

LEGAL PROFESSION ACT  
(CHAPTER 161, SECTION 71)

## LEGAL PROFESSION (PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT) RULES

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[1st June 1998]

**Citation**

1. These Rules may be cited as the Legal Profession (Professional Conduct) Rules.

## PART I

## PRELIMINARY

**Application**

2.—(1) These Rules shall apply to every advocate and solicitor who has in force a practising certificate.

(2) In the interpretation of these Rules, regard shall be had to the principle that an advocate and solicitor shall not in the conduct of his practice do any act which would compromise or hinder the following obligations:

- (a) to maintain the Rule of Law and assist in the administration of justice;
- (b) to maintain the independence and integrity of the profession;
- (c) to act in the best interests of his client and to charge fairly for work done; and
- (d) to facilitate access to justice by members of the public.

(3) These Rules shall, to the extent of any inconsistency, prevail over the Practice Directions and Rulings 1989 issued by the Law Society or any additions or amendments thereto.

### **Definitions**

**3.—(1)** In these Rules, unless the context otherwise requires —

“client account” has the same meaning as in the Legal Profession (Solicitors’ Accounts) Rules (R 8);

“client’s money” has the same meaning as in the Legal Profession (Solicitors’ Accounts) Rules;

“conveyancing account”, “conveyancing (CPF) account” and “conveyancing money” have the same meanings as in rule 2(2) of the Conveyancing and Law of Property (Conveyancing) Rules 2011 (G.N. No. S 391/2011);

“Court” means any court, tribunal, board or committee where an advocate and solicitor appears as a representative of another person, whether or not for a fee;

“Judge” means a Judge of the Supreme Court, a District Judge, Magistrate, Coroner or any person presiding over a court or statutory tribunal;

“law firm” means a firm of advocates and solicitors and includes a sole-proprietorship and partnership of 2 or more advocates and solicitors, but does not include a limited liability law partnership;

“law practice” means a law firm, a limited liability law partnership or a law corporation;

“solicitor-trustee” has the same meaning as in the Legal Profession (Solicitors’ Trust Accounts) Rules (R 9);

“trust account” has the same meaning as in the Legal Profession (Solicitors’ Trust Accounts) Rules (R 9);

“trust money” has the same meaning as in the Legal Profession (Solicitors’ Accounts) Rules (R 8).

- (2) In these Rules, unless the context otherwise requires —
- (a) references to an employee of a solicitor or law firm or limited liability law partnership or law corporation shall be construed to include a locum solicitor engaged by the solicitor or law firm or limited liability law partnership or law corporation; and
  - (b) references to a member of a law firm or limited liability law partnership or law corporation shall be construed to include a locum solicitor engaged by the law firm or limited liability law partnership or law corporation.

## PART II

### PRACTICE

#### **Description**

4. An advocate and solicitor shall not describe himself in connection with his profession as other than as an advocate and solicitor, lawyer, legal consultant (if qualified), or such other description as may be approved by the Council from time to time and where so appointed, as a Commissioner for Oaths or Notary Public.

#### **Practice in one law practice only**

5.—(1) Subject to this rule and any rules made under section 81N or 81ZB of the Act, an advocate and solicitor shall not practise either as a consultant or a member of more than one law practice.

(2) An advocate and solicitor may practise as a locum solicitor in more than one law practice.

(3) An advocate and solicitor may practise concurrently in —

(a) one law corporation; and

(b) one other law practice that is related to the law corporation.

(4) No law corporation shall be related to more than one law practice.

(5) No law practice shall be related to more than one law corporation.

(6) For the purposes of paragraphs (3) and (4), a law corporation and a law firm (being a sole proprietorship) are related if —

- (a) every shareholder of the law corporation is the sole proprietor, a consultant or an employee of the law firm; and
- (b) every director, consultant or employee of the law corporation is the sole proprietor, a consultant or an employee of the law firm.

(7) For the purposes of paragraphs (3) and (4), a law corporation and a law firm (being a partnership of 2 or more solicitors) are related if —

- (a) every shareholder of the law corporation is a partner, a consultant or an employee of the law firm; and
- (b) every director, consultant or employee of the law corporation is a partner, a consultant or an employee of the law firm.

(8) For the purposes of paragraphs (3) and (4), a law corporation and a limited liability law partnership are related if —

- (a) either of the following applies:
  - (i) the limited liability law partnership is the sole shareholder of the law corporation; or
  - (ii) every shareholder of the law corporation is a partner, a consultant or an employee of the limited liability law partnership; and
- (b) every director, consultant or employee of the law corporation is a partner, a consultant or an employee of the limited liability law partnership.

(9) For the purposes of paragraphs (3) and (4), 2 law corporations are related if —

- (a) either of the following applies:
  - (i) the first law corporation is the sole shareholder of the second law corporation; or
  - (ii) every shareholder of the second law corporation is either or both of the following:
    - (A) a shareholder of the first law corporation;

(B) a director, a consultant or an employee of the first law corporation; and

(b) every director, consultant or employee of the second law corporation is a director, a consultant or an employee of the first law corporation.

### **Professional stationery and signs, etc.**

6. An advocate and solicitor shall comply with all directions of the Society regarding professional stationery or signs, signboards and name plates.

### **Arrangements during absence**

7. An advocate and solicitor shall make suitable arrangements for the running of his practice during any period of his absence.

### **Supervision of employees and staff**

8.—(1) An advocate and solicitor shall exercise proper supervision over his employees and other staff.

(2) Where a sole proprietor of a law firm engages a locum solicitor, the sole proprietor shall be the designated supervising practitioner for the locum solicitor.

(3) Where a law firm or a limited liability law partnership engages a locum solicitor, the partners of the law firm or the limited liability law partnership shall appoint a partner of the law firm or the limited liability law partnership (as the case may be) as the designated supervising practitioner for the locum solicitor.

(4) Where a law corporation engages a locum solicitor, the directors of the law corporation shall appoint a director of the law corporation as the designated supervising practitioner for the locum solicitor.

(5) Without prejudice to paragraph (1), the designated supervising practitioner shall exercise proper supervision over the locum solicitor.

