

Annual Meeting  
Program Committee

# Society of Biblical Literature

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This document describes the role and activity of the Annual Meeting  
Program Committee and lays out policies for management of the SBL  
Annual Meeting program.

**Handbook**

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## Annual Meeting Program Committee

The Annual Meeting Program Committee (AMPC) approves, reviews, and renews program units for the Annual Meeting and works with Council and the Executive Office to set policy and procedure for the Annual Meeting.

### *Description*

With assistance and coordination from the Executive Office (EO), the Annual Meeting Program Committee approves, reviews, and renews program units. The committee meets briefly at the Annual Meeting to evaluate the meeting and holds periodic conference calls throughout the year to conduct its business, including the management of PUs. The committee works with the EO and Council to set policy and procedure for the Annual Meeting. The AMPC encourages diversity, collegiality, and mutual respect. It seeks to set policies that develop innovative scholarship, scholarly conversation and community, and the efficiency of overall program management.

The EO maintains detailed historical data on participation, sessions, program units, and other specifics that inform the AM Program Committee's work. Reports will be provided by the EO for this work, and it is essential that the AM Program Committee discuss with the EO what information is needed. The AM Program Committee does not make decisions regarding meeting locations. Selection of locations is determined by the EO.

### *Responsibilities*

Working with the EO, the AMPC addresses both specific strengths and weaknesses of current program structures and policies and anticipate trends that could influence such structures and policies over the next five to ten years.

Responsibilities include the following:

- To develop the program actively
- To review program unit renewals and proposals
- To evaluate the distribution of topics and sessions among program units
- To set and evaluate participation policies
- To maximize participation without compromising quality
- To consider the structure of the meeting and its capacity to incorporate new ways of thinking or methods of research
- To consider alternatives to conventional lecture and panel formats

Following these responsibilities, the AMPC develops a program that keeps SBL members abreast of the latest developments across the discipline and provides significant opportunities for professional development in terms of research, teaching, and networking.

### *Relation to International Meeting Program Committee*

The Annual Meeting and International Meeting are autonomous. Program unit proposals are made for one meeting, and the committees for each meeting review proposals independently. When appropriate, the committees converse about overall program strategy, though they act independently of each other.

### *A Calendar of the AM Program Committee's Work*

Jan – Mar	Review of new program unit proposals, review of AM program
By Feb 1	<i>New proposals are due by this date.</i> AMPC will have all proposals; proposals will be sent as they come in so review does not back-up (review process explained below)
By Feb 15	Conference call to discuss proposals
By Feb 25	Follow-up conference call to decide upon final proposals, if needed
By Mar 1	Responses to proposals will be sent to proposers
Apr – May	Discussion and evaluation of AM program, including participation levels, topics, etc.
By Apr 15	AMPC will receive from EO reports on current year AM program, including number of program units, participation details, and overview of topics
By May 10	Conference call to review reports and discuss related policy matters and long-term goals
Jun – Jul	Recess
Aug – Dec	Discussion and evaluation of long-term goals and policies, review of renewal proposals
By Aug 30	Conference call to discuss policy matters for Council, if needed
By Oct 1	<i>Program unit renewals are due.</i> AMPC will have all renewals; renewals will be sent as they come in so review does not back-up (review process explained below)
By Oct 15	Conference call to discuss renewals
By Oct 25	Follow-up conference call to decide upon final renewals, if needed
By Nov 1	Responses to renewals will be sent to program unit chairs

## Program Unit Review

The Annual Meeting program has grown substantially since the early 2000s, and this has necessitated the committee's adjustment and adaptation to new complexities and responsibilities. In 2005 there were 122 program units; five years later, the number had increased by 33% to 162. The number of new program unit proposals was 31 in 2010 and 52 in 2011. Anywhere from 20 to 34 program units are up for renewal in a given year (12 to 21% of program units in a given year).

To handle this significant growth, the committee has shifted its review of program unit renewals to the fall of the Annual Meeting prior to a unit's expiration (e.g., fall 2010 for a unit ending in 2011). The committee will receive proposals by October 1 and will review all proposals and remit feedback to proposers by November 1. New program unit proposals will be reviewed in the spring of the year in which they are intended to begin. The committee will receive proposals by February 1 and will review all proposals and remit feedback to proposers by March 1.

### *Method of Review*

Renewal and new unit proposals are submitted to the committee via the EO. The EO collates proposals, sends them to the committee for review when they are submitted, and coordinates the committee's review by setting up conference calls.

#### **Initial review**

1. When a committee member receives a proposal, the committee member reviews the proposal and makes notes for discussion, including whether to accept, reject, request revisions, or discuss.
2. Several days prior to the conference call but after all proposals have been sent to the committee, the EO will coordinate a simple poll of the committee about decisions to accept or reject proposals. Any proposals accepted or rejected by two-thirds majority will be removed from the conference call agenda.
3. The committee will review all proposals via conference call, sharing notes and discussing the merits of proposals vis-à-vis the needs and standards of the program.

