



SECURITIES AND FUTURES COMMISSION
證券及期貨事務監察委員會

Corporate Finance Adviser Code of Conduct

October 2013



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Definitions

Advising on corporate finance	See paragraph 1.2 of the Code
Authorized financial institution	A bank, a restricted licence bank or a deposit-taking company
Code	Corporate Finance Adviser Code of Conduct
Code of Conduct	Code of Conduct for Persons Licensed by or Registered with the Securities and Futures Commission
Corporate Finance Advisers	Persons or entities who carry on the business of <i>advising on corporate finance</i> in Hong Kong and are licensed or registered under the Securities and Futures Ordinance (Cap. 571) as a licensed representative, licensed corporation or registered institution. For a registered institution, this also includes its Relevant Individuals
Designated Compliance Officer	The person within a Corporate Finance Adviser who supervises and oversees the compliance function of the Corporate Finance Adviser, who may carry out other functions or responsibilities
IFA	Independent financial adviser
Listing applicant	An applicant applying for a listing of its securities on the Stock Exchange
Listed company	A company or corporation the shares of which are listed on the Stock Exchange
Listing Rules	The Rules Governing the Listing of Securities on the Stock Exchange and the Rules Governing the Listing of Securities on the Growth Enterprise Market of the Stock Exchange
Regulators	The SFC and/or the Stock Exchange as appropriate
Relevant Individuals	Individuals who advise on corporate finance for or on behalf of or by an arrangement with a registered institution and whose names are entered in the register maintained by the Monetary Authority under section 20 of the Banking Ordinance (Cap.155)
Relevant Persons	Employees or directors of a Corporate Finance Adviser who are likely to have access to confidential information in relation to a matter where the Corporate Finance Adviser is advising on corporate finance



Senior Management	Managing director, the board of directors or the chief executive officer of a corporation or other senior operating management personnel in a position of authority over a corporation's business decisions
SFC	Securities and Futures Commission
Share Repurchase Code	The Hong Kong Code on Share Repurchases
Stock Exchange	The Stock Exchange of Hong Kong Limited
Takeovers Code	The Hong Kong Code on Takeovers and Mergers
Takeovers Executive	The Executive Director of the Corporate Finance Division of the SFC or any delegate of the Executive Director



Corporate Finance Adviser Code of Conduct

1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose of this Code

This Code sets out requirements and guidelines in respect of the conduct of Corporate Finance Advisers.

1.2 Corporate finance advice

“*Advising on corporate finance*” means giving advice:

- (a) concerning compliance with or in respect of regulations including the Listing Rules, the Takeovers Code and the Share Repurchase Code respectively;
- (b) concerning:
 - (i) any offer to dispose of securities to the public;
 - (ii) any offer to acquire securities from the public; or
 - (iii) acceptance of any offer referred to in sub-paragraph (i) or (ii), but only in so far as the advice is given generally to holders of securities or a class of securities; or

- (c) to a listed corporation or public company or a subsidiary of the corporation or company, or to its officers or shareholders, concerning corporate restructuring involving securities (including the issue, cancellation or variation of any rights attaching to any securities),

but does not include advice given by:

- (i) a person who is licensed to deal in securities who gives such advice wholly incidental to the carrying on of that securities dealing business;
- (ii) an authorized financial institution which is registered to deal in securities and gives such advice wholly incidental to the carrying on of that securities dealing business;
- (iii) an individual -
 - (A) whose name is entered in the register maintained by the Monetary Authority under section 20 of the Banking Ordinance (Cap. 155) as engaged in the business of dealing in securities by an authorized financial institution registered for that business; and
 - (B) who gives such advice wholly incidental to the carrying on of that securities dealing business.
- (iv) a corporation solely to any of its wholly owned subsidiaries, its holding company which holds all its issued shares, or other wholly owned subsidiaries of that holding company;
- (v) a solicitor who gives such advice wholly incidental to his practice as such in a Hong Kong firm or foreign firm within the meaning of the Legal Practitioners Ordinance (Cap. 159);
- (vi) a counsel who gives such advice wholly incidental to his practice as such;



- (vii) a professional accountant who gives such advice wholly incidental to his practice as such in a practice unit within the meaning of the Professional Accountants Ordinance (Cap. 50);
- (viii) a trust company registered under Part VIII of the Trustee Ordinance (Cap. 29) which gives such advice wholly incidental to the discharge of its duty as such; or
- (ix) a person through –
 - (A) a newspaper, magazine, book or other publication which is made generally available to the public; or
 - (B) television broadcast or radio broadcast for reception by the public or a section of the public, whether on subscription or otherwise.

