



PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS COMMITTEE

PART 1	PSC STRUCTURE & PROCEDURES	2
PART 2	ARBITRATION SERVICE	8
PART 3	BEST PRACTICE GUIDELINES	11

**PART 1 MRSS PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS COMMITTEE
Codes and Guidelines**

SECTION A

The Professional Standards Committee (PSC)

Article 1

1. MRSS has a Professional Standards Committee. A key function of the PSC is to apply the MRSS Code of Conduct in Singapore (which will be subsequently referred to as 'the Code').
2. The PSC is located at the MRSS office in Singapore but may meet at any place deemed appropriate by the PSC Chairman or in his/her absence the Vice Chairman or other member of the committee in their absence.

Composition and Appointment

Article 2

1. The PSC shall be composed of a Chairman, Vice Chairman and two other members of MRSS. All members are to have a minimum of fifteen years relevant research experience.
2. All members of the PSC shall be appointed by the President of MRSS for a period of three years
3. Additional PSC members can be appointed at any time by the President of MRSS for formulating policies, disciplinary procedure hearings or dispute resolution.
4. The MRSS Committee may at any time replace a PSC member for cause. Such cause may include, but may not be limited to, failure to perform the duties expected of PSC members as described herein. The MRSS Committee may also replace any PSC member who becomes unavailable.

Competence

Article 3

1. The PSC shall investigate cases of possible infringement by an MRSS member of the Code in Singapore.
2. Notwithstanding the provisions of Article 3.1, in any case where an MRSS member who is also an ESOMAR member has, after investigation by the MRSS PSC, been found guilty of an infringement of the Code that MRSS considers sufficiently serious to call for suspension or withdrawal of the offender's membership of MRSS, MRSS shall notify the ESOMAR PSC accordingly.
3. The PSC may upon request give opinions to courts of law, public authorities and other interested parties with respect to the Code.

Submission of complaints

Article 4

1. Any firm, company, business or private individual directly concerned by an alleged infringement of the above mentioned by an MRSS member may file a complaint with the PSC in accordance with Article 3.
2. The complaint shall be made in writing (facsimile and electronic mail are acceptable) and shall be supported with detailed statement of the case as well as all relevant documents and other evidence. It shall be addressed to the President of MRSS.

Procedure

Article 5

1. On receipt of a complaint concerning a member's conduct or on his/her own initiative, the Chairman of the PSC, the Vice Chairman or his/her delegate shall cause inquiries to be made to establish the facts and circumstances of the matter by whatever means the PSC considers appropriate, including raising questions directly with the member concerned. The member shall be informed upon the raising of any question that such questions are being asked in connection with possible disciplinary procedures.
2. Any member of the PSC, including the Chairman, having a personal interest in the subject matter of a complaint or a relationship with one of the parties of a nature that might affect the PSC member's ability to proceed in an objective manner shall withdraw from any consideration of the complaint.
3. Having made such inquiries, the PSC may conclude that there is no prima facie case against the member involved, in which event the PSC shall so inform in writing the member as well as any complainant involved.
4. If, having undertaken appropriate inquiries, the Chairman, the Vice Chairman or his/her delegate, after consultation with the PSC, has decided that there is a prima facie case that should be pursued against the member concerned in

respect of a possible breach of any provision of the Code, the PSC shall write to the member setting out the conduct complained of and the Code provisions allegedly breached.

- a. The PSC shall allow the member a period of twenty-eight calendar days to provide a written response.
 - b. Upon receipt of the members' written response, or after the twenty-eight calendar days, whichever occurs earlier, the PSC shall undertake such further inquiries as it considers necessary.
 - c. Upon completing its inquiries, the PSC shall give its opinion on the case and send its findings and reasons in writing promptly to the member.
 - d. In any case that appears to the PSC, having completed its inquiries, to be so serious that a sanction should be considered as stated in Article 12 numbers 3, 4, 5, 6, or 7, then the PSC shall meet again with the President and Vice-President of MRSS or his/her delegate to discuss the imposition of an appropriate sanction.
5. Meetings of the PSC may be held at the discretion of the PSC Chairman, Vice Chairman or his/her delegate, as the case may be, in person, by telephone or electronic mail or any other appropriate means of communication. Votes may be taken and recorded in the same manner. Complaints may be resolved by the PSC with or without a hearing in either event, the PSC shall notify the parties involved of their right to appeal any PSC decision. In either event, the PSC shall notify the parties involved of their right to appeal any PSC decision involving them to the MRSS Committee at which time the member(s) against whom the particular complaint has been made shall be afforded a hearing opportunity.
6. The President of MRSS or his/her delegate shall select members of a Review Board to review the case and review any earlier decision of the PSC. The findings of the Review Board shall be final.
7. Any time period set out in these procedures may be varied at the discretion of the PSC within reasonable limits.