#### **Further review**

1. If proposals require further discussion, the committee will organize a follow-up conference call and ensure that proposals are reviewed in a timely fashion.
2. The EO will coordinate informing the proposers that an initial review has occurred and the committee requires further review.

#### **Response to proposers**

1. The committee will coordinate letters of response with the EO.
2. Contact should be made with proposers no later than November 5, in the case of renewals, and March 5, in the case of new proposals.

### *Options for response*

The committee has several options in its decisions regarding program units.

### Renewals

1. **Accept:** the unit will start its term as proposed
2. **Reject:** the unit cannot sustain participation for the duration of a new term; the unit's topic has run its course
3. **Needs revision:** idea is promising, but questions exist about some aspect of the unit's organization, focus, topic, relation to existing units, etc.

### New proposals

1. **Accept:** the unit will start its term as proposed
2. **Reject:** the unit cannot sustain participation for the duration of a new term; the unit's topic has run its course; the unit's topic is inappropriate or too much of its purview duplicates an extant unit
3. **Needs revision:** idea is promising, but questions exist about some aspect of the unit's focus, topic, relation to existing units, etc.
4. **Special session:** idea is promising and proposal is clear, but questions exist about attendance, participation, or other matters. In this case, the committee may offer the proposers the opportunity to organize a session at the upcoming Annual Meeting and to report on that session as part of a revised proposal for the following year. This option does not guarantee acceptance of the unit in the following year but provides an opportunity to introduce the unit to the program and gauge its appeal.

### *Criteria for Program Unit Review*

Proposals for Annual Meeting program units, whether new or seeking renewal, will be evaluated based on the following criteria.

1. Evidence of advancing biblical scholarship or the relation of that scholarship to contiguous disciplines
2. Evidence of sufficient SBL member interest to sustain the program unit for the proposed period
3. Significance of topics of program unit beyond its immediate constituency
4. Evidence of need for program unit and relationship to existing program units
5. Mechanisms for evaluation and self-criticism, including critical assessment of the program unit's own method(s), biases, and perspectives.
6. Quality, commitment, and diversity of program unit's proposed leadership.
7. Evidence of involving a diverse steering committee constituency (e.g., gender, racial and ethnic backgrounds, levels of professional status, institutional affiliations) and commitment to variation in methodological approaches
8. Plans for refereeing proposals, including student member paper proposals
9. Plans, when appropriate, for communication of steering committee between Annual Meetings

The criteria for renewal shall generally be the same as those for establishment, though achievement (rather than promise) is relevant. The SBL Annual Meeting Program Committee evaluates all unit proposals and renewals collectively and comparatively.

## Principles

With over 40% of membership in attendance each year, the Annual Meeting provides an unparalleled vehicle by which to foster biblical scholarship and nurture its influence in the general culture, the academy, religious communities, and general education.

Program units comprise the majority of the AM. These units are working groups of SBL members that are approved by the AMPC to organize sessions at the AM. Program units issue calls for papers annually and are responsible for reviewing presentation proposals, organizing sessions, and providing program information to the EO for scheduling and publication. Therefore, program units are integral to the AM, and the AMPC must maintain an intimate knowledge of and connection with program units.

The following principles inform the work of program unit chairs and can be found in the *Program Unit Chair Handbook*.

The role of a program unit chair involves strategic thinking and intentional balancing of its topics of inquiry, as well as careful planning about how the program unit will develop. This role can be described by three continuums.

### *Broad/core and specialized/peripheral*

Find a way to balance traditional or well-established methodologies and topics with cutting edge or innovative ones. Some topics present themselves as central or foundational, while others appear peripheral. Core topics should be balanced with emerging trends.

### *Senior voices and junior voices*

Find a way to balance senior voices with junior voices, providing opportunity for dialogue and professional development.

### *Receive and pursue*

Find a way to balance receiving proposals from open calls for papers and pursuing participants important to the unit's topics.

## Policies

### *Statement on Participation*

By submitting this proposal or accepting a role in any affiliate organization or program unit at the Annual or International Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, you agree to participate in an open academic discussion guided by a common standard of scholarly discourse that engages your subject through critical inquiry and investigation.

### *Chairs and Steering Committee*

- **Terms of office**
  - *Program Unit Chair (PUC)*: 3-year term, renewable once
  - *Steering Committee Member (SCM)*: 3-year term, renewable once
  - After fulfilling her or his term, a PUC may serve as an SCM, or an SCM may serve as a PUC, for one additional term. A person may serve no more than nine years (i.e. three terms) with any one program unit.
- **Size of program unit committee**
  - A program unit may have 1 to 2 PUCs.
  - A program unit may have 2 to 4 SCMs.
  - The total number of persons on a program unit committee, therefore, may not exceed six.
- PUCs and SCMs should hold a doctorate in the field of or a field related to biblical studies that was granted at least three years before the start of the person's term as PUC or SCM; however, as many as one SCM may be ABD.
- Only SBL members may chair PUs; ordinarily chairs have several years of professional experience beyond the completion of the doctoral degree. No member may chair more than two PUs.
- Only SBL members may serve as steering committee members. No member may serve on more than two steering committees, whether as chair or member.
- If a program unit chair's term is expiring and the chair has taken suitable steps to find a replacement without success, then the Executive Office may extend the program unit chair's tenure for a single year.