**Sharing premises**

**9.** An advocate and solicitor shall not share, occupy or use premises jointly with any unauthorised person unless prior written approval of the Council is obtained.

**Business, trade or calling**

**10.** An advocate and solicitor shall not engage in any business, trade or calling which —

- (a) derogates from the dignity of the legal profession;
- (b) is likely to lead to the attraction of professional business unfairly; or
- (c) is in any way prohibited by the Act or any subsidiary legislation made thereunder.

**Executive appointment**

**11.—(1)** An advocate and solicitor who practises in a law firm shall not accept any executive appointment in any company, other than a company of which each shareholder is the sole proprietor or a partner of the law firm.

(2) An advocate and solicitor who practises in a limited liability law partnership shall not accept any executive appointment in any company, other than a company of which each shareholder is —

- (a) the limited liability law partnership; or
- (b) a partner of the limited liability law partnership.

(3) An advocate and solicitor who practises in a law corporation shall not accept any executive appointment in any company, other than —

- (a) the law corporation; or
- (b) a company of which each shareholder is —
  - (i) the law corporation; or
  - (ii) a director and shareholder of the law corporation.

**Touting and referrals**

**11A.**—(1) An advocate and solicitor or a law practice shall not tout for business or do anything which is likely to lead to the reasonable inference that it is done for the purpose of touting.

(2) Without prejudice to the generality of paragraph (1), where there is reason to believe that a client is referred to an advocate and solicitor or a law practice by a third party, the advocate and solicitor or law practice, as the case may be, shall —

- (a) maintain the independence and integrity of the profession and not permit the referror to undermine the professional independence of the advocate and solicitor or law practice;
- (b) not reward the referror by the payment of commission or any other form of consideration;
- (c) not allow the referral in any way to affect the advice given to such client;
- (d) advise the client impartially and independently and ensure that the wish to avoid offending the referror does not in any way affect the advice given to the client;
- (e) ensure that the referror does not in any way influence any decision taken in relation to the nature, style or extent of the practice of the advocate and solicitor or law practice; and
- (f) communicate directly with the client to obtain or confirm instructions in the process of providing advice and at all appropriate stages of the transaction.

**Agreement for referrals**

**11B.**—(1) In addition to rule 11A, when an advocate and solicitor or a law practice enters into agreements for referrals of conveyancing services, the advocate and solicitor or law practice, as the case may be, shall ensure that the agreement is made in writing and contains the following terms:

- (a) the referror undertakes in such an agreement to comply with these Rules and the Legal Profession (Publicity) Rules (R 13);

- (b) the advocate and solicitor or law practice shall be entitled to terminate the agreement forthwith if there is reason to believe that the referrer is in breach of any of the terms of the agreement;
- (c) any publicity of the referrer (whether written or otherwise), which makes reference to any service that may be provided by the advocate and solicitor or law practice, must not suggest any of the following:
  - (i) that the conveyancing service is free;
  - (ii) that different charges for the conveyancing services would be made according to whether or not the client instructs the particular advocate and solicitor or law practice; or
  - (iii) that the availability or price of other services offered by the referrer or any party related to the referrer are conditional on the client instructing the advocate and solicitor or law practice; and
- (d) the referrer must not do anything to impair the right of the client not to appoint the advocate and solicitor or law practice or in any way influence the right of the client to appoint the advocate and solicitor or law practice of his choice.

(2) The advocate and solicitor or law practice, as the case may be, must forthwith terminate the agreement if the referrer is in breach of any term referred to in paragraph (1) or if there is reason to believe that the advocate and solicitor or law practice is in breach of such term.

(3) Where the advocate and solicitor or law practice has terminated an agreement under paragraph (2), the advocate and solicitor or law practice, as the case may be, may continue to act in matters the advocate and solicitor or law practice was instructed prior to the termination but should not accept any further referrals from the referrer.

### **Notifications by locum solicitors**

**11C.—**(1) Whenever an advocate and solicitor is engaged as a locum solicitor by any law practice, he shall notify the Law Society

(not later than 7 days from the commencement of each such engagement) of —

- (a) the name of the law practice engaging him;
- (b) the date of commencement of his engagement by that law practice; and
- (c) the period of his engagement by that law practice.

(2) Whenever an advocate and solicitor ceases to be engaged as a locum solicitor by any law practice, he shall notify the Law Society (not later than 7 days from the cessation of each such engagement) of the date of cessation of his engagement by that law practice.

### **Knowing your client**

**11D.**—(1) An advocate and solicitor or a law practice shall take reasonable measures to ascertain the identity of a client as soon as reasonably practicable before accepting instructions to act in a matter.

(2) An advocate and solicitor or a law practice receiving instructions in a matter from an agent on behalf of a principal client shall take reasonable measures to ascertain the identity of the principal client before accepting instructions to act in the matter.

(3) Subject to paragraph (4), where a client is not a natural person, an advocate and solicitor or a law practice shall take reasonable measures to ascertain the identities of the natural persons that have a controlling interest in or that exercise effective control over the client.

(4) Paragraph (3) shall not apply in respect of a client that is —

- (a) a ministry or department of the Government, an organ of State or a statutory board; or
- (b) a public company listed on a securities exchange or a recognised securities exchange within the meaning of the Securities and Futures Act (Cap. 289).

### **Prohibition against anonymous accounts**

**11E.** An advocate and solicitor or a law practice shall not open or maintain any account for or hold and receive moneys from —

- (a) an anonymous source; or

- (b) a client with an obviously fictitious name.

**Knowing your client’s business relationship**

**11F.—(1)** This rule shall apply where an advocate and solicitor or a law practice acts for a client in any of the following matters:

- (a) acquisition, divestment or any other dealing of any interest in real estate;
- (b) management of client’s moneys, securities or other assets, or bank, savings or securities accounts;
- (c) creation, operation or management of a company, corporation, partnership, society, trust or other legal entity or legal arrangement;
- (d) acquisition, merger, sale or disposal of a company, corporation, partnership, business trust, sole proprietorship or other business entity; or
- (e) a matter that is unusual in the ordinary course of business having regard to —
  - (i) the complexity of the matter;
  - (ii) the quantum involved;
  - (iii) any apparent economic or lawful purpose of the matter; and
  - (iv) the business and risk profile of the client.