SECTION B

SANCTIONS

Article 6

The PSC/Review Board may impose one or more of the following measures:

1. warning
2. reprimand
3. publication
4. suspension
5. expulsion
6. notification to authorities
7. any further measures that are authorised by the MRSS Committee

Language

Article 7

Complaints and relevant documents shall be presented in English.

Expert advice

Article 8

The PSC may after consultation with the parties seek expert advice at any time, which shall be made available to both parties. At the discretion of the Chairman or Substitute Chairman, as the case may be, experts may be invited to appear before the PSC or Review Board.

Confidentiality

Article 9

1. Except as provided below, the deliberations of the PSC and the Review Board shall be confidential.
2. Documents the PSC or the Review Board accept as being confidential shall not be shown to anyone other than PSC/Review Board members, the PSC Secretary, pertinent members of the Society's professional staff and any experts needing access to such documents to enable them to formulate the expert opinion(s) being sought by the PSC or the DC, as the case may be, or any of the parties.

3. All of those given access to confidential documents in connection with any disciplinary proceeding shall be required to sign a document pledging them to respect any and all disclosure limitations that have been placed on individual documents.
4. MRSS shall publish the decisions formulated in individual cases by the Chairman or Vice Chairman of the PSC, or his/her delegate, and by the Chairman or Substitute Chairman of the Review Board once such decisions have become final.
5. Other than in the circumstances described below, PSC/Review Board decisions shall not refer by name to any MRSS member or related company unless the PSC/Review Board sustains the charges alleged in the particular complaint and concludes that disclosure of such name(s) would constitute an appropriate penalty.
6. If the PSC or Review Board, as the case may be, does not sustain the charges alleged in the particular complaint, the name(s) of the MRSS member(s) against whom the particular complaint has been lodged shall be included in the PSC/Review Board's decisions only if such member(s) unanimously so request in writing.

SECTION C

APPLICATION TO NON-MEMBERS

Article 10

1. The rules specified herein shall apply to any complaint brought against an MRSS member. To the extent practicable, the same rules shall be employed whenever a complaint involves a non-member.
2. A proceeding against a non-member may be entertained only if approved by the MRSS Committee, which shall authorise such a proceeding only if deemed by the Council to be required to safeguard the ethical standards contained in the MRSS Code of Conduct. In the case of a proceeding involving only those who are not members of MRSS, the PSC may go no further than requesting that the non-member refrain from the action complained of.

Interpretation

Article 11

MRSS members should seek always to comply with the spirit as well as the letter of the MRSS Code of Conduct, as detailed in the related Notes.

PART 2 ARBITRATION SERVICE
Adopted from ESOMAR Codes & Guidelines

BACKGROUND

1. Over the next few years MRSS is likely to be faced with a growing number of queries, complaints and disputes which relate to the technical quality of specific research projects and the ways in which the findings of research are interpreted and used. This issue is not adequately covered by the present MRSS or ESOMAR systems of professional advice and regulation.
2. The existing MRSS Code of Conduct deals primarily with the 'ethical' aspects of market and opinion research. Certain provisions of these codes may help clients and the general public also to assess the likely technical quality of a research survey and the adequacy of its findings for the uses made of these - e.g. by requiring research agencies to provide details of the methodology used, specifying reporting standards, etc. However the codes do not in themselves set out to define what constitutes 'good' (or at least 'adequate') quality in research.
3. Guideline documents, and developments such as quality control schemes or model contracts, can additionally encourage at least minimal standards of good research. Except in cases of blatantly inadequate work, however, they can rarely in practice provide a clear or full answer to disputes about the quality of any particular project.
4. Research is nowadays so widely used and discussed - and the commercial, political and other actions based on its findings so important - that researchers cannot afford to sit on the sidelines when an argument arises about the technical quality of a survey or the way in which its findings are being interpreted and used. If the profession itself is not prepared to express views on such issues, and where appropriate take some action to remedy abuses, others will do this for us - politicians, the courts, international bodies, etc. Debates about research quality may at the very least undermine confidence and credibility. At worst, they can lead to regulation, control and restrictions from outside the profession.
5. To this end, MRSS has decided to publish a "Best Practice Guideline" to set down some basic standards that are generally agreed as "best practice". A copy of this is found on page 13 of this document.

