

Indian Statistical Institute

203, B.T Road, Kolkata – 700 108



PROCEEDINGS OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE ACADEMIC COUNCIL OF THE INSTITUTE HELD ON JANUARY 20, 2026 ONLINE AND IN THE CSSC VC ROOM, ISI, KOLKATA

Members Present			
1	Ayanendranath Basu (Chair)	Following Members Participate Virtually	
2	Biswabrata Pradhan (Convener)	24	SM Subhani
3	Mohammed Zafar Anis	25	Debashish Goswami
4	Mandar Mitra	26	Sujata Ghosh
5	Jaydeb Sarkar	27	Arijit Chakrabarty
6	Rajat Kumar De	28	Nandini Das
7	Tridib Kumar Mondal	29	Ranjan Sett
8	Swapan Rana	30	Paramita Das
9	Sarbani Palit	31	A L N Murthy
10	Mahuya Datta	32	Smarajit Bose
11	Pradipta Bandyopadhyay	33	BS Daya Sagar
12	Krishnendu Mukhopadhyaya	34	Subir Ghosh
13	Arijit Bishnu	35	Yogeshwaran D
14	Santanu K. Maiti	36	Saroj K. Meher
15	Gopal Krishna Basak	37	Mrinal Das
16	Debasis Sengupta	38	Antar Bandyopadhyay
17	Guruprasad Kar	39	Abhishek Mukherjee
18	Rudra Pada Sarkar	40	Jagadish
19	Partha Sarathi Ghosh	41	Dibakar Ghosh
20	Sasthi Charan Ghosh	42	Arup Ranjan Mukhopadhyay
21	Swagato Kumar Ray		
22	Sandip Das		
23	Swagatam Das		

Agenda Item 1: Consideration of the proposal for discussion and deliberation on academic implications of the draft ISI Bill 2025.

Discussion: The Chairman welcomed all participants to the meeting and outlined the agenda. He stated that the meeting had been convened to deliberate on the academic implications of the draft ISI Bill, 2025. He noted that the Dean of Studies had called the

meeting with his consent following a petition submitted by three members. The petition stated that, if the Bill were to be enacted, the role of the Academic Council (AC) would become purely recommendatory, and its authority would be substantially diminished. The Chairman also mentioned that some members have indicated that they disagreed with this view, stating that the AC is already a recommendatory body, and therefore the question of any significant loss of authority may not arise. In their opinion this meeting was based on an incorrect premise. The Chairman opined that the meeting may go on but emphasized that the academic implications of the draft Bill should be the primary focus of discussion in this forum.

Prof. Arijit Chakrabarty stated that the names of those who have objected to holding this meeting should be disclosed; otherwise, the petitioners would be required to respond to anonymous queries.

Prof. Arijit Bishnu stated that the objective was to understand the implications of the draft Bill on the AC and the overall academic autonomy of the Institute. He observed that the Academic Council does not function in isolation; ISI is headed by a Society and governed by the Council. He noted that, thus far, academic matters at ISI have been conducted under the guidance of the AC, with academicians largely confining themselves to academic issues and preserving academic autonomy to the extent possible. Referring to the Fourth Review Committee and examples of IITs and IIMs, he stated that the nodal Ministry has cited these in its FAQs while proposing the draft Bill, although such references were not previously in the public domain. He further noted that the Fourth Review Committee recommended only two amendments: one relating to the expansion of academic programmes and the other primarily concerning financial matters. It did not recommend repeal of the Act.

Under the argument of aligning ISI with IITs and IIMs, there is no governmental study indicating that ISI performs below other Institutions of National Importance (INIs). There are approximately 160 such institutions, including about 15 AIIMS, 25 IITs, 20 IIMs, 7 IISERs, 21 NITs, and several other universities. Most of these institutions follow a broadly uniform governance structure. However, the Ministry has not referred to IISc, which does not follow the same structure as the above-mentioned institutions and operates under a trust model. The MoSPI, in recent communications, has stated that the Bill has been prepared in consultation with stakeholders and is based on established models such as IITs and IIMs, with necessary customization considering the specialized nature of ISI. He observed that the IIMs transitioned from a society to a statutory body corporate after extensive deliberation and necessary statutory changes. He emphasized that the AC is a key stakeholder of ISI and that no consultation with the Academic Council had taken place regarding the draft Bill. He further noted that ISI has a well-established and effective academic governance structure that has evolved over time and has functioned satisfactorily. He concluded that it is difficult to justify claims of significant deficiencies in the current system, and that large-scale structural changes to the Institute may risk destabilizing its smooth functioning.

