

The AMS Annual Meeting Programming Process

The AMS Annual Meeting program is created with input from the AMS staff, Committee on the Annual Meeting & Public Events (CAMPE), Performance Committee, Program Committee, and the Society's many study groups and committees. The goal of the program is to 1) fairly represent the breadth of musicology as an academic field; 2) provide coherently organized sessions and events of interest to a broad cross-section of the Society's constituents; and 3) highlight the most promising research as determined by the Program Committee and a pool of 60-70 external reviewers. These goals must be balanced against each other in the final program.

The call for proposals is updated every four to five years in accordance with the Society's strategic plan. The call states priorities and session types that advance the Society's goals for its meetings. Major revisions to the call must be approved by CAMPE. The program selection process takes into account the priorities and session types stated in the call.

To ensure that the program created by the Program Committee meets these goals and achieves the desired balance, the Society has developed and prescribed the following Program Committee process. Beginning in 2026, the Society, which has conducted its recent Program Committee meetings virtually, will return to in-person programming meetings in which two AMS staff members will be on-hand to answer questions, provide administrative support, and help as needed with the assembling of the program.

How to Run a Program Committee Meeting

- 1) **Receive data and quotas from AMS Executive Director or program staff.**
 - a) **Proposal ratings data spreadsheet:** The AMS staff collates and statistically normalizes reviewer scores in preparation for the Program Committee's deliberations. This information is provided to the Program Committee in a spreadsheet that can be used to easily record the Committee's decisions.
 - b) **Blinded proposal abstracts:** The AMS staff prepares a searchable PDF with the abstracts for all proposal submissions to be reviewed by the Program Committee. This document conceals submitter and presenter information for most proposals (excepting roundtables and workshops) to facilitate a largely blind review process.
 - c) **Available quotas:** The AMS staff calculates acceptance quotas based on available session space, venue capacity, and other factors as indicated by AMS policy and the call. Specific acceptance targets and percentages of paper and panel proposal types change from year-to-year depending on venue, whether it is a joint or online meeting, etc.
- 2) **Meet with all Members of the Program Committee to create the AMS program.**

The Program Committee should plan to spend the equivalent of two days (or 14-16 hours) creating the program. The process proceeds as follows:

- a) **Approve pre-organized session proposals:** The first Program Committee task is to approve pre-organized session proposals, including paper sessions, roundtables, films, and workshops. The committee should do this by approving sessions that cover a wide range of topics, selecting *preferentially* from more highly rated proposals, but not determining approval solely on the basis of proposal score. Lower-scoring proposals should be accepted if they represent an important topic or meet a distributional need.
- b) **Automatically accept highest rated “anchor” paper proposals:** The Program Committee should then *automatically* accept the top 10%-15% of highest rated paper proposals. The number of paper proposals automatically accepted depends on the size of the overall proposal pool and the venue capacity. The AMS staff can advise. These automatically accepted paper proposals will serve as anchors for the entire conference program. The majority of paper panels and forums will be built around them.
- c) **Build coherent sessions around automatically accepted papers:** The Program Committee should build as many coherent 3-paper sessions as possible from the automatically accepted anchor proposals, selecting preferentially from the most highly rated non-automatically accepted papers with the primary goal of optimizing session coherence. In this process, the PC will inevitably have to select some lower-rated (but still strong) proposals over higher-rated ones in order to optimize session coherence. This is understood and inevitable. 4-paper sessions should be avoided.
- d) **Identify topical holes and omissions:** As the Program Committee assembles recommended paper panels and forums it should be continually alert to topical holes or omissions. When identified, the PC should endeavor to fill them by selecting an anchoring paper proposal that addresses that topic and building a session around it.
- e) **Conduct the “Reveal”:** After the program is substantially created, the Program Committee may request and receive an unblinded copy of the proposal abstract information showing presenter names and affiliations. This is called “the reveal.” The purpose of the reveal is to allow the Program Committee to identify any obvious representational imbalances in the recommended acceptances before submitting the program to the office. (The AMS staff conduct a thorough and extensive analysis of the program to identify imbalances after the program is submitted.)
- f) **Create Engaging Session Titles:** After creating enough paper panels and forums to meet the established quotas, the Program Committee should spend time creating engaging titles for the recommended paper panels and forums. An engaging title is essential to encouraging attendance of the session and is the best way to advertise its content and coherence.

What Happens After the Program Committee Submits its Program

After the Program Committee submits its recommendations for proposal acceptances, the AMS staff conducts a comprehensive review of the draft program to identify conflicts, omissions, eligibility issues, etc. The Society's program review procedures, which have been in place for many years, are designed to ensure that the annual meeting program serves the entire field and membership fairly, and does not privilege any one group or constituency. Specifically, the AMS staff is required to check the draft program for the following:

1) conformity with eligibility guidelines

(are duplicate proposals accepted, are individuals accepted to present more than once, etc.)

2) topic and session distribution

(are all significant musicological fields represented; does distribution of pre-organized sessions and paper panels match the call for proposals; are there sufficient roundtables and other popular formats, etc.)