(2) When accepting instructions in relation to a matter referred to in paragraph (1), and at any time thereafter in accordance with the Law Society’s Practice Directions, the advocate and solicitor or the law practice shall obtain satisfactory evidence as to the nature and purpose of —

- (a) the business relationship with the client in the matter; and
- (b) the business relationship between the client and any other party to the matter.

(3) If a client refuses or is unable to provide the satisfactory evidence required under paragraph (2), the advocate and solicitor or the law practice shall not act or continue to act for the client.

(4) The satisfactory evidence required under paragraph (2) shall include the following:

- (a) evidence to ascertain the identity of the client; and
- (b) if moneys or securities are to be held for the client by the advocate and solicitor or the law practice, evidence to identify the legal and beneficial owners of the moneys or securities to be deposited with or held by the advocate and solicitor or the law practice.

### **Suspicious transaction reporting**

**11G.** Where an advocate and solicitor or a law practice knows or has reasonable grounds to suspect any matter referred to in section 39(1) of the Corruption, Drug Trafficking and Other Serious Crimes (Confiscation of Benefits) Act (Cap. 65A), the advocate and solicitor or the law practice shall disclose the matter to —

- (a) the Suspicious Transaction Reporting Office of the Commercial Affairs Department by way of a suspicious transaction report; or
- (b) an authorised officer under that Act,

in accordance with section 39 of that Act.

### **Retention of records**

**11H.—**(1) A law practice shall retain for not less than 5 years after the end of a matter —

- (a) the documents that were used to ascertain the identity of the client under rule 11D;
- (b) the documents that were used to ascertain the nature and purpose of the business relationships under rule 11F; and
- (c) records of transactions undertaken on behalf of the client in that matter.

(2) A law practice shall ensure that the documents and records retained shall be sufficient to enable information on the identity of the client and details of the matter to be given to a competent authority

when requested, subject to the obligations relating to professional communications under section 128 of the Evidence Act (Cap. 97).

(3) In this rule, “competent authority” includes the Council, a person appointed by the Council under rule 11I and a police officer.

### **Powers of inspection by Council**

**11I.—(1)** In order to ascertain whether rules 11D to 11H are being complied with, the Council, acting —

(a) on its own motion; or

(b) on a written complaint lodged with it by a third party,

may require an advocate and solicitor or a proprietor, partner or director of a law practice to produce any document or provide any information or explanation to the Council or to any person appointed by the Council.

(2) Before appointing a person under paragraph (1), the Council shall consider any objection made by the advocate and solicitor or the proprietor, partner or director of the law practice to the appointment of that person on personal or other proper grounds.

(3) A requirement under paragraph (1) shall be made under the hand of a member of the Council and may be served —

(a) by delivering it to the advocate and solicitor or the proprietor, partner or director of the law practice; or

(b) by sending it by registered post to his usual or last known address as maintained by the Society.

(4) Upon being required to produce any document, information or explanation, the advocate and solicitor or the proprietor, partner or director of the law practice shall provide to the Council or to any person appointed by the Council the document, information or explanation.

(5) A document that is in electronic form shall be produced in the form or format required by the Council or the person appointed by the Council.

- (6) The Council or the person appointed by the Council may —
- (a) retain the document provided and make and retain copies of the document; and
  - (b) record the information or explanation provided.
- (7) The Council may —
- (a) use the document, information or explanation obtained as a basis for proceedings under the Act; and
  - (b) disclose the document, information or explanation for the purposes of an investigation of a criminal offence and of subsequent criminal proceedings.

### PART III

#### RELATIONSHIP AND DEALINGS WITH CLIENTS

##### **Diligence and competence**

**12.** An advocate and solicitor shall use all reasonably available legal means consistent with the agreement pursuant to which he is retained to advance his client's interest.

##### **Improper costs**

**13.** An advocate and solicitor shall not undertake work in such a manner as to unnecessarily or improperly escalate his costs that are payable to him.

##### **Complete work in reasonable time**

**14.—(1)** An advocate and solicitor shall at all times use his best endeavours to complete any work on behalf of a client as soon as is reasonably possible.

(2) If it becomes apparent to the advocate and solicitor that he cannot do the work within a reasonable time, he should so inform the client.

**Inadequate time**

**15.** An advocate and solicitor shall not accept instructions if, having regard to his other professional commitments, he will not be able to discharge or carry out such instructions diligently and expeditiously.

**Competence**

**16.** An advocate and solicitor shall not accept instructions in a field of practice in which he possesses insufficient knowledge, skill or experience to provide competent representation to the client unless —

- (a) the advocate and solicitor is able, without undue delay and cost to the client, or unless the client is agreeable to bear any further cost necessarily incurred, to obtain such knowledge and skill either through study and research or through the association with him of another lawyer (whether within or outside the same jurisdiction) of established competence in that field; or
- (b) where access to the relevant body of knowledge or to a lawyer of competence in the field is not readily available, the advocate and solicitor informs the client of those facts and of the likely delay and cost in acquiring the requisite knowledge and skill and the client voluntarily consents to the advocate and solicitor acting in the matter.

**Keeping client informed**

**17.** An advocate and solicitor shall keep the client reasonably informed of the progress of the client's matter.

**Receipt of client's moneys or securities**

**18.—(1)** An advocate and solicitor shall notify his client promptly of the receipt by him of moneys (including conveyancing money) or securities on behalf of that client.

**(2)** An advocate and solicitor practising as a locum solicitor shall not —

- (a) hold or receive client's money, conveyancing money or trust money or any security on behalf of a client;

- (b) open, maintain or operate any client account, conveyancing account, conveyancing (CPF) account or trust account;
- (c) give instructions in respect of any client account, conveyancing account, conveyancing (CPF) account or trust account;
- (d) sign any cheque or effect any instruction for the withdrawal of money from a client account, conveyancing account, conveyancing (CPF) account or trust account;
- (e) sign any bill of costs referred to in section 118 of the Act, or any letter accompanying such a bill; or
- (f) act as a solicitor-trustee.

