



What is a Professional?

Professionals are people who are in a profession that requires certain types of skilled work which requires formal training or education such as lawyers, doctors and engineers. To become a professional, you need to gain extensive knowledge of your field from academic study, usually in the form of tertiary education, and formalised training.

Professionals are different from skilled workers, such as electricians and plumbers, who undergo training but are not governed by a professional body, and knowledge workers who generally learn their trade from experience. Professionals are people in a learned occupation who are entrusted with maintaining control or oversight of the legitimate practice of the occupation.



According to Guy Le Boterf, a French expert on the development of competencies, 'A professional is a person who possesses a personal body of knowledge and of knowhow which is recognised and valued by the market.'

Le Boterf explained that due to the recognition, the professional has an advantage which is not available to other workers. He said, 'A person who is recognised as a professional possesses a social standing which is larger than the specific job he or she holds down'.

There are several criteria that a 'true' professional must be proficient in for the field of work they are practising professionally. Besides academic qualifications, a professional must have excellent manual/practical and literary skills which is related to his profession and produce high quality work within his respective field.

Professionals need to use their independent judgement and professional ethics when carrying out their responsibilities. Typically, the service that a professional provides is in accordance with established protocols for licensing, ethics, procedures, standards of service and training/certification.

Professionals are generally self-regulating, up to a certain degree, by controlling the training and evaluation processes that admit new people to the field, and in judging whether the work done by their members is up to standard. Members of a professional body must also maintain a high standard of professional ethics, behaviour and work activities while carrying out their profession.