Texas Academy of Science

Section Chair Handbook

Thank you for your service to the Texas Academy of Science as a Section Chair. While all the positions held in the Academy are important, our Section Chairs are really our public face because everyone who attends or gives a presentation will see you in action. We rely heavily on you to leave everyone with a positive impression about our organization. When your section runs smoothly, the entire meeting is much more likely to run smoothly, and people will be eager to return next year. In order to assist you in fulfilling your responsibilities well, we have compiled this handbook.

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Purpose of Sections/General Responsibilities of Section Chair:

1) Facilitate interaction among members with similar interests, organize sessions at Annual Meetings, and undertake activities which further the purposes of the Academy (TAS Constitution Article IV, Section 1).

    a. The primary way this is accomplished is by active recruitment of participants to give presentations and/or posters in their respective section at the annual meetings when the call for papers is announced.

2) Section Chairs are members of the Program Committee, chaired by the President-Elect (TAS Constitution Article IV, Section 2).

    a. The Section Chairs (Program Committee) meet during each annual meeting twice - Friday morning before presentations (a Pre-Session meeting) and Saturday afternoon following the presentations (Post-Session meeting). At the Pre-Session meeting, announcements, updates, judging forms, and certificates are distributed to Section Chairs. The Post-Session meeting is held to discuss any pertinent sectional business and to submit the results of the section elections to the TAS Vice President.

    b. Section Chairs serve on the Annual Program Committee. Typically, the Program Chair for the upcoming annual meeting will contact each Section Chair and send them the abstracts submitted for presentation in their section with a request to review the abstracts. Review of abstracts is for purposes of ensuring proper formatting and checking that subject content is appropriate for that section (if not another section will be recommended).

    c. Section Chairs interact directly with the Program Chair (President-Elect), Academy Counselors (in coordinating judging student presentations), and Board members.

    d. Vice Chairs fill the above roles in the absence of the Section Chair. Regardless, Vice Chairs also work to recruit presentations in their section.

3) There are no term limits for Section Chairs or Vice Chairs and an individual may serve back to back terms if no new nominees are available; however, Vice Chairs are typically elected Chair the following year and the outgoing Chair either rotates off or can be elected as Vice Chair if no other nominations are available. If more than one nomination is made for a section office, the one receiving the most votes will serve in that office.

Section Chair responsibilities and Annual Timeline:

1) **Spring of year, Annual Meeting (prior to election as chair)**
   - Attend **sectional business meetings** during Annual Meeting and volunteer or request nomination to serve as Section Chair or Vice Chair (typically Vice Chairs are elected as Chair the following year).
     [Note: Sectional business meetings will be scheduled in the meeting Program]
   - Attend **Post-Session Section Chairs meeting** (along with Vice Chair) and provide contact info to Vice President (next year's Program Chair). The Section Chairs meeting will be scheduled in the meeting Program. Fill out the Section Survey form at the end of this document and get it to the Vice President.
2) **Fall of Year, Call for Papers Announced by Program Chair**
   - Promote participation by sharing the call for papers with colleagues and encouraging them to submit an abstract to give a presentation in your section (recruit assistance of Vice Chair).
   - Upon request from Program Chair, review abstracts submitted for your section for appropriateness and formatting (recruit assistance of the Vice Chair). See guidelines on page 5.
   - Notify authors of acceptance of their abstracts for presentation in your section.
   - Recruit judges for undergraduate presentation competition (all undergrad presentations in your section should be judged during paper sessions). In an ideal world, judges should be senior members of the Academy who are "unbiased and academically unrelated" to the presenter. In such cases where this is impossible, we will rely on the academic integrity of the evaluator(s).
3) **Late Winter of Year, Annual Meeting Program Published/Posted**
   - Recruit moderator(s) for paper sessions. Usually the Chair and Vice Chair share this responsibility or may recruit a volunteer.
   - Contact the presenting authors in your section to tell them…
     - To check the posted program to see when they are scheduled to present.
     - When and where to load their presentation for their talk.
     - How much time will be allotted for each talk and questions.
     - Students selected for an award must be present at the banquet to receive their award, otherwise they forfeit the check.