### **Statements of accounts**

**19.** An advocate and solicitor shall expeditiously render statements of accounts if requested by the client.

### **Responding to clients**

**20.** An advocate and solicitor shall where possible —

- (a) promptly respond to the client's telephone calls; and
- (b) keep appointments made with the client,

unless there are good and sufficient reasons why this cannot be done.

### **Explanation to client**

**21.—(1)** An advocate and solicitor shall explain in a clear manner, proposals of settlement, other offers or positions taken by other parties which affect the client.

(2) Where the client is not English speaking, the advocate and solicitor shall ensure that any offers or proposals of settlement are explained to the client in the language or dialect that he understands.

### **No advice for illegal purpose**

**22.** An advocate and solicitor shall not tender advice to a client when the advocate and solicitor knows or has reasonable grounds to

believe that the client is requesting the advice to advance an illegal purpose.

### **Authority of client's agent**

**23.** An advocate and solicitor shall ensure that an agent giving instructions on behalf of a client has the required authority to do so and, in the absence of evidence of such authority, the advocate and solicitor shall, within a reasonable time thereof, confirm the instructions with the client.

### **Confidentiality**

**24.—(1)** Subject to paragraph (2) and any rules made under section 81N or 81ZB of the Act, an advocate and solicitor shall not in any way, directly or indirectly —

- (a) disclose any confidential information which the advocate and solicitor receives as a result of the retainer; or
- (b) disclose the contents of the papers recording such instructions,

unless with the consent of the client or is required by law or order of court.

(2) Notwithstanding paragraph (1), an advocate and solicitor may use the confidential information to reply or defend any charge or complaint as to his conduct or professional behaviour brought against him whether in Court or before a disciplinary tribunal of the Society.

### **Conflict of interest**

**25.** During the course of a retainer, an advocate and solicitor shall advance the client's interest unaffected by —

- (a) any interest of the advocate and solicitor;
- (aa) where the advocate and solicitor is a director or an employee of a law corporation, any interest of the law corporation;
- (ab) where the advocate and solicitor is a partner or an employee of a limited liability law partnership, any interest of the limited liability law partnership;

- (b) any interest of any other person; or
- (c) the advocate and solicitor's perception of the public interest except where accepting the instructions may make it difficult for him to maintain his professional independence or would make it incompatible with the best interests of the administration of justice.

**Disclosure of interest**

**26.** In any case where the advocate and solicitor or any member of his family or any law corporation of which the advocate and solicitor is a director or an employee or any limited liability law partnership of which the advocate and solicitor is a partner or an employee has an interest in any matter entrusted to him by a client, the advocate and solicitor shall —

- (a) make a full and frank disclosure of such interest to the client;  
or
- (b) if, on the grounds of confidentiality or for any other reason, the advocate and solicitor is unable to make such disclosure, decline to represent or withdraw from representing that client.

**Adverse interest**

**27.** An advocate and solicitor shall decline to represent, or withdraw from representing, a client where the interest of —

- (a) the advocate and solicitor or any member of his family;
- (b) any law corporation (of which the advocate and solicitor is a director or an employee) or any of its directors or employees;  
or
- (c) any limited liability law partnership (of which the advocate and solicitor is a partner or an employee) or any of its partners or employees,

is adverse to the interest of the client, unless the client having been fully informed, and advised that he should seek independent legal advice, consents to the advocate and solicitor acting or continuing to act on his behalf.

**Potential conflict of interests**

**28.** When accepting instructions to act for more than one party in any commercial or conveyancing transaction where a diversity of interests exists between the parties, an advocate and solicitor shall advise each party of the potential conflict of interests and of the advocate and solicitor's duty if such conflict arises.

**Not to act for both parties in dispute**

**29.—(1)** When an advocate and solicitor or any member of his firm has acted for more than one party in the preparation of a document creating rights and obligations between them and a dispute in relation to the matter has arisen between them where the enforceability of the document is in dispute, or where the dispute is such that the advocate and solicitor is likely to be in conflict, the advocate and solicitor or any member of his firm shall not act for any party to the transaction in relation to that dispute.

(2) Where an advocate and solicitor or any solicitor practising in the same law corporation or limited liability law partnership as the advocate and solicitor has acted for more than one party in the preparation of a document creating rights and obligations between them and a dispute in relation to the matter has arisen between them where the enforceability of the document is in dispute, or where the dispute is such that the advocate and solicitor is likely to be in conflict, the advocate and solicitor or any solicitor practising in the same law corporation or limited liability law partnership shall not act for any party to the transaction in relation to that dispute.

**Not to act against client's interests**

**30.—(1)** An advocate and solicitor or any member of his law firm or any director or employee of the law corporation of which the advocate and solicitor is a director or an employee or any partner or employee of the limited liability law partnership of which the advocate and solicitor is a partner or an employee shall decline to advise a person whose interests are opposed to that of a client he is representing on any matter and shall inform such person to obtain independent legal advice.

(2) If the person does not obtain such independent legal advice, the advocate and solicitor is under a duty to ensure that the person is not under an impression that his interests are protected by the advocate and solicitor.

### **Not to act against client**

**31.**—(1) An advocate and solicitor who has acted for a client in a matter shall not thereafter act against the client (or against persons who were involved in or associated with the client in that matter) in the same or any related matter.

(2) For the purposes of paragraph (1), the term “client” includes a client of the law practice of which the advocate and solicitor is a partner, a director, an associate or an employee, whether or not he handles the client’s work.

(3) Paragraph (1) shall apply even where the advocate and solicitor concerned becomes a member of a different law practice.

(4) Nothing herein shall preclude a law practice from acting against a party in a matter provided that —

- (a) the law practice has not previously acted for the party (or for persons who were involved in or associated with the party in that matter) in the same or any related matter; and
- (b) any advocate and solicitor of the law practice who has previously acted for the party in the same or related matter neither acts nor is involved in that matter or related matter in any way whatsoever and does not otherwise disclose any confidential information relating to the matter or the party to any other member of the law practice.

