

ISPP Constitution & Bylaws Revision April 2020

Frequently Asked Questions

What did the Governing Council do and why?

The Governing Council, in reviewing its operations in Summer 2017, determined that the current ISPP Constitution does not reflect the ways in which the Society now operates. Some positions were no longer needed (the Executive Director is now a staff person, not an elected officer), and some committees needed to be restructured and new ones created. It also turned out to make even small changes in the formal operations of the Society required a vote of the membership, which has become unwieldy and impossible for routine operational changes. A committee was formed, chaired by (then President-elect) David Redlawsk. In 2019 the Committee proposed and the Governing Council approved a revised Constitution that was put to a membership vote. The Constitution was not approved due to a lack of a quorum (one-third of membership voting). That proposal did not include revised By-laws, assuming the Governing Council would write the By-laws once the Constitution was revised. Some members were concerned about approving a Constitution without the By-laws necessary to implement it.

The Committee was reconstituted and proposed a new Constitution and Bylaws. These were approved by the Governing Council at its January 2020 meeting, and are now being submitted to the ISPP membership for approval. To be approved, a majority must vote yes, and a quorum must be achieved.

What is the role of the ISPP Constitution?

The ISPP Constitution currently defines both the structure and some operations of the Society. The Constitution along with the current Bylaws, provides the framework for the organization of the Governing Council, Officers, and many of its procedures, such as details for elections and appointments, and the management of ISPP funds. It establishes the powers and duties of the Governing Council, the Executive Committee, and the Officers. The Constitution also lays out the purposes of ISPP and what we can or cannot do as a Society.

Under the revised Constitution, almost all detailed operations are defined in Bylaws, while the Constitution is concerned primarily with the purposes, governance structures (including election procedures) and powers and duties of the Governing Council, Executive Committee, and Officers. Placing most procedural details in the Bylaws makes it easier for the Governing Council to make changes in operating procedures without needing to change the Constitution.

Changes to the Constitution still require a super-majority vote of the Governing Council and ratification by a majority of the ISPP membership, assuming a quorum of 25% of members voting is met. This makes changes to the Constitution purposely quite difficult.

What is the role of ISPP Bylaws?

Under the current Constitution and Bylaws, there is little practical difference between the two. In many ways, the Bylaws are simply an extension of the Constitution, rather than a document that defines the operations of the Governing Council.

The revised Bylaws included here codify significant operational aspects of the Society, including additional election procedures, financial procedures and controls, operating committee structures and responsibilities, and other elements of the regular operation of the Governing Council and the Central Office. These Bylaws are separate and distinct from the Constitution and allow the Governing Council to make changes to its operations as necessary without requiring a vote of the membership every time.

It is important to note that where previous Bylaws (for example, related to nominations and appointments) addressed structural governance issues, they have generally been written into the new Constitution for permanence.

To adopt or amend Bylaws, the Governing Council will have to approve them by a two-thirds majority vote of its full membership, no sooner than 30 days after they have been first proposed by a committee, Executive committee, or the Governing Council itself. The idea is that Bylaws changes should require strong informed support from the governing council before they are adopted and should not be too easy to change.

What about Financial Controls under the new governance structure?

ISPP has an annual operating budget and an endowment fund. The operating budget is funded primarily by royalties from the publisher of *Political Psychology*, membership fees, and conference fees. The endowment fund is the result of having a series of surpluses in the operating budget over the years. When there is a surplus, the current Constitution and Bylaws requires virtually all of it be moved to the endowment fund. That fund is meant to both protect ISPP from future financial challenges, and to allow ISPP to fund special initiatives, like small conference grants. Currently, the endowment fund has reach about \$1.5 million. The operating budget is about \$550,000 per year, varying depending on conference location.

The new governance structure creates a Finance Committee with oversight of the Treasurer and all financial operations. The Finance Committee will be responsible for the management of the endowment funds, providing recommendations to the Governing Council on investments and uses of the funds in accordance with the Bylaws. The new Bylaws reflect what is currently the case: the endowment is to be protected in order to ensure that it provides the safety net needed for the Society. The new Constitution authorizes this in Article 7 (F) (8): the Governing Council shall “Adopt such financial policies as necessary to prudently manage the Endowment of the Society (if any) and the use of Endowment funds, subject to the By-laws.”

The new Constitution also would allow a multi-year budgeting process, if the Governing Council desired, rather than limiting budgets to one year at a time.