

Comments of the Working Group on the drafts of statutes, rules for elections and rules for awards and prizes circulated by the Council

Summary

In late 2023, the Council asked Catherine Jami to convene a Working Group to prepare a new set of statutes for the Academy. The group, consisting of Catherine Jami, Christopher Cullen, Luiz Carlos Soares, and Liu Dun, submitted to the Council a complete draft of new statutes in November 2024. Nineteen months later, in June 2026, the Council circulated draft statutes differing markedly from those we had prepared, together with draft rules for elections and draft rules for awards and prizes. The members of the original Working Group have studied these documents carefully, and have produced detailed, specific and reasoned proposals for amendments. In some cases these amendments are designed to eliminate inconsistencies and lack of clear definition in the Council's drafts. In others we have raised objections of principle to the Council's proposals, and we consider it our duty as responsible members of the Academy to lay these before members. We hope that members will engage in an informed discussion of the relevant issues through all available channels.

Members and their rights

We support the proposal that apart from honorary members there should only be one class of members, thereby simplifying relevant administration. We see no reason why this should lower the quality of members elected. We oppose the idea that members who do not or cannot pay dues should be expelled, and instead propose a simple rule that the right to vote in any given year should depend on having paid dues for that year.

Use of electronic voting

We have tried to clarify the voting procedures proposed, but remain strongly of the view that in the second quarter of the 21st century the Academy should get up to date by following the example of other bodies in adopting electronic voting procedures throughout its activities.

No permanent tenure of Council offices

We strongly oppose the proposal to allow some council officers to remain in office indefinitely, on general grounds of principle and in view of the obvious benefits of renewing the governance of the Academy as it moves towards the future.

Proposals to expand the role of the 'Archivist-Administrative Secretary'

The proposals made to expand the role of this post holder (previously simply 'The Archivist'), combined with the proposal to enable unlimited tenure of the post, appear to be of little benefit to the Academy. These proposals should be resisted, both in principle and under present circumstances.

Proposal to limit elections of members to a fixed fraction of nominations

We strongly oppose the proposal to limit the number of new members who can be elected in any given election to one-third (or any other fraction) of those nominated. We believe that few members will wish to ask distinguished colleagues to accept nomination under such conditions, given the high likelihood that they will not be elected.

Exclusion of persons connected with Council members from prize awards

On a positive note: we applaud the exclusion from prize awards of persons connected with Council members. Regardless of the merits of the person to whom the award is made, such awards risk raising questions about the integrity of the process that has led to such an award.

(The summary above has been added by Jami and Cullen for the convenience of readers. What follows has been approved by all members of the Working Group.)

COMMENTS ON THE THREE DOCUMENTS CIRCULATED

1. STATUTES

General remarks

- We will base our comments on the English version, so that they can be shared with all Academy members.
- The style of the English version needs to be polished. In particular, the provisions in the Statutes are supposed to be binding, so the use of “shall” should be generalized, rather than using “will” or the present tense.
- The statutes need to be made gender-neutral and inclusive. This can be achieved in French as well as English without breaking spelling and grammar rules. It is not acceptable that any of the texts defining the Academy’s rules should refer to all posts of responsibility using masculine pronouns. There is no systematic change to that effect in what follows, but when we propose a rewriting, we use they/them/their as non-gendered pronouns, which is normal nowadays English usage.
- The use of the term “General Assembly” is inconsistent:
8.1 defines it as one of the deliberative bodies of the Academy;
9.1 considers “General Assembly” as a meeting. Only *sessions* of the General Assembly can be ordinary or extraordinary. The deliberative body consisting of all members does not change.

The detailed comments below aim to make the statutes unambiguous and consistent. In some cases, we are opposed to the rules proposed, and we put forward an alternative rule acceptable to us.

Comments on articles

Article 6

6.1. This article states that there is only one category of members. Why continue to call them “effective members”? This brings confusion. We suggest that Article 6 should simply be titled ‘Members’, and that Article 6.1 should read:

“6.1. Apart from honorary members (see Article 7), the Academy has only one class of members. Those who hold the status of ‘corresponding members’ and those who hold the status of ‘effective members’ before the adoption of the present statutes shall become simply ‘members’ once these new statutes have been adopted.”

