

IAPS Strategic Plan

2021-2024

This document was written using the responses to the 2021 IAPS Feedback poll.

The International Association of Physics Students aspires to be the most student-centered, global-reaching, inclusive and diverse student organization in the world. From our association's beginnings in bringing students together for peace and collaboration after decades of geopolitical tension, we have built a resource and a community that has had a genuine impact on thousands.

But an institution, however old and renowned, is of no use if it doesn't continue to work for the benefit of the people it serves. IAPS must use its resources, its voice, and its network of allies to go even further in helping physics students worldwide. We aim to build a prosperous future for the next generation of the world's physicists, one that every one of us can take part in, and we need to develop as an association to that end.

This next Strategic Plan for IAPS is a step in that journey. It outlines and highlights the actions that we commit to over the next three years for real and effective improvement. We will invest in signature programs to foster our continually expanding international community, build strong communities within and throughout our member societies, and continue our mission of relationship building across the globe.

In order to achieve these goals, IAPS needs to focus on 5 different areas:

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1. Communication

Keep members engaged by ensuring they know what is going on in IAPS and how to get involved. Ensure the use of clear communication, so the IAPS community can be more effective. This requires:

- **A clear website.** This should be frequently checked to ensure that everything is up-to-date, well-organised and easy to understand.
- **A monthly newsletter.** This will ensure that events and working groups are much more visible.
- **Regular social media posts.** This will increase engagement with IAPS and make it appear more active.
- An easy and well-publicised **system for members to share their events** with the whole IAPS community. This could be through a social media request form, which would make things easier for the PR Manager too.
- Maintain a single **communication platform** such as Discord, Telegram, WhatsApp, Messenger or Slack for people at all levels of IAPS to communicate easily. A single platform helps to decrease confusion and divisions.
- Make communication really clear and easy, so anyone who is interested can get involved with little effort. The more effort they have to put to find details on how to join working groups etc, the less likely it is that they'll get involved.

Practical ideas:

- Review all social media platforms and the website to make sure they are clear and attractive.
- Set up a newsletter team and structure so high-quality newsletters can be sent out every month. The EC should make a proposal to formalise this newsletter team structure in an AGM.
- Share the newsletter sign-up link on social media and ensure that all member committees distribute the newsletter to their members.
- Heavily advertise the PR working group so IAPS has the best chance of finding volunteers.
- Review all platforms such as Telegram and Discord to determine which is most effective at driving conversation and connection. Use the PR working group to focus on maintaining and growing this platform.
- Create an easy system for members to share information to the IAPS community through official IAPS platforms.
- Ask members to review communication in a feedback poll at the end of each year, to determine the best next steps for future years.

2. Community

Ensure the IAPS community thrives in-person and virtually, that members collaborate and support each other, and that students can easily make real connections at all levels of the organisation. This requires:

- An **active online community**, through group chats and social media engagement. Run initiatives such as social media challenges and regularly engage with group chats.
- A **visible community** that shows what physics students are doing across our whole membership, through platforms such as blogs and podcasts and through better cross-pollination.
- **Regular online socials**. Members are more likely to be aware of and show up for regular, low-pressure events than big one-offs. Breakout rooms, specific Discord channel, coffee chats or speed dating-type events can help people make real connections virtually.
- Opportunities to **meet teams in an informal setting**. This means fellow teammates within a working group or the EC, but also IAPS members in general getting to know our teams. By building a social element to working groups and the EC, they can become more attractive to join.
- **Initiatives to help people connect** such as Physics families or mentorship programs. Interest groups for specific areas of physics could be popular, to help meet people with similar interests. There are endless possibilities, including the existing IAPS Couchsurfing platform.
- **More inter-committee collaboration**. IAPS NCs and LCs should be able and encouraged to work together directly, through joint projects, sharing news and ideas, virtual or physical exchange programmes and promoting who they are and what they do on a local level.

Practical ideas:

- Run a 'meet the EC' event, assess how useful this is.
- Launch initiatives such as podcasts and blogs, and encourage members to do the same.
- Create a central feed that can automatically bring together all our members' updates and events.
- Experiment with different ways to help students make more connections, e.g. families, pen pals, study buddies, coffee chats.
- Launch a working group to reform the big structural parts of IAPS that may be hindering a more active community.
- Set up a mentorship programme.
- Re-launch the IAPS exchange.
- Review how successful each initiative is at the end of the year to help decide what to focus on in future years.