MRSS ARBITRATION SERVICE

1. MRSS offers an arbitration service through the Professional Standards Committee (PSC). This service can be requested by any of the parties to a possible dispute, but the service and the arbitrator suggested, must be accepted by all parties before the latter starts work. Arbitration is impossible without such agreement.
2. The service can be used to resolve disputes relating to the quality of any or all of the following aspects of a research project:
 - the briefing and research proposal on which the study was based
 - the technical design of the study
 - its administration (including the control of any sub-contracting work involved)
 - the data collection procedures involved (sampling, questionnaires, the way in which the data were obtained from respondents, field control procedures, etc.)
 - data processing procedures (editing and coding, analysis, etc.)
 - the reporting, presentation and interpretation of the findings
 - the conformity of the project to Code, Guideline and legal requirements.
3. The appraisal and judgement provided by the arbitrator will deal with the adequacy of the work carried out in relation to the original research brief and Contract and to the purposes for which the findings were to be used. The arbitrator will take into account the relative roles and responsibilities of client and agency in the design and other aspects of the work (for example, who was responsible for the choice of methodology).
4. The service can be either
 - (a) provided for *beforehand* as an agreed option in the initial Contract between the parties to the project, to be used if and when the need arises,or
 - (b) supplied at a later stage *after* a dispute has arisen.
5. The MRSS Committee will maintain a register of possible arbitrators. This will be based on the recommendations of the Professional Standards Committee. It will be set up in such a way that it can cope with:
 - (a) a range of specialist research problems (such as media research, opinion polling, panel research, industrial and business research, specialised methods of data collection, statistical techniques, etc.)
 - (b) the need for clear independence and impartiality on the part of the arbitrator (who should have no personal interest in, or connection with, the parties in dispute or the subject matter of the research)
 - (c) the need for quick action.

6. Potential arbitrators will (with the possible exception of people with highly specialised knowledge and experience e.g. in certain forms of industrial research) be individuals of recognised standing and seniority in the profession with a minimum of 15 years experience. Wherever possible they will be people with direct experience of working on, or closely with, MRSS and/or ESOMAR. They will normally have had appropriate experience of international research.
7. The procedure for using the service will be as follows:
 - (1) any request for its use will be made to the Secretariat, who will refer this to the Chairman of the Professional Standards Committee (or if he/she is not available, to the Vice-Chairman);
 - (2) the Chairman will, if necessary, then ask for further information about the issues involved before consulting other members of the Committee;
 - (3) after such consultation (normally by telephone or email) the Chairman will provide the names of 2-3 possible arbitrators drawn from the Register (a 'first choice' plus one or more alternatives), having checked that the individuals suggested are available if required. These names will be forwarded to the parties requesting arbitration. The Chairman will inform the President of MRSS of the case and of the action being taken;
 - (4) it will then be up to the parties in dispute
 - (a) to agree which arbitrator to use
 - (b) to agree with the arbitrator selected the nature of the issues to be studied, the kind of judgement required, and the fee to be paid to the arbitrator;
 - (5) access to the service will be free to members of MRSS, but there will be a charge made to non-members for such access. This charge will be set by the MRSS Committee, and amended from time to time as appropriate, on the recommendation of the Professional Standards Committee. MRSS will *not* be responsible for setting arbitrators' fees: these will usually consist of a daily rate plus out-of-pocket expenses, and will be negotiated directly between the parties to the dispute and the arbitrator.
8. The service will be concerned with questions of research *quality* and the professional competence of the work carried out. Problems which relate primarily to *Contractual* issues, such as payment disputes, are normally issues for lawyers and the courts.
9. MRSS itself will not automatically be responsible for the views and judgements made by an arbitrator. These will be the responsibility of the individual concerned. However, it will be possible for MRSS officially to endorse the arbitrator's judgement whenever it seems appropriate to do so. This will often be desirable on issues of wider public interest and concern, e.g. media research or public opinion surveys. Such an endorsement will be by MRSS Committee on the recommendation of the Professional Standards Committee.

