

3 March 2026

PAPER CLASSIFICATION: OPEN**Board of Trustees**

(Paper by Zaheed Hussein and Hannah Bunker. If you have any questions, please contact Zaheed Hussein and Hannah Bunker by email: ZaheedHussein@theiet.org, HBunker@theiet.org)

1. Issue

- 1.1. To provide clarity and confirmation on the meaning of the disciplinary sanction “suspension”.
- 1.2. Please note, this issue was previously presented out of committee (paper reference T(26)OC4) but the vote was inconclusive due to a split vote, and therefore the issue needs to be considered in committee and a final decision made.

2. Timing

For the 19 March 2026 meeting of the Board.

3. Reason for Paper Classification

- 3.1. This is a matter which is of importance to the membership and therefore transparency is required. The decision of the Board of Trustees will be recorded in the Guidance to the Disciplinary [Regulations](#) for all involved in the disciplinary process to see.

4. For Decision

- 4.1. The Board of Trustees is asked to confirm the meaning of the disciplinary sanction “suspension”. The options are set out below in paragraph 5. The Board is asked to confirm which of the three options is to be adopted, or if none, the alternative meaning of “suspension” that it considers fair and appropriate.
- 4.2. The Board is recommended to accept Option 1. This is simple for all to understand and to manage from an administrative **and technical** perspective, **and given the low numbers of suspensions, it would be a reasonable and proportionate outcome.**

5. Sanctions

- 5.1. There are 7 sanctions in the Disciplinary Regulations. They can be separated into two categories, corrective and punitive:

Corrective	Punitive
Guidance	Written warning [Least harsh]
Apology	Admonishment

Corrective	Punitive
Training	Suspension ¹
	Expulsion [Most harsh] – this serves to terminate an individual's membership from the IET immediately and permanently.

- 5.2. Suspension does have different interpretations and therefore it is essential that we have clarity on what it actually means so that this can be communicated to members and fairly implemented as part of the disciplinary process.
- 5.3. **Option 1:** The suspension serves to terminate the member's membership immediately, prevents them from rejoining the IET during the suspension period, but once that period has expired, they are eligible to re-join.

Example 1:

- The member renewed on 01.01.2025.
- They are suspended from the IET for 6 months, effective from 01.05.2025 until 31.10.2025.
- Their membership is cancelled from 01.05.2025, so they lose 8 of the 12 months paid for. They do not have access to member benefits².
- They are eligible to re-join the IET from 01.11.2025. They would have to buy a full year's membership subscription.
- ***If they were professionally registered at the time of their suspension, the IET must notify the Engineering Council. Upon re-joining as a member, they would have to undergo and pass a Professional Review³ (as well as pay any Engineering Council fees) in order to retain their professional registration status⁴⁵.***

Commentary:

This could be considered a punitive measure and could ultimately mean that a member is lost from the IET as it is dependent upon them taking active steps to re-join the IET – something which they might not do having been disciplined⁶.

This could be viewed as an 'expulsion lite' option because we are ending the relationship but will allow them to rejoin should they want to. The implication of this would mean that to distinguish between expulsion and suspension, expulsion would have to be infinite, and the expelled member would never be able to rejoin under any circumstances. For example, the Board of Trustees would never be able to consider an expelled member's application.

¹ Background information – there have only been 3 completed disciplinary cases since 2017 with the outcome sanction of suspension, in which the following suspension periods were ordered: 15 months; 10 years and 3 years.

² This would include not being able use designatory letters, not being able to vote, and no access to member discounts and Career Manager (for logging CPD). However, for suspended members, during their period of suspension, support via Foothold would still be available to them (on the premise that Foothold supports past and active IET members.)

³ A Professional Review is essentially the last stage of the professional registration process, being the interview.

⁴ A caveat to this is that, if the individual has been suspended for more that 3 years, they would need to undertake a fresh professional registration application.

⁵ This is the current Engineering Council requirement, which could change in the future.

⁶ At the end of the suspension period, the Complaint Secretary will write to the accused member to confirm that the sanction has expired, and they are welcome to rejoin should they wish.

This option is easy to implement from a technical perspective.

- 5.4. **Option 2:** The suspension serves to put a “pause button” on the member’s complete membership during the period of suspension, but once that period has expired, they can pick up their membership where they left off.

Example 1:

- The member renewed on 01.01.2025.
- They are suspended from the IET for 6 months, effective from 01.05.2025 until 31.10.2025.
- Their membership is paused from 01.05.2025, after 4 months of the 12 they paid for. They do not have access to member benefits during the suspension period.
- Their membership re-starts from 01.11.2025, and they run down the remaining 8 of the 12 months they paid for. Their access to member benefits resumes.
- ***Their membership renewal date is 01.07.2026***
- ***If they were professionally registered at the time of their suspension, the IET must notify the Engineering Council. At the end of the suspension period, they would have to undergo and pass a Professional Review (as well as pay any Engineering Council fees) in order to retain their professional registration status.***

Example 2:

- The member renewed on 01.01.2025.
- They are suspended from the IET for 15 months, effective from 01.05.2025 until 31.07.2026.
- Their membership is paused from 01.05.2025 after 4 months of the 12 they paid for. They do not have access to member benefits during the suspension period.
- Their membership re-starts from 01.08.2026, and they run down the remaining 8 of the 12 months they paid for. Their access to member benefits resumes.
- ***Their membership renewal date is 01.03.2027.***
- ***If they were professionally registered at the time of their suspension, the IET must notify the Engineering Council. At the end of the suspension period, they would have to undergo and pass a Professional Review (as well as pay any Engineering Council fees) in order to retain their professional registration status.***

Commentary:

This is not so punitive in its effect and serves to retain the member in membership. It gives a very different message to the member concerned from that given in option 1 (i.e. here in Option 2 we want to keep the member and the IET will take steps to do so, whereas in Option 1 the member must take the proactive steps to rejoin.)

In Option 2, Example 2, the annual membership renewal would ordinarily fall during the suspension period and the member would be unlikely to pay it as suspended, but the ‘pause’ effect serves to move the renewal date so this issue is avoided.

This option, whilst achievable, would require some technical developments to the CRM system, and would also require careful consideration and action in respect of financial

adjustments for revenue recognition. This work does not seem proportionate to the number of suspensions issued each year by a Disciplinary Panel (***see footnote 1), and therefore is not recommended.***

- 5.5. **Option 3:** The suspension serves to put a “pause button” on the member’s access to the member benefits only, and their membership subscription continues to run down during the period of suspension.

Example 1:

- The member renewed on 01.01.2025.
- They are suspended from the IET for 6 months, effective from 01.05.2025 until 31.10.2025.
- Their access to member benefits is paused from 01.05.2025.
- Their membership subscription continues to run down during the suspension period.
- Their membership re-starts from 01.11.2025, and they run down the 2 of the 12 months they paid for. Their access to member benefits resumes.
- ***If they were professionally registered at the time of their suspension, the IET must notify the Engineering Council. At the end of the suspension period, they would have to undergo and pass a Professional Review (as well as pay any Engineering Council fees) in order to retain their professional registration status.***

Commentary:

If the member’s annual membership renewal would ordinarily fall during the suspension period (which could occur during a lengthier suspension period), the member would be unlikely to pay it. We might therefore lose a member as they would have to take active steps to re-join the IET as the end of the suspension period.

This option would be technically difficult (***and therefore potentially costly***) to implement ***and therefore is not recommended.***

6. Risk

6.1. None