



Mains Practice Question

Q. What do you understand by code of conduct? Discuss how it differs from code of ethics? (150 words)

06 Aug, 2020 GS Paper 4 Theoretical Questions

Approach

- Explain the meaning of code of conduct and illustrate with a suitable example.
- Briefly mention the elements of code of conduct.
- Differentiate the code of conduct with code of ethics in terms of meaning and existing provisions.
- Conclude by suggesting needed reforms in code of conduct and ethics.

Introduction

- A code of conduct is a set of rules, standards of behaviour or practices for an individual or organization that guide the decisions, procedures and systems of an organization in a way that contributes to the welfare of its stakeholders.
- For example, Election Commission of India's Model Code of Conduct is a set of guidelines issued by the Election Commission of India for conduct of political parties and candidates during elections mainly with respect to speeches, polling day, polling booths, portfolios, election manifestos, processions and general conduct.
- Similarly a set of codes of rules are prescribed for civil servants with regard to their conduct in performing their duties.

Body

Elements of a Code of Conduct

A Code of Conduct must address all important ethical issues and legal duties with respect to the behaviour and conduct of civil servants. It should have with the following elements:

- General standard of accountability
- Compliance with all applicable laws
- Maintaining Confidentiality
- Avoidance of Conflicts of interest
- Political Impartiality in conduct
- Probity
- Commitment to public service
- Devotion to duty
- Exemplary behaviour

Difference Between Code of Conduct and Code of Ethics

Code of Conduct	Code of Ethics
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ A legally enforceable code of conduct sets out the standards of behaviour expected of those working in the public service.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Such a code contains a declaration of values for the civil services, reflecting public expectations of the relationship

- The Civil Service code outlines the Civil Service's core values, and the standards of behaviour expected of all civil servants in upholding these values.
 - In India, the current set of ethical norms are the Conduct Rules, contained in the **Central Services (Conduct) Rules, 1964** and analogous rules applicable to members of the All India Services or employees of various State Governments.
 - The code of behaviour as enunciated in the Conduct Rules contain general norms like **'maintaining integrity and absolute devotion to duty'**
 - These conduct rules do not constitute a code of ethics.
- between the civil service and the government, the legislature, and the members of the public.
 - It entails specific reference to **political impartiality, maintenance of the highest ethical standards, accountability for actions and responsibilities to the government.**
 - There is no Code of Ethics prescribed for civil servants in India although such codes exist in other countries.
 - There is a need for more generic norms to be laid down by way of accepted conduct for the civil servants as recommended by the Hota committee.

Conclusion

The code of conduct for civil servants is charted out on the basis of values outlined in the code of ethics. To streamline both it is necessary to execute the reforms recommended in the second Administrative Reform Committee (ARC) report such as that the rigid rule bound bureaucracies should be changed into flexible and action-oriented.

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