The Chairman called for a specific discussion on the academic implications of the Bill.

Prof. Bishnu pointed out that, in recent times, legislative changes for IITs, IIMs, and NITs have not displaced internal academic self-governance, unlike the changes proposed for ISI. He observed that, in the case of ISI, the proposed change involves repeal and re-enactment of the Act, whereas for other institutions, the changes were in the nature of amendments or consolidation, undertaken after consultation with stakeholders. He further noted that, compared to other Acts, the ISI Act is distinct in that the proposed changes may adversely affect the Institute's autonomy by concentrating authority in the hands of the BoG.

Prof. Bishnu further added that ISI currently has an elected Dean of Studies who oversees academic matters in consultation with faculty members; however, under the provisions of the draft Bill, the Dean of Studies may not function with the same degree of independence. He observed that the Bill proposes significant changes to the academic administrative structure. He noted that, at present, ISI follows a divisional structure aligned with research areas, with the Dean of Studies overseeing academic programmes. In contrast, the draft Bill appears to replace this division-based academic hierarchy with a centre-based structure.

He further pointed out that, under the existing system, the Director is responsible for recruitment, whereas the draft Bill assigns this responsibility to the BoG, which may lead to administrative difficulties. He observed that challenges arise when the Bill attempts to align ISI with the structures of other Institutions of National Importance (INIs). He elaborated that IITs function as independent institutions across different geographical locations under the IIT Act, and new IITs are established within that legislative framework. However, he cautioned that adopting a similar model for ISI may lead to complications. He also noted that the roles and functions of departments in IITs are largely uniform, and they have the authority to award degrees across their programmes, whereas ISI follows a different model. This, he suggested, is an issue that warrants further deliberation.

Prof. Bishnu further observed that the draft Bill lacks clarity in several definitional aspects. Divisions are not defined, nor is the role of the Head of Division specified. The Academic Council is mentioned only in Section 18. Additionally, branches and outlying units have not been defined in the Bill, despite being integral to the structure of ISI.

He also pointed out that a "Department of Teaching" is mentioned in Clause 17(n) but is not defined elsewhere in the draft Bill. Furthermore, the revised draft does not define "Headquarters" in Section 3, where definitions are provided. He noted that if Kolkata is treated merely as a Centre with its own Management Council, questions may arise regarding the relationship between the Management Council and the Academic Council. Clause (d) of Section 17(2) may be examined carefully, as it outlines the powers and functions of the Board, including the establishment of departments, faculties, schools of study, and the initiation of programmes or courses at the Institute, taking into

account the recommendations of the Management Council. This provision appears to confer a recommendatory role on the Management Council regarding academic programmes and courses at the Centres, which may be in conflict with the powers and functions of the Academic Council as specified in Section 19.

A major concern relates to student fees. The FAQ published by the MoSPI attempts to assure that the draft Bill does not intend to introduce fees for existing courses. However, the FAQ does not explicitly address the fee structure, possibly because any formal inclusion would require amendment of the relevant statute by Parliament for future revisions. At present, the fee and scholarship structure of ISI programmes is first discussed in the Academic Council. The draft Bill appears to transfer this authority away from the Academic Council and vest it exclusively in the BoG. Section 41(4) confers upon the BoG the authority to modify or annul any standing order passed by the Academic Council. This provision extends even to matters that fall within the functional domain of the Academic Council, not merely its recommendatory role. Consequently, the provisions of Section 19(1) may effectively be overridden by Section 41 (4), thereby expanding the powers of the BoG in relation to the Academic Council. Further, Clause (d) of Section 3 appears to enable the administrative Ministry to intervene and effect changes through executive orders. Overall, it was observed that, even after revision, the draft Bill may create only a limited appearance of autonomy for the Academic Council while concentrating authority within the administrative Ministry.

