Ethics & Morality · GS - IV

Distinguish between “Code of ethics” and “Code of conduct” with suitable examples.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
2018	GS - IV	Ethics & Morality

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
10	~150 words

Answer Hint

Ethical principles; prescribed rules; professional values; enforceability; discretion; disciplinary action; public service standards

Model Answer

Introduction

A code of ethics and a code of conduct guide the behaviour of public servants. However, they differ in their emphasis, specificity and enforcement.

Code of Ethics

A code of ethics establishes broad moral principles and values that should guide professional decisions.

- **Nature:** Aspirational and value-oriented.
- **Scope:** Encourages integrity, impartiality, compassion and commitment to public welfare.
- **Application:** Helps resolve situations where written rules do not provide a clear answer.
- **Example:** A civil servant should prioritise public welfare over personal interests.

Code of Conduct

A code of conduct specifies rules and standards of behaviour expected from employees.

- **Nature:** More specific and rule-oriented.
- **Scope:** Defines permissible and prohibited actions.
- **Enforcement:** Violations may attract disciplinary proceedings under applicable service rules.
- **Example:** A government employee must disclose specified financial interests or comply with restrictions on accepting gifts.

Key Differences

Ethics explains the values that should guide conduct, while conduct rules prescribe how employees must behave in defined situations. Ethics encourages moral judgement; conduct rules provide clearer standards for compliance and accountability.

Conclusion

Both are complementary. A code of ethics cultivates an internal commitment to public service, while a code of conduct establishes enforceable minimum standards. Together, they promote ethical and accountable administration.

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