   (See the sample 'letter to presenters' on page 6)
4) **Spring of Year, Annual Meeting**
   - Attend **Pre-Session Section Chairs** meeting at annual meeting
   - Moderate and/or attend paper session(s) for your section. (See page 7 for how to be an effective moderator). Remember to visit the posters too.
   - Preside over sectional business meeting
     - Conduct elections for Section Chair and Vice Chair.
   - Attend **Post-Session Section Chairs** meeting as outgoing Chair (or Section Chair/Vice Chair if re-elected). Instruct new Chair and Vice Chair to attend the meeting. Bring your completed Section Survey form.

Detailed Timeline for the Annual Meeting

Friday Morning

- Pick up your registration package and review the list of cancelled papers to see if any are in your section.
- Finish recruiting judges for the paper and poster sessions, as needed.
- Touch base with your Vice Chair and any moderators you assigned if you are not going to moderate your sessions yourself.
- Locate your room ahead of time and make sure everything appears to be in order.
- Attend Pre-Session Section Chairs meeting
    - Receive updates/announcements from Program Chair
    - Obtain undergraduate certificates of participation and judging forms from Collegiate Academy Counselor (Cathy Early)
    - Obtains graduate certificates of participation from Graduate Academy Counselor (Shannon Hill)

Friday during your sessions

- Remember to give a participation certificate to every oral and poster presenter in your section. Many presenters will need this certificate in order to file for reimbursement from their home institution.
- Collect completed judging forms after each talk; submit these to Collegiate Academy Counselor (Cathy Early) by 2:00PM Saturday (the earlier the better!)
- Take time to view the posters in your section.
- Invite audience members in your sessions to visit the posters during breaks.
- Invite audience members to attend your Section Meeting (announce the time).

Saturday during sessions

- Collect completed judging forms after each talk; submit these to Collegiate Academy Counselor (Cathy Early) by 2:00PM (again, the earlier the better)
- Run the Section Meeting and conduct elections for the Section Chair and Vice Chair.
- Invite the newly elected Chair and Vice Chair to attend the Post-Session Section Chairs meeting. If they have not held one of these positions before, they may not be expecting this. Do your best to encourage them to be there.
- Fill out the Section Survey (get the contact information for the new Chair and Vice Chair before they leave).
- Attend the Post-Session Section Chairs Meeting and turn in your completed Section Survey form with you.

Guidelines for reviewing abstracts:

In the fall you should receive an email from the Program Chair (President-Elect) or Coordinator of Information Technology with your log in information for the abstract submission web page.
As abstracts are submitted to your section, you will receive an email notification from the web page for each abstract that includes the authors, title, and abstract.

Review each submission (request assistance from your Vice Chair as needed) for the following:

- Does the abstract belong in your section or is it better suited to another section?
  - If the abstract should be moved, email the contact author (and cc the Program Chair) with your suggestion.
- Does the abstract need major revision to improve clarity? This could include special characters that did not translate correctly or confusing sentence structures.
  - If revision is needed, email the contact author with your specific concerns and give them a deadline to submit clarifications or revisions yourself.
- Does the abstract or title need minor revisions such as changes in case or italics for scientific names? If the meaning is clear, you can make minor revisions yourself.
- Were any abstracts submitted more than once? If so, notify the Program Chair so they can delete the duplicate submissions.

Guidelines for putting talks in order:

In January or early February you should receive a request from the Program Chair to suggest an order for the talks in your session. Consider these factors:

- Judges may be more difficult to find for the earliest and latest talks. Try to put the undergraduate presentations in the middle of your line up.
- Place more closely related topics back to back so that people most interested in those topics can plan to stay in your section for a longer block of time.
- Do submit a single list with the talks in the order you think is best, but provide notes regarding any talks that should not be separated by a break so the Program Chair can make appropriate adjustments to the presentation order to keep them together.
- Do not schedule undergraduate talks for Saturday afternoon.