6.2. The word ‘Effective’ should be deleted.

6.3. In contradiction with the statement in 6.1, this article introduces a further category of members, “active members”. Instead, this article should be rewritten to read:

“6.3. Only those members who have paid their annual dues for any given year by the date set by the Administrative Council are entitled to vote, and stand for election to positions on the Academies bodies and committees during that year. Those who

have not paid their dues as set out here may still nominate candidates for election as members.”

6.4. Here there are another two new categories:

- “non-active members”
- those “released from their obligations”

Neither of these categories are defined. This article should be rewritten to read:

“6.4. Subject to the exclusions set out in Article 6.3, all members may participate in activities of the Academy, and, with the agreement of the Administrative Council, propose or organize new activities which promote the objectives of the Academy.”

6.5. This article is objectionable in two respects:

- It implies that the more elderly of our colleagues, if they are no longer capable of paying their yearly fee for financial reasons or simply through the infirmities of old age, will be expelled from the Academy at the end of their life. This would be shameful.
- In the present version of the Statutes, nothing prevents current members from nominating and electing former members who have been expelled.

This article should be rewritten as:

“6.5. Membership is terminated through death, resignation, or serious misconduct, in accordance with the procedures defined in the Internal Regulations.”

It is highly unfortunate that the Council, after more than a year of deliberations, has not yet proposed to members what those internal regulations might be. This deficiency should be remedied without further delay.

Article 7

The title of this article should be simply ‘Honorary members’.

7.1. Rewrite to read:

“7.1. Honorary membership may be awarded to scholars or persons in public life who have promoted the study of the history of science through support of public institutions, activities of the Academy, or financial contributions to assist the Academy’s work. Honorary membership is awarded for life. It does not carry the right to vote.”

7.2. Delete “Active”. Instead of “which submits them” write “which shall submit them”.

7.3. After “two proposals” add “of candidates for election as honorary members”.

7.4. After “honorary members” insert “at any one time”.

7.5. Delete “active” before “members”.

Article 9

9.1. After “two types of” insert “of sessions of the”.

9.2. Delete “active effective members” and insert “members who have paid their dues for the current year”.

9.3. Delete the two occurrences of the word “active” in this article.

9.4. Delete the word “and” and write “in addition to”. After “a proxy vote” insert “which they may cast on behalf of another member”.

Article 10

10.1. “Frequency” should be changed to “Frequency of sessions”

10.2. mentions “the new year letter” which is nowhere defined. The preparing and sending of this letter (which could be called the “annual letter” to make it clear that this is not a kind of “Season’s Greetings”) should be mentioned in Article 16 as one of the tasks that fall to the Permanent Secretary, who is tasked with all communications to members.

10.3. Change “addresses” to “shall address”.

Change “It votes on the annual report presented by the Permanent Secretary” to “It shall vote on the approval of the annual report presented by the Permanent Secretary”.

Change “It reviews the decisions of the Administrative Council” to “It votes on the approval of the decisions of the Administrative Council”

Change “It votes on the approval of the Academy’s draft budget ...” to “It shall vote on the approval of the Academy’s draft budget ...”

10.4. Reword to read:

“10.4. Decisions shall be made by a majority of more than half of the total number of members present in person or remotely, or represented by a proxy present at the meeting, who have the right to vote under the conditions laid down in Article 6.3.”

Article 12

The periodicity of Council meetings should be mentioned in this article, just like those of the General Assembly are above in article 10.1. We suggest adding the following article:

“The Council shall meet in person or online at least once a year. If decisions need to be made between Council meetings, this shall be done by a vote by e-mail or other electronic means.”

This leaves the Council in the clear if it is unable to meet more than once in a given year, while enabling it to approve minutes of a meeting while everyone still remembers what took place; it makes it possible for all Academy members to be informed of the Council’s decisions and activities without undue delay.

12.2. Delete “administrators” and instead insert “members” in the title of the article.

In the text of the article, delete “effective”. Article 6.3 has already made it clear that only member fulfilling the condition of having paid their dues can stand for election to posts on the Council.

12.3. Should be simply “Non-elected members of the Administrative Council”.

Article 12.3.1 (c) It would be wise to check with DHST before passing this article, to ensure that they still wish to have a representative attending the Academy's Council meetings. To the best of our knowledge the DHST statutes make no mention of the Academy.

