

AERA Council Adopts Important Changes to Advance Annual Meeting Quality

AMPP-RAC Joint Committee Guides Changes Starting in 2010

In winter 2007, the AERA Annual Meeting Policies and Procedures Committee (AMPP) and the Research Advisory Committee (RAC) were given a joint charge from the AERA Council to examine how best to enhance the quality of the Annual Meeting as a forum for communication and dissemination of new knowledge. Over a 2-year period, the Joint Committee of AMPP-RAC solicited input from program chairs of divisions and special interest groups (SIGs), hosted a town hall meeting at the 2008 Annual Meeting in New York, gathered online input from AERA members during an open comment period, and considered feedback from two divisions that conducted pilot projects. Taking into consideration extensive feedback and multiple rounds of deliberation, as well as input from Council, the Joint Committee submitted a report and recommendations for Council's review in July 2008 and an additional report and recommendations in January 2009. At both meetings, Council adopted recommendations that constitute the changes going into effect.

In introducing these changes, AERA Council and the Joint Committee aim to strengthen the Annual Meeting and the role it serves in advancing education research. Although the changes span a wide range of aspects of the Annual Meeting (from submission through presentation and participation), the modifications are connected and linked to a common goal of enriching the Annual Meeting experience for both those presenting and those attending sessions. In looking forward to 2010 and beyond, Council and the Joint Committee have been reflective about the Annual Meeting and open to innovation, change, and, equally important, periodic review.

Changes to the 2010 Annual Meeting—Major Highlights and Opportunities

A brief overview of some of the key Annual Meeting changes adopted by Council is set forth below. The overall set of changes approved by Council represents the Association's collective effort to foster an AERA Annual Meeting comprising high-quality presentations and opportunities for maximal engagement by participants in sessions. To that end, changes relating to session formats, submissions, review, and participation will go into effect with the 2010 Annual Meeting.

1. Changes for Paper Submissions

- *Paper submissions.* Submissions for paper sessions, roundtables, or posters must be in the form of narrative papers. Power Point presentations or proposals to write a paper will not be considered.

- *Elements of a paper.* All six elements of a paper as described in the Call for Submissions must be addressed even if the submission is not the final paper and the results, conclusions, or findings are not yet complete. The six elements are (1) objectives or purposes; (2) perspective(s) or theoretical framework; (3) methods, techniques, or modes of inquiry; (4) data sources, evidence, objects, or materials; (5) results and/or substantiated conclusions or warrants for arguments/point of view; and (6) scientific or scholarly significance of the study or work. It is understood that theoretical or methodological papers will include information that is the equivalent of element (4) for those genres of scholarly work.
- *Selection of individual paper format type.* Authors submitting individual papers will indicate whether they wish to participate in a paper, poster, or roundtable session. Authors will also be asked at the time of submission in which other sessions types they are willing to present their paper if it is not accepted for their first-choice session type.
- *Submission of final papers.* Authors of accepted papers must upload a final paper into the AERA online system at least 3 weeks before the start of the Annual Meeting. The paper initially submitted will be considered the final paper if an author does not upload a revised paper by that date. Access to uploaded papers is provided to all other participants in a paper session or at a roundtable. At their discretion, authors may also elect to make their papers available to a broader readership through the AERA Online Paper Repository.

2. Changes for Session Submissions

- *Session submission.* Organizers need to prepare a session summary (maximum of 500 words) describing the overarching rationale and objectives for the session, its scholarly or scientific importance, and how the session will be organized. Also, for each paper/presentation, the submission needs to include a summary (maximum of 500 words) that addresses the basic elements of a research or scholarly paper/presentation.
- *Elements of submission.* The elements of submission will emphasize the scholarly or scientific importance of the session and the importance of reviewers' examining the paper/presentation summaries as well as the overall session summary.
- *Submission of final commentary papers.* Presenters of papers/presentations must prepare and upload a paper or commentary paper into the AERA online system at least 3 weeks before the start of the Annual Meeting to be available to session participants. A paper or commentary paper is limited to a maximum of 1,000 words. Presenters may elect to have their papers or commentary papers also placed in the AERA Online Paper Repository.

3. *Innovations in Individual Paper and Session Formats and Modes of Presentation*

- *Changes to individual paper format types.* Paper sessions must have a chair; a discussant(s) is optional. Papers accepted into poster sessions will be grouped by the program chair into a poster session or a structured poster session. Paper discussion sessions have been renamed *roundtables*. The new roundtable format will be a table of 3 to 5 researchers of accepted papers clustered around shared interests. Each roundtable at a roundtable session will have a designated chair. Roundtable sessions will be scheduled for a 90-minute time slot.
- *Changes to session submission format types.* Organizers submitting session proposals may use new session formats—*working group roundtables* or *structured poster sessions*. Symposium and demonstration/performance submissions remain options; workshop submissions need to be sessions related to the research process or other elements of work related to research professionals. Off-site visits as a type of session submission are encouraged and historically have been exceptionally well attended, albeit underutilized as a submission option.

