Govcomm meets weekly or biweekly on Tuesdays at 4pm (Zoom link: https://zoom.us/j/91681615917).

1. Works in progress:

Policy I-21 / AMS Committee Appointments

Govcomm has met several times with the AMS President’s office to discuss Policy I-21, Policy on Committee Appointments. I-21 aims to address the issues of efficiency and accessibility that arose during the May 2020 appointment process. It provides a clear and streamlined process for appointing members to AMS Council. Following substantive conversations at Govcomm, a final version of I-21 – along with necessary Code changes – is being brought forward to the August 26 Council meeting.

AMS Disciplinary Action / Ad Hoc Governance Committee Review

Govcomm has been mandated by Council to “Investigate new guidelines or procedures regarding disciplinary action at AMS Council and report back to Council with a report and/or relevant Code changes by the last Council meeting of August”. Following discussions regarding research undertaken by Justin Zheng into the practices of other Canadian universities’ student societies, Govcomm has requested that Sheldon Goldfarb, Clerk, draft potential Code language that would out in place a system similar to that of Western. The aim is to provide both mechanism and guidelines to allow Council to ensure both Councillors and Executive are able to fulfill their mandates effectively. At the July 30 meeting, Council accepted Govcomm’s request to extend the deadline for this work from August to November.

Committees and Chair Transitions

Govcomm has discussed the issue of committee members, committee chairs, and executives not receiving adequate assistance with transitions. Following discussions with the AMS President and his office, Govcomm will continue to look at the issue, including the potential creation of a new Policy on Transitions (I-23). Thus far, Govcomm has looked at previous Code requirements for transition reports.

Constituency Membership

Govcomm is looking at this project, which was first raised by the previous Govcomm (2019-2020). Some AMS members are not represented by constituencies, and others are represented by more than one constituency. The first issue presents an obvious concern regarding democratic representation. The second represents a concern regarding students in the same situation paying different student fees. Govcomm has examined the materials developed by last year’s Committee and has spoken with Katherine Westerlund (Govcomm chair 2019-2020). Govcomm is considering whether to pursue this project at this time.
Vote tallies on recommendations from Committee

Following a recommendation from the President’s office, Govcomm is looking at introducing a requirement that when Committees make recommendations to Council, such motions include a vote count representing the margin by which they passed through the Committee stage. Sheldon Goldfarb, Clerk, has drafted Code language.

Membership of Representatives from the Senate and the Board of Governors on AMS committees

Following a recommendation from the President’s office, Govcomm is looking at whether representatives from the Student Senate Caucus as well as the Board of Governors should continue to hold voting positions on Committees. The President’s office has raised concerns regarding the fact that these representatives hold non-voting seats on Council and do not have a fiduciary duty to the AMS. Govcomm plans on reaching out to current representatives to gain their perspectives.

I-1: Policy on Policies

Following a recommendation from the President’s office, Govcomm is looking at amending Policy I-1 to include framework-level policies, such as the AMS Sustainability Action Plan and the AMS Equity Plan, to ensure such plans have formal recognition and standing.

Policy I-9 / Executive KPIs

Following discussion at the June Council meeting regarding the AMS Executive Goals for 2020-2021, Govcomm has discussed Policy I-9, especially with regards to the requirement that the Goals include Key Performance Indicators (para 13). Given that Policy I-9 is up for review by Govcomm in February 2021, we will be continuing our discussion of this topic later in the year. We also hope that our examination at that time will be partially informed by Executives’ updates to Council regarding their KPIs.

Committee reporting

The President’s office has recommended changes to how Committee Chairs report to Council. Govcomm has requested draft reports of the proposed changes, to better evaluate them.

2. Works completed:

Distance Education - Code Definition

AMS Code provides that Active Members taking only distance education courses are exempt from paying Society fees. Govcomm proposed a clarification to Code that distance education courses do not refer to courses that are regularly in-person but have been moved online due to COVID-19. (Definition adopted by Council on June 24).

Finance and Operations Committee Chairpersonships
After considering the motion from Council that the VPs Finance and Administration no longer be required to chair the Finance and Operations Committees, respectively, Govcomm brought this change forward to Council for approval, to be in place for the September reconstitution of committees. Govcomm aims to evaluate this change before May 2021. (Adopted by Council on July 30.)