The Academy is a member of the International Academic Union (IAU), and has appointed a representative to IAU. This representative should be, firstly, appointed by the Academy's Council; secondly, an ex-officio member of the Academy's Council. Therefore add:

“(e) the representative of the Academy to the International Academic Union.”
(see also 12.7 below)

12.4 Change ‘Election’ to ‘Elections’

12.5 In the draft we submitted, all offices were limited to two terms. We regret that the Council has not heeded our advice: while we are grateful for officers' service to IAHS, we believe it is vital for the Academy's future that the Council should be regularly renewed, and that more members should be actively involved in the Academy's life by serving on the Council. The present post descriptions for the Treasurer and for the “Archivist and Administrative Secretary” do not justify that they should be monopolized by the same persons for what could be decades. The Treasurer has to be elected by members, but if the post of “Archivist and Administrative Secretary” is so very technical, then it should be an ex-officio post rather than an elected post.

12.6. The second paragraph suggests that the president could be replaced by the person who lost the election to them. What are the vice-presidents for? Similarly, appointing the person who lost the election to the Permanent Secretary might be unwise. We suggest to replace “In filling the first two posts, preference will be given to the candidate who had the second highest number of votes in the elections for this post.” with:

“In the event of the President's post being vacated, the first Vice-president should replace the President. In the event of the Permanent Secretary's post being vacated, the Council shall appoint an interim Permanent Secretary, and organise an election for the vacant post as soon as possible, and no later than six months after the post has become vacant.”

12.7 (d) Fifteen days is too short for members to be able to seriously consider amendments. We recommend 4 months, and the opening of an online group discussion to enable the members to clearly understand the stakes of the proposed amendments.

Add:

“(f) appoints the Academy's representative to the International Academic Union.”

Article 13

The proposed Executive Committee has 9 members. This is too many to “manage collectively the day-to-day affairs” of the Academy. We suggest no more than 4 members, e.g. President, First Vice-President, Permanent Secretary and Treasurer.

Article 14

Delete “of the Academy. He” and insert “of the Academy and”

Delete “the President acts” and insert “the President shall act”

Article 16

It is not clear what is meant by “the living archives”. Delete “retains the living archives” and insert “retains custody of archival materials that are currently relevant to the work of the Council during the Permanent Secretary’s term of office, subject to the right of all members of the Academy to have sight of any part of those archives on reasonable notice”.

Delete “He establishes the agenda and is responsible for preparing, circulating and amending” and insert “They shall establish the agenda in consultation with the President and shall prepare, circulate and where agreed with the Council amend ...”. Insert “They shall publish the minutes of all Council meetings online, in a form that all members can read, within one month of each council meeting”.

In the description of the Permanent Secretary’s duties, it should be clearly defined what is meant by the so-called “New year letter” (A better name might be “annual letter”) mentioned in 10.2 but nowhere explained. Who prepares it? Does the Council have to agree on its content? Has the President a role in its preparation? What information does it contain? How is it to be conveyed to members – online, one would hope! Should there only be one letter a year?

Rewrite “... a report mentioning the votes will be immediately drawn up” to “shall be prepared within the ten days following”.

Rewrite “prepares the activity report and presents it on behalf of the Administrative Council to the General Assembly.” to “shall prepare the activity report, and after this report is approved by the Administrative Council, shall present it to the General Assembly.”

The Permanent Secretary has other duties that include:

- Informing members of the date and venue of General Assembly session, at least 4 months in advance.
- Circulating the agenda of a GA session at least two weeks before this session.
- Circulating the agenda of Council meetings.
- Circulating minutes of GA sessions and Council meetings to all members no later than 30 days after they have taken place.
- Calling for Council votes outside Council meetings when it is in the interest of the Academy (for example for the minutes of a Council meeting, to avoid members receiving those minutes 6 months late).

Therefore, we suggest the addition of the following paragraph:

“The Permanent Secretary’s administrative duties are listed in the Internal Regulations.”

Article 17

Rewrite “The Treasurer prepares, or causes” to “The Treasurer shall prepare, or cause”. After “to the General Assembly” insert “for a vote on whether to approve them”.

Rewrite “Academy’s financial and asset situation” to “values and locations of the Academy’s cash and other financial holdings.”

Rewrite “The Assistant Treasurer assists” to “The Assistant Treasurer shall assist”.

