

## What is a Professional?

*Answer:* A person who practices a profession.

### What is a Profession?

Building on the analysis of Martin and Shinzinger, pp. 18-19, we can identify four prominent characteristics of a profession.

1. A profession is something one does to earn a living
  - A profession is not a hobby or primarily a volunteer activity.
  - A professional is paid for a specific service or class of services.
2. A profession is an activity that requires advanced training or expertise
  - Professionals have substantial formal education and are expected to keep current in their fields through mentoring, ongoing training and professional development.
  - Professionals develop their practice under the mentorship of another professional with more experience.
3. A professional is allowed and expected to use self-regulation.
  - Professional societies are organized to define and advance the practice.
  - Professional societies establish codes of conduct.
  - Professional societies represent the profession before public regulatory bodies, and thereby seek the “autonomy of the profession”. Professionals are granted a degree of autonomous judgment in the practice of their occupation.
4. The practice of a profession requires a concern for the public good.
  - The occupation serves an important public good.
  - There is a concerted effort to maintain high standards, and thereby attend to the public good and maintain the public’s trust.
  - A profession may confer prestige, but that prestige is earned as a consequence of serving the public good, and acting according to established codes of conduct. In other words, the *purpose* of professionalism should not be primarily about social status.

### Reference:

Martin, Mike W. and Schinzinger, Roland, Introduction to Engineering Ethics, 2th ed., 2010, McGraw-Hill, NY.