### **Definitions for purposes of rules 33 and 34**

**32.** For the purposes of rules 33 and 34 —

“associated party” includes —

- (a) any member of the immediate family of the advocate and solicitor or of his partner or partners or of his employees or, in the case of a law corporation, of any of its directors or employees or, in the case of a limited

liability law partnership, of any of its partners or employees; and

- (b) any body corporate, partnership, syndicate, joint-venture or trust in which the advocate and solicitor or any member of his immediate family or any member of the immediate family of his partner or employee has or have any beneficial interest whether vested or contingent;

“client” includes —

- (a) any person who has an existing relationship of solicitor and client with the advocate and solicitor;
- (b) any person defined as client in the Act; and
- (c) any person seeking to invest money through an advocate and solicitor or approached by or on behalf of an advocate and solicitor for that purpose;

“excepted person” means any licensed or authorised banks, finance companies or any other similar entity whose business includes lending money to members of the public;

“full disclosure” means such disclosure in writing by the advocate and solicitor as would be necessary if the transaction were a trustee transaction;

“immediate family” means a spouse, child, grandchild, sibling, sibling’s children, parent or grandparent;

“independent advice” means advice by an advocate and solicitor not being a party to the transaction nor representing any associated party and where the advocate and solicitor has certified in writing that he has given such advice;

“prohibited borrowing transaction” means any transaction under or by virtue of which money or valuable security is borrowed (directly or indirectly and whether with or without security) by an advocate and solicitor from his client or by an associated party from that client unless the client is an excepted person.

**Prohibited borrowing transaction**

- 33.** Subject to rule 34, an advocate and solicitor shall not —
- (a) enter into a prohibited borrowing transaction;
  - (b) instruct, procure, secure or arrange for an associated party to enter into a prohibited borrowing transaction; or
  - (c) knowingly allow an associated party to enter into a prohibited borrowing transaction if it is within his power to prevent it.

**Exempted borrowing transaction**

- 34.** Rule 33 shall not apply to any transaction in respect of which —
- (a) all parties thereto, other than the advocate and solicitor or the associated party, have received independent advice and the certificate referred to in the definition of “independent advice” in rule 32 as to that advice has been given prior to the transaction being entered into; and the advocate and solicitor has made full disclosure of any interest of the advocate and solicitor and of any associated party;
  - (b) the advocate and solicitor does not act for the client in relation to the transaction but the client is represented by an independent advocate and solicitor; or
  - (c) the Council determines (either before or after the transaction is entered into) that it shall not apply to that particular transaction.

**Fees**

- 35.** An advocate and solicitor shall inform the client —
- (a) of the basis on which fees for professional services will be charged and the manner in which it is expected that those fees and disbursements, if any, shall be paid by the client;
  - (b) of other reasonably foreseeable payments the client may have to make either to the advocate and solicitor or to a third party and the stages at which the payments are likely to be required;

- (c) of the estimates of the fees and other payments, which shall not vary substantially from the final amount, unless the client has been informed of the changed circumstances in writing;
- (d) that the fees may be subject to a limit which may be incurred without further reference and, where the limit imposed on the fees is insufficient, the advocate and solicitor shall obtain the client's instructions as to whether to continue with the matter; and
- (e) of the approximate amount of the costs to date in every 6 months, whether or not a limit has been set, or deliver an interim bill in appropriate cases.

### **Fees in contentious matters**

**36.** An advocate and solicitor shall, at the outset of a contentious matter and at appropriate stages thereafter, explain to the client the following:

- (a) that in any event the client shall be personally responsible for payment of his own solicitor and client bill of costs in full regardless of any order for costs made against the opponent;
- (b) that in the event the client loses, he will have to pay his opponent's costs as well as his own; and
- (c) that even if the client wins, his opponent may not be ordered to pay the full amount of the client's own costs and may not be capable of paying what has been ordered.

### **Contingency fees prohibited**

**37.** An advocate and solicitor shall not enter into any negotiations with a client —

- (a) for an interest in the subject matter of litigation; or
- (b) except to the extent permitted by any scale of costs which may be applicable, for remuneration proportionate to the amount which may be recovered by the client in the proceedings.

### **Gross overcharging**

**38.** An advocate and solicitor shall not render a bill (whether the bill is subject to taxation or otherwise) which amounts to such gross overcharging that will affect the integrity of the profession.

### **Unauthorised persons**

**39.** An advocate and solicitor shall not share his fees with or pay a commission to any unauthorised person for any legal work performed.

### **Evaluation**

**40.** An advocate and solicitor shall, in appropriate cases, evaluate with a client whether the consequence of a matter justifies the expense or the risk involved.

### **Termination of retainer**

**41.** An advocate and solicitor shall —

- (a) permit a client to change his legal adviser at any time; and
- (b) in the case where the outstanding fees are not agreed or paid, release all documents and offer any such assistance as may be necessary to enable any other advocate and solicitor instructed to take over the matter upon receiving an undertaking to protect his lien upon such documents.

### **Withdrawal**

**42.—(1)** Subject to rule 41, an advocate and solicitor may withdraw from representing a client —

- (a) at any time and for any reason if the withdrawal will cause no significant harm to the client's interest and the client is fully informed of the consequences of withdrawal and voluntarily assents to it;
- (b) if the advocate and solicitor reasonably believes that continued engagement in the case or matter would be likely to have a serious adverse effect upon his health;

- (c) if a client breaches an agreement with the advocate and solicitor regarding fees or expenses to be paid by the client or regarding the client's conduct;
  - (d) if a client makes material misrepresentations about the facts of the case or matter to the advocate and solicitor;
  - (e) if an advocate and solicitor has an interest in any case or matter in which the advocate and solicitor is concerned for the client which is adverse to that of the client;
  - (f) where such action is necessary to avoid a contravention by the advocate and solicitor of the Act or these Rules or any other subsidiary legislation made under the Act; or
  - (g) where any other good cause exists.
- (2) Where an advocate and solicitor withdraws from representing a client, he shall take reasonable care to avoid foreseeable harm to the client, including —
- (a) giving due notice to the client;
  - (b) allowing reasonable time for substitution of a new advocate and solicitor;
  - (c) co-operating with the new advocate and solicitor; and
  - (d) subject to the satisfaction of any lien the advocate and solicitor may have, promptly paying to the client any moneys and handing over all papers and property to which the client is entitled.