Article 18

This article is not clearly expressed, and needs to be rewritten. Apart from the fact that it is not clear, it seems to carry the risk that it may lead to conflicts with the duties of the Permanent Secretary.

We note that “The safekeeping” of the archives (apart from the current materials in the custody of the Permanent Secretary, see Article 16) is at present entrusted to the CAPHÉS (Centre d'Archives en Philosophie, Histoire et Édition des Sciences), which is a CNRS “Research Support Unit” (UAR) based at the École normale supérieure (ENS) in Paris. There seems no reason to change this arrangement.

Before members can approve of the Archivist-Administrative Secretary “granting exemptions”, they need to be informed of the rules to which such exemptions are to be granted. “Substantiated letters” is too vague a category, and could lead to controversy.

We therefore suggest that this article should be reworded to read:

“The Archivist-Administrative Secretary assists the Permanent Secretary with administrative procedures, and ensures that archival material received from the President, the Permanent Secretary and the Treasurer at the end of their terms is safely deposited with the CAPHÉS (Centre d'Archives en Philosophie, Histoire et Édition des Sciences). At the time when these archives are deposited with CAPHÉS, the Archivist-Administrative Secretary shall ask the Council to designate appropriate articles as ‘restricted’, and the Council shall decide whether the article should or should not be so designated. If the CAPHÉS transmits to the Academy a request to view material not classified as ‘restricted’, the Archivist-Administrative Secretary shall inform the CAPHÉS that the material may be viewed. If the Council has designated a requested article as ‘restricted’, the Archivist-Administrative Secretary shall ascertain the reasons given for wishing to view the article, and pass them to the Council with a recommendation as to whether permission to view the article should or should not be granted. Once the Council has come to a decision, the Archivist-Administrative Secretary shall inform the CAPHÉS whether or not the Academy is willing for the article to be viewed.”

Article 19

“Dossier” in English does not work here. Instead, write “material relating to elections of new members, honorary members, or for posts on the Council”.

Article 20

20.2. The participation quorum mentioned in this article needs to be defined. Is it necessary only for a vote to change the statutes to be valid, for all extraordinary sessions of the General Assembly, or for ordinary sessions as well? Moreover, entrusting the vote on amendments to the statutes to the those who can make it to an in-person meeting is in conflict with the idea that remote presence at a General Assembly is a form of attendance of equal validity with in-person attendance. Change to:

“20.2. At least one third of the members who have paid their dues and therefore have voting rights under Article 6.3 must participate in this extraordinary session of the General Assembly. This includes members who have paid their dues and therefore have voting rights under Article 6.3, and who are present in person or remotely as well as those who are represented by proxy. If the participation quorum is not reached, a new General Assembly may be held after a period of 15 days.”

20.3. Rewrite “present or represented” with “present in person or remotely present or represented by a proxy”.

Article 21

21.2 As above, demanding in person presence at the GA session that will decide on the dissolution of the Academy is a breach of equal treatment of members, in particular those unable to travel to the venue for whatever reason. Therefore rewrite “must be physically present or represented” to “must be present in person or remotely or represented by a proxy”.

Add article 21.4.

“No proposal to dissolve the Academy shall be valid unless it includes a clear and practicable statement of how the Academy’s assets are to be disposed of.”

2. ELECTORAL REGULATIONS

1. Election of new effective members

Delete “effective” from this heading.

1.1. Delete “effective”. What constitutes “a serious impediment”? This vague term seems to give the Council the right to postpone elections whenever they wish.

This article refers to the so-called “New Year’s letter”, which is nowhere defined.

The sentence “The Administrative Council will take appropriate measures to introduce all the nominees to the members” does not belong in this section.

1.2. Delete “effective” from this article (2 occurrences).

Giving the Council the right to “limit the election of new members to underrepresented disciplines” is problematic in two ways:

a. There are no authoritative subdivisions of history of science into “disciplinary fields”, nor any statistics as to the number of historians of science working in different subfields. Therefore, the Council cannot be in a position to make well-based recommendations.

b. Writing that “nominators should follow this recommendation” is wishful thinking. What happens if some of them don’t? What happens if all of them do, and as a result the formerly “underrepresented disciplinary fields” become overrepresented after the election?

Therefore, delete the paragraph reading:

“The Administrative Council reserves the right, if necessary, to limit the election of new effective members to underrepresented disciplinary fields. In this case, nominators should follow this recommendation.”

