

Frequently Asked Questions regarding the changes

The Royal Statistical Society (RSS) Council has recommended that amendments be made to the RSS Royal Charter and Bylaws. A resolution was passed at a Special General Meeting held in September, subject to the result of a ballot of professionally qualified members (CStats).

This document provides background information on the proposed amendments and seeks to respond to some FAQs. We are organising an online meeting in early 2021 for members to ask further questions or seek clarification on related issues.

The ballot will be circulated following this meeting and there will be a two-week period during which members can vote. Further information on the process can be found later in this document.

Proposed changes to the Royal Statistical Society Charter and Bylaws

What is a royal charter and when was it awarded to the Royal Statistical Society?

Many new professional bodies were formed in the 19th century, representing the new post-industrial revolution industries. These bodies sought recognition by gaining royal charters, which lay out their constitutions and defined the professions in question, often based on occupational activity or expertise. To their various corporate aims, these professional bodies added the concept of working in the public interest – something not found in earlier incarnations of professional bodies. This established a pattern for British professional bodies, and the ‘public interest’ has become a key test for a body seeking a royal charter.

The Royal Statistical Society was one such body. Originally formed in 1834 as the ‘Statistical Society of London’, it became the Royal Statistical Society in 1887 upon being awarded its Royal Charter.

What are Bylaws?

An organisation’s Bylaws are concerned with the operation of the organisation and set out the form, manner, or procedures in which it should be run. Bylaws vary from organisation to organisation but generally cover such topics as the purpose of the organisation, who are its members, how it is governed and how trustees are elected, how meetings are conducted and what officers the organisation will have and a description of their duties. The wording of the Bylaws must be precise, otherwise the meaning may be open to interpretation.

The Royal Statistical Society Bylaws describe the constitution of the Society and its disciplinary procedures.

What is the process for approving changes to the Charter, the Bylaws, and the Regulations?

One of the sections in the Bylaws describes the procedures for amending Bylaws. It describes who can amend them (usually the membership), how much notice is needed and how much of a vote is needed.

Whilst the Bylaws describe the procedure for amending both the Royal Charter and Bylaws, even if a change is agreed by a vote of the membership, the request to change must then be approved by the Privy Council.

The Society has indicated that the current revision of Charter and Bylaws is required to modernise them. What are the characteristics of a 'modern' Charter and Bylaws?

The RSS Council agreed at its meeting in March this year to recommend to the fellowship the implementation of proposed changes to the Society's Royal Charter and Bylaws. Council considered the proposed revisions will modernise and clarify the Charter to better administer the Society without changing the fundamental purpose for which it was founded. Council agreed that the proposed revisions should be succinct, fit for purpose and meet the requirements of the Privy Council.

The proposed amendments to the Bylaws have few substantive changes but the document has been edited with many clauses being transferred to the Society's Regulations (these will be reviewed later as Council has authority to adapt and amend Regulations).

The intention when editing was to ensure that the overall meaning was kept for each of the Bylaws. The language used should be clear and concise with no ambiguity.

What are the key practical benefits to the Society of the proposed changes?

There are two substantive changes to note:

1 - Bylaw 19: The Professional Affairs Committee (PAC) shall be the registration authority for admission to the Register of Chartered Statisticians exercising authority delegated from Council.

This proposed change is so that PAC is more clearly identified as having delegated authority from the Trustees, particularly in respect of its disciplinary powers, because the courts recognise that the trustees are conflicted (wanting high standards but also not to lose income from removal of members). So, while the trustees will retain their ultimate authority, the PAC will have more independence in managing the Register of Chartered Statisticians.

2 - Bylaw 2.4 There shall be a category of Data Analysts whose members may continue to use the postnominal 'Data Analyst'

This proposed change is to allow the Society to launch a new category of membership, 'Data Analyst.' The Privy Council requires sight of the creation of any new categories of membership or qualification.

What specific changes to the Charter and Bylaws have led to the need for a ballot of the Professionally Qualified Fellows (CStats)?

Currently, there is a requirement that all changes to the Bylaws affecting the Professional Affairs Committee (PAC), the Chartered Statistician award and the Professionally Qualified Fellows (CStats) must be approved by a ballot of the Professionally Qualified Fellows.

What is the current role of the Professional Affairs Committee (PAC)?

The Professional Affairs Committee (PAC) is responsible for all professional aspects of the Society's work. These include conferral of professional status, accreditation of university courses, continuing professional development and any other matters concerned with professional training.

PAC also oversees any changes made to the Society's [Code of Conduct for RSS fellows](#).

The Committee consists of a chair and eight elected members, all of whom must be holders of CStat status. An election is held each year; all professionally qualified members of the Society may participate. In addition, a member of Society's Council, appointed by the Council, attends as a non-voting observer.

With these changes to the Charter and Bylaws is the scope of the work of the PAC, now described as that of a Registration Authority, changed?