Sample letter to presenting authors:

Congratulations on the acceptance of your abstract to the ________ Section of the Texas Academy of Science! While the meeting is still a couple of months away, I have listed a few things you can do to help our sessions run more smoothly.

1. All presentations for each session need to be loaded on the computer before the session begins. There should be time before the first session and during the breaks.
    a. Name your presentation file with YOUR last name (naming your file TAS2016 does not tell me whose file it is).
    b. Please bring your presentation on a flash drive.
    c. If you don't bring your presentation to be loaded ahead of time, we will try to load it when it is time for you to begin speaking; HOWEVER, your presentation will have to end at your regularly scheduled time.
2. A new talk is scheduled to begin every 15 minutes. In order to keep the session on schedule the moderator will signal you (by waving or standing up temporarily) when 11 minutes have passed. At 13 minutes the moderator will stand up and continue standing. You need to wrap up quickly at this point because at 14 minutes the moderator will move to the front of the room to get the next presenter's presentation opened on the computer and will allow for audience members to change room if they need to.
3. After each presentation, the **moderator** will determine if enough time is available for the audience to ask questions. (It is better to end your presentation with a Thank You rather than asking for questions since it is not up to you to determine if there is time for questions. This also allows for applause by the audience before the moderator calls for questions.) The moderator will stop the questions when it is time to transition to the next speaker. People with further interest in your work are welcome to talk to you at the next break.
4. If you are in competition for a student award, remember that one component being evaluated is how you respond to questions. If you don't leave time for questions, the judges will not have the opportunity to see how well you respond to questions.
5. If you are in competition for a student award, please note that **you must be present at the meeting banquet to receive your award**. Another person cannot accept the award on your behalf. There are no exceptions to this rule. This applies both to the honor of having been named as the recipient of the award, as well as any monetary prize associated with the award. Additional requirements apply for recipients of Research Awards.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation. I look forward to meeting you in person at ____________(meeting location)!

Send this letter out when authors are first informed that their abstract was accepted and a modified version a couple of weeks before the meeting. Your second letter could begin with:

> Thank you again for submitting your oral presentation to the _____ section of the Texas Academy of Science! The meeting is only a few weeks away and I am greatly looking forward to meeting each of you. I would like to remind you of a few things you can do to help our sessions run more smoothly.

Then paste in the 5 items listed above. Close with:

> Thank you in advance for your cooperation. May you all travel safely to ____(meeting location)!

How to be an Effective Moderator:

1. **Arrive 10 minutes before your session** to check that all equipment and room facilities are present and functioning.
2. **Load presentations on the computer before the session begins.** Create a folder on the desktop for all the presentation files. Speakers should have used their last name to name their presentation file, but change the file name as needed. Add numbers (01, 02, 03,…) to the beginning of the file name to reflect the order of the presentations.
3. **If a speaker does not load their file ahead of time** wait until they are scheduled to speak to load their file (unless a talk gets cancelled, leaving a 15 minute break in your session). Remind the speaker that their turn to talk will still end when it is time for the next speaker to begin.
4. **Locate and identify each speaker in the session in advance.** If the speakers do not come to you, make an announcement about 5 minutes before the session begins and ask speakers to identify themselves to you. Show speakers how equipment works and indicate how you will identify time elapsed.
5. **Check the correct pronunciation of each speaker's name.** For multiply authored papers, determine which author is presenting. Mispronunciation of names and inability to identify the next speaker should never occur.
6. **Tell speakers how time intervals will be indicated.** The 11-minute mark should be signaled to allow speakers 1-2 minutes to conclude, leaving a further 2-3 minutes for questions. Ensure that your method of indicating time will be conspicuous even when the speaker is in full swing and not looking in your direction.
7. **Introduce the presentation quickly and efficiently.** Rather than simply reading the title and authors from the program (which any audience member can do for themselves), <u>prepare a shortened title</u> that will permit a speedy introduction of the next speaker.
8. **Use full room lighting for the introduction and question period.** Never use dim room lighting before the speaker has made his/her introductory remarks. Once the speaker refers the slides or requests reduced lights, adjust lighting <u>**only**</u> enough to ensure that slides are visible; normally this means dimming only those lights that might interfere with visibility of the screen. Return the room to full lighting for the question period. If the light switch is in an inconvenient location for you to reach, recruit an assistant to operate the lights.
9. **NEVER plunge the audience into darkness.** The speaker needs to see the audience to gauge how effectively points are being made, and audience members need to see the speaker and have sufficient light to take notes. With most PowerPoint presentations, lighting in the audience portion of the room does NOT need to be dimmed.
10. **Keep session on time.** To ensure that the speaker is aware of the time, use a large flash card, stand up, move into the line of view of the speaker, and wait until the speaker indicates that he or she has seen your time signal.
11. **Be bold. Interrupt if necessary.** For concurrent sessions to stay in synchrony, speakers MUST leave the podium at the 15-minute mark. To be fair to all speakers, it is the session chair's responsibility and obligation to move on to the next speaker at the allotted time.
12. **Run the question period** by standing up and positioning yourself to be able to see any raised hands; do <u>not</u> sit down during the question period. Select the next person to ask a quesiotn, and indicate

