

ISPP Constitutional Update March 2019

Frequently Asked Questions

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 will be defined in Bylaws or the Procedures Manual, while the Constitution will be 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 revised Bylaws will make it easier for the Governing Council to make changes in operating procedures without needing to change the Constitution.

Changes to the Constitution will still require a super-majority vote of the Governing Council and ratification by a majority of the ISPP membership, assuming a quorum of 1/3 of the membership 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, which are still to be written, will 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 will be separate and distinct from the Constitution and will 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 existing 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 an Operating 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 is the Procedures Manual?

The Procedures Manual will codify processes adopted by the Governing Council over the years that govern certain Central Office operations, instructions to Program Chairs on how to solicit and decide on submissions for the Annual Meeting, processes for setting Annual Meeting and Membership fees, and other such day-to-day operations. The ISPP Central Office already has a set of such procedures as adopted by the Governing Council over the years. This new provision will require codification of those procedures.

Procedures will be adopted and amended as they are now, by a majority vote of the Governing Council.

When will the new Bylaws be written?

The new Constitution has a number of references to necessary Bylaws that the Governing Council will have to adopt in order to implement it. The new Constitution will require the Governing Council to adopt these new Bylaws “no later than the second regular Governing Council meeting following [the Constitution’s] ratification.” [Article 26, Section C].

In practice, if the Constitution is adopted before the 2019 ISPP Annual Meeting, the Bylaws will be required to be adopted no later than the Winter 2020 Governing Council meeting (typically held in January). In the interim, the Officers and Governing Council will of necessity operate as if the current Bylaws are still in force, where they do not conflict with the new Constitution.

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 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 on ISPP. 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 and Procedures adopted by the Governing Council. The new Bylaws will 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) (7): the Governing Council shall “Adopt such financial Bylaws and Policies as necessary to prudently manage the Endowment of the Society (if any) and the use of Endowment funds.”

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

Why was the position of Councilor dropped?

The ISPP has had a virtually unique position, that of Councilor, who serves a five-year term on the Governing Council. Such a position does not appear to exist in other similar academic societies. The role of the Councilor is to:

“...serve as the repository of organizational memory and as policy adviser to the President and Executive Committee, giving special attention to ways of fulfilling the Society's goals and maintaining its diversity and openness.” [current ISPP Constitution, Article XIV (B)].

In addition, the Councilor advises the Nominating Committee. As a practice – but not defined anywhere in the Constitution or Bylaws – the Councilor has acted as the arbitrator of questions of Constitutional governance, and can act as a one-person “supreme court” to define what it means. Over the years, ISPP has been guided with distinction by several Councilors who have been dedicated to the Society.

The Governing Council determined that this position is less needed now that we have a full-time professional Central Office staff, which maintains records and serves the “organizational memory” function of the Councilor. The role of the Councilor in advising the Nominating Committee will be fulfilled by the Past-president, who presumably has at least as long standing a perspective on ISPP as the Councilor. Finally, under the Governing Council’s proposed procedures, questions about Constitutional meaning may in the future be addressed by a new Operations Committee, broadening the perspectives used to make these decisions. A side benefit to this change (and dropping a Vice President) will be to cut some current costs. While no one on the Governing Council gets paid to do the work, ISPP does have a reimbursement policy for travel to Governing Council meetings. Reducing the number of members will reduce costs.