We note that the nominations process can only work well if all academy members have access to an up-to-date members list (excluding those who are dead) and the means to contact any of the other members. At present this is not the case.

Delete the word “Effective”.

1.3. “Dossier” should be changed to “Application” throughout this article

Demanding that the applications should include materials in French will result in at least one of the two following problems:

- Making it more difficult for colleagues outside Europe and French speaking countries, that is to say, the majority of historians of science in the world, to nominate or be nominated. This is a breach of equal treatment of members and nominees.
- Academy members will be sent documents that are in bad French, produced by an A.I. translator.

In the year 2026, the Academy should have an online website through which nominations can be submitted in a standard form, rather than using an email address

1.4. Change “dossiers” to “applications”.

Delete “active members” and substitute “members who have the right to vote as defined in Article 6.3”.

1.5. “The election [...] will take place according to the procedures decided by the Administrative Council”

What is there to decide that is not specified in the present regulations? Everything should be specified in the Internal Regulations. This remark also applies to sections 3.5 and 4.5 below.

The word ‘bailiff’ in English does not have the same meaning as the French ‘huissier’; indeed it is not easy to think what kind of person outside France does what a ‘huissier’ does in France. This article should be rewritten to read:

“The voting shall be conducted by one of two means; the Council shall decide which means are to be used in any given election:

(a) using physical ballot papers.

(b) by electronic means.

If method (a) is used, the ballot papers shall be sent to a legally qualified person who is not a member of the Academy, who will deal with them as the Council instructs. A ballot paper must not display any distinguishing marks or signatures, and ballot papers on which a voter marks more names than there are places vacant will be declared null and void.

If method (b) is used, voting shall be conducted online using a system provided by an independent, accredited company.”

1.6. We strongly oppose the idea of defining the number of places open for new members as a fixed fraction of the number of nominations.

One immediate effect of this would be to encourage members to make a large number of nominations, rather than nominating only colleagues they wish to be elected.

We also strongly oppose the idea that the ratio between the number of nominations and the number of posts should be 3 to 1. This small ratio will discourage members from making nominations, and potential candidates from accepting nominations. Speaking for ourselves, we would not feel able to nominate excellent and well-qualified candidates if we had to tell them that there was only a one in three chance that they would be elected.

The main danger for the Academy at present is not that it should be overwhelmed by younger colleagues, but that it should lose more members in the same way it has in 2025, and that younger scholars should consider the Academy to be an irrelevant body that they have no wish to join. At the time of writing we are unclear how many members the Academy has, but it is

certainly far less than the 500 specified in Article 6.6. The Council could if it wishes plan to solve this problem by deciding in advance a fixed number of candidates for election, with the aim, over the years ahead, of growing the Academy's membership. The process of nomination is a demanding one, and it is unlikely that members will go to the trouble of nominating people they do not honestly believe to be worthy of the honour of membership.

Therefore, in place of the paragraph reading:

“At the close of nominations, it counts the valid dossiers and sets the number of seats at one-third (rounded up to the nearest whole number if necessary) of the number of nominees. This information is communicated to all voting members together with the ballot paper.”

Substitute this paragraph:

“Before each election of members takes place, the Council shall decide on the number of candidates who may be elected, and shall announce this number when the election is called. If this number is N, then when the votes have been counted the N candidates having the greatest number of votes shall be declared to have been elected. If a number of candidates tie for the lowest vote, they shall all be declared to have been elected.”

Replace ‘bailiff’ with ‘legally qualified person’.

1.7. Replace ‘bailiff’ with ‘legally qualified person’.

1.8. What are the criteria for the necessity of organizing more elections in the 3 years after the new statutes are adopted? A sensible electoral rule, for example filling all the posts announced before the election, should make this provision unnecessary. We suggest that this Article should be deleted.

2. Admission of new honorary members

The admission procedure described here includes a vote of all members who have the right to vote under Article 6.3 of the statutes. This contradicts Article 6.1. of the Statutes proposed by the Council, which states: “The Academy has only one type of elected membership.” The procedure described here will only be valid if the rephrasing of Article 6.1 that we propose above is adopted.

2.3. As throughout this text, ‘Dossier’ would be better changed for another English word, such as (in this case) ‘proposals’.