### **Fees chargeable in conflict situation**

**43.** Where, through a conflict of interest, an advocate and solicitor has recommended to a client that the client seek alternative legal representation, the advocate and solicitor may charge only for those items which clearly need not be duplicated by the alternative advocate and solicitor.

### **Dissolution of law practice**

**44.**—(1) When a law practice is dissolved, the solicitor and client relationship between the client and the advocate and solicitor in charge of his matter shall terminate.

(2) The final decision of which advocate and solicitor shall be appointed to take over the matter shall rest with the client.

### **Purchases from client**

**45.**—(1) Subject to the law on fiduciary relationship, an advocate and solicitor may purchase goods and assets from a client only if the purchase is at the prevailing market price or at such price as is reasonable.

(2) Where practicable, the advocate and solicitor shall obtain an independent valuation of such goods and assets.

### **Gift by will or inter vivos from client**

**46.** Where a client intends to make a significant gift by will or inter vivos, or in any other manner, to —

- (a) an advocate and solicitor acting for him;
- (b) any member of the law firm of the advocate and solicitor;
- (c) any member, director or employee of the law corporation of the advocate and solicitor;
- (ca) any partner or employee of the limited liability law partnership of the advocate and solicitor; or
- (d) any member of the family of the advocate and solicitor,

the advocate and solicitor shall not act for the client and shall advise the client to be independently advised in respect of the gift.

### **Relationship with other advocates and solicitors**

**47.** An advocate and solicitor shall treat his professional colleagues with courtesy and fairness.

**No communication with represented clients**

**48.**—(1) An advocate and solicitor shall not, directly or indirectly, communicate with a client of another advocate and solicitor in the same transaction, except —

- (a) with the express approval of such other advocate and solicitor;
- (b) where it is not reasonably practicable to communicate with the other advocate and solicitor; or
- (c) where the interests of the advocate and solicitor’s client will be severely prejudiced if the communication is delayed.

(2) In the case of paragraph (1)(b) or (c), the other advocate and solicitor must be informed as soon as possible.

**Second opinion**

**49.** An advocate and solicitor may give a second opinion with or without the knowledge of the first advocate and solicitor except that the second solicitor shall not improperly seek to influence the client to determine the first advocate and solicitor’s retainer.

**Taking over brief**

**50.** An advocate and solicitor who finds, on receiving instructions, that acceptance of the instructions would amount to his replacing another advocate and solicitor who has previously been instructed in the same matter, shall inform the other advocate and solicitor that instructions have been given to him and advise the client to pay the outstanding costs, if any, of the other advocate and solicitor before accepting the brief.

**Professional undertaking**

**51.** An advocate and solicitor shall honour the terms of a professional undertaking given to another advocate and solicitor, a court of law, tribunal, client or any other person.

### **Responsibility for fees**

**52.**—(1) Except where otherwise agreed, an advocate and solicitor or a law practice, as the case may be, who instructs another advocate and solicitor or law practice shall be responsible for the payment of the latter's fees.

(2) This rule shall also apply where the advocate and solicitor or law practice instructs a lawyer in such other jurisdiction which recognises a reciprocal responsibility for the payment of the fees of an advocate and solicitor or a law practice.

### **Communications with other solicitors**

**53.** An advocate and solicitor shall not voluntarily disclose to the Court any discussions between himself and the advocate and solicitor acting for another party without the consent of the other advocate and solicitor.

### **Relations with third parties**

**53A.** An advocate and solicitor shall not take unfair advantage of any person or act towards anyone in a way which is fraudulent, deceitful or otherwise contrary to his position as advocate and solicitor or officer of the Court.

## **PART IV**

### **CONDUCT OF PROCEEDINGS**

#### **Conduct of proceedings in client's interest**

**54.** Subject to these Rules, an advocate and solicitor shall conduct each case in such a manner as he considers will be most advantageous to the client so long as it does not conflict with the interests of justice, public interest and professional ethics.

#### **Duty to Court**

**55.** An advocate and solicitor shall at all times —

- (a) act with due courtesy to the Court before which he is appearing;

- (b) use his best endeavours to avoid unnecessary adjournments, expense and waste of the Court's time; and
- (c) assist the Court in ensuring a speedy and efficient trial and in arriving at a just decision.

**Not to mislead or deceive Court**

**56.** An advocate and solicitor shall not knowingly deceive or mislead the Court, any other advocate and solicitor, witness, Court officer, or other person or body involved in or associated with Court proceedings.

**Client's perjury or fraud**

**57.** If at any time before judgment is delivered in any case, an advocate and solicitor becomes aware that his client has committed perjury or has otherwise been guilty of fraud upon the Court, the advocate and solicitor —

- (a) may apply for a discharge from acting further in the case; or
- (b) if required to continue, shall conduct the case in such a manner that it would not perpetuate the perjury or fraud.

**Duty to cease to act**

**58.** An advocate and solicitor shall cease to act for a client if —

- (a) the client refuses to authorise him to make some disclosure to the Court which his duty to the Court requires him to make;
- (b) the advocate and solicitor having become aware during the course of a case of the existence of a document which should have been but has not been disclosed on discovery, the client fails forthwith to disclose it; or
- (c) having come into possession of a document belonging to another party by some means other than the normal and proper channels and having read it, he would thereby be embarrassed in the discharge of his duties by the knowledge of the contents of the document.

**Facts, arguments and allegations**

**59.** An advocate and solicitor shall not contrive facts which will assist his client's case or draft any originating process, pleading, affidavit, witness statement or notice or grounds of appeal containing —

- (a) any statement of fact or contention (as the case may be) which is not supported by his client or instructions;
- (b) any allegation of fraud unless he has clear instructions to make such allegation and has before him reasonable credible material which as it stands establishes a prima facie case of fraud; or
- (c) in the case of an affidavit or witness statement, any statement of fact other than the evidence which in substance according to his instructions the advocate and solicitor reasonably believes the witness would give if the evidence contained in the affidavit or witness statement were being given orally.