Any grievances against these policies or the conduct of program unit chairs, steering committee members, presenters, or attendees should be immediately referred to the chair of the Annual Meeting Program Committee in writing.

### *Program Units*

- **New proposals**
  - New program unit proposals must follow the Checklist for New Proposals.
- **Types**
  - *Consultation*: usually the first incarnation of a PU and formed to explore the viability of and interest in a subject; also short-term units responding to current trends or topics/methods/inquires new to the SBL program



- *Section*: offers presenters most access for unsolicited papers; required to have at least one open session each year; session types include panels and workshops
- *Seminar*: long-range collaborative research topics/papers that require active participation and well-defined research topics or projects; unit chairs collect papers before meeting and distribute to participant group; papers are summarized and discussed, not read, at meetings

\*\*\*Groups and Workshops have been eliminated. Units of these types will complete their terms as such; if they pursue renewal, they will choose to be either Sections or Seminars.

- **Terms**
  - *Consultation*: 3 year term, non-renewable
  - *Section*: 6 year term, renewable
  - *Seminar*: 6 year term, renewable
- **Typical Number of Sessions**
  - *Consultation*: 2
  - *Section*: 3; a fourth session may be organized if this session is jointly organized with another SBL program unit or Affiliate organization
  - *Seminar*: 3; a fourth session may be organized if this session is jointly organized with another SBL program unit or Affiliate organization

### *Program Participation*

- **Participation Limits**
  - Full members of SBL are limited to participate in no more than two regular program sessions as a presenter, panelist, or respondent. Appearances on Affiliate programs do not count towards this total. SBL Committee and business sessions do not count towards this total.
  - Student members of SBL may participate in two sessions as presider, panelist, or respondent but are limited to only one paper presentation.
- **Proposals**
  - Proposals **must** be submitted through the online system, including invited proposals.
  - All first-time presenters (full and student members of SBL) must submit the paper to-be-read to the program unit chair(s) during the call for papers period.
  - All presentations must be new presentations of the scholar's own original work. *In absentia* presentations are not typically accepted.
  - Papers cannot be repeated in other sessions or at other SBL meetings. Papers presented at an SBL regional meeting, however, can be presented at a subsequent Annual or International Meeting.

### *Registration and Membership Requirements*

- **SBL Program**
  - SBL Membership is required at the time of a proposal for the SBL program.
  - SBL Membership will be checked by **June 1**, and non-current members will be removed from the program at that time.
  - SBL Membership must be current at time of the Annual Meeting.

- **Affiliate Organization Programs**
  - Affiliate organization membership is required to participate.
  - If a member of an Affiliate organization intends to participate in an SBL session, the member is required to have current SBL membership.
- **Registration for Meeting**
  - All meeting participants must be registered by **June 1**. Registration will be checked, and those not registered will be removed from the program.

### *Special Sessions*

- Special sessions should be discussed with and programmed as a part of ongoing Annual Meeting Program Units whenever possible. Proposers are responsible for contacting related program units prior to submitting a proposal for an independent session.
- Book reviews should be discussed with and programmed as a part of ongoing Annual Meeting Program Units. Proposers are responsible for contacting related program units prior to submitting a proposal for an independent session. If a book review session cannot be organized through existing program units, then it is to be considered an Additional Meeting. Please see the [SBL Annual Meeting website](#) for information on Additional Meetings.

### *Waivers*

Program unit chairs may submit waiver requests for scholars who are not members of SBL. The consideration for waiver is not simply whether one is or is not a "biblical scholar," but whether one works regularly with the literatures, histories, and cultures (material and social) that interface "Bible," broadly construed, for this is the milieu from which persons join SBL as members regularly.

- Membership waivers for participation are granted to those from "outside the discipline." Those who are within related disciplines must become SBL members to participate on the program. (Related disciplines include religion, archaeology, ancient near eastern studies, etc.)
- Membership in other related organizations (e.g., AAR, ASOR) does not qualify one for a waiver.
- Waivers are granted on a one-time basis only. If a waiver recipient wishes to participate on the program a second time in subsequent years, he or she must join the SBL.
- Waivers will not be granted to expired SBL members.
- A waiver for the Annual Meeting includes:
  - Complimentary membership through the month of the Annual Meeting;
  - Complimentary meeting registration;
- The waivers program is administered by the Executive Office in consultation with the Annual Meeting Program Committee.