

APS Policy Document

# Consultation and communication

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## Introduction

Effective consultation and communication are critical components of a cohesive member-based organisation. The members of the Presidential Taskforce have developed a policy to describe the principles and process for APS member consultation across its member groups and members.

By providing a structured approach, we aim to ensure that all members are well-informed, their voices are heard, and their input is valued. The policy is designed to foster trust and confidence between members with leadership of the APS, through promoting transparency, engagement, and mutual respect, ultimately enhancing the collective strength and unity across our diverse organisation.

While the APS will make its best efforts to consult with all relevant members, striving for inclusivity and transparency, it acknowledges that outcomes cannot be guaranteed; members are also expected to actively participate and engage in the consultation process.

## Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to identify clear and effective consultation and communication processes between members and APS leadership. Effective consultation will strengthen informed decision making, encourage member participation, and strengthen the overall sense of community and trust within the APS.

## Objectives

The policy seeks to strengthen the overall cohesiveness and effectiveness of consultation and communication between members and the organisation. The consultation and communication policy aims to:

- ensure that all members have access to timely, accurate and relevant information
- facilitate meaningful consultation processes through which members can provide input and feedback on member related organisational decisions
- promote active engagement and participation from all members, fostering a sense of community and collaboration
- establish consistency and clarity through standards for various communication methods
- enhance mutual understanding and trust within the organisation by maintaining open lines of communication
- support informed decision making by incorporating diverse perspectives and insights from the membership.

## Scope and Application

The organisation's commitment to consulting/consultation with members on developing, reviewing, and/or communicating governance, and organisational policies is outlined in this policy. The goal is to create a collaborative and transparent environment where members are actively involved, and their contributions are respected and valued. By conducting regular and meaningful consultations, the APS aims to improve the effectiveness and inclusiveness in its decision-making process. In doing so, it emphasises collective strength, promoting mutual responsibility and active participation among all members.

The policy applies to everyone associated with the APS. Its purpose is to ensure that all members, regardless of their role or level of involvement, can have access to accurate information and meaningful opportunities to contribute.

The policy covers consultation with members on developing, reviewing and communicating:

- Governance policies and strategic direction, including matters such as constitutional change, committee provisions, elections and representation, regulations and member group governance
- Development of APS positions on psychology or the psychology profession which require extended advocacy

government and other stakeholders

- Advice on organisational policies and services reviews as they apply to members.

The policy does not apply to:

- Personal consultation and communication between members, casual or social interactions, and informal discussions that do not pertain to organisational matters
- Additionally, it excludes consultation and communication related to legal or confidential matters which are governed by separate confidentiality policies and legal frameworks
- By clearly defining these exclusions the policy aims to remain focused on the formal consultation and communication process which is essential for the organisation's operations and governance.

## Definitions

The distinction between independent decision-making, information sharing, and comprehensive consultation, is underscored in this section, advocating for a nuanced approach tailored to each scenario. It promotes a spectrum model that recognises varying degrees of member involvement, from informed notification to robust consultation with reciprocal feedback. By delineating these definitions and approaches, this policy aims to foster clarity and consistency in the implementation of consultation and communication practices across the organisation.

### Consultation:

Consultation involves seeking *input, advice, or expertise* from relevant stakeholders before making decisions or changes. It ensures active engagement with individuals or groups who have a vested interest in the matter at hand. The process can occur across committees, member groups, across departments, or with external partners. Effective consultation considers diverse perspectives, leading to well-informed and inclusive decision-making that enhances the effectiveness of the organisation.

### Communication:

Communication is *the exchange of information, ideas, thoughts, and feelings* between individuals or groups. It includes verbal, non-verbal, and written interactions. Clear communication fosters collaboration, prevents and/or resolves conflicts, and enhances understanding within an organisation or community.

Consultation spectrum and process:

The consultation spectrum outlines levels of member participation:

- Governance: decisions must be made by the Board or the Board's delegates, in accordance with corporations law and/or the APS Constitution. There is no consultation with members.  
  
The Board has the power to delegate any of its powers of direction and management of the APS to a Director, person or committee under the APS Delegations of Authority Policy.
- Delegated decision: decisions are made under delegation by management, elected representatives or a combination of both. There is no consultation with members.
- Inform: the APS distributes information about a specific topic or decision to members or a representative segment of the membership base.
- Consult: members' views are sought via an appropriate data collection method, such as a survey (online, phone-based or written), forum, submission or vote.
- Involve: members are invited to actively engage in a specific decision-making process through participation in a committee, taskforce, working group, reference group or similar.
- Where organisation-wide decisions are made, all communication will be directed through executive or business leadership in order to maintain a structured hierarchy of information dissemination.