Prof. Antar Bandyopadhyay stated that the AC members from the Delhi Centre had already communicated their views to the Dean of Studies. Prof. Bandyopadhyay pointed out that the matters discussed in this meeting do not fall within the purview of the AC. He observed that the AC's role, as per Regulation 9.2, is to make recommendations to the Council regarding teaching and training programmes, including their introduction, discontinuation, modification, and organizational processes. He further noted that matters such as eligibility requirements, procedures for the selection of students, and the examination and evaluation system are not directly addressed in the draft Bill.

Prof. Antar Bandyopadhyay further pointed out that the meeting had been convened based on what he described as an incorrect and potentially misleading premise regarding the Draft ISI Bill, 2025. He stated that the proposal assumes that the powers of the AC would be reduced if the Bill were enacted, a point that had been elaborated upon by Prof. Bishnu. He emphasized that the AC is primarily a recommendatory body and that Section 19(1) provides certain executive powers in specific matters.

In response, Prof. Bishnu observed that such executive powers could be overridden by the BoG, which is consistent with hierarchical administrative structures where higher authorities exercise control over subordinate bodies. He further noted that similar arrangements exist under the current system, where the Council holds overriding authority.

It was also noted that, on grounds of credibility, integrity, and procedural propriety, the AC members from the Delhi Centre had decided to boycott the meeting. Prof. Bandyopadhyay requested that the dignity of the Academic Council not be undermined by deliberating on matters that, in his view, fall outside its authorized scope.

Prof. Bishnu further stated that there may be different interpretations of the drafting of the Bill, and emphasized the need for careful examination of its provisions. He observed that the powers conferred on the Academic Council (AC) under Section 46(1) may, in effect, be nullified by the provisions of Section 19(1). He reiterated that the primary objective is to understand the implications of the Bill in a clear and consistent manner.

Prof. Rajat K De stated that he is one of the petitioners and has submitted a written petition requesting that the Academic Council deliberate on the implications of the revised draft Bill for the independent functioning of the AC. He noted that Section 6 of the draft Bill is largely similar to Section 2 of the existing MoA, indicating that the stated objectives remain broadly unchanged. However, he pointed out that references to natural and social sciences, which were present in the ISI Act, 1959, have been omitted in the revised draft. He further observed that the Academic Council is, and will continue to be, primarily a recommendatory body, raising the question of what additional benefit would be derived from adopting the new Bill. He also remarked that, although the Bill claims to enhance autonomy, certain provisions appear to have the opposite effect. In particular, the electoral process has been removed, and the Dean of Studies would no longer be elected but instead selected through a mechanism determined by the BoG.

Prof. Krishnendu Mukhopadhyaya stated that he holds a view that differs from that expressed earlier. He observed that, in the Council meeting, the Dean of Studies represents the AC and is expected to convey the views of the AC to the Council. In this context, he emphasized that the Dean of Studies should consult the AC prior to such meetings. He further remarked that, in his capacity as Professor-in-Charge, he often holds both a divisional perspective and a personal opinion, and that individual views may differ from the collective position.

In response, Prof. Bishnu stated that the Dean of Studies had not communicated with the members of the AC to solicit their views prior to the Council meeting. He noted that the present meeting had been convened only upon the request of three AC members and, therefore, raised concerns regarding its procedural propriety. The motivation for raising these issues stems from specific provisions in the draft Bill. He observed that Section 41 confers direct powers on BoG to curtail the autonomy of the Academic Council, including the authority to modify or annul any standing orders passed by the AC. He further noted that Section 46(1), read with Clause (d) of Section 3, appears to enable the Administrative Ministry to intervene and effect amendments through executive orders. He concluded that, even after revision, the draft Bill creates only a

limited appearance of autonomy for the Academic Council while concentrating authority within the Administrative Ministry, which prompted the convening of this meeting.

The Chairman commented that there was no need to engage in a debate on whether the premises were correct or incorrect. He emphasized that the focus of the meeting should be on how the proposed changes would affect the academic curriculum.