**Conduct of Court proceedings**

**60.** An advocate and solicitor when conducting proceedings in Court —

- (a) shall be personally responsible for the conduct and presentation of his case and shall exercise personal judgment upon the substance and purpose of statements made and questions asked;
- (b) shall not express his personal opinion of his client's guilt or allow his personal feelings to affect his professional assessment of the facts or the law or to affect his duty to the Court;
- (c) shall inform the Court of all relevant decisions and legislative provisions of which he is aware whether the effect is favourable or unfavourable towards the contention for which he argues;
- (d) shall bring any procedural irregularity to the attention of the Court during the hearing and not reserve such matter to be raised on appeal;

- (e) shall not advance submissions, opinions or propositions which to his knowledge is contrary to the law;
- (f) shall not concoct evidence or contrive facts which will assist in advancing his client's case;
- (g) shall not by assertion in a speech make an allegation against a witness whom he had an opportunity to cross-examine unless in cross-examination he has given the witness an opportunity to answer the allegation; or
- (h) shall not suggest that a witness or other person is guilty of any crime, fraud or misconduct or attribute to another person the crime or conduct of which his client is accused unless such allegations go to a matter in issue (including the credibility of the witness) which is material to his client's case and which appear to him to be supported by reasonable grounds.

**Scandalous or annoying statements or questions**

**61.** In all cases, an advocate and solicitor —

- (a) shall not make statements or ask questions which are scandalous or intended to insult or calculated only to vilify insult or annoy either the witness or any other person or are otherwise an abuse of the function of the advocate and solicitor; and
- (b) shall exercise his own judgment both as to the substance and the form of the questions put or statements made.

**No communication with witness under cross-examination**

**62.—(1)** An advocate and solicitor shall not interview or discuss with a witness, whom the advocate and solicitor has called, his evidence or the evidence of the other witness while such witness is under cross-examination.

(2) Paragraph (1) shall not prevent the advocate and solicitor from communicating with his client for any purpose necessary to the proper management of the matter being handled by him or his law firm or a law corporation of which he is a director or an employee or a limited liability law partnership of which he is a partner or an employee.

**Communication with Court**

**63.**—(1) An advocate and solicitor representing an interested party shall not initiate communication with the Court about the facts, issues or any other matter in a case that the advocate and solicitor knows is pending or likely to be pending before the Court unless the advocate and solicitor has first informed the persons acting for all other interested parties of the nature of the matters he wishes to communicate with the Court and has given them an opportunity to be present or to reply.

(2) If an advocate and solicitor has communicated with the Court regarding the issues in a case in the absence of the person acting for the other party, the advocate and solicitor shall fully inform that person of such discussion at the earliest opportunity.

**Solicitor not to act if he is a witness**

**64.**—(1) An advocate and solicitor shall not accept instructions in a case in which the advocate and solicitor has reason to believe that he is likely to be a witness on a material question of fact.

(2) An advocate and solicitor shall discharge himself from representing a client if it becomes apparent to the advocate and solicitor that he is likely to be a witness on a material question of fact.

(3) In discharging himself, the advocate and solicitor shall take all reasonable steps to ensure that his client's interest is not in any way jeopardised.

**Relationship with client or Court**

**65.** An advocate and solicitor shall not appear before a Court in a matter where —

- (a) by reason of his relationship with the client it would be difficult for the advocate and solicitor to maintain his professional independence; or
- (b) by reason of his relationship with the Court or a member thereof the impartial administration of justice might appear to be prejudiced.

**Interviewing of witnesses**

**66.** Subject to rule 63, an advocate and solicitor may interview and take statements from any witness or prospective witness at any stage in the proceedings, whether or not that witness has been interviewed or called as a witness by another party to the proceedings except that if the advocate and solicitor is aware that the witness has been called or issued a subpoena to appear in Court by the other party to the proceedings, he shall inform the advocate and solicitor of the other party or the prosecution in criminal proceeding, as the case may be, of his intention to interview or take statements from the witness.

**Statements to press or media**

**67.** An advocate and solicitor shall not give a statement to the press or media whether on behalf of the client or otherwise, which may amount to contempt of Court or which is calculated to interfere with the fair trial of a case which has not been concluded.

**Payments to witnesses**

**68.** An advocate and solicitor shall not make or offer to make payments (other than the allowable disbursements and expenses the witness is entitled to under the law) to the witness contingent upon the nature of the evidence given or upon the outcome of a case.

**Letter of demand**

**69.** An advocate and solicitor shall not, in his letter of demand, demand anything other than that recoverable by due process of law.

**Entering judgment by default**

**70.—(1)** An advocate and solicitor shall not enter judgment by default pursuant to the Rules of Court (Cap. 322, R 5) against any other party who is on record represented by another advocate and solicitor, or take any advantage of any delay in filing pleadings unless written notice of his intention to do so has been given to the other advocate and solicitor and 2 working days have elapsed after service of such notice.

(2) Any notice under paragraph (1) given on a working day after 4.00 p.m. or on a day other than a working day shall be deemed to have been given on the next working day.

(3) This rule shall not operate to extend the time stipulated by any order of court for any action or step to be taken and no notice need to be given under this rule before any action or step is taken upon any failure to comply with any such order of court.

(4) In this rule, “working day” means any day other than a Saturday, Sunday or public holiday.

### **Allegations against another solicitor**

**71.**—(1) An advocate and solicitor whose client has given instructions to include in an affidavit to be sworn whether by the client or his witness, an allegation made against another advocate and solicitor, shall give the other advocate and solicitor an opportunity to answer the intended allegations.

(2) In such a case, the answer of the other advocate and solicitor shall be included in the affidavit before the same is deposed to, filed and served.

## PART V

### DEFENDING ACCUSED PERSONS

#### **Defending accused regardless of personal opinion**

**72.** Subject to these Rules, an advocate and solicitor shall defend any person on whose behalf he is instructed on a criminal charge irrespective of any opinion which the advocate and solicitor may have formed as to the guilt or innocence of that person.

#### **Duty of defence counsel**

**73.** When defending a client on a criminal charge, an advocate and solicitor shall endeavour to protect the client from being convicted except by a competent Court and upon legal evidence sufficient to support a conviction for the offence with which the client is charged.

**Confession by client**

**74.** An advocate and solicitor to whom a clear confession of guilt has been made by a client —

(a) may, if the confession is made before the proceedings have commenced; or

(b) should, if the confession is made during the proceedings, continue to act but shall not set up an affirmative case inconsistent with the confession by, for example, asserting or suggesting that some other person committed the offence charged or calling evidence in support of an alibi.