when question time is about to run out. The MODERATOR, **not** the speaker, controls the question period; make sure the speaker know this.

13. **Thank the speaker and hand them their participation certificate.** Many presenters require this certificate as evidence of their attendance to obtain reimbursement from their home institution.
14. **Manage the audience.** Allow a brief period between speakers for audience members to move in and out of the room, thereby avoiding noise and shuffling as the next speaker begins. Adjust this interval according to the amount of audience turn-over; usually <30 seconds is adequate. Indicate if empty seats are available at the front or within rows and allow people time to move to these seats. Request people move away from doorways and sit down.
15. **Read abstracts and have a question ready to ask the speaker** in the event of an awkward silence when no questions are forthcoming from the audience. Every speaker deserves to have at least one question asked if time permits (and students being judged are evaluated on their response to questions), so read the abstracts for your session in advance.
16. **Announce cancellations** in your session at the beginning of the session. Additionally, note cancelled papers on the while/black board and post a notice on both sides of any doors to the room.
17. **Do not make unannounced changes to the program.** Talks must be presented in their designated time slots so that people can plan which papers to attend and when. If a paper is cancelled mid-session, wait until the next designated time so that remaining presentations are given at their scheduled times.
18. **Inform the Local Host of problems or issues.** If a speaker fails to appear at the allotted time or if any unusual problems arise, especially any requiring attention to improve subsequent session in that room, immediately inform the Local Host.

Acknowledgement: This list was adapted (with permission) from "Responsibilities of Session Chairs at Annual Meetings," prepared for the American Society of Mammalogists by Gail R. Michener, University of Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada.

Open and close each session of your section with these comments:

- Invite the audience to visit the posters for your section during the breaks and announce the times designated for the authors to be with their posters.
- Announce when your section's Business Meeting is scheduled and invite the audience to attend.

TAS Section Survey 2017

Please fill this in and bring it with you to the Section Chairs Meeting.

Section Name:			
2016-2017 Section Chair		2016-2017 Section Vice Chair	
NEW 2017-2018 Section Chair		**NEW 2017-2018 Section Vice Chair**	
Home Institution:		Home Institution:	
Mailing Address:		Mailing Address:	
Phone Number:		Phone Number:	
Email:		Email:	

To help next year's host committee to better plan for the amount of space needed for each section, please estimate the attendance in your section this year.

- Total number of seats available in your room: _____

- For the highest attendance in your session this year:
    - About _____ seats were empty
      OR
    - All seats were filled and about ____ people had to stand.

Please answer the following question in the space provided below. You can write on the back or attach an additional page if more space is needed.

1. Did your presenters load their presentations on the computer in a timely manner?
2. Did you have difficulty recruiting enough judges to evaluate undergraduate presentations?
3. Were there any other issues that should be addressed for the next meeting?
4. What suggestions do you have to help improve future meetings?