3. Reach

Make IAPS more international and reach more students in countries where it already has a strong presence. Ensure IAPS is well-known amongst and also outside of the physics student community. This requires:

- Outreach to countries where IAPS doesn't have many members. Focus on **empowering students to start their own committees and support their events**. Encourage committees outside of Europe to host IAPS major events.
- **Spread the word about IAPS**. Use NCs & LCs to help send emails to universities and schools, telling them about IAPS and giving the links to subscribe to the newsletter and IAPS social media. Ensure that members promote themselves and IAPS to new physics students at all levels.
- Launch/strengthen initiatives to **help students from distant countries to attend in-person events**. Use relationships with MOU organisations to do this if possible. This will help to make the IAPS community more inclusive and international.
- Ensure that in-person IAPS events continue to have **virtual and live components**, so that more members can still gain value from activities that they don't have the time or resources to attend.
- Build **relationships with new organisations**, such as NASA and UNESCO, to help provide opportunities and connections to IAPS members, and increase the influence of IAPS.
- **Review diversity and inclusion** of IAPS. The EC should produce IAPS inclusion guidelines to be presented and ratified in the 2022 AGM. Work out why people are attending IAPS events and why people aren't and act on this.

Practical Ideas:

- Create an introductory email about IAPS to distribute to universities, including links to sign up to the newsletter and the social media channels. Form a working group to help translate this email and distribute it to as many schools and universities as possible
- Build on existing relationships. Set up a liaison role proposal for all organisations with which an MOU exists, to present in an AGM. This will help to make sure none of these connections are being ignored.
- Use the external relations working group to maintain and make the most of current relations. Look into potential new collaborations to establish in future years, and determine the necessary steps to do so.
- Work to formalise relationships with new organisations such as UNESCO or the ISC.

4. Impact

Represent students on many key issues. Develop as a resource that students can go to for help. To do this:

- **Support and empower members with their ideas.** Lend them the resources and voice of IAPS, allowing them to share the projects and crises that are important to them more widely, so they have an independent advocacy platform.
- Continue to **publish strong statements in support of physics students.** Reinforce IAPS' voice and our place in the conversations on issues that affect students, both social and educational, by using the weight of an international organisation. Make statements that are consistent with who we are as an organisation, and that advance our aims.
- **Keep up with current social and educational issues,** and offer our help to tackle them with student discussions and amplifying ideas. Be active in the wider student advocacy space.
- Focus on **populating advocacy working groups;** recruit students who are passionate about their issues and who bring ideas and topics to IAPS, so that they can do more with us.
- **Leverage our network of members** to advocate for students on national and local levels.
- **Use existing relationships** with external organisations to help with advocacy initiatives.
- Participate in high-level discussions with governments, NGOs and external partners, such as UNESCO and the UN, the CoE and the EU, and equivalents across the world. Actively represent students and position IAPS as *the* voice that is listened to for opinions of physics students.

Practical ideas:

- Use the external relations working group to focus on making the most of relations with current MOU organisations to provide the most value to members.
- Make it clear that if anyone has any ideas for events or initiatives, IAPS can provide a valuable platform and support, as well as access to a lot of students, with which to do so.

5. Value

Provide real value to members. To do this:

- Regularly update an **opportunities page** on the website, so members can easily find relevant internships and other opportunities. Create a system for people to easily send opportunities to be added to this.
- Seek **unique opportunities for IAPS members** through MOU organisations, such as internships, mentorships, networking and shadowing opportunities.
- Run **frequent IAPS events**, including socials and talks.
- **Encourage members** to host more international events, both physical and virtual. Promote and improve our guides and materials for holding events, and develop our grants programme.
- Provide **opportunities for professional development**, such as workshops, training and capacity building. Networking opportunities would be useful, particularly with MOU organisations.
- Send out **annual surveys** to find out how to improve.
- **Connect with other student organisations**, in IFISO and beyond, for ideas and collaborations. Seek concrete plans on what others are doing to help their members that we are not.
- Seek out **new, sustainable funding** for IAPS which we can use to develop more activities. Continuously review plans and ideas so that we can promptly take advantage of any new funds.
- A **space for ideas** so anyone with an event or initiative idea can be connected to others that would help to make it happen. This would encourage collaboration amongst IAPS committees and members. Encourage committees and members to collaborate amongst themselves.

Practical Ideas:

- Set up structure for opportunities page on website and how they are shared directly to members.
- Review and reform how working groups run to be as attractive and effective as possible, so they become a much larger part of IAPS life, and the foundations are set for many more projects to be supported. Clear and effective communication is key for this.
- Develop coherent plans for what to do with any extra funding that IAPS is able to secure.
- Review and update a list of potential grants, donors and sponsors. Regularly follow up.
- Look into reforming the different parts of IAPS to help with efficiency and effectiveness, involving members to make them feel more connected and lower EC workload.
- Launch a space for people to share their ideas.