1.3 Status of this Code

This Code aims to supplement, and should be applied in conjunction with, relevant laws, legislation, codes, regulations or guidelines applicable to Corporate Finance Advisers. It does not replace any existing codes, rules and regulations. Corporate Finance Advisers should not interpret this Code as if it were a statute but rather, have regard to the spirit, as well as the letter, of the Code. Further reference should however be made to relevant codes, regulations, guidelines and legislation. In the case of any inconsistency, the provision requiring a higher standard of conduct will apply. This Code does not have the force of law and should not be interpreted in a way that it would override the provisions of any law.

1.4 Enforcement

The SFC will use this Code as a benchmark, along with other SFC's codes and guidelines, against which a Corporate Finance Adviser's fitness and properness will be measured. Breaches by a Corporate Finance Adviser of any of the requirements of this Code will, in the absence of extenuating circumstances, reflect adversely on its fitness and properness, and may result in disciplinary or other actions by the SFC.

1.5 General

Corporate Finance Advisers engaging in corporate finance advisory work under the Listing Rules, the Takeovers Code or the Share Repurchase Code are required to observe the specific requirements under the respective codes and rules as regards their conduct. Corporate Finance Advisers who are found in breach of the Listing Rules, the Takeovers Code or the Share Repurchase Code will be subject to the respective disciplinary measures contained in those codes and rules. In general, any breaches of the above codes and rules will prima facie cast doubts on the fitness and properness of the Corporate Finance Adviser concerned.

A Corporate Finance Adviser acting as a sponsor to a listing applicant is also subject to paragraph 17 of the Code of Conduct. In case of any conflicts between this Code and paragraph 17 of the Code of Conduct, insofar as sponsors are concerned, the provisions of paragraph 17 of the Code of Conduct shall prevail.



2. Conduct of business

A Corporate Finance Adviser should ensure that it is fit and proper to conduct its business.

This paragraph 2 applies to all Corporate Finance Advisers other than individuals. It shall be the responsibility of the Senior Management of a Corporate Finance Adviser to ensure compliance with this paragraph 2.

2.1 Licensing

A Corporate Finance Adviser should ensure that its business is properly established and conducted, and that the Corporate Finance Adviser and its directors and representatives are fit and proper, and are properly licensed and registered in accordance with all applicable statutory and regulatory requirements.

2.2 Management of the business

A Corporate Finance Adviser should:

- (a) organise and control its internal affairs in a prudent and responsible manner;
- (b) maintain satisfactory financial and operational controls;
- (c) maintain satisfactory risk management procedures commensurate with its business; and
- (d) ensure that it has adequate competence, professional expertise and, human and technical resources for the proper performance of its duties as a Corporate Finance Adviser.

2.3 Books and records

A Corporate Finance Adviser should maintain proper books and records, and be able to provide a proper trail of work done upon request by the SFC.

2.4 Staff supervision

A Corporate Finance Adviser should ensure that:

- (a) all of its staff members who engage in advising on corporate finance are suitable and appropriately qualified;
- (b) its less experienced staff are properly supervised; and
- (c) there are clear reporting lines with supervisory and reporting responsibilities assigned to the more experienced staff members.

2.5 Compliance

A Corporate Finance Adviser should:

- (a) maintain an effective compliance function, which should be headed up by a Designated Compliance Officer to monitor compliance with its own internal



policies and procedures, and all applicable legal and regulatory requirements, including this Code;

- (b) ensure that its compliance function possesses the technical competence, adequate resources and experience necessary for the performance of its functions; and
- (c) ensure that its compliance function is independent of other business functions and reports directly to Senior Management. Compliance monitoring activities may be delegated to an appropriately qualified professional, although the responsibilities and obligations may not be delegated.

Note:

For small firms where human resources are limited, Senior Management should assume the role of the Designated Compliance Officer.

2.6 A Corporate Finance Adviser is encouraged to establish clear and comprehensive written compliance procedures (which should be readily available to all staff involved in the business of advising on corporate finance), covering its corporate finance business and addressing all applicable regulatory requirements. Such procedures should give Senior Management reasonable assurance that the corporation complies with all applicable requirements at all times.

2.7 Training

A Corporate Finance Adviser should offer continuous professional training to its staff.



3. Competence

A Corporate Finance Adviser should act with competence.

3.1 Integrity

A Corporate Finance Adviser should be honest, and of good repute and character, and it should maintain a high standard of integrity and fair dealing.

3.2 Demonstration of competence

Regulators may require a Corporate Finance Adviser and its staff members to demonstrate their resources, competence and suitability, e.g. by submitting a list of their qualifications and previous experience in handling relevant corporate finance work for the Regulators' consideration.

3.3 Professional advice

Where appropriate, a Corporate Finance Adviser should seek proper professional advice in respect of its compliance with the applicable laws and regulations.



4. Conflicts of interest

A Corporate Finance Adviser should avoid engaging in work that is likely to involve conflicts of interest.