With respect to the following four points, our legal advice is as follows: 'The important point is that, legally, it is the Council members that have the liability for the results of all decisions taken by the Society and such liability cannot be divided between the Council and PAC so all decisions are Council's even though PAC may take decisions under delegated authority from Council.'

The Professional Affairs Committee (PAC) currently has 'assigned' responsibilities in the Charter and with the proposed changes it has responsibilities 'delegated' to it by Council (as described in the Bylaws). What is the benefit of this change for the Society, for Council, for the PAC, and for the Professionally Qualified Fellows (CStats)?

Some of the changes have allowed us to be consistent with the language used and we feel 'delegated' is more representative of the work PAC can do daily without further authorisation from Council required.

Independence of the PAC as a Registration Authority is described as very important. Is there sufficient independence, given that Council appoints the Chair of the PAC and that its procedures and regulations must be approved by Council?

As PAC has been delegated to oversee applications for professional membership and the standards against which these applications are assessed against without further authorisation from Council, PAC is completely independent in its assessments and decision-making. PAC is also independent from the Training arm of the Society and therefore any training courses wishing to be accredited against our standards must apply to PAC via the same avenues as public modules/courses

Currently, there is a requirement that all changes to the Bylaws affecting the Professional Affairs Committee (PAC), the Chartered Statistician award and the Professionally Qualified Fellows (CStats) must be approved by a ballot of the Professionally Qualified Fellows. This is being removed from the Bylaws and so in future changes can be made by Council without determining whether these changes are in line with the wishes of the Professionally Qualified Fellows. What is the thinking behind this change?

Whilst this is being removed, any substantial changes to the Bylaws are still required to be presented to the entire membership and put to a vote at the AGM. Professionally Qualified Fellows are part of this group and therefore will still be able to vote on any such recommendations

What are the typical qualifications and experience required of members to be accepted on to the new Data Analyst Register? –

Please see the guidance notes on the website regarding how an individual may be eligible.

It is proposed not to have an acronym post-nominal for those on the Data Analyst register. What is the thinking behind this?

Individuals that successfully apply for the title of Data Analyst will be registered holders of the title and appear on our professional register as such. Holders will then be able to use the title RSS Data Analyst after their name. They will also have access to an e-badge and be awarded an e-certificate.

How does the Society plan to support and encourage progression of members along the professional pathway from Data Analyst, through Graduate Statistician, to Chartered Statistician?

The RSS will be promoting progression through the professional pathway (which can be found here - [link](#)) using the new competency framework. It is the first time the RSS membership offering has been directly linked with a competency framework allowing members to identify which competencies they have achieved and which they can continue to work towards. Members will be able to then upskill appropriately as they plan to progress through the pathway. Watch out for further development as not only will members be able to gain these competencies via their work experience, but they will also be able to register qualifying training courses and modules, including RSS training courses.

How will the ballot of Professionally Qualified Fellows (CStats) be organised, what question(s) will be asked in the ballot, and what will be the timeline from the opening of the ballot for voting, until the results of the ballot being communicated?

We are circulating all the information relating to the ballot to all professionally qualified fellows prior to the Christmas period 2020.

We will be organising an online meeting in early January 2021 to answer any questions that professionally qualified members may have.

A ballot will be sent to all professionally qualified members asking the following questions:

There will be a two-week period during which voting will take place.

Once the ballot has taken place and the votes counted, the outcome of the ballot will be communicated to all professionally qualified fellows, and subsequently to the wider membership.

Assuming changes to the Charter and Bylaws are supported by the ballot, what are the subsequent steps before the changes are approved and implemented?

The process and timeline for making the proposed revisions and subsequent submission of amendments to the Privy Council are as follows:

1. The Society called a Special General Meeting in September 2020 at which a resolution to make amendments to the Supplementary Charter and revisions to the Bylaws was put to the fellowship of the Society.
2. Those RSS fellows present at the AGM were called on to vote on the resolution to revise the Charter and Bylaws.
3. The fellowship agreed to the amendments subject to the result of a ballot of professionally qualified members. If the outcome of that ballot agrees to the amendments, Council can continue with the application to the Privy Council.
4. The Society to compile a list of non-objectors for the Privy Council: this is a list of other professional organisations who have been consulted on these changes and have raised no objections.
5. Once Council has agreed to the changes, and any later changes, the documents are delivered to the Privy Council with the Petition signed by the President and sealed.

Can I see the existing version of the Bylaws, as well as the proposed version?

Yes – they are available here:

[Current RSS Bylaws](#)

[Proposed RSS Bylaws](#) (PDF - changes in red)

[Proposed RSS Bylaws with tracked changes](#) (.docx)

When will the Regulations underpinning the changed Charter and Bylaws be drafted, reviewed, and approved?

During 2021 in consultation with relevant committees of the Society, including PAC where applicable.