10. As with issues arising under the MRSS Code of Conduct, the MRSS Arbitration Service will be concerned mainly with *national* disputes (i.e. concerning a Singapore registered company or a Singapore MRSS member) and would be heard by the Singapore MRSS PSC.
11. The introduction of the service will be discussed with ESOMAR and MRSS will co-operate fully with ESOMAR at all times.

OTHER LINKED SERVICES

1. Arbitration as such is relevant only to situations where a dispute exists and where all parties have agreed to accept arbitration. Certain cases which are likely to arise do not fall into this category.
2. The *first* such 'other' category is where there is a complaint, falling outside the provisions of the MRSS Code, by one party to a survey where the other party *does not agree to arbitration*. In such cases the only redress of the complainant would normally be by legal action of some kind. One way in which MRSS might help in such cases is by providing the names of possible 'experts' who could make informed and objective appraisals of the issues involved for use by the complainant. Such 'experts' are in general likely to be the same types of individual as will figure on the Register of potential arbitrators. (The procedure for using such a service would be broadly similar to that set out in 1.7, except that the agreement of the second party to the dispute would not be needed).
3. The *second* 'other' category is the case where there is no dispute between the immediate parties involved in the research (client and agency) but where the publication/use of the findings - e.g. by a media owner - leads to accusations of bias, inaccuracy or incompetence in the way the study was carried out or the findings were used. Such cases fall under the heading of '*public interest*', and may get considerable publicity and provoke criticism of research generally. Cases of this kind have already been referred to ESOMAR and have been heard in the High Court of Singapore. These can be extremely damaging to the profession.
4. A *third*, relatively minor, 'other' category is likely to be less contentious since it falls more under the heading of '*advice*'. It consists of situations where an organisation is seeking a 'second opinion' on some aspect of research, for example:
 - (a) a client wanting a second opinion on a research proposal he has received (particularly in a case where the findings of the research are to be published)
 - (b) the recipient of a research report (who may not be the original client) who wants an expert opinion on its validity, applications and limitations.

Most such requests for help will (and should) be made directly to individual 'experts' by the organisation concerned. Occasionally, however - particularly in the case of research which has been, or is to be, widely published - the organisation may want advice on whom to contact or to be seen to have consulted the main professional body in the field. It would again be possible to consider using the register as a potential panel of experts to deal with such requests.

PART 3 MRSS BEST PRACTICE GUIDELINES

Adapted from:
- The Association of Business Media Companies
Code of Professional Research Ethics & Practices
- CASRO
Code of Standards and Ethics for Survey Research

Adopted by MRSS

POLICIES

1. Due care shall be exercised on the development of research and in the analysis of data. Research tools and methods of analysis must be chosen solely because they suit the problem at hand - not because they will produce a desired result. (The fundamentals of "due care" are to be found in the standard statistics and survey research textbooks. Any properly trained researcher, if provided with certain kinds of information about a survey, should be able to evaluate whether it reflects a proper concern with the canons of survey research.)
2. Due care shall be exercised in gathering and processing data, with all reasonable steps taken to assure accuracy.
3. If a research project involves a unique approach, concept or technique, the client shall not solicit a design from one research supplier, then give it to another for execution - unless the originator approves.
4. Any information that might identify a respondent shall be held in strictest confidence by the client and research practitioner-except when a respondent agrees to a release on request.
5. No client or researcher shall conduct any activity under the guise of research whose real purpose is to sell respondents merchandise or services, create databases or engage in any activity that is not purely research-related.
6. Names of respondents shall not be made known to anyone outside the research organization, nor used for other than research purposes (unless the respondent waives confidentiality on request). Moreover, no hidden codes or other devices will be used in mail surveys to identify respondents. If any identification is needed for follow-up mailings to non-respondents, the code will not be concealed and must be accompanied by a straightforward explanation of why it is there and how it will be used.
7. Research practitioners are encouraged to tell respondents that the study has a serious business purpose and is being conducted by legitimate methods.
8. Practices and methods which may be interpreted by the respondent as abusive or coercive shall not be used. These include unreasonably long interviews or questionnaires, questions that require a lengthy search of records, and questions phrased so that the respondent can't honestly give an unbiased meaningful answer.