3) representational imbalances

(are there too many scholars from one institution on a single panel; women's studies sessions without women; pronounced geographic or institutional imbalances, etc.)

4) session coherence

(are all paper panels coherently organized with presentations on closely related topics)

After the review is concluded, the Executive Director shares the results of the review with the AMS Vice President, who serves as chair of CAMPE. If the PC-proposed program departs meaningfully from AMS policies and guidelines, the Executive Director recommends revisions to rebalance the program. If the recommended revisions are few, they can be implemented with the concurrence of the Executive Director and Vice President. If the recommended changes are substantial, the Executive Director reaches out to the AMS Vice President and chair of CAMPE to make a formal report of the issues and requests assistance in rectifying them. If time allows, the Program Committee chair and the members of CAMPE may also be involved in this process. However, every effort is made to avoid substantial revision of the draft program and Program Committee members are encouraged to follow the prescribed procedures to help ensure that little revision is needed.

AMS Annual Meeting – Organizing Overview: Program Committee

Division of Labor

The AMS Annual Meeting is organized every year with the input of the AMS staff, Committee on the Annual Meeting & Public Events (CAMPE), Performance Committee, and the Program Committee. Below is an overview of the responsibilities of each and the division of labor among them:

AMS Staff: The AMS staff is responsible for logistical and financial management and planning for the AMS Annual Meeting. This work begins 3-4 years before each annual meeting and includes selection of a venue, negotiation of site and A/V contracts, the updating and publication of all calls, the development of an event website and submission portal, and the selection and contracting of vendors. The AMS staff is also responsible for managing and preparing registration forms, processing financial transactions, and enforcing annual meeting policies created to manage these functions with authorization from the AMS Board of Directors or Committee on the Annual Meeting and Public Events (CAMPE).

CAMPE: The Committee on the Annual Meeting and Public Events (CAMPE) is responsible for advising the AMS staff and Board on policies and strategies involving the AMS Annual Meeting and other events. CAMPE is chaired by the AMS Vice President and is empowered, along with the AMS staff, to set policies for the annual meeting and to review and approve significant changes to meeting design. The chair of CAMPE is also typically consulted by the Executive Director and staff on initial site selection decisions for upcoming annual meetings (although CAMPE and the VP are not required to approve these choices). CAMPE is also empowered to propose and draft special calls that meet the Society's larger strategic goals; and both CAMPE and the Executive Director are authorized to accept or approve proposed sessions or papers that have not been accepted by the Program Committee, but which serve larger strategic or public relations goals.

Performance Committee: The Performance Committee is charged with reviewing performance proposals and ranking the top 6-10 in order of preference. Depending on space and financial constraints, the AMS will program 3-5 performances at each annual meeting, using the Performance Committee's ranking as a guide and programming their top selections. In select cases, the Executive Director may decline to program a specific performance based on financial constraints or program conflicts, for example where a required historical instrument is not available/too costly to procure or a specific performer has performed recently at a previous annual meeting. The Performance Committee has no specific responsibilities during the annual meeting, but members are expected to attend as many performances as their schedule will accommodate and extend a welcome and best wishes to the performers.

Program Committee: The Program Committee is charged with assembling the competitive part of the annual meeting program. To do this work, the Program Committee directly reviews proposals and utilizes statistically normalized and weighted summaries of reviews provided by the Society's 60-70 volunteer proposal readers, who are not members of the Program

Committee. The Program Committee is responsible for selecting pre-organized sessions (panels, workshops, and roundtables) to be accepted onto the program; selecting proposed papers to be combined into paper panels and forums; compiling individual papers into sessions; proposing paper session titles; and assigning session chairs for paper panels and chairs/discussants for paper forums. In joint meeting years, the Program Committee must also designate 2-3 members to serve on a joint subcommittee with the partnering society or societies to review and select jointly-sponsored session proposals. (NOTE: The work of the Program Committee is heavily facilitated and mediated by the AMS staff, who alone have access to the proposal submission system. After the program is assembled, it is subject to review by the AMS staff and Vice President. During this review, the staff conducts a systematic check of presenter eligibility, topic and demographic diversity, and the suitability of proposed session titles. If problems are found, these are corrected or addressed in consultation with the AMS VP and the Program Committee chair.)

Program Committee – *Calendar*

The work of the appointed Program Committee for the annual meeting begins roughly one year prior to the annual meeting itself. Below is a calendar of routine activities and milestones that Program Committee members can expect:

13 months prior (Oct)

Program Committee Orientation – AMS staff meets with the Program Committee chair (or the committee as a body) to review the calendar and answer questions.

12 months prior (Nov)

Annual Meeting Call Published – The Annual Meeting call is published in the Program Guide for the previous annual meeting and on the AMS website. Submission deadlines: 15 February (competitive proposals/performances); 15 March (committees/study groups)

11 months prior (Dec)

Submission Portal Opens / Website launched – AMS staff open the submission portal and launch the annual meeting website.

Call for Proposal Reviewers published – The AMS staff publish the call for proposal reviewers for the upcoming annual meeting. The deadline to volunteer is usually set for early February.

