



Code of Conduct for celebrants in the BHA's Humanist Ceremonies™ network

Guiding Principles

All members of the Humanist Ceremonies network are expected to:

1. Uphold and exemplify humanist principles and values as they carry out their work as celebrants, treating all individuals, whatever their beliefs or backgrounds, with integrity, respect, courtesy and dignity, observing high standards of professionalism.
2. Be fully and actively aware of their **responsibilities to their clients by:**
 - a) preparing each ceremony in close consultation with their clients
 - b) preparing scripts and ceremonies according to this Code of Conduct (3 and 4), but respecting and observing clients' requests for different approaches or for flexibility in specific instances
 - c) respecting confidentiality
 - d) recognising personal boundaries
 - e) listening carefully
 - f) being empathetic and non-judgemental
 - g) communicating clearly and promptly
 - h) delivering every ceremony to the best of their ability
 - i) charging fair and agreed fees for their work, clearly communicating amounts and payment schedules from the outset
 - j) using discretion when amending charges in exceptional circumstances or in clients' special need.
3. Be fully and actively aware of their **responsibilities to clients and intermediaries** (e.g. funeral directors, hoteliers et al) by:
 - a) communicating clearly, promptly and politely
 - b) being helpful, flexible and reliable
 - c) making contingency plans in case of unavailability
 - d) maintaining and promoting the good reputation of HC network.
4. Be fully and actively aware of their **responsibilities to their colleagues** in the Humanist Ceremonies network by:
 - a) being supportive and respectful
 - b) working co-operatively and fairly
 - c) sharing experience
 - d) engaging in Continuous Professional Development (CPD) activities
 - e) fostering a collegiate and professional culture

- f) agreeing ceremony fees with local colleagues within the bandings laid down by the Ceremonies Management Committee (CMC)
 - g) working together to attract clients or ceremonies, fairly and professionally
 - h) maintaining the good reputation of the HC network at all times.
5. Be fully and actively aware of their **responsibilities to themselves** by:
- a) keeping up-to-date and informed about current celebrant practice and requirements
 - b) engaging in Continuous Professional Development (CPD)
 - c) exercising the right to refuse work from a client or intermediary, politely and professionally, making referrals to another HC celebrant wherever possible
 - d) maintaining a manageable work/life balance, keeping themselves refreshed and making sensible decisions about whether or not to carry on working when ill health or life's circumstances are constraining
 - e) ensuring that local intermediaries and colleagues are informed about absences for holidays, sickness etc to enable clients to find an alternative HC celebrant when needed
 - f) having regard to their own personal safety by making sure that someone else – family, friend or fellow celebrant - knows exactly where they are going when they leave for a family visit or ceremony.

Professional Standards

1 Self Presentation

Celebrants are expected to maintain the highest standards in how they present themselves, paying particular attention to:

- a) telephone manner and answer-phone messages
- b) communication with clients, suppliers, and colleagues
- c) e-mail etiquette
- d) appropriate dress and personal hygiene at visits to clients or intermediaries, at ceremonies and in any follow-up work required.

2 Client Visit

Celebrants are expected to achieve as positive and as productive a meeting as possible by:

- a) making and keeping to agreed arrangements for visits
- b) establishing a good rapport with the client
- c) establishing an understanding of why the client has requested a humanist ceremony and what a humanist ceremony involves
- d) ensuring the meeting(s) is/are long enough to obtain all necessary information
- e) dealing effectively with the client's emotions and tensions within their family or friendships
- f) advising the client about the organisation and detail involved in the ceremony
- g) inviting and organising the client's participation (or their friends') in the ceremony
- h) checking details with the client
- i) being prepared to provide a preview copy of the ceremony as appropriate or, in the case of a funeral, the tribute, to ensure accuracy of information
- j) accommodating the client's suggestions where possible and offering advice about music, poetry and readings appropriate to the occasion
- k) dealing with requests for religious poetry, hymns and prayers - advising these cannot be accommodated within a humanist ceremony unless, in exceptional

circumstances, the context is particularly fitting and can be signalled appropriately (refer to 2c)

- l) not using the meeting to develop any business or personal relationships.

3 The Script

Celebrants are expected to produce a unique script for each ceremony, which

- a) is well structured and of an appropriate length to fit the allocated delivery time, with clear signposts and links between the main sections
- b) includes a welcome and mention of all important names
- c) includes a short introduction of the celebrant, as a trained and/or accredited member of Humanist Ceremonies and a short explanation of a humanist ceremony and its purpose, if acceptable to the client
- d) is full and rounded in descriptions of the main character/s where appropriate
- e) is free of inaccuracies and errors
- f) contains language, poetry, prose and music appropriate to the occasion and to the individuals involved, properly introduced and linked, with authorship acknowledged
- g) allows time for private reflection
- h) includes thoughts on life, love, birth, renewal and death as appropriate to the ceremony
- i) includes thanks where needed and announcements as requested
- j) is clearly written, using standards of literacy, spelling and grammar expected of a professional organisation
- k) aims to leave those attending feeling uplifted.

4 The Ceremony

Celebrants are expected to conduct ceremonies:

- a) within the allocated time
- b) clearly and audibly
- c) with warmth, sensitivity and empathy
- d) with varied and appropriate pace
- e) with appropriate facial expressions and eye contact
- f) with a steady stance and an air of confidence
- g) with the appropriate degree of formality
- h) involving contributors confidently and graciously.

5 Follow-Up

After each ceremony, celebrants are expected to:

- a) provide the client with a copy of the final script presented to a high standard which includes contact details for the celebrant and the BHA
- b) ensure that complete payment is arranged in a polite and professional manner.

6 Compliments and Complaints

- a) Celebrants are always pleased when their work is acknowledged and Humanist Ceremonies is delighted to learn when ceremonies go particularly well. The Head of Ceremonies will always pass on to celebrants those compliments about ceremonies or celebrants sent to the BHA.

- b) Conversely, if things have not gone as well as expected, celebrants should inform the Head of Ceremonies as soon as possible so that problems can be addressed quickly.
- c) Complaints will be handled according to the Humanist Ceremonies' 'Complaints Handling Process' which can be obtained by contacting the Head of Ceremonies on 020 7079 3582, or by emailing ceremonies@humanism.org.uk should the need arise.