Using this approach ensures consultation and communication practices are clear and consistently applied throughout the

organisation.

## Consultation

The policy outlines various methods for engaging members in consultation processes to ensure their voices are heard and their opinion is valued. The consultation methods covered by this policy include but are not limited to:

- Surveys and questionnaires: tools designed to gather member opinions, preferences, and feedback on specific issues or proposals that relate to the functioning of the organisation
- Focus groups: small, diverse groups of members brought together to discuss and provide detailed input on particular topics
- Town hall meetings: open forums where members can engage in dialogue with organisational leaders and discuss important matters
- Committees and working groups: structured groups that include member representation to work on specific projects or areas of interest
- Public comment periods: designated times when members can review and comment on proposed policies, plans, or changes before final decisions are made
- Suggestion boxes: physical or digital boxes where members can submit ideas, concerns, or feedback anonymously
- Interviews and one-on-one meetings: personal interactions with selected members to gain in depth insights and perspectives
- Workshops and seminars: interactive sessions designed to educate members on specific issues and solicit their feedback and ideas
- Online forums and discussion boards: digital platforms where members can participate in ongoing discussions and consultations on various topics.

## Communication

The policy covers a broad range of communication methods to facilitate effective information sharing and consultation. These include but are not limited to:

- Email: regular updates, newsletters, and official announcements
- Meetings: general assemblies (town halls), board meetings, committee meetings, member meetings, forums
- Digital platforms: website, social media channels, member portals
- Printed materials: brochures, reports, policies, official documents, correspondence
- Survey and feedback forms: tools to gather member views, sentiment, and suggestions
- Events, workshops and training sessions: opportunities for education and engagement on specific topic
- Telephone and video conferences: for real time discussions and consultation
- Encompasses all of the above by individuals in their capacity as an APS member.

## Guiding Principles

Our Guiding Principles serve as the compass that directs our actions and shapes our policy. These principles represent our commitment to our values as a member organisation: stronger together, respect in every action, forward thinking, and professional integrity. By adhering to our values and these guiding principles, we foster trust, empower our members, and ensure that our decisions align with our mission and values. In this section, we delve into each principle, providing

clarity on how they guide our consultation and communication.

As an organisation, the APS values effective collaboration, the efforts of others and building unity through partnerships to be stronger together. We act with care and compassion, communicate honestly, value diversity, and treat everyone with dignity to show respect in every action. By embracing new technology, anticipating future trends, and encouraging creative solutions we demonstrate our forward thinking, and we uphold professional integrity by delivering excellence, being accountable, leading by example, and adhering to high ethical standards.

### Unity of purpose: one organisation, one purpose

We understand our members come from different backgrounds and have diverse experiences and views. Yet we are all committed to the same goals as an organisation. Unity of purpose ensures that every member is respected, and their opinions are considered when decisions are made, taking into account what members need.

By embracing our members' diversity and working together towards common goals, we aim to create a supportive environment. We adapt how we communicate and consult so that it suits the preferences and needs of our members. We hope to ensure everyone feels valued and included. It also helps us make choices that benefit everyone in our organisation, reflecting the interests and hopes of our diverse group of members.

### Giving members the tools and the technology to provide their individual voice

We strive to ensure every member feels safe, listened to, respected, and appreciated. We do this by giving members the tools they need to talk openly and comfortably. We create a culture where everyone feels included and safe. When members can communicate freely, it encourages them to take part and share their ideas. It also helps us think ahead and suggest options that help our whole organisation grow.

### Creating a psychologically safe environment

We are committed to ensuring that every member and staff equally feel secure and encouraged to speak up and feels valued when expressing their thoughts and opinions. We believe in the importance of open and honest communication, where differing viewpoints are welcomed and discussed with kindness and understanding. We address disagreements directly, yet with empathy and consideration, ensuring that all interactions contribute to a supportive and inclusive atmosphere. By prioritising respect and care in our discourse we create a foundation where everyone can contribute freely and confidently. All APS leaders, members and staff are accountable for building and maintaining psychological safety.