2.4. For “active members of the Academy” substitute “members entitled to vote under the provisions set out in Article 6.3 of the Statutes”.

2.5, 2.6 and 2.7. These three articles, with their references to ‘ballot papers’ and scrutineers who check such papers, are written in terms that appear to exclude members with voting rights under Article 6.3 who are remotely present at the meeting. They need to be written in terms that include electronic voting.

2.7 “Executive Bureau” should be “Executive Committee”.

“the candidate who obtained a simple majority” should be replaced by “candidates who have obtained a simple majority”.

3. Renewal of the Executive Committee

“Renewal” should be replaced by “Election” in this heading and in the whole section.

3.3. The term ‘programmatic statement’ is obscure. It should be replaced by a description of what is intended, which is perhaps “a statement of what the candidate intends to do if elected”.

3.4. Replace “active members” by “members who have the right to vote under the conditions laid down in article 6.3”. As elsewhere, “dossiers” should be replaced by a meaningful English word, in this case “applications”.

3.5. As elsewhere “bailiff” does not work in English. Substitute “legally qualified person”.

3.6. For “bailiff” substitute “the legally qualified person referred to in Article 3.5.”

3.7. For “bailiff” substitute “the legally qualified person referred to in Article 3.5.”

The statement “Any ballot form showing votes for more than one name for each position is invalid” does not belong in this section, and should be deleted.

As above, “programmatic statement” should be replaced by words that make it clear what is intended by this obscure phrase.

“Most senior” is ambiguous, and could be understood in terms of career: Substitute “older”, which appears to be is what is meant. This remark also applies to 4.7.

4. Renewal of the Permanent Secretary

Same as above: “Renewal” should be replaced by “Election”

4.4. As before, replace “active members of the Academy” by “members of the Academy entitled to vote under the provisions of Article 6.3.”

4.5. How are “the procedures decided by the Administrative Council” known to members? What are these provisions at this moment in time?

4.7. As before, change “bailiff” to “the legally qualified person referred to in Article 3.5.”

3. DISTINCTIONS AND PRIZES

Article 1: Koyré Medal

1.2. For “active members of the Academy” substitute “members of the Academy entitled to vote under the provisions of Article 6.3.”

1.3. One more, we meet the undefined “New year’s letter”.

1.4. For “Members of the Executive Committee cannot be nominated for the Koyré Medal.” substitute:

“Members of the Executive Committee, their spouses or partners, persons of their family, their colleagues in the same institution cannot be nominated for the Koyré Medal.”

Here as for electing new members, demanding that the applications should be bilingual will result in at least one of the two following problems:

- It will make it more difficult for colleagues outside Europe and French speaking countries, that is to say, the majority of historians of science in the world, to nominate or be nominated. Many people will regard this as improper discrimination.
- Giving academy members documents in French to read that have been imperfectly translated by A.I.

1.5.

2nd paragraph: change “the validity of the files” to “the validity of the nominations”.

4th paragraph: change the text “The result is communicated by the Archivist/Administrative Secretary to the Administrative Council as quickly as possible” to “The result is communicated by the Permanent Secretary to the Administrative Council as quickly as possible”.

This kind of duty usually falls to the Permanent Secretary, and no reason is given why this should not be the case.

Article 2: Prize for Young Historians

Change “Historians” to “Historians of Science”

2.1. Again, change “Historians” to “Historians of Science”.

2.3. Once more we encounter the undefined “New Year’s letter”.

2.4. Change “a brief one-page presentation in French and English” to “a one-page presentation in English.”

The text states: “if the book exists in print, it must be sent to CAPHES (the same applies to an e-book)”. Sending a hard copy of a book may well cost those proposing more than EUR 100. This provision is burdensome, and discriminates against those who cannot afford to do so. It should be deleted.

Change “or are beyond the deadline” to “or are received after the deadline”.

2.5. Change “rapporteurs” to “reviewers”

The terms “files” and “dossiers” should be replaced by “nominations”.

Again, it should be the Permanent Secretary, not the Archivist/Administrative Secretary who reports to the Council.

In the text “In this case, the third Vice-President or another member of the Executive Committee is chosen.”, what is “the case” that is being referred to? It looks as if this text is out of place and should be deleted.

“the Spring Council meeting” is nowhere mentioned in the statutes.