**Advising client to plead**

**75.** An advocate and solicitor may advise a client to plead guilty to a criminal charge but the client must be allowed complete freedom of choice whether to plead guilty or not guilty.

**Absence from criminal trial**

**76.** An advocate and solicitor appearing for a client on a criminal charge shall not absent himself from a trial unless —

(a) there are exceptional circumstances which the advocate and solicitor could not reasonably have foreseen;

(b) he obtains the consent of his client; and

(c) a competent assisting counsel, who is well informed about the case and able to deal with any question which might reasonably be expected to arise, takes over the conduct of the case from the advocate and solicitor.

**Continuing to act if accused absconds**

**77.** If during the course of a criminal trial and prior to final sentence, the accused absconds, the advocate and solicitor may continue to act and, if he does so, the advocate and solicitor shall conduct the case on the basis of the instructions he has received as if the client is still present in Court but had decided not to give evidence.

### **Disclosure of previous convictions**

**78.** Where a client who has a record of previous convictions is convicted of an offence and the prosecution —

- (a) does not put the record before the Court;
- (b) puts only part of the record before the Court; or
- (c) puts before the Court a record containing errors that favour the client,

the advocate and solicitor acting for that client is under no duty to make any disclosure to the Court if the disclosure would be to his client's detriment, except that the advocate and solicitor shall not lend himself to any assertion that the client has no convictions nor ask a prosecution witness whether there are previous convictions against the client in the hope of receiving a negative answer.

### **Evidence from accused**

**79.** An advocate and solicitor may advise a client about giving evidence in his own defence but the client must be allowed complete freedom of choice whether to give evidence or not.

### **Mitigation plea**

**80.** An advocate and solicitor shall not in a plea in mitigation make an allegation that is scandalous or calculated to vilify or insult any person.

### **Acting after conviction and sentence**

**81.** An advocate and solicitor shall continue to reasonably assist his client after conviction and sentence.

### **Bail**

**82.** An advocate and solicitor shall not post bail for the client in a case where he is personally conducting the defence on behalf of the client.

## PART VI

### CONDUCT OF CRIMINAL PROSECUTIONS BY PRACTISING SOLICITOR

#### **Presentation of case**

**83.** A prosecuting advocate and solicitor shall present to the Court or tribunal, fairly and impartially, the whole of the facts which comprise the case for the prosecution or the case which the defendant has to meet.

#### **Potential witnesses**

**84.** A prosecuting advocate and solicitor shall, prior to the trial and within a reasonable time, inform the defence of the identity and location (if known) of any person who he knows may be able to give evidence relevant to a case but who is not proposed to be called by the prosecution.

#### **Conflicting statements**

**85.** A prosecuting advocate and solicitor shall within a reasonable time inform the defence where a witness called by the prosecution gives evidence on a material issue in substantial conflict with a prior statement made by the witness.

#### **Duty to assist Court**

**86.** A prosecuting advocate and solicitor shall assist the Court at all times before the conclusion of the trial, by drawing attention to any apparent errors or omissions of fact or law or procedural irregularities which in his opinion ought to be corrected.

#### **Unrepresented accused**

**87.** If the accused person is unrepresented, the prosecuting advocate and solicitor shall inform the Court of any mitigating circumstances as to which he is instructed or knows.

**Pending proceedings against accused**

**88.** A prosecuting advocate and solicitor shall not disclose to the Court the fact that there are proceedings pending against the accused person except —

- (a) on an application for an adjournment or remand where the fact of pending proceedings is relevant to whether an adjournment or remand should be granted, the length of the adjournment or remand, or any proposed condition of the adjournment or remand;
- (b) in relation to an application for bail;
- (c) in answer to an allegation by or on behalf of an accused person that there are no criminal matters pending against him;  
or
- (d) where such evidence would otherwise be admissible as a result of any law or rules.

**Savings**

**89.** These Rules shall not limit or restrict any duty or obligation of an advocate and solicitor or any right or remedy of any person which otherwise exists or may arise.

*[G.N. Nos. S 156/98; S 410/2001; S 71/2005; S 656/2006;  
S 384/2007]*

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY  
LEGAL PROFESSION (PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT) RULES  
(CHAPTER 161, R 1)

This Legislative History is provided for the convenience of users of the Legal Profession (Professional Conduct) Rules. It is not part of these Rules.

**1. 1936 Revised Edition — Rules Regulating the Practice and Etiquette of the Singapore Bar**

Date of operation : 25 March 1992

**2. G. N. No. S 156/1998 — Legal Profession (Professional Conduct) Rules 1998**

Date of commencement : 1 June 1998

**3. 1990 Revised Edition — Rules Regulating the Practice and Etiquette of the Singapore Bar (Revoked)**

Date of operation : 1 June 1998

**4. 2000 Revised Edition — Legal Profession (Professional Conduct) Rules**

Date of operation : 31 January 2000

**5. G. N. No. S 410/2001 — Legal Profession (Professional Conduct) (Amendment) Rules 2001**

Date of commencement : 1 September 2001

**6. G. N. No. S 71/2005 — Legal Profession (Professional Conduct) (Amendment) Rules 2005**

Date of commencement : 1 April 2005

**7. G. N. No. S 656/2006 — Legal Profession (Professional Conduct) (Amendment) Rules 2006**

Date of commencement : 1 January 2007

**8. G. N. No. S 384/2007 — Legal Profession (Professional Conduct) (Amendment) Rules 2007**

Date of commencement : 15 August 2007

**9. 2010 Revised Edition — Legal Profession (Professional Conduct) Rules**

Date of operation : 31 May 2010

**10. 1990 Revised Edition — Legal Profession (Professional Conduct) Rules 1990**

Date of operation : 31 December 9999

**11. G.N. No. S 393/2011 — Legal Profession  
(Professional Conduct) (Amendment)  
Rules 2011**

Date of commencement : 1 August 2011

**12. G.N. No. S 247/2012 — Legal Profession (Professional Conduct)  
(Amendment) Rules 2012**

Date of commencement : 1 June 2012