Prof. Bishnu said that Clause 17.2(d) allows BoG to introduce programmes. Prof. Rajat K De said that BOG is supreme and bypassing AC they may do their own job.

Prof. Bandyopadhyay opined that AC is only a recommendatory authority to the Council of the Institute about introduction or discontinuation of any of our programmes. The authority to whom we are recommending would have the right to agree or disagree. Introduction, discontinuation or major change in programme is the discussion agenda in Council. So that apprehension that the BoG can overruled the decision of the AC as envisioned in the new Act is a pure apprehension which always exist even today. Prof. Bandyopadhyay further added that in section 19 the power of the AC has given, and in some sections (41 or other) powers of BoG has been given. In Section 19 it says that for introduction of courses AC recommends to the BoG and BoG will have the power to accept or reject. So power to the BOG to be introducing a course should not be interpreted that it's going to overruled the recommendation of AC.

Prof. Bishnu stated that Section 5 of the Institute's Regulations clearly provides for the constitution of a Council as the governing body of the Institute. He noted that the Council is entrusted with functions such as considering and approving the scientific and academic programmes of the Institute, preparing and adopting the annual budget, awarding degrees, diplomas, and certificates to successful candidates, and taking decisions on academic and administrative matters referred to it by the Director. The Council is also empowered to undertake activities consistent with the objectives of the Institute, ensure efficient management, constitute committees, working groups, or boards (other than those statutorily provided for), create and fill such bodies as necessary, and receive grants from the Government. In contrast, he observed that Clause 17(2)(D) of the draft Bill empowers the BoG to establish departments, faculties, schools of study, and to initiate programmes or courses of study. He expressed concern that this provision may enable the BoG to direct the introduction of new courses or programmes within the academic curriculum. Under Sections 41 and 42 of the draft Bill, it may be possible that the Institute would not be able to initiate or discontinue a course of study without the approval of the BoG.

Under the proposed Bill, even hostel fees would be determined by the BoG. He suggested that the composition of the Academic Council be carefully examined. He noted that, in the existing structure, all Professors are members of the Academic Council, and each Division nominates two junior members at the level of Associate Professor or below. Consequently, there were 14 members in the Academic Council representing the views of junior faculty members. He observed that this representation would no longer exist

under the proposed Bill, and therefore, structurally, the Academic Council would not remain the same. He further pointed out that the BoG would include two members from the Academic Council; however, the Bill does not specify the mechanism for selecting these members. In contrast, in IITs and NITs, the Senate or the body of Professors has the authority to nominate representatives to the BoG. The proposed structure of the BoG consists of 11 members, wherein a certain number of members would initially be appointed by the Government, and these members would subsequently select the remaining members.

Prof. Antar Bandyopadhyay pointed out that Section 18.2(iv) states that the Academic Council shall include all full-time faculty at the level of Professors, along with such number of other full-time faculty members as may be determined by the Board. He clarified that the term “other” does not refer only to Professors but includes other categories of full-time faculty of the Institute, as determined by the Board. In this context, he observed that Prof. Bishnu’s remarks may be partially valid. He further noted that, although such members are currently expected to be determined through an electoral process, in practice, elections have not taken place, and members have been nominated by the Council of the Institute. He concluded that the provisions proposed in the draft Bill are, in effect, similar to the existing practice being followed.

Prof. Bishnu pointed out that, with regard to the core academic activities of the Institute, the draft Bill gives rise to significant confusion and contradictions. He noted that the terms “programmes” and “courses of study” have not been clearly defined in Section 3 or elsewhere in the revised draft Bill. If one follows the prevailing usage within the Institute, “programmes” would correspond to degree, diploma, or certificate programmes, whereas “courses” would refer to individual subjects taught within those programmes. He further observed that there are no corresponding regulation-making powers vested in the BoG under Section 14 in this regard. However, Clause (b) of Section 41(2) confers upon the Academic Council the authority to make standing orders only for courses of study relating to degrees and diplomas of the Institute. While such a provision is necessary and useful, it does not extend to programmes beyond degrees and diplomas.