9. Research assignments, materials received and information obtained from respondents, shall be held in confidence by the interviewer and the research organization.
10. Information provided by the publisher or gained through a research activity shall not be used for the personal gain of the interviewer or individual members of the research organization. Neither will it be released to any party other than the publisher, unless expressly authorized by the client.
11. An adequate description of methods employed will be made available as part of the study report. There will be no international misrepresentation of research methods or results.
12. A client or researcher shall not knowingly disseminate conclusions from a research project that are inconsistent with or not warranted by the research design or the data. Exaggerated or misleading claims or implications will not be made. The promotion of study findings must be consistent with the technical research report.
13. Clients who publish surveys shall have the research supplier, when one is used, approve for accuracy the report of findings before they are released. If a research organization is not used then the client must take all reasonable steps to determine the validity, reliability and accuracy the data and fully disclose the survey methodology.

PROCEDURES

Sampling

1. All research reports and presentations must contain a complete and accurate description of the universe from which the sample was derived.
2. The universe, or population, to be sampled must be such that: (1) it can be described in measurable terms and (2) it is pertinent to the subject under investigation. Moreover, the description of it must be complete and accurate. For example, if the universe is said to be the qualified circulation list of a magazine, it must be the entire qualified list, not merely selections, such as subscribers with e-mail addresses, users of reader service cards or readers with specific demographics.
3. To avoid bias and "preheating," there shall be no prior contact with the individual to be surveyed - beyond communication that would normally take place regardless of the survey (as in special cases, e.g. Customer Satisfaction Surveys where respondents are told the name of the sponsoring client).
4. Some form of unbiased systematic sample selection, such as a random or probability method, should be used. If a convenience sample is used, then the biases and limitations of such a sample must be explained.
5. For list samples, the most up-to-date and complete list of the pertinent universe shall be used and a full description of how and when the list was compiled must be given in the report.

6. Panel samples shall be clearly described in terms of panel design, size, percentage of sample agreeing to serve on the panel, and some statement or description of how long members serve on the panel or their maximum frequency as a participant.
7. The size of the total sample and number of usable responses will be reported. Also, counts will be reported for respondents who for one reason or another would not cooperate.
8. Sub-samples shall be large enough to provide good representation so that the data within the cell is deemed credible and reliable. The larger the number of useable responses in a cell, the more confident the researcher can be that the results are representative of the items being measured, The number of responses deemed statistically adequate is, of course, dependent on the situation and the sample being measured, and must take into account the level of error that those viewing the results are willing to accept. For example, in B2B surveys where the universe is not large, smaller sizes and purposive sampling methods are permitted as long as the rationale for this methodology is noted.
9. Although there is no number that is identified as the absolute minimum that may be used for comparison in data tables, it is suggested that a minimum of 30 responses in a cell be considered. Anything below this level should be clearly annotated, stating that the data may not be reliable and is shown for consistency and directional purposes only.
10. A minimum number of 30 responses, given a 95 percent confidence level, will yield a margin of error that is plus or minus 18.2 percent. While some may decide that a cell size of 30 is sufficiently stable for their purposes, it is the researcher that must decide whether or not the level of inconsistency is acceptable. Bases and filters should be reported for each question.
11. Two elements are critical in establishing both stability and projectability of a sample randomly drawn and delivered electronically or via conventional mail. These elements are the number of complete responses (or useable returned surveys) and the response rate (or percent of complete responses out of the number solicited).
12. Both of these combine to affect the reliability of the research. Neither one alone provides adequate information for an informed evaluation of the findings. The minimum required levels for these two factors depend on how the research is to be used, either directionally, or for more accurate projections or more detailed analysis. Predicting the margin of error based upon the number of completed returns is available from statistical tables. In the research literature, it is generally agreed that a sample size of 400 or greater is more appropriate for more accurate or detailed projections, whereas sample sizes in the 100-400 range usually produce only directional findings. A sample size much below 100 should not be encouraged in quantitative research due to the large margin of error inherent in such samples. The appropriate level for the response number and the responses rate is dictated by the intended purpose and use of the research. It is essential that all research reports note the achieved levels for both these elements and it is encouraged that the resulting standard error be presented.

