

ACSM Fellowship Objectives and Minimum Benchmarks

The objectives of ACSM fellowship are as follows:

- To recognize outstanding service to the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM)
- To promote continued involvement and leadership within ACSM
- To honor distinguished professional achievements in research and/or service in the fields of sports medicine and exercise science

Fellowship candidates should already demonstrate a history of meaningful service and a strong commitment to ACSM. Advancement to Fellow status signifies a deeper level of engagement and a willingness to contribute further to the organization's mission, particularly through leadership roles.

Fellowship should not be viewed as a final achievement or pursued for personal recognition, but rather as a commitment to continued service and active participation in ACSM's internal affairs.

Minimum Benchmarks for Fellowship Consideration

As outlined in Article IV, Section 3 of the ACSM Constitution and defined by the Board of Trustees, the following minimum criteria (items 1–7 below) represent the baseline required for an application to be reviewed. **Meeting these minimum requirements does not guarantee advancement to Fellow status**—it only ensures that the application will move forward to the peer review stage.

During peer review, candidates are evaluated holistically. Advancement is based on the Credentials Committee's assessment of the applicant's overall contributions to, and commitment to, ACSM. The following elements are especially important during this phase:

- **Depth and breadth of service** to ACSM, with emphasis on the **significance, duration, and recurring nature** of that service.
- **Responses to the two open-ended questions**, specifically:
 - How you became involved with ACSM and why that involvement is personally meaningful.
 - What "Fellowship" in ACSM represents to you.
- **Strength and enthusiasm of the two Fellow endorsers**, including how well they articulate the candidate's qualifications and readiness for Fellowship.
- For applicants in the **Research category**: The **quality and impact of professional publications**, especially the **four peer-reviewed articles** submitted as best representing the candidate's work (with emphasis on first-author contributions).

Candidates must meet the minimum benchmarks outlined in sections 1–7 below to be eligible for consideration.

1. Shall have demonstrated high standards of professional development and a commitment to the goals and long-range activities of the College.

"High standards of professional development" refers to well-established and sustained contributions to the fields of Exercise Science and Sports Medicine. This may be demonstrated through impactful research and/or distinguished service in medical practice—implying recognized excellence or leadership within the profession.

"Commitment to the goals and long-range activities of the College" is demonstrated through well-rounded, meaningful service to ACSM. Service to one's Regional Chapter is also considered highly valuable and strongly encouraged.

To meet the minimum service requirement for advancement, candidates must earn a combined score of at least 4 points from the activities listed in Section I: Service to ACSM. This should be achieved through a variety of service roles and activities. Again, meeting only the minimum does not guarantee advancement—and candidates are encouraged to exceed the baseline.

Exceptions to this standard may be granted under the Exceptional Service Waiver or Service Waiver pathways, as detailed in requirement #5 below.

2. Shall have earned a diploma from an accredited college or university in one of the following fields: Doctor of Medicine or Osteopathy, Doctor of Dental Surgery, Doctor of Philosophy, Doctor of Education, Doctor of Physical Education, Doctor of Public Health or an equivalent.

The intent of this requirement is to be inclusive of other terminal degrees that are educationally equivalent to those listed (such as DHSc, ScD, DC, DPT, etc.)

3. Shall have been a Professional Member of the College for at least three consecutive years at the time of application for advancement.

The purpose of this requirement is to ensure that applicants have held uninterrupted Professional Member status for at least three consecutive years immediately prior to applying. Memberships that have lapsed for six months or more before being renewed do not satisfy this requirement. Additionally, time spent in other membership categories—such as Professional-in-Training, Student, or ACSM's Alliance of Health & Fitness Professionals—either alone or in combination with Professional membership (e.g., one year as a Student Member and two years as a Professional Member), does not count toward the three-year requirement.

4. Shall have attended at least two ACSM Annual Meetings of the College within the last five years.

The intent of this requirement is that the member must have registered, paid, and attended the full ACSM Annual Meeting in person. The 2021 ACSM Annual Meeting – a Live Virtual Format also meets this requirement provided the member signed in and actively participated during the live event. The following do not meet this requirement: Post meeting/on-demand educational content; Single day and complimentary/free registrations; ACSM specialty meetings (e.g. – Sports Medicine Essentials/Team Physician Course, Health & Fitness Summit & Exposition); ACSM Regional Chapter meetings, and the 2020 Virtual Experience.

5. Shall have submitted a curriculum vitae, including evidence that he or she has fulfilled at least one of the following:

Research

Members who have published in peer-reviewed (refereed) journals—such as those indexed in Index Medicus or Citation Index—may be considered for advancement based on a distinguished record of scholarly publication. As part of the application, please include four principal author publications from peer-reviewed journals that best represent your contributions to sports medicine or exercise science research.

In addition, applicants must demonstrate a minimum of 4 ACSM service points in Section I, earned across a variety of activities (not solely through presentations). Please note: Meeting only the minimum criteria is rarely sufficient for advancement. Candidates are strongly encouraged to exceed the minimum to demonstrate a sustained and meaningful commitment to ACSM and the field.

Service

Members who do not publish research in indexed, refereed, peer-reviewed journals may be considered for fellowship based on distinguished service to both ACSM and the broader sports medicine and exercise science community. This service may include notable contributions in medical practice related to sports medicine over a minimum of three years—such as serving as a team physician, participating in sports injury prevention, or working in exercise testing or rehabilitative medicine. To qualify under this pathway, candidates must demonstrate service to both ACSM and the wider professional community, earning at least 4 points in Section I and 10 points in Section II, for a combined minimum score of 14 points.

Applicants pursuing advancement through service are expected to exceed the minimum point thresholds, as meeting only the minimum criteria is rarely sufficient for advancement.

Waivers

The Waiver pathways outlined below are designed to accommodate applicants who fall outside the conventional Research and Service eligibility paths.

Service without a Terminal Degree Waiver

Members without a terminal degree may be considered for advancement if they have maintained Professional membership for 10 or more consecutive years at the time of application, earned at least 15 points in Section I – Service to ACSM, and at least 15 points in Section II – Service to the Sports Medicine and Exercise Science Community. Additionally, they must meet requirements 1 and 3 through 7.

Service with a Terminal Degree Waiver

Members who hold a terminal degree and consider ACSM their primary professional organization but have limited service outside ACSM may be considered for advancement if they have maintained Professional membership for 10 or more consecutive years at the time of application and have earned a total of at least 20 service points across Sections I and II—with more than half of those points coming from Section I (Service to ACSM). Additionally, they must meet requirements 1 through 7.

Exceptional Service Waiver

Members who, due to extenuating circumstances (i.e. - such as certain international members), have limited opportunities to provide significant service to ACSM but whose contributions to the broader sports medicine and exercise science community are recognized as especially noteworthy by both ACSM's Board of Trustees and the wider professional community may be considered for Fellowship through documented exceptional service. Applicants must submit a detailed narrative and a curriculum vitae demonstrating significant and sustained service. Additionally, they must meet requirements 1 through 7.

6. Shall have received a recommendation in writing by two Fellows of the College.

Two typed recommendations from current Fellows of the College are required to fulfill this criterion. The expectation is that exactly two recommendations be submitted. Fellows should act as mentors throughout the application process, including reviewing your materials for accuracy and completeness. They should be well-acquainted with your involvement in ACSM and have a strong understanding of your professional contributions. Regardless of their specific role—whether ACSM President, Past President, Board Member, or Fellow Member—the strength and enthusiasm conveyed in their recommendations carry significant weight in the evaluation of your application.

7. Shall have received the approval of the Credentials Committee and the Board of Trustees. The Credