Australian Computer Society
Constitutional Reform Working Group (CRWG)

Recommendations for Referrals to Relevant ACS Organs

18 October 2022

Introduction

The CRWG process involved three rounds of consultation with the membership. The input provided by participants covered a great deal of territory, some of it extending beyond the matters that are appropriate to address in the Society's constitutional document.

This document brings together the input that was coherently expressed by participants, was supported by significant numbers of participants, and has implications for one or more of the Society's By-Laws, strategy or policy.

The CRWG recommends to Congress that it refer the matters in this document, via Management Committee, to the relevant Society organs, primarily the Boards and national Committees.

The CRWG draws particular attention to items 1.1 and 1.2, regarding revisions to By-Laws.

All of the National Regulations and similar documents require review.

However, **in order to ensure smooth transition, a proportion of them need revision prior to the date on which the new constitutional document comes into effect.**

For this to happen, **Congress needs to assign responsibilities to an appropriate organ of the Society, and seek resourcing from the Management Committee.**

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1. Governance Matters Outside the Constitution

1.1 Prioritisation of By-Laws Needing Revision before Changeover

Because of the unsuitability of many of the existing Rules, and members' preferences, the new constitutional document contains a number of material differences from the old Rules.

As a result:

(a) all of the current National Regulations need to be reviewed, and many documents need to be materially revised, to reflect the new constitution.

Some documents need to be revised in advance of the cutover to the new constitution, and come into force as By-Laws on that date; and the remainder need to be revised in the months following the cutover; and

(b) **a number of additional By-Laws need to be written and promulgated, some prior to cutover** and the remainder in the months following.

It would be advantageous for the higher-priority revisions to be presented to the membership as part of the package for the General Meeting that approves the new constitution.

For this to be achieved, Congress and/or MC need to assign responsibility and resources.

A list of the segments of the By-Laws is in the Appendix to this document.

1.2 Branch Election Cycles

The Constitution establishes the framework for Branch members to elect Branch Committees (cl.8(b)), and for Branch Committees to elect Congress Representatives (cl.10.3(a)).

However, **several timing matters need to be established in the By-Laws**:

(a) **formally provide that terms for positions on Branch Committees and as Congress Representatives run for 2 years from 1 July to 30 June**, as per cl.8(b)(iv);

(b) **declare** in National Regulation 8.5.1 that **Branch Committee members and Congress Representatives have overlapping terms**, with about half elected each year of the 2-year cycle; or declare that the decision is to be left to each Branch Committee; and

(c) **declare that the new Congress Representative(s) is/are elected by** the outgoing / 'grey' Branch Committee in Apr-Jun each year, or by the incoming / 'green' Branch Committee in Jul-Aug each year; or that the decision is to be left to each Branch Committee.

1.3 The Code of Professional Conduct

Questions were asked by some participants about a recent process that it is understood was intended to result in a revision to the Code of Ethics.

Concern was expressed about the absence of supporting materials to assist educational institutions to explain the Code, to discuss applications of it in specific circumstances, and to thereby inculcate awareness and enhanced compliance. These have existed at various times in the past, but must be revised periodically to sustain their relevance.

1.4 The Scope of ICT and Hence of the Society

Participants noted that there is a lack of clarity about the scope of 'ICT'. There is widespread acknowledgement that the term must be interpreted broadly, and adapted on an ongoing basis. What is essential, however, is that it be apparent to potential members, and to other parties, that the scope is inclusive. Contemporary topic-areas that some participants argued are not clearly within the Society's scope include AI, robotics and data analytics.

Related concerns are the very low visibility of the Core Body of Knowledge (CBOK), and the lack of coherent and consistent guidance about which version is current. The following versions can be found on the web-site: a prior document v5.1 of Jul 2012, and CBOK v1.1 of Feb 2019, v3.1 of Sep 2021 and v3.2 of Sep 2021.