Questionnaire

1. Pre-testing of questionnaires for length, understandability and reliability is encouraged.
2. Bias in questionnaire design shall be avoided. Non-directive wording should be used at all times; order effects should be minimised by rotation of brand names, attribute statements, concepts tested and so on.
3. The respondent should not be asked for information he or she cannot reasonably be expected to know, remember or evaluate.
4. The sponsor of the research should be unknown or "blind" to respondents though it can be revealed at the end of the interview. Keeping a sponsor unknown is particularly important for brand and advertising research because revealing can bias awareness questions and comparisons to other brands.

Analysis

1. The reliability of the coding process should be checked carefully and objectively, usually by examination of a sample of each coder's work.
2. The exact question posed to respondents should appear on each table. Column headings must correspond to the questionnaire.
3. Tables should include the sample size on which the table (or cross tabulation) is based, as well as the number of "no answers" and "don't knows."
4. Researchers must ensure that data tables and reports include sufficient technical information to enable reasonable interpretation of the validity of the results.
5. Where the number of responses in cross tabulations are too small for reliability (less than 30 responses), the data must be clearly annotated and must indicate that the data is unstable and is shown for reference only.
6. When measures of central tendency are indicated, it should be clear whether these refer to the mean, median or mode.
7. Differences cited in the report should be defensible from the standpoint of statistical sampling tolerances.
8. Bases and filters should be clearly noted.
9. Multiple surveys should not be aggregated unless all of the following conditions are met:
 - Population surveyed was identical;
 - Questionnaire was identical;
 - Sampling methodology was identical; and
 - Time period over which the surveys were conducted was reasonably short.

10. Whenever results of multiple surveys are combined into one, this fact must be noted, along with the required sampling information for each survey.
11. Researchers must ensure that reports and presentations clearly distinguish between facts and interpretations.

Responsibilities in Reporting to Clients and the Public

A. When reports are being prepared for client confidential or public release purposes, it is the obligation of the researcher to insure that the findings they release are an accurate portrayal of the survey data, and careful checks on the accuracy of all figures are mandatory.

B. A researcher's report to a client or the public should contain, or the researcher should be ready to supply to a client or the public on short notice, the following information about the survey:

1. The name of the organization for which the study was conducted and the name of the organization conducting it.
2. The purpose of the study, including the specific objectives.
3. The dates on or between which the data collection was done.
4. A definition of the universe that the survey is intended to represent and a description of the population frame(s) that was actually sampled.
5. A description of the sample design, including the method of selecting sample elements, method of interview, cluster size, number of callbacks, respondent eligibility or screening criteria, and other pertinent information.
6. A description of results of sample implementation including (a) a total number of sample elements contacted, (b) the number not reached, (c) the number of refusals, (d) the number of terminations, (e) the number of non-eligibles, (f) the number of completed interviews.
7. The basis for any specific "completion rate" percentages should be fully documented and described.
8. Details of incentives provided to respondents should be stated.
9. The questionnaire or exact wording of the questions used, including Interviewer directions and visual exhibits.
10. A description of any weighting or estimating procedures used.
11. A description of any special scoring, data adjustment or indexing procedures used. (Where the researcher uses proprietary techniques, these should be described in general and the researcher should be prepared to provide technical information on demand from qualified and technically competent persons who have agreed to honor the confidentiality of such information).

12. Estimates of the sampling error and of data should be shown when appropriate, but when shown they should include reference to other possible sources of error so that a misleading impression of accuracy or precision is not conveyed.
13. Statistical tables clearly labeled and identified as to questionnaire source, including the number of raw cases forming the base for each cross-tabulation.

C. As a **minimum**, any general public release of survey findings should include the following information:

1. The sponsorship of the study.
2. A description of the purposes.
3. The sample description and size.
4. The dates of data collection.
5. The names of the research company conducting the study.
6. The exact wording of the questions.
7. Any other information that a lay person would need to make a reasonable assessment of the reported findings.