



With an increasingly diverse membership, how can IChemE make sure all get the service they expect? **Judith Hackitt** investigates

You will have received your 2010 IChemE subscription notice recently and I trust you'll be renewing your membership. But in these challenging economic times you might have paused to consider what you get for your money and more importantly, whether it's what you want from your Institution.

AS IChemE becomes increasingly international – more than a third of our members are now outside the UK – it's imperative that the services we offer are relevant to members and stakeholders on a global scale.

International growth continues to exceed that of the UK and in Malaysia, IChemE membership has grown ten-fold since 1999, with more than 2300 members now registered.

How do we ensure for example, that a Chartered Chemical Engineer in the UK, an Australian student member, and a Malaysian associate member all get value for money from their membership?

Furthermore, how should IChemE communicate and work with the media, governments, the general public and other policy makers?

There are various questions to be answered, and many are interlinked. This is a big project. However, by the time it is complete, I will be able to stand in front of any subset of our membership or wider society

and explain what IChemE can offer to that group.

But ultimately, this is *your* project. Whether you're reading this in Aberdeen or Adelaide, Beijing or Birmingham, Calgary or Cape Town, you will get the opportunity to have your say.

We need to know what our members (students, academics and industrialists) want from their membership. We're asking what benefits you think IChemE should offer to companies and employing organisations and we want to know where you believe IChemE needs to have a voice, speaking for and on behalf of its members and the profession.

the history

As we head into 2010, IChemE is a vibrant, growing, international institution with 30,000 members in more than 120 countries. But getting this far hasn't been plain sailing. In fact, just getting started proved a challenge.

IChemE was founded on 21 December 1922, despite objections at the time from both the Institute of Chemistry and the Institution of Civil Engineers. The first Annual Corporate meeting was held in London, UK in June 1923 where the first IChemE president, Sir Arthur Duckham was elected.

Speaking at that first meeting, Duckham said, "The aim of the Institution is to produce chemical engineers and hallmark such men so that they may be accepted as providing a valuable service to the process industries."

The philosophy of producing chemical engineers who provide a valuable service remains the same but much has changed since then. IChemE and its membership have become more international and diverse while the engineering challenges that face the profession have similarly become more global and varied.

The first application for a Royal Charter was made in 1950 but was rejected after further objections, this time by the both Institution of Civil Engineers and the Institution of Mechanical Engineers. But in 1955, a second application was successful and the Institution was granted its Royal Charter in 1957. IChemE has steadily grown since then and today, a range of specialist subject groups, training resources, publications and member support services are at the heart of the Institution. These resources are to improve and enhance the quality and competence of chemical engineers and chemical engineering.

Benchmarking and accreditation are other key IChemE functions. We've been accrediting university courses since the 1950s, in-company training schemes since 1990 and there are now almost 11,500 Chartered chemical engineers in membership. These gold standard benchmarks are a key reason why IChemE is so highly regarded throughout the international chemical engineering community. Our qualifications and accreditation standards carry global credibility, helping our members to diversify and giving an employer confidence in the staff they employ.

We have Chartered members in 84 countries and accredit university courses in 16 countries. Partnerships with the likes of the Canadian Society for Chemical Engineering, the South African Institution of Chemical Engineers and the Institution of Engineers Singapore open new gateways to further strengthen our international reach.

Other developments like our new Memorandum of Understanding with Cogent – the UK Sector Skills Council for Chemicals, Nuclear, Oil and Gas, Petroleum and Polymers – and the National Skills Academy for Process Industries, alongside our newly-acquired licence to register individuals at engineering technician status (EngTech) allow us to extend the breadth of our work.

We have offices in Australia and Malaysia and a growing presence in the likes of China, Singapore and India. More than 20% of our members are women and, like their male counterparts, they work in a wide range of industries. But as membership continues to grow and IChemE becomes more global, we recognise the challenge to ensure that the Institution continues to offer value and benefits to all of its members and stakeholders.

how will the value proposition review work?

IChemE staff members and Council are currently drawing up plans of what we consider to be the existing value proposition – ie, what IChemE can offer – for each subset of IChemE membership. We're also thinking about how that proposition needs to evolve in the coming years.

In January, we'll share our thoughts with you and, as part of the 2010 salary survey consultation, we'll ask for your feedback.

We'll then gather your results, analyse the data, amend our initial plans where necessary and then take to the streets and talk to as many of you as we feasibly can for face-to-face workshops and get more of your detailed input.

For those of you who can't join us in person, we'll invite you to attend web-based discussions. We'll then close the project with a final, more detailed member consultation survey before unveiling the final results.

We know what we currently offer in terms of member benefits, resources and qualifications. We think we know what you value most from us and your recent feedback on the impacts of the recession contained some very interesting pointers on what other services members might want from IChemE. And, we remain bound to a certain extent, by our bylaws.

Those of you who took part in IChemE's technical strategy two-and-a-half years ago will be familiar with the process we are about to embark on. The end result of that consultation



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was a clearer understanding of the Institution's technical direction that continues to underpin our policy and subject group direction.

Our president, Ian Shott, spoke about 'accelerated evolution' in his presidential address this year. Now we will discover whether IChemE needs to undergo its own process of accelerated evolution to meet the needs and expectations of its members and stakeholders. I'm looking forward to the project and to finding out what results it will yield.

We need you to become involved and to tell us what you want from your membership of this IChemE in the 21st century! **tce**

More information...

For more information about the IChemE value proposition review, visit www.icheme.org/valueproposition or contact Matt Stalker at mstalker@icheme.org

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