

# A Graduate Student's Guide to the APSA Annual Meeting & Exhibition

## Prepared by the APSA Committee on the Status of Graduate Students in the Profession

### *Annual Meeting Attendance*

#### **Q: Who can attend the APSA Annual Meeting?**

Anyone may attend the APSA Annual Meeting—all that's required is that you register as an attendee and pay the meeting registration fee. APSA student members receive a discounted conference rate. You may register in advance through the APSA website or onsite at the annual meeting. Attending the annual meeting at any time during a graduate school program may be beneficial, but attendance is often most useful for graduate students who are interested in networking, finding potential research collaborators, or currently on the job market.

#### **Q: What travel funding is available for graduate students?**

A: There are many ways for graduate students to find funds to attend the annual meeting. One source may be your department—many provide graduate students with funds for conference travel. Other sources include professional and graduate associations at your home institution. Some [funding organizations](#) also provide grants for conference travel.

APSA also awards a large number of [annual meeting travel grants](#) for graduate student members each year. Select APSA [organized sections](#) also offer travel grants for graduate student members, both for the annual meeting and other relevant conferences.

#### **Q: Where should graduate students stay while attending the APSA Annual Meeting?**

A: There are usually several options for hotels—at a range of price points—at or near the annual meeting site. Hotel rooms can be booked at the discounted conference rate through the APSA Annual Meeting website. There may also be low-cost options available through deal websites. You may want to consider sharing a room with a friend to reduce costs.

#### **Q: What's the dress code?**

Dress code can vary—if you are presenting on a panel, for example, the dress code tends to be more formal than if you are attending a happy hour or reception. For attendance at panels and roundtables, attire is typically business formal. This generally means some combination of dress slacks, blazers, cardigans, and collared shirts or blouses. Interviews are also business formal. The dress code relaxes for happy hours and receptions, but is typically business casual.

#### **Q: Who can I speak to if I have concerns about the annual meeting?**

Feel free to approach APSA staff onsite if you have concerns about annual meeting programming or any other issues.

If you have concerns relating to an uncomfortable or inappropriate interaction with another meeting attendee, you should also feel free to reach out to the APSA Ombuds. The APSA Ombuds will be available during the annual meeting to speak with any meeting attendee on a variety of topics including, but not limited to, consultation with any meeting attendees who believe that they have experienced any form of harassment or have concerns about violations of the sexual harassment provisions of the APSA anti-harassment policy. More info about the Ombuds will be available at the meeting and also on [APSA website](#).

### ***Job Searches and Interviews at the Annual Meeting***

#### ***Q: How can I use the annual meeting to help me on the job market?***

The annual meeting is a good time to network with scholars in your field, faculty, editors, department leaders, and many non-academic and private sector organizations. You should do your homework before the meeting—review the program and exhibitor list to find out which individuals or organizations are attending. Consider which academic departments have receptions, booths, or conduct interviews at the conference. If you would like to set up a time to chat with someone, reach out *before* the annual meeting and ask if they'd be willing to meet. This may often involve sending a "cold call" email to a senior scholar or organization representative, but this is common practice and many attendees are open to scheduling informational meetings with students. Serendipitous meetings can happen, but don't count on it—calendars fill up quickly, and scheduling in advance is important.

Both the APSA Interview Service and Career Fair also take place at the annual meeting—these are important events for any job search. More information on both is included in the next question.

Finally, don't forget to bring your business card! Ask your academic department if they will print one for you, or consider printing some yourself. A quick online search will give you several low-cost printing options.

#### ***Q: Why do some students and job-seekers interview at the APSA Annual Meeting? How does this process work?***

APSA has a comprehensive database of jobs in political science on the [eJobs website](#). In addition to the database, APSA also provides an [Interview Service](#) at the annual meeting, which departments use to interview job candidates onsite. Conducting interviews at the annual meeting helps search committees narrow down their list of potential fly-out candidates.

Beginning on June 1 of each year employers indicate on their job posting whether they are planning to interview job candidates at the annual meeting. Job seekers may also indicate whether they plan to be available for interviews at the annual meeting on their eJobs profile, also beginning on June 1 each year.

Some hiring departments contact job candidates in advance to schedule an interview at the annual meeting. In some cases, you may not need to submit a full application before the interview is set up. Other colleges and universities may contact you only after you have submitted your materials, and set up an interview in order to learn more about you. You may also contact the hiring department directly if

you are interested in a particular position. In these cases, you should first apply for the position and then reach out to the hiring committee contact listed on the job posting to indicate your interest in an interview. You can find more information about the Interview Service [here](#).

***Q: Where do the interviews take place?***

The APSA Interview Service takes place in a large ballroom in one of the main conference hotel buildings. Each participating hiring department has a table for conducting interviews. If you have an interview the search committee may give you directions to the room, but you can also ask the staff at the registration desk for help finding it. The location also listed in the annual meeting website and program.

Some employers may organize interviews (or informational interviews) outside of the APSA Interview Service, for instance at a coffee shop, in one of the common meeting areas, etc. APSA does not recommend arranging interviews in hotel suites or private rooms that are not part of the common conference area.

***Q: What tools or resources should student and job-seekers bring along to these meetings?***

Standard procedure is to bring copies of all job materials (including CV, cover letter, teaching statement, writing sample, syllabi, etc), though it's likely that the search committee will have copies of their own in hand. Prepare as if you were going to an on-campus interview, with talking points about your research and teaching. You may also want to take a look at the [Job Candidate Questions](#) list on the APSA website before your interview and have questions in mind to ask the hiring committee.