Joint Sessions Subcommittee formed (joint meetings only) – In joint meeting years, the Program Committee creates a subcommittee (usually composed of the chair and one other

member) to review joint proposals in collaboration with the program subcommittees from the other society or societies.

9 months prior (Feb)

Reviewer Sign-up Deadline – Reviewers must sign up. External reviewer pool finalized.

Proposals Due – Proposals for performances (Performance Committee) and Program Committee review are due **15 February**.

Reviewer Orientation – Reviewers receive instructions and are invited to an in-person orientation **led by the Program Committee chair** and a staff liaison.

Proposals Assigned/Reviewer Portal Opens – In the 7-14 days following the proposal deadline, AMS staff assign proposals to reviewers (including Program Committee members) and the reviewer portal officially opens. Reviewers typically have two (2) weeks to complete their reviews.

Performance Proposal Review Begins – The Performance Committee receives the performance proposals and begins its review. Performance Committee decisions due in April.

8 months prior (Mar)

Affiliate Proposals Due – Proposals for guaranteed slots are due from AMS affiliates (i.e., study groups and committees) due **15 March**.

Call for Chair / Discussant Volunteers Call Published – AMS staff publish a call for chair volunteers for the upcoming annual meeting. Deadline for chair volunteers set in early May.

Proposal Reviews Due – Proposal reviews are due.

Score Normalization – AMS staff do a statistical analysis of all proposal reviews and create normalized scores for the Program Committee to work from. (Score normalization aligns the ratings of “hard” and “easy” reviewers, so that scores are all broadly comparable.)

Program Committee Gets Review Data – At the very end of March or start of April, the Program Committee receives the normalized proposal data from the AMS staff. The Program Committee has about one (1) month to complete its review and 1) accept papers and pre-organized sessions; 2) organize individual papers into paper panels and forums; 3) propose titles for paper panels and forums; and 4) identify waitlisted sessions and/or potential paper panels.

Joint Program Sub-Committee Meets (joint meetings only) – For joint annual meetings, the joint program subcommittee will meet to review and select any jointly sponsored sessions or proposals.

7 months prior (Apr)

Program Due – Program Committee submits program and program decisions.

Program Review – AMS staff and CAMPE chair review and analyze the program to identify conflict, issues, or omissions. Any changes or additions incorporated. This process usually takes 3-4 weeks.

Performance Committee Decisions Due – The Performance Committee's proposal ranking is due in mid-April. Ranking is reviewed by AMS staff and CAMPE chair, and decisions are sent out in May.

Annual Meeting Travel Funding – Application portals for annual meeting travel funding opens. Deadline July 1.

6 months prior (May)

Chair / Discussant Volunteers Due – Deadline to volunteer to serve as a chair or discussant volunteer usually set in early May.

Program Committee Assigns Chairs / Discussants – After AMS staff check eligibility of chair / discussant volunteers, the list is given to the Program Committee to make assignments. Assignments due in early June. (After the assignments are made, the AMS staff reaches out to volunteers and asks if they are willing to serve on the assigned session.)

Finalize Program / Prep Decisions – The AMS staff finalizes the program, enters acceptances into the submission portal, and preps decisions. Decisions are typically sent in the first few days of June.

5 months prior (Jun)

Program Decisions Sent – AMS staff send out acceptance and rejection decisions for all proposals (guaranteed and competitive).

Registration Opens / Hotel Reservations Open – Registration for the annual meeting opens and attendees may begin reserving hotel rooms at group rate. (Hotel reservation portals may open earlier depending if available.)

Call for Annual Meeting Volunteers – The call for onsite annual meeting volunteers is published and the volunteer application form opens.

Proposal Revision Period – Accepted authors/session organizers are given a two-week window for revising and finalizing their proposals. (Note: Proposal text is published as part of the program and linked to the relevant session in the online program. Proposal text is not separately edited by the AMS staff in conference materials, but titles and presenter institutions are.)

Chair / Discussant Assignments Due – Program Committee submits chair and discussant assignments. AMS staff sends messages to chair and discussant volunteers and asks if they are willing to serve on the assigned session.

4 months prior (Jul)

Conference Schedule Created – AMS staff creates the annual meeting schedule and assigns rooms. Month-long process.

Annual Meeting Travel Funding – Deadline for applications for annual meeting travel funding is July 1.

Program Clean-up / Outstanding Issues – AMS staff and Program Committee work together to address any outstanding program issues, such as chair/discussant assignments, paper withdrawals, or titles. This work continues up until the meeting as needed (i.e., when people withdraw). Program Committee members should be prepared to step in or make last minute assignments, if chairs or discussants withdraw at the last minute. *Ongoing.*

3 months prior (Aug)

Annual Meeting Program Published – The annual meeting searchable online program is published. AMS begins promoting performances and special events.

Annual Meeting Travel Funding Decisions Sent – AMS staff sends out decisions about annual meeting travel funding. Grant/reimbursement payments are made and room reservations, where applicable.

At the Annual Meeting (Nov)

Program Committee Celebratory Dinner – At the Annual Meeting, the Program Committee goes out to dinner to celebrate. Dinner costs reimbursed by AMS.