

International Meeting
Program Committee

Society of Biblical Literature

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

Handbook

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International Meeting Program Committee

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

History

The IMPC was created in 2010 because of the growth of the IM and the need to evaluate and shape its direction for the future. The IM itself began in 1983 in Salamanca, Spain. The meeting was held in one day with six sessions and twenty-four participants. By 2010, twenty-one different countries hosted the meeting. The 2011 IM in London, UK will mark the 29th SBL meeting held outside of North America and will involve close to 200 sessions and over 500 participants.

While Europe remains home to the majority of SBL members outside of North America, the IM has been held outside of Europe five times (1986 Jerusalem, 1992 Melbourne, 2000 Cape Town, 2005 Singapore, 2008 Auckland), and discussions with institutions in South America and Asia are ongoing. How the IM functions as a part of the Society's general strategy of internationalization is continually under discussion. The IMPC plays an important role in discussing and shaping this strategy with Council and the EO.

Description

With assistance and coordination from the Executive Office (EO), the IMPC approves, reviews, and renews program units. The IMPC meets briefly at the IM to evaluate the just-completed meeting and holds periodic meetings throughout the year via email and conference calls to conduct its business, including the management of PUs. The IMPC works with the EO and Council to set policy and procedure for the IM. The IMPC 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 IMPC's work. Reports will be provided by the EO for this work, and it is essential that the IMPC discuss with the EO what information is needed. The EO makes decisions regarding location of the IM and all financial matters pertaining to its operations.

Responsibilities

Working with the EO, the IMPC should address 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

Relation to Annual 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.

Relationship of AM to IM

Following the aforementioned responsibilities, the IMPC should develop a program representative of the entire discipline so that the IM grows as a leading vehicle for keeping SBL members abreast of latest developments across the discipline and provides significant opportunities for professional development in terms of research, teaching, networking. The IM and AM share this general goal and many other similarities but differ in significant ways.

The IM is comprised of program units just like the AM, but IM program units are reviewed and approved separately from AM units. Policies for the two meetings are similar but separately considered and set. Only 6% of program unit chairs organize both an IM and an AM unit, so the leadership active at the meetings is different.

Membership figures in 2010 show that SBL is predominately composed of scholars from North America and Europe, as just over 90% of SBL members hail from the two continents. Moreover, between 75 and 80% of members reside in North America. Of SBL members outside North America, then, half reside in Europe and half reside in all other regions.

In this order, the following countries consistently provide the most participants.

1. United States
2. United Kingdom
3. Germany
4. Israel
5. South Africa

For these reasons, the IM tends to be organized in Europe.

A Calendar of the IM Program Committee's Work

Feb – Apr	Review of new program unit proposals, review of IM program
By Feb 15	IMPC will have all updates on presentation proposal figures and anticipated sessions and attendance
By Mar 5	Conference call to discuss sessions, review list of program units, and engage in strategic planning
By Mar 15	Policy considerations and update for Council finalized
May – Jul	Discussion and evaluation of IM program, including participation levels, topics, etc. for

- By Apr 25 IMPC will receive from EO reports on current year IM program, including number of program units, participation details, and overview of topics
- By May 25 Conference call to review reports and discuss related policy matters and long-term goals

- Aug – Nov Discussion and evaluation of long-term goals and policies, review of renewal proposals

- By Sep 1 *Program unit proposals and renewals are due.* IMPC will have all proposals and renewals, which will be sent as they come in so review does not back-up
- By Sep 15 Conference call to discuss proposals and renewals
- By Sep 25 Follow-up conference call to decide upon final proposals and renewals, if needed
- By Oct 1 Responses to proposals and renewals will be sent to program unit chairs

- Dec – Jan Recess

Program Unit Review

Attendance and participation at the International Meeting fluctuates based on location, even within Europe. The 2009 IM in Rome, Italy attracted 726 registrants; 448 registered for the 2010 IM in Tartu, Estonia. Nonetheless, the program has grown steadily since the early 2000s. In 2004 there were 18 program units; five years later, the number had increased by 161% to 47.

The committee manages this growth and the vitality and quality of the program by setting terms for program units. Program units must submit renewal materials in the fall of the unit's expiration. The committee will receive proposals and renewals by September 1 and will review them and remit feedback to proposers by October 1. These dates will ensure that program units can provide up-to-date information to the IMPC in their proposals and that the IMPC can remit feedback in time for accepted units to participate in the call for papers.

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 October 5.

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 International 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 International 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 International Meetings

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

Principles

Program units comprise the IM. These units are working groups of SBL members that are approved by the IMPC to organize sessions at the IM. 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 IM, and the IMPC 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*: usually more broadly defined; offers presenters most access for unsolicited papers; required to have at least one open session each year
- *Seminar*: long-range collaborative research topics/papers that require active participation and well-defined research topics or projects; limited membership; papers are generally pre-distributed and 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**
 - A person is 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.
- **Proposals**
 - Proposals **must** be submitted through the online system, including invited proposals.
 - 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 International 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 **May 1**, and non-current members will be removed from the program at that time.
 - SBL Membership must be current at time of the International 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 **May 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 International 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 International 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 International 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 International Meeting includes:
 - Complimentary membership through the month of the International Meeting;
 - Complimentary meeting registration;
- The waivers program is administered by the Executive Office in consultation with the International Meeting Program Committee.