practitioner. This prescription applies equally to individuals working within GRC (see diagram, above, adapted from Müller and Cook (2024).

Professionalism and its associated status, give meaning and ascribes value to roles that have, in the past, been seen as a business inhibitor and not an enhancer. The transformation of GRC from inhibitor to enhancer has further developed into enabler in some cases. All of which should establish GRC professionals as confident individuals. As professional persons, GRC practitioners add value to businesses by helping them avoid most regulatory pitfalls and if fallen, facilitates the journey back to alignment with regulations and key principles.

Professionals will generally be judged against expectations (perhaps found in a job description) or professional standards that have become widely accepted within institutions, industries or business sectors. However, even within these reference points there are other factors that may be taken into account: communicating about yourself (personal brand), the image presented (the way you dress and are groomed), the competence you display (in a CV, resume or on a social media profile), your demeanour in the company of others (juniors, peers and senior managers) amongst other factors. Confidently managing situations and contexts so that you appear calm, capable and resourceful goes a long way to cementing a reputation as a professional person.

ⁱ Michael Boyles, "What are business ethics & why are they important?" Business Insights, HBR Online (27 JUL 2023): <https://online.hbs.edu/blog/post/business-ethics>

ⁱⁱ Dr Lisa-Maria Müller and Dr Victoria Cook, "Revisiting the notion of teacher professionalism: a working paper," (May 2024): <https://chartered.college/research-and-policy/publications/professionalism/>

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