

Developing a sustainable membership model at IChemE

How do we report our membership figures?

IChemE's current policy is to 'lapse' members who have not paid a subscription for two years. Lapsed members are deleted from the membership list at the end of the second year on 31 December.

This policy provides members with ample opportunity to clear any arrears and maintain their membership for two years. However, experience indicates that nearly all members who fail to pay their subscription in year one generally fail to pay in year two and are subsequently deleted. This arrangement makes it difficult to report membership figures accurately. The Institution is "carrying" members who are in arrears and unlikely to renew and this results in an inflated membership total. Therefore, trends in our membership figures can be masked for two years. Increases or decreases are not evident in our reporting until the 2 years have passed.

IChemE's 2017 year-end membership total was 42,699. This represents a 4% fall on the previous year end. The drop can be attributed to several factors; notably the ending of an Affiliate Society agreement with COIQCV in Spain and further rationalisation of our South African membership list. We also experienced a higher number of deletions of members in two year's arrears, notably in South East Asia, with double digit percentage drops reported for both Malaysia and Singapore.

As at 1 February 2018 30% of overall membership is Chartered (38% if the student membership is discounted).

Moving to sustainable membership growth

The most straight-forward way to join IChemE is via our Associate Member grade. Associate Membership is primarily for graduate chemical engineers who are gaining experience, building on their academic knowledge and are on course to becoming professionally qualified (e.g. Chartered Chemical Engineer). Many of those who lapse are Associate Members, who have not progressed to Chartered Membership for a variety of reasons.

IChemE celebrates its centenary year in 2022. The Institution's strategy and business planning for the next five years, *Strategy 2022*, is currently evolving and will be finalised following the 2018 AGM. The ambition is to switch the focus away from looking at membership growth in terms of top-line figures, looking instead at identifying and working with Associate Members to find the most appropriate routes for them to progress to professional membership.

Why are we doing this?

Professional Engineering Institutions rely on their qualified members (Chartered and Fellows), to nurture and develop the next generation of engineering professionals and contribute to their learned society work. IChemE is no different.

A balance is required between those seeking professional recognition, and those who have attained it. In recent years, the balance at IChemE has been tilted towards non-qualified members. This has proved challenging and prompted some unease amongst our qualified membership, which is significantly outnumbered by Student, Affiliate and Associate Members. Rebalancing is required to ensure that there is sufficient support for the professionally qualified members who make an essential contribution to the Institution's core activities.

What does the future of IChemE membership look like?

IChemE is looking to reduce the arrears period that triggers automatic lapsing and deletion from two years to one year. This will allow a more focussed approach to retention work with members who fall into arrears after one year. It is anticipated that this will deliver a more efficient process, better support for members in good standing and a stronger emphasis on progression to professional membership.

The likely impact of these changes will be a further spike in the number of lapsing members (likely to be in 2019). There will be no consequential financial impact, since these members have not made a subscription payment for a year or longer.

It takes two years for the effect of any deletions to reflect in the membership total. Therefore, the downward trend reported in 2018 may continue. Work on the development of a sustainable membership model remains a key element of *Strategy2022*.

February 2018