

Result of member consultation about a proposed change in relationship between IChemE and the Science Council

Science Council - background information

The Science Council (sciencecouncil.org) was established by Royal Charter in 2003. The principal activity of the Science Council, as set out in its articles is 'the promotion of the advancement and dissemination of knowledge of and education in science pure and applied, for the public benefit'. It is a membership organisation for learned and professional bodies across science and its applications and works with them to represent this sector to government and others.

The Science Council promotes the profession of science and scientists mainly through the operation of its registers, through which it aims to establish a credible framework of professional standards and recognition across the science workforce.

IChemE's relationship with the Science Council

IChemE is licensed by the Science Council to award Chartered Scientist (CSci), Registered Scientist (RSci) and Registered Science Technician (RSciTech). However, IChemE is fundamentally an engineering institution with an interest in science rather than primarily being a scientific body. IChemE has been content to offer scientific registrations as a service to interested members, however unlike other registers, the fees paid by individuals to IChemE have not covered the cost of their registration to the Science Council and required a cross subsidy from other income streams.

This cross subsidy is in the main due to the different fee structures that are in place. IChemE pays the Science Council an annual membership fee to be able to offer registration. The annual fee is in part based on the total IChemE membership numbers rather than just those with a direct interest in science. IChemE has over the past three years pointed out the inequality of the fee structure to the Science Council trustees, highlighting that the algorithm that they use to determine the fees does not account for IChemE's prime interest being with engineering and not science. As a result, IChemE pays a disproportionately high annual fee for providing this service when compared with the fees associated with the Engineering Council (EngC) and Society for the Environment (SocEnv).

What are the costs involved?

The substantive component of the Science Council's annual fees is the 'membership fee' of £12,642. This amount is calculated on the assumption that the majority of IChemE members will register as scientists. As a predominantly engineering body, the majority of IChemE members are unlikely to ever consider registration as a scientist. As a proportion of IChemE's total registrations, the Science Council registrations represent circa 4%, with the majority having taken up this registration through a recognition and acceptance process. Furthermore, the number of new applications for scientific registration is currently circa five candidates per annum, compared with 420 candidates per annum for CEng. Currently all candidates are assessed in a broadly similar manner against the relevant standards. However, if the Science Council were to change a registration process requirement, then in order to implement it, and ensure that processes remain broadly similar, IChemE would either need to set up a separate process or apply it to all applicants, which could attract a significant and disproportionate development cost.

In addition, the Science Council charges £3,500 for an annual licence fee bringing the total annual fees to £16,142. If the membership and licence fees were passed directly on to all Science Council

registrants there would be an annual increase of circa £35 (based upon the current number of registrants standing at 457). This would bring the total cost, including the registration fee, to £80 per annum.

As stated previously the Science Council charges IChemE annual fees totalling £16,142 (membership fee + licence fee). In comparison, the Engineering Council does not charge IChemE an annual fee and the Society for the Environment (SocEnv) charges IChemE an annual fee of £715.

Actions taken so far

In 2017 and 2018, IChemE corresponded with the then Science Council Executive on this matter. On 20 August 2019, IChemE wrote to the new Executive and confirmed that IChemE could not allow the current system to continue beyond the end of 2019. On 13 December 2019, Helen Gordon (Chief Executive of the Science Council) informed the IChemE Chief Executive, that after much deliberation, the Science Council Trustees had decided not to change their fee model.

As there was no satisfactory response to IChemE's concerns, the IChemE Board of Trustees were asked to consider the following options at their January 2020 meeting:

- a. [Do nothing]. Pay the fees as requested and make no changes internally.
- b. [Internal change]. Pay the fees as requested and share the full costs for the service across the scientific registrants (increasing the CSci registration fee from £45 to £80).
- c. [Unilateral change]. Pay a reduced membership fee using 5% as a fair estimate of the scientific population. Were the additional cost to be passed on to the registrants it would result in the additional cost per registrant reducing to £9.
- d. [Allowable change]. Reduce our membership status to (non-Licensed Professional Body) removing the licence fee (£3,500), however, this would still require the payment of a membership fee and would prevent new registrations.
- e. [Cessation]. Cease membership of the Science Council.

The recommendation in the paper to the Board of Trustees included the following conclusion:

Continuation of the status quo is unfair to engineering registrants. The trustees are requested to consider whether they wish to address this inequality. If yes, then this could be addressed through Option (b) or Option (c) above. The 'Do nothing Option' (a) and 'Cessation Option' (e) are not recommended. Option (d) would not result in a significant financial reduction and may require further action in the future. The Board of Trustees are requested to discuss the above options and confirm which option is preferred.

In March 2020, IChemE was informed that the Science Council intended to change its By-laws at its next General Meeting such that a minimum of 12 months' notice would be required. Once the change was implemented, then IChemE would be contractually bound in for an additional year's fees using the current mechanism.

Based upon this information, the Board of Trustees decided that IChemE should give immediate notice to the Science Council confirming that IChemE wished to withdraw from membership at the end of 2020. It was agreed that a consultation should then be undertaken with the affected members on three options:

1. Science registrants share the costs of registration through an additional £35 fee on top of the registration fee giving a total annual cost of £80
2. Science registrants transfer to another body (such as RSC)
3. Science registrants lapse their registration

Next stages and the result of the July 2020 member consultation

At the beginning of July 2020, the Science Council registrants, who are also members of IChemE, were consulted via email on whether they would prefer one of the following options:

1. IChemE shares the costs between all its Science Registrants. In the first year (2021) this would result in individual members paying an additional £35 (GBP) - the amount may vary for members residing outside of UK due to exchange rates
2. I would prefer to either cease being a science registrant or will arrange to transfer my registration to another body (e.g. RSC).

We received a total of 219 responses of which 75% (164 members) expressed a preference of sharing the additional costs between all Science Council registrants. Based upon this result, I can confirm that we will be adding a Science Council administration fee of £35 (GBP) to the 2021 membership subscription notice for all Science Council registrants.

Science Council registrants are therefore asked to note that IChemE will be maintaining its membership of the Science Council going forward. However, we will continue to ask the Science Council Trustees to keep their fee structure under review and we will continue to monitor the level of this administration fee relative to the number of IChemE Science Council registrants.

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Chief Executive, IChemE

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