At the 2017 ISA Governing Council meeting, the Governing Council approved several changes to ISA’s Code of Conduct, as suggested by the Professional Rights and Responsibilities Committee. Since then, the Professional Rights and Responsibilities committee has discussed additional changes to the Code. We recommended many changes – some large and some small – to the Executive Committee for its November 2017 meeting. Our recommendations stem from our use of the Code during the last year, as well as from conversations with the Executive Director and the President.

Based on feedback from the Executive Committee, we have revised our set of recommended changes. We look forward to the Governing Council’s discussion of our proposed Code of Conduct revisions at its 2018 San Francisco meeting.

1. CODE OF CONDUCT REVISIONS: COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Our committee strongly supports revisions to the ISA’s Code of Conduct, as a means of improving the mechanism by which complaints related to Code violations are received and adjudicated.

The proposed revisions seek to clarify the process by which complaints are adjudicated: in ordinary circumstances, complaints are referred to the PRR Committee; the PRR collects evidence and evaluates the claim; and the PRR makes a determination and recommends, where appropriate, a sanction. The ISA’s Executive Director communicates the Committee’s findings to the complainant and respondent. The respondent has the right to appeal, within a specified time frame, the determination and/or sanction to ISA’s Executive Committee. The proposed revisions also specify some sanctions that are available to the investigating body (typically PRR), and it offers the alternative of mediation, conducted by a professional mediator, should all parties to the dispute agree to a mediation procedure.

We also agree that the Code of Conduct should be further revised to employ non-gendered language. Our committee’s view is that this sort of revision should be done by ISA Headquarters, and should be done for all of ISA’s documentation. This will ensure consistency of language across documentation.

2. COMPLAINTS RECEIVED

During the last year, ISA Headquarters received, and referred to our committee, three formal complaints. These complaints, which were received in late February and early March. The complaints involved the same set of individuals, and all three focused (at least in part) on behavior during the annual meeting (February 2017, Baltimore).

The committee began its consideration of these complaints almost immediately. We gathered information on these complaints, discussed whether the Committee (and the ISA generally) had jurisdiction regarding some of the issues raised in the complaints, and deliberated the merits of the complaints. As the current Code of Conduct specifics, the committee also forwarded the materials related to the complaints to the Executive Committee. The Executive
Committee and PRR completed their deliberations, and shared their determinations with the complainants and respondents, in early June.

3. ISSUES FOR THE FUTURE

We anticipate that further changes to the Code of Conduct may be necessary, as new substantive issues arise, and as the PRR Committee and the Association gain further experience with applying the Code.

The PRR committee also intends to examine the issue of personal relationships, in the context of conflicts of interest, as well as in the more general context of appropriate professional interactions. The end result may be a suggested “relationships policy” for the association.