

2023 Annual Report of Congress

This report covers Congress activities between the Institution's AGMs in June 2022 and June 2023.

Congress has held three on-line sessions during this period using the 'Yammer' discussion tool. Some topics have been further supported by arranging webinars with Q&A sessions with the relevant VPs and staff where this added value. In the most recent session, a new form of engagement using an interactive whiteboard has been tried. Members support using this as a discussion medium again in future sessions. The outputs from Congress discussion are shared with the Trustees and their feedback and response via the President are much valued.

During 2022/23 there have been lively discussions on a range of topics. Some looked inwards at the Institution. These included the support that is available to applicants for chartership, communication of the recent changes to overseas subscription rates and most recently a review of the impact of Strategy 2024. Others were more outwards facing: employability and encouragement of chemical engineering outside traditional employment sectors and student engagement (supported by the recent survey of students commissioned by the IChemE). Importantly, Congress also covered two topics of more professional concern, strongly welcoming the Presidential theme of professional ethics and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and its recording.

Congress members have only been able to meet physically once, at the inaugural meeting in 2019, thanks to the intervening global pandemic. This it has been possible to arrange our second physical meeting, and as in 2019, the opportunity was taken to meet with the Board of Trustees and work together in a lively session on developing ideas for inclusion in the forthcoming Strategy 2028. Separately, Congress also discussed some important matters concerning its own operation, covering the kind and source of topics it should be discussing and how to promote Congress to fill vacant seats. We also covered two important topics of interest to the entire IChemE membership; improving communications within the Institution and how to 'promote and foster chemical engineering' with wider society.

In this year's elections, I have the pleasure of welcoming back four re-elected members and also five new Congress members. This brings the total membership to 25 (from 40 available seats) which is another drop in total from 28 last year. At our Annual Meeting in April, one of the topics Congress addressed was how to reverse this trend. A number of ideas will be progressed ahead of the commencement of the 2024 election campaign. Sharing the personal value and the impact of volunteering to support the IChemE through Congress is seen as key.

It is part of Congress's role and duty to assess and report on the Institution's business strategy and accounts. We see significant progress in developing the Institute for a more resilient future under 'Strategy 2024' and particularly note the continuing reputation of the qualification process to chartered chemical engineer. We commend the work of the Trustees and the Management in achieving the necessary changes. Congress looks forward to engaging in the development of the future strategy in collaboration with the Trustees and management over the coming year.

Congress cannot function without the support of the IChemE staff at Rugby. The Volunteer Engagement Manager, Chelly Walsma has been invaluable enabling on-line sessions to be set-up and managed and working with other staff to plan and arrange our 2nd face to face meeting in April 2023. I would like to publicly acknowledge the commitment and support of the outgoing CEO, Jon Prichard during Congress's first years and welcome his successor, Yvonne Baker, whose support is already clear. Congress members are looking forwards to another year of active engagement in matters of interest to all members of the Institution and continuing to be a representative 'Voice of the Membership'.

Rob Peeling
Congress Chair