More importantly, he pointed out that there is no explicit provision empowering the Institute to frame regulations or standing orders for the initiation or discontinuation of academic programmes. He also noted that the ambiguity is compounded by Clause (c) of Section 7, which defines “courses of study” in a broader and different sense. This clause includes the specification and conduct of courses of study, training, and research in subjects, including but not limited to statistical science and allied fields, as part of the powers and functions of the Institute. He emphasized that no clear procedure has been specified for the implementation of these powers, particularly with regard to identifying such subjects and operationalizing these provisions.

Prof. Bandyopadhyay stated that he wished to leave the meeting, as the members had already submitted their views in writing. He further stated that their written

submissions should form part of the proceedings of the meeting, as this is their legitimate right.

Shri A L N Murthy stated that it is important to distinguish between what is implied and what is legally valid, as the proposed legislation will be an Act of Parliament and every provision will be legally binding. He emphasized that, in the event of any conflict, reference will be made to the Act and its provisions. Therefore, interpretations based on reading between the lines may not be tenable, and clarity is essential when interpreting the provisions strictly in accordance with the text of the Act. He further opined that, although there are several anomalies, the second draft reflects improvements over the first. However, there remain certain inconsistencies, particularly with regard to the role and responsibilities of the AC. He pointed out that the manner in which the AC is defined in the proposed Act does not align with the existing academic structure. He further noted that the roles and functions outlined in the Act differ from those currently in practice.

Prof. Sujata Ghosh stated that some points in the draft Bill were very detailed, while others were brief.

Prof. Debasis Sengupta expressed his concerns regarding the BSDS programme. He raised the issue of how the BSDS programme would be managed under the new setup if the Bill comes into effect.

Prof. Mahuya Datta stated that, under the proposed Act, the Centres would be independent, and the Board of Governors (BoG) would initiate new courses in consultation with the Management Council. Prof. Antar Bandyopadhyay observed that the independence of the Centres pertains to administrative and financial matters, not academic matters. He further pointed out that the Management Council primarily deals with administrative issues rather than academic matters.

Prof. Bishnu stated that all these concerns may be consolidated, and it may be observed that the revised Bill generates a number of complications and anomalies. He noted that the Institute currently has a fully functional system, and no anomalies or difficulties have been detected or reported so far. He further emphasized that, if any changes to the existing structure are to be introduced, it should be ensured that such changes lead to clear improvements over the present system. Otherwise, in the collective wisdom of the academic community, it would not be appropriate to accept such changes unless there is sufficient assurance that the proposed system is significantly better than the current one. He also pointed out that the existing framework under the 1959 Act, the MoA, Bye-laws, and Regulations provide a practical and implementable system of academic governance, and no issues have been reported to date. Referring to earlier discussions, including the views expressed by Prof. Bandyopadhyay and the letter from the AC members of Delhi Centre, he noted that there is widespread concern among faculty

members on these issues. It was suggested that the Ministry be requested to withdraw the current draft Bill and undertake further consultations with the Academic Council and other statutory bodies of the Institute to develop a more suitable proposal.

Prof. Debashish Goswami suggested that the Bill should clearly state that the BoG cannot unilaterally introduce any new course or programme; such proposals must originate from the appropriate academic bodies. Any changes in fees or the introduction of new courses must be initiated by the AC, not by the BoG. Prof. Swagato Roy expressed the same view as Prof. Goswami.

Prof. Rudra Pada Sarkar stated that clarification may be sought regarding the necessity of the Bill, as the Institute already has a fully functional system with no apparent issues. He further noted that the Review Committee report does not recommend such a Bill.

Dr. Arup Ranjan Mukhopadhyay commented that there are two ways of addressing the issue. First, it is necessary to examine why the Bill has been proposed at all and to identify any lacunae or deficiencies in the present structure. Second, the fundamental changes proposed in the draft Bill may be considered and further refined by examining the associated anomalies. He further stated that it is difficult to understand what kind of lacunae the Government has identified, as the Institute appears to be functioning well, whereas the Government seems to hold a contrary view.

