

The Nuts and Bolts of Planning the Annual ASMS Conference Program

How are topics for tutorials and plenary lectures chosen?

Selection of the topics for the tutorials and plenary lectures is one of the major duties of the Vice President for Programs. In addition to the VP Program's own suggestions, input is provided by the post-conference survey and from interest groups and individual members. The proposed topics are presented by the VP of Programs to the rest of the ASMS Board during the summer executive board meeting during which additional feedback is obtained. The VP Programs then contacts potential speakers and finalizes the arrangement for the tutorial and plenary lectures. The goal is always to serve members well with a broad variety of topics presented over multiple years.

How are topics for oral and poster sessions selected?

Selection of the topics for the oral and poster sessions is one of the major duties of the Vice President for Programs. The topics are largely driven by feedback from the interest groups and individual members, typically by suggestions made in the interest group reports and the post-conference surveys or by correspondence directly with the VP of Programs. The proposed topics are presented by the VP of Programs to the rest of the ASMS Board during the summer executive board meeting during which additional feedback is obtained. Topics that are carried over from year to year are popular ones as evidenced by large numbers of submitted abstracts and high attendance at the sessions. Some of these topics are revised, updated, and refined each year before eventually being retired. Other new topics are added to the program each year, and this is why recommendations from the interest groups and member feedback via the post-conference surveys are so critical. Even a single suggestion for a new topic is enough to land it on the program for the following year. Let your voice be heard!

How are Chairs of oral sessions selected?

Selection of the Chairs of oral sessions is a second major duty of the VP of Programs. Repeating oral session Chairs from year to year is strongly discouraged, so that means there is a constant hunt for fresh faces. Maintaining diversity within the Chairs is also important: age, gender, nationality, career track, etc. Compiling a list of potential Chairs is an ongoing activity of the VP of Programs; many names are suggestions from the interest groups and individual members.

How are speakers selected?

Speakers are selected by the oral session Chairs based on the submitted abstracts. The Chairs review the submitted abstracts and select six based on the abstracts that showcase interesting and novel science. Chairs are also reminded to keep diversity at the forefront when selecting abstracts (age, gender, nationality, career track, etc.). Unlike many other conferences, ASMS does not have "invited" sessions; all sessions are based on submitted abstracts. Popular sessions might garner upwards of 50 abstracts, so competition for the six oral slots is stiff. The session Chairs remain anonymous throughout the submission and review process to minimize the chances of speaker lobbying. Chairs are not allowed to select their own abstracts, nor abstracts submitted by collaborators or co-authors, in order to minimize conflicts-of-interest.

How are poster abstracts reviewed?

All abstracts submitted for poster sessions and those not selected for oral sessions are reviewed en masse by a committee of ~20-25 members who are sent stacks of abstracts (based on topic) immediately after the abstract submission deadline. The committee convenes for a day-long review session during which abstracts are reviewed for overly commercial content, duplication, failure to disclose results, and lack of results. Abstracts are grouped by topics and divided into more manageable sub-topics. The poster sessions are scheduled based on distributing the topics across the four days of the conference. The acceptance rate for posters is very high (usually greater than 90%).

What are the primary reasons some ASMS abstracts are rejected?

There are several reasons that abstracts for the annual ASMS Conference are rejected:

- i. Insufficient preliminary data: occasionally authors will submit abstracts with no or very little preliminary data, and the results are phrased as "This will be done..."
- ii. Duplication of another submitted abstract: the review panel will pull out any abstracts that are near duplicates of other abstracts, typically ones from the same group.
- iii. Use of non-disclosed compounds: ASMS requires that all compounds used in a study be disclosed so that ASMS members can fully understand and utilize the findings.
- iv. Sections of the abstract are not completed: an abstract without an Introduction, Methods, Results, or Novel Aspect will be rejected.
- v. Questionable content: abstracts with overly commercial or inappropriate content are flagged for rejection.

Note that any abstract that is flagged for possible rejection is re-evaluated by two other reviewers plus the Vice President of Programs prior to final rejection. In addition, the Vice President of Programs may contact authors to resolve concerns prior to rendering the final decision.

How are the oral sessions arranged in the schedule?

The oral sessions are arranged to minimize overlap with similar and complementary topics. The program chair also attempts to move topics around so that the same topics do not always appear either early or late in the conference week.

Why are some oral sessions dedicated in honor of members? How are these selected?

Occasionally oral sessions are dedicated to celebrate or commemorate members. These are typically very distinguished members with a long history of ASMS membership and contributions to the field. The selection of specific members to be honored is based on member recommendations. Members typically make the recommendations in the post-conference survey or by directly contacting the VP for Programs. The topics of the oral sessions remain aligned with the regular scientific program.