***Q: Are there other career opportunities at the annual meeting?***

If you are not on the job market yet, you can still learn about careers at the APSA Annual Meeting [Career Fair](#). The Career Fair is open to any annual meeting attendee. Attendees have the chance to connect with departments, institutions, and organizations for informational and informal discussions about jobs in political science, and other careers that draw on political science training, both on campus and in applied/non-academic settings. Participants include university and college political science departments, federal government agencies, non-profits, and research organizations.

There are also career related [professional development roundtables](#) at the annual meeting—you can learn more about these in the following section.

***Networking and Professional Development at the Annual Meeting***

***Q: Which receptions should I attend?***

Receptions at the annual meeting typically take place in the evening after panels have ended for the day. Groups that host receptions include academic departments, [organized sections](#), [status committees](#), and [related groups](#). APSA also hosts several receptions during the course of the conference. Deciding which receptions to attend depends on your interests and goals. There are multiple receptions each evening, so look through the program in advance to see which ones may be of interest for you.

If your current department hosts a reception, you may want to attend. You should also consider attending any receptions hosted by departments where you are interested in applying for positions. These department receptions are a good opportunity to connect informally with faculty and graduate students and learn more about a particular college or university. Attending receptions for organized sections and related groups that you're interested in (or already a member of) is also a good idea. You can learn more about what the section does and network with colleagues who work in your field of interest.

Additionally, APSA-sponsored receptions provide excellent networking opportunities. A number of APSA Status Committees host receptions that provide a welcoming environment for grad students and first-time meeting attendees. There is also a Graduate Student Happy Hour reception each year, where you can network with your peers. There is also the Opening Reception, the International Attendee reception, the Mentoring and Networking reception, and the First-Time Attendee welcome breakfast. All these receptions provide opportunities for meeting attendees to learn more about the discipline and connect with one another. A full list of receptions is available in the annual meeting program.

***Q: What other professional development resources are available at the annual meeting?***

In addition to receptions and other networking opportunities, there are many professional development events for graduate students at the annual meeting. These include short courses, workshops, roundtables, and more.

On the Wednesday before the meeting, there are a series of “short courses” that take place, many of which provide in-depth training for attendees on topics such as research design and methods, academic freedom, and teaching techniques. You may register for a short course when registering for the annual meeting. In addition to short courses, there are also APSA organized workshops—including [dissertation](#) and [pedagogy](#) workshops—which take place on Wednesday. Keep an eye out during spring semester for announcements about these workshops—you can apply to participate in advance of the annual meeting.

APSA also has a wide variety of [professional development roundtables](#) on topics including the academic job market, the non-academic job market, mentoring, publishing, networking, diversity and inclusion, grants and funding in the discipline, and pedagogy. [A full list of roundtables](#) is included each year on the APSA website and in the annual meeting program. There is also an all-member business meeting that takes place at the meeting, where you can learn more about APSA business and initiatives.

***Q: What questions should you ask journal editors?***

There are a number of panels each year dedicated to learning more about journals and academic publishing at the Annual Meeting. Editors of APSA journals, including the *American Political Science Review*, *Perspectives in Political Science*, *PS: Political Science & Politics*, and the *Journal of Political Science Education* typically host roundtables where annual meeting attendees can ask questions and learn more about particular journals. There is also a professional development roundtable where book and journal editors discuss the publishing process more broadly.

If you attend one of these roundtables or meet a journal editor while at the annual meeting, what you discuss will depend on your own interests and experience with the publishing process. If you have no familiarity with the publishing process, don't be afraid to mention you're new to it and ask some basic questions. If you're interested in getting involved, some journals accept graduate students as reviewers and you can inquire about their process for applying. Being a reviewer can give you a unique, in-depth perspective to the publishing process.

### ***Organized Sections at the Annual Meeting***

#### ***Q: Who can attend organized section business meetings?***

Organized sections provide an opportunity for groups of APSA members who share a common interest in a particular subfield to organize meetings and coordinate communications. Each organized section has a business meeting at the APSA Annual Meeting—these meetings are listed in the print and online annual meeting program. Anyone who has registered for the annual meeting is allowed to attend an organized section business meeting. A business meeting may be a good way to introduce yourself to other section members, make connections, and determine whether a particular section is a good fit for your research interests. Be aware, though, that votes on organized section business may occur during the meeting, and while in most cases it is fine for non-members to observe, they should not participate in section member business votes.

#### ***Q: Can graduate students attend panels and roundtables organized by sections they're not a member of?***

Yes, students registered for the annual meeting are welcome to attend panels and meetings of any organized section, so long as the event is listed in the annual meeting program.

#### ***Q: Why should graduate students join organized sections?***

Organized sections can help graduate students develop a network in their chosen field. Being a part of a section may give graduate students access to current research, conferences, journals, and mentorship from more senior members in the field. Graduate students are also excellent candidates for junior leadership roles in organized sections. Whether it's copyediting the section newsletter, collating conference paper proposals, or finalizing the business meeting agenda, as a graduate member you can offer invaluable service to a section, all while developing important professional skills that will prepare you to take on more senior leadership roles in the future. More information on organized sections, including a list of frequently asked questions, is available [here](#).