Prof. Swagatam Das observed that, if the current trajectory continues, there is a possibility that, two or three years down the line, significant changes may be imposed, leaving the Institute in a position where it may not be able to resist them.

Prof. Smarajit Bose pointed out that the size of the AC should be larger, which would mitigate the possibility of the BoG introducing new courses without consulting the AC.

Prof. Mahuya Datta suggested that, in light of today's discussion and the concerns raised, the Dean of Studies may place these issues before the forthcoming Council meeting.

The concerns raised about this meeting by some Delhi members of the AC in the form of a letter are attached to these proceedings in the form of an annexure.

Resolution: The institute already has a functional, tried-and-tested academic governance structure in place, that is in line with the ISI Act 1959, and ISI's Memorandum of Association, Regulations and Bye-laws. An analysis of the revised draft ISI Bill, 2025, shows that the current version still has several inconsistencies and ambiguities that may affect both academic governance, and the autonomy of the Academic Council. Thus, if the present Bill is implemented as an Act, there may be serious problems in academic governance of the institute for the foreseeable future. The Academic Council was not consulted as a stakeholder during the drafting of the ISI Bill, 2025. It expresses serious concern over the current draft of the Bill, and urges the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation to engage in dialogue and consultation with the Academic Council regarding any modifications to the existing

system of academic governance, so as to more effectively achieve the stated objectives of excellence, improved governance, autonomy and accountability.

The meeting ended with the thanks to the Chair.

Sd/-

Biswabrata Pradhan

Dean of Studies and
Convener of the AC

Sd/-

Ayanendranath Basu

Director (Officiating) and
Chair of the AC

To:
Professor Ayanendranath Basu
The Director (Officiating)
Indian Statistical Institute, Kolkata
203 B. T. Road
Kolkata 700 108

Date: January 20, 2026

Sub: Special Academic Council Meeting called by the Dean of Studies to be held at 04:00 PM of Tuesday, January 20, 2026

Dear Professor Basu,

We the members of the Academic Council (AC) from ISI, Delhi Centre would like to bring the following points to your kind notice:

1. The proposal which is to be discussed in the Special meeting of the AC which is to be held today (Tuesday, January 20, 2026) at 04:00 PM as per the announcement from the Office of the Dean of Studies via the e-mail dated January 15, 2026, does not come under the purview of the AC.
2. Further we firmly believe that the meeting has been called on an incorrect and misleading claim about the draft ISI Bill 2025. The proposal is based on a claim that the powers of the AC will be reduced if the draft ISI Bill 2025 becomes an Act, to a “purely recommendatory” authority. In fact, as pointed out by the Head, Delhi Centre in his email to the Officiating Director on the January 16, 2026 (see attached), the current powers of the AC are only recommendatory, and the draft ISI Bill 2025 proposes to enhance several of them to become executive powers of the AC.
3. To have a discussion in the Academic Council about a matter based on clearly false premises undermines the authority, credibility, and legitimacy of the Academic Council.

Because of the above mentioned points and without having any prejudice in support or in opposition of the draft ISI Bill 2025, AC members from ISI, Delhi unanimously consider that this meeting is illegitimate and thus we shall not be attending the Special meeting of the Academic Council to be held to be held at 04:00 PM of Tuesday, January 20, 2026, except for the Head, Delhi Centre, whom we authorise to speak on behalf of all of us.

We also request you to kindly minute our views as stated above for the proceedings and any reporting of any conclusion derived from this special meeting to any authority inside or outside the Institute including the Council of the Institute.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

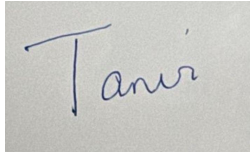
Arup K. Pal

Anish Sarkar

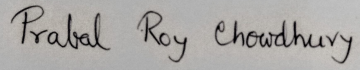
Antar Bandyopadhyay



Shanta Laishram



Tanvi Jain



Prabal Roy Chowdhury



E. Somanathan



Tridip Ray



Abhiroop Mukhopadhyay



Farzana Afridi



Monishankar Vishnu



Isha Dewan



Abhay G. Bhatt



Swagata Nandi



Debasis Mishra