4. *Establishment of a Peer-Review Panel Process*

- *Peer-review panel process.* In place of selecting individual volunteers to serve as reviewers, units (divisions, division sections, SIGs, committees) considering submissions will establish expert reviewer panels to evaluate papers and session proposals. The central element of this change is to identify, in advance of the start of the review cycle, individuals with a range of necessary expertise who agree to undertake a set of reviews within a specific time frame. Reviewers will be selected by a unit's program chair from a roster of volunteers or invited to serve by or before the end of an Annual Meeting to serve as a panel reviewer for the Annual Meeting the following year. The procedure also includes review of the roster of reviewers by a unit head (division vice present, SIG chair) before it is finalized. Review panels will be constituted to reflect the breadth of expertise needed by that unit—with a process that is more transparent and provides for greater consistency in the quality of reviewing.
- *Units cooperating on peer review.* Units with small numbers of submissions have the option of coordinating an integrated review process to avert the problems of conflicts of interest or an insufficient number of reviewers (even with reviewers reviewing a greater number of submissions). A reviewer does not need to be a member of a unit to serve as a reviewer for that unit.
- *Reviewers and scoring.* Each submission will be reviewed by three reviewers and may be reviewed by a graduate student or graduate students serving as additional reviewers. All reviews, including graduate student reviews (which will be identified as such), will be provided to submitters. However, scores from graduate student reviewers will not be included in the calculations for evaluating and scoring submissions. Special sessions on peer review training will be featured at each Annual Meeting to provide an educative opportunity for persons who are interested in serving as reviewers.

- *Graduate student reviewers under unusual circumstances.* Under unusual circumstances and at the discretion of the program chair, graduate students may be invited to serve as the third reviewer on a review panel. Under such circumstances, graduate student reviews will be taken into full consideration as part of the review score.

5. *Issues Relating to Participation*

- *Redistribution of Annual Meeting participation among paper/symposium, poster, and roundtable sessions.* To strengthen the overall quality of the Annual Meeting, the total number of paper/symposium sessions will be reduced to 1,000, and the use and emphasis on the value of poster and roundtable sessions will increase. The purpose is to add to the coherence and selectivity of paper/symposium sessions and to increase the use of posters and roundtables that are especially well suited for discussion of work. An underlying paper by authors is required whether the submission is for a paper, poster, or roundtable session. Based on the quality of submissions, units may accept the same relative proportion of papers as in the past but will be placing more papers in either poster or roundtable sessions. AERA will embark on a series of educative strategies to increase the use and emphasize the importance of these sessions for authors and audience alike.
- *Chair and discussant roles.* Chairs and discussants need to have substantive background and expertise appropriate to the substance of the session. Discussants have responsibility for commenting on papers, presentations, and the overall issues guiding the session and are not to use the time to make a presentation on their own work.

6. *Additional Enhancements*

- *Submission deadline advanced by 2 weeks.* The deadline for proposal submissions will be advanced 2 weeks earlier to July 15 each year. The earlier deadline will allow for an earlier release of the program and information about the Annual Meeting.
- *Notification of decisions.* Notification will be sent to all authors on papers and to all presenters/participants in sessions.
- *Online repository of papers.* AERA is establishing an online repository for Annual Meeting papers effective with the 2009 Annual Meeting. Participation by authors and presenters is voluntary and separate from the requirement for submission of final papers in advance of the Annual Meeting. The new repository provides an opportunity for authors to disseminate their work and communicate with a broader community of scholars and for scholars to connect with the most current work. Author copyright and other guidelines with respect to ethical and legal protections are specified as part of the repository.
- *Conflicts of interest policy.* AERA's conflicts of interest policy will be observed by persons reviewing proposals or serving as discussants and will be publicized in the Call for Submissions and in the *Annual Meeting Procedures Handbook* for program chairs.
- *Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, where applicable.* Authors submitting papers need to indicate that their research has been reviewed and approved by an IRB or that IRB review is "Not Applicable."

- *Guidance for paper and commentary paper preparation.* The AERA Standards for Reporting on Empirical Social Science Research in AERA Publications and the AERA Standards for Reporting on Humanities-Oriented Research in AERA Publications will be emphasized as guidance in the Call for Submissions.
- *Continued expansion of disability access and awareness.* The special attention in recent years to persons with disabilities will continue in site selection and organization of the Annual Meeting and in the substantive execution of sessions to enhance the Annual Meeting experience for presenters, audience, and all attendees.
- *Evaluation plan.* Emphasizing the value of baseline data and assessing the effects of Annual Meeting changes over time, session chairs will be asked to fill out an online chair information form immediately following the 2009 Annual Meeting. In addition, session attendees from a sample of sessions at the 2009 Annual Meeting across days and time slots will be asked to fill out a session attendee evaluation form. These two mechanisms of data collection will continue in future years.

Annual Meeting Sessions on Key Changes for the 2010 Annual Meeting *Find Out What These Changes Mean for You*

Opportunities and Changes for the 2010 Annual Meeting

Thursday, April 16, 2:15 p.m.–3:45 p.m.

San Diego Marriott Hotel & Marina, Level 3 Mission Hills

All AERA Annual Meeting attendees interested in forthcoming changes to the 2010 Meeting are encouraged to attend. This session is an opportunity to learn firsthand about important Annual Meeting changes from the Joint Annual Meeting Policies and Procedures Committee and Research Advisory Committee. The session will provide an accessible briefing for those planning to submit papers, organize sessions, or serve as reviewers. Also, AERA members serving as program chairs for their units (divisions, division sections, SIGs) are encouraged to attend. This session is intended to be interactive. There will be sufficient time for questions and answers so that attendees can learn about the submission process, innovations in session formats and modes of presentation, and other changes being introduced in 2010.

So You Want to Be a Peer Reviewer: Learning to Review Annual Meeting Papers and Enhancing Annual Meeting Quality

Wednesday, April 15, 2:15 p.m.–3:45 p.m.

San Diego Convention Center, Upper Level Room 25A

This session provides a comprehensive orientation directed primarily at graduate students who are interested in serving as peer reviewers on review panels for AERA Annual Meeting submissions. Emphasis will be placed on the process of reviewing, how to review, and the educative value for the reviewer.