2. **Membership Matters**

2.1 **Membership Grades**

(a) **Professional Grades**

(i) **An Entry Grade**

Concerns have been frequently expressed about the lack of a pathway grade towards professionalism. This was the function of the grade of Associate, prior to the 2010 changes. Participants considered that the current entry requirements to the Professional Division are not appropriate, and seek changes in order to resume an orderly flow of graduates in ICT (and equivalent) into a preliminary grade within the Professional Division.

(ii) **A Practitioner Grade**

The imposition of Certification as a prerequisite for MACS, although well-intended, is perceived by members to have resulted in a logjam, stalling conversion from non-professional Associateship to professional Membership.

The need is perceived for an 'all-but-CP' level within the Professional Division, similar to the Associate Grade pre 2010, e.g. an Associate (Snr) or Practitioner Grade.

(iii) **The Society's Scope**

Flexibility and adaptability are necessary in both the definition of the CBOK and the recognition of new specialisations. These need to automatically play through into the accreditation process for courses, and into the approval process for applicants for membership. All of these documents need to be promptly and clearly discoverable and accessible on the web-site.

(b) **Non-Professional Grades**

The change a decade ago to remove entry requirements for Associate (effectively re-naming the Affiliate Grade as Associate, but granting voting rights) has resulted in a single 'grade' whose members have a wide variety of profiles.

Participants recognised the need for distinctions among Grades within the non-professional membership. These need to reflect the person's standing, e.g.

(i) secondary-school students;

(ii) hobbyists;

(iii) professionals in other arenas (including IT-oriented lawyers, medical professions, applied sciences generally, specialist ICT teachers, specialist ICT careers advisers);

(iv) skilled users of complex IT (data analytics tools, CAD/CAM, 3D/additive printing, etc.); and

(v) senior managers and executives (particularly CIOs).

By way of example only, possible Grade-titles might include Associate for (i)-(ii), Companion for (iii)-(iv) and Associate (Exec) or Executive for (v).

This assumes that an Entry Grade and a Practitioner Grade are created in the Professional Division, as per 2.1(a) above. If not, those segments also need to be addressed here.

2.2 **Member Services**

Participants perceive that a major reason for the steep decline in membership numbers, and for very rapid churn, is the limited value that membership delivers. Another factor has been the application of surplus to purposes other than professional matters and member services.

There is a strong desire that the Society become more member-centric. Member-centric activities are seen as including conferences, professional events, professional publications, academic publications, development and promulgation of technical standards, facilitation of peer groups (SIGS, National Forum), training and assistance in career advancement, and advocacy to governments on behalf of the membership.

Mentions were made of the disappearance of SIGs, which in some Branches have long been a major source of energetic activity; the reduction in events arranged by local Branch members and their replacement by events arranged by staff who in some cases are not

themselves professional members; and, in some Branches, the disappearance of a monthly open meeting and the imposition of charges for events.

The reduction in services appears to be related to the absence of a Board/Panel/Standing Committee with a strong focus on driving member services and ensuring staff focus on them.

2.3 Member Participation

Participants considered that the Society was showing a lack of activism on key issues, which falls short of its responsibilities, and at the same time fails to gain positive exposure to key target audiences.

To address this, participants expressed strong support for member involvement in the Society's **national strategy and policy**. There is concern that too much of the strategy and policy is prepared by staff and/or consultants, without meaningful member contributions. The historic involvement of members through volunteer committees and SIGs is important and needs to be revived.

The view was put that National Committees and/or SIGs and/or Branch SIGs should be the primary source of strategy and policy documents, supported by staff. Professionalising the presentation, and projecting the publication's messages through appropriate channels, may, on the other hand, be more appropriately done by staff and contractors who have the requisite expertise and connections.

Publications are seen as an important activity. Participants see these as needing to be developed by, or at least coordinated by, professional members, and to include:
- public statements on policy issues and public policy input to governments, directly, in concert with other relevant organisations, and via peak bodies;
- digestible information for the general public, embodying a strong ethical perspective that emphasises ICT's use to improve people's lives at personal, organisational and societal levels, with a particular focus on the quality of public-facing systems, and their security in the widest sense;
- communication to the membership of the opportunity to contribute; and
- communication to the membership of the policy statements, and of the informational publications for the general public.