### Identify and clearly articulate why we're communicating and consulting

Knowing when to consult means actively deciding when different viewpoints can help make better decisions or when member input is essential for successful plans. We clearly define how decisions are made, identifying who is responsible for making final decisions after hearing from stakeholders. By clearly stating roles and responsibilities, we ensure everyone knows what to expect and can participate meaningfully.

We also aim to explain clearly why we are consulting on each issue and what we hope to achieve. Consultation helps members understand what outcomes or decisions we are aiming for. Clear communication reduces confusion and makes our consultations more effective. It shows respect for members by valuing their input and making sure their contributions are considered when making decisions.

Overall, this principle guides us to approach consultations with a focus on understanding our goals, defining who decides, and ensuring everyone knows what to expect. We uphold our values while working together to achieve positive and lasting results for our organisation and everyone involved.

### Timelines around consultative process

Defined timelines ensure the information we provide is about when each phase of consultation will start, how long it will last, and when, how and by whom decisions will be made. By doing so, we demonstrate respect for members' time and commitment, enabling them to plan their involvement effectively. Emphasising timely communication fosters a constructive and inclusive atmosphere where members can provide feedback that is heard and valued. Additionally,

adhering to agreed-upon timelines demonstrates our commitment to professional integrity, ensuring that our processes are transparent and accountable.

### Mechanisms to provide feedback and what level of transparency are we comfortable with?

Varied consultation options emphasise the importance of establishing clear ways for both giving and receiving feedback, ensuring that communication is a two-way process.

Encouraging us to create channels where members can easily share their thoughts and opinions, this principle also prompts us to consider how transparent we want to be in our communications. Being transparent means being open and honest about decisions and processes, which builds trust and shows we are stronger working together.

By fostering two-way communication and transparency, we enhance our ability to collaborate effectively. Two-way communication not only strengthens our decision-making by incorporating diverse perspectives but also upholds our commitment to integrity and forward-thinking practices. Ultimately, it helps us achieve positive outcomes that benefit our organisation, and everyone involved.

### Seek feedback on the effectiveness of communications

A focus on effectiveness encourages us to regularly evaluate our communication methods to ensure they are clear and understandable to everyone involved. It involves seeking feedback from members to improve how we convey information and gather input. By making communication a two-way street, we aim to foster an environment where dialogue is open, respectful, and productive.

Additionally, we strive to streamline our communication processes to make them more efficient and effective by removing unnecessary steps or complexities that could hinder understanding or participation. In doing so, we demonstrate our commitment to professionalism and forward-thinking practices, ensuring that our interactions with members are efficient and meaningful.

In essence, this principle guides us to constantly refine our communication strategies, promoting openness, clarity, and efficiency in our consultations. It helps us uphold our values while enhancing collaboration and achieving positive outcomes for our organisation and its members.

### Informing members about significant decisions and the business decisions that don't warrant a consultative process

Keeping members informed about important decisions that directly affect them is important to the APS. It acknowledges that not every decision requires consultation but commits to explaining why certain decisions are made and their potential impact on members. Additionally, it emphasises the importance of educating members about how decisions are reached and what resources are available to support them through changes.

By prioritising trust and embracing the diversity of perspectives within our organisation, we aim to foster an environment where members feel informed and valued, supporting our forward-thinking goals by ensuring that decisions are communicated clearly, and members are equipped with the knowledge and support they need to navigate any impacts effectively.

We communicate openly, educate proactively, and uphold our values. By doing so, we strengthen our organisation's integrity and responsiveness while promoting collaboration and positive outcomes for all members involved.

### Review

The Consultation and Communication policy is designed to be dynamic and continuously evolving, requiring regular reviews to ensure it effectively meets the evolving needs of our organisation and the changing external environment.

Effective implementation of this policy relies on clear communication and making information easily understandable and accessible.

Following the first year of application this policy will be reviewed after a 2-year period to ensure that it is meeting the changing needs of the membership and leadership.

Post this period the Consultation and Communication policy will be reviewed at three yearly intervals or as directed by the Board.

## Associated documents

For more information, please refer to the associated documents related to this policy:

- Spokesperson and Media policy
- Delegations of Authority policy
- Brand guidelines
- Tone of Voice
- Committee manuals
- Social media policy
- Data protection and privacy policy
- Member handbook
- Complaints and Grievances policy
- Code of Conduct
- Constitution
- Consultation process



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