4.1 Conflicts of interest

A Corporate Finance Adviser should:

- (a) take all reasonable steps to avoid situations that are likely to involve a conflict of interest;
- (b) not unfairly place its interests above those of its clients; and
- (c) withdraw from, or decline to accept, a mandate where a material conflict of interest arises with its client that cannot be resolved through its client giving its informed consent.

4.2 Acting as IFA

Issues of conflicts of interest relating to the independence of a financial adviser should be dealt with in accordance with the Listing Rules, the Takeovers Code or the Share Repurchase Code as appropriate.

4.3 Chinese walls

Where a Corporate Finance Adviser is part of a professional firm or group of companies undertaking other activities, e.g. auditing, banking, research, stockbroking and fund management, the Corporate Finance Adviser should ensure that there is an effective system of functional barriers (*Chinese walls*) to prevent the flow of information that may be confidential or price sensitive between the corporate finance activities and the other business activities. This system should include physical separation between, and different staff employed for, the various business activities.

4.4 Sponsors

A Corporate Finance Adviser acting as a sponsor to a listing applicant should satisfy all the requirements applicable to sponsors as set out in the Listing Rules. It should ensure that, when giving a view as to whether an issuer is suitable for listing, it is capable of giving “impartial advice” before accepting the sponsorship role and that such view is given independently.

4.5 Contingency fees

A Corporate Finance Adviser should disclose, upon request by the Regulators particularly if there is a conflict of interest concern, any fees or other benefits-in-kind that are offered contingent upon the success of a transaction.



4.6 Receipt or provision of benefits

A Corporate Finance Adviser should:

- (a) not offer nor accept any inducements in connection with the business of, or a transaction involving, its client without first disclosing the particulars of the inducements to the client. If the client is a corporation, such disclosure should be made to the board of directors of the corporation; and
- (b) ensure that it develops and maintains written policies and procedures on the disclosure of the value of gifts given to, or provided by, its staff members above a certain monetary limit, and the circumstances in which they were offered or received.



5. Standard of work

A Corporate Finance Adviser should aim to deliver a high standard of work at all times.

5.1 Due skill and care

A Corporate Finance Adviser must act with due skill, care and diligence and observe proper standards of market conduct.

5.2 Engagement letter

A Corporate Finance Adviser is encouraged to record the terms of its engagement in writing between the Corporate Finance Adviser and its client and to ensure that the service performed for the client is in accordance with the provisions of the engagement letter.

5.3 Reliance on work by experts or other professionals

Where reliance on the work of independent experts or other professionals is planned, a Corporate Finance Adviser (including an independent financial adviser) should, inter alia:

- (a) undertake reasonableness checks to assess the relevant experience and expertise of the firm of experts or other professionals and to satisfy itself that reliance could fairly be placed on their work; and
- (b) review and discuss with its clients and the experts or other professionals the qualifications, bases and assumptions adopted by the experts or the other professionals in the course of their work and satisfy itself that the qualifications, bases and assumptions have been made with due care and objectivity, and on a reasonable basis.

Note:

The requirements in paragraph 5.5(b) shall not be applicable in respect of work performed by:

- (i) a property valuer in respect of a valuation of real property if it is a member of a relevant regulatory or professional body;*
- (ii) legal advisers in respect of legal advice rendered by them; and*
- (iii) accountants in respect of the audit of results and accountants' reports derived therefrom.*



5.4 Financial adviser to a listing applicant

A Corporate Finance Adviser acting as a financial adviser to a listing applicant should co-operate fully with the sponsor appointed by the listing applicant in connection with its application for listing and should not engage in any conduct that would unreasonably or adversely affect the sponsor in discharging its duties.

5.5 Reliance on information from the client

Where information and representations are provided by a client for incorporation in a public document or submission to the Regulators, the Corporate Finance Adviser should advise its client to take all reasonable steps to ensure, and obtain confirmation from the client, that the information and representations provided are true, accurate, complete and not misleading, and that no material information or facts have been omitted or withheld.

5.6 Avoid undue delay

A Corporate Finance Adviser should have regard to the time management of a transaction and should avoid undue delay, e.g. in the preparation of the appropriate document or the filing of the application fee. It should ensure that its responsibilities are performed on a timely basis in accordance with the relevant rules and regulations.

5.7 Standard of documents

Where a Corporate Finance Adviser is involved in the preparation of any document for public dissemination, it should use all reasonable efforts to assist its client in ensuring that the document is prepared to the required standard and no relevant information has been omitted or withheld.

5.8 Use of plain language

A Corporate Finance Adviser is encouraged to use plain language in the preparation of documents. Reference should be made to the *Guides on the preparation of announcements and documents* issued by the Regulators.



6. Duties to the client

A Corporate Finance Adviser should ensure that it acts in the best interests of its client at all times.

6.1 Know your client

Unless the circumstances do not require, a Corporate Finance Adviser should understand the business of its client. In particular, a Corporate Finance Adviser should:

- (a) obtain at the outset, information regarding its client's background, the nature of its business, and if the client is a company, the identity of its controlling shareholder(s), and its shareholding structure; and
- (b) understand the financial circumstances and investment or corporate objectives in relation to the transaction under consideration.

6.2 Confidentiality

A Corporate Finance Adviser should:

- (a) safeguard the confidentiality of information provided to it by its client; and
- (b) take reasonable steps to ensure that all other persons who receive the confidential information from the Corporate Finance Adviser avoid an accidental leak of information.

6.3 Client's behaviour

A Corporate Finance Adviser should use all reasonable efforts to ensure that its client understands the relevant regulatory requirements and their implications at all stages of a transaction. Where a Corporate Finance Adviser becomes aware that its client is not complying with the regulatory requirements, it should advise its client to bring the matter to the attention of the Regulators at the earliest opportunity. If this is declined by the client without valid reasons, it should consider the need to cease to act. When asked by the Regulators about a possible breach of a relevant regulation (whether committed by itself or by its client), a Corporate Finance Adviser should respond to the Regulators in a co-operative and truthful manner (to the best of its knowledge).

6.4 Conduct towards a client

When acting for a client, a Corporate Finance Adviser should:

- (a) ensure that all representations made and information provided by it to its client are true, accurate, complete and not misleading;
- (b) take all reasonable steps to give its client, in a comprehensive and timely manner, any information required (including advice on the Listing Rules, the Takeovers Code or the Share Repurchase Code) to enable its client to make a balanced and informed decision;
- (c) be ready to provide a full and fair account of its fulfilment of responsibilities towards its client; and
- (d) ensure that it makes adequate disclosure of all relevant and material information in its dealings with its client.



7. Communication with Regulators

A Corporate Finance Adviser must deal with the Regulators in an open and co-operative manner.

7.1 Dealing with the Regulators

A Corporate Finance Adviser should ensure that its day-to-day communication with the Regulators is only conducted by staff who are competent and conversant with the regulatory requirements.

7.2 Co-operation with the Regulators

A Corporate Finance Adviser should advise its client to co-operate fully with the Regulators, and to provide all relevant information and explanations upon request.

7.3 Consultation

A Corporate Finance Adviser is encouraged to consult the Regulators at an early stage of a transaction or an issue to seek guidance on the transaction or issue under consideration.



8. Personal account dealings

A Corporate Finance Adviser should ensure that all personal account dealings are properly conducted.

The following guidelines are intended to address the basic principle that a Corporate Finance Adviser should avoid conflicts of interest when dealing in securities on its own account while discharging its duties as adviser to its client.

8.1 Personal account dealings

- (a) A Corporate Finance Adviser should have a policy which has been communicated to Relevant Persons in writing on whether they are permitted to deal for their own accounts in securities or futures contracts.
- (b) In the event that Relevant Persons are permitted to deal for their own accounts in securities or futures contracts:
 - (i) the written policy should specify the conditions on which Relevant Persons may deal for their own accounts;
 - (ii) Relevant Persons should be required to identify all related accounts and report them to the Designated Compliance Officer;
 - (iii) Relevant Persons should generally be required to deal through the Corporate Finance Adviser (if it is also a registered person) or its affiliates;
 - (iv) if Relevant Persons are permitted to deal through another dealer, the Corporate Finance Adviser and the Relevant Persons should arrange for duplicate trade confirmations and statements of account to be provided to the Designated Compliance Officer;
 - (v) any transactions for such Relevant Persons' accounts and related accounts should be separately recorded and clearly identified in the accounting records of the Corporate Finance Adviser (if it is also a registered person) or its affiliates; and
 - (vi) the transactions of Relevant Persons' accounts and related accounts should be reported to and actively monitored by the Designated Compliance Officer who should not have any beneficial or other interest in the transactions and who should maintain procedures to detect irregularities and ensure that the handling of these transactions or orders by the Corporate Finance Adviser or its affiliates is not prejudicial to the interests of the Corporate Finance Adviser's clients.

Notes:

1. *For the purposes of this paragraph 8.1, the term "related accounts" includes accounts of the Relevant Persons' minor children and accounts in which the Relevant Persons hold beneficial interests.*



2. *A globally uniform policy on personal account trading which is consistent with the provisions of paragraph 8.1 above would normally be acceptable.*

8.2 Prohibition of dealings

For the purpose of proper monitoring of personal account dealings and proprietary trading, a Corporate Finance Adviser should maintain a watchlist and restricted list system.

8.3 Proper monitoring

A Corporate Finance Adviser should ensure that all personal account dealings in securities and derivatives by Relevant Persons are properly monitored by the Designated Compliance Officer.