Volunteering by ACS members is seen by some as a key function that should be supported by the Society. This is important in post-emergency contexts such as bushfires and floods, but also in some ongoing contexts, e.g. for the socio-economically disadvantaged including refugees, and those with various kinds of disabilities. Support is needed in such forms as communication channels, training, coordination and facilitation (e.g. through insurance).

2.4 ACS as an Umbrella Organisation

Many participants expressed concern about the current absence of close relationships with other professionally-oriented organisations. The following were indicated as being appropriate ways for the Society to ensure effective linkages within the IT professional eco-system, expand its exposure and influence, and better service its members:
- **constructive partnering with compatible professional societies**, e.g. by means of co-sponsoring and co-branding of events; cross-accreditation of professional education offerings; discounted joint memberships; all of which need to be supported by MoUs – but to document the established relationship, not to block or delay its emergence;
- **hosting of additional, compatible professional organisations**, e.g. as National SIGs;
- **enabling of the organic proliferation of self-organising groups within ACS**, especially as Branch SIGs and virtual communities-of-interest or -practice;
- **constructive partnering with other organisations that are relevant to the ICT arena and that share the Society's values**, such as associations of teaching staff, and associations that provide award-recognition to ICT professionals; and
- **constructive work with other relevant organisations**, such as industry associations, on matters where there is sufficient commonality of interest.

To achieve this, members want the ACS to be organisationally a great deal more agile, and to overcome the current deficit in its internal ICT so as to efficiently provide convenient and effective service-bundles designed to meet the needs of National SIGs, Branch SIGs, virtual communities and hosted professional organisations.

All existing documents require review. Many will require at least some degree of revision.

Document-titles in italics may or may not already exist.

Documents in bold are the most important ones to revise prior to cutover.

Schedule A – By-Laws Subject to Member Approval (cl.12.8)

The following documents are subject to Member Approval:
- Code of Ethics - National Regulation (NR) 4
- Membership Grades - NR 2.1, 2.5
- Qualifications for Admission to the Professional Grades - NR 2.2
- *Terms of Reference of the Professional Standards organ established under cl.9(a)(i)*

Schedule B – By-Laws Subject to Governing Committee Approval

All other documents of the nature of By-Laws, including the following:

The following documents are subject to Governing Committee Approval:
- *Process and Authority for Amendment of the Code of Ethics*
- *Code of Ethics Supporting Materials*
- **Disciplinary Procedures - Rule 7, NR 5**
- ***Dispute Resolution Procedure***
- ***Principles for Determining how Surplus from the Society's Operations is to be Allocated aka the Society's Investment Policy***
- *Procedure for Proposals for Major Initiatives*

- ***Procedures for General Meetings***
- ***Procedures for Online Voting***
- Standing Orders for Meetings

- ***Terms of Reference for Committees of the Governing Committee****, Task Forces, Working Groups, National SIGs, etc. - NR 9 (extended)*
- *Procedures for Elections, Appointments and Operations for Committees of the Governing Committee, Task Forces, Working Groups, National SIGs, etc. - NR 9 (extended)*

- **Terms of Reference for Branches and Branch Committees - NR 7 and 8**
- **Procedures for Elections and Operations for Branch Committees - NR 8**
- *Guidelines for Branch Chapters*
- *Guidelines for Branch SIGs and Communities of Interest or Practice*

- Course Accreditation - NR 2.4
- Procedures for Admission of Members - NR 2.3
- Qualifications for Admission to the Non-Professional Grades - NR 2.2.4
- Procedures for Membership Administration - NR 2.9-2.12, 2.14
- Definitions and Procedures for Special Categories of Membership - NR 2.6-2.8
- *Principles Underlying the Schedule of Membership Fees, including gratis memberships*
- Schedule of Membership Fees
- Membership Fee Administration - NR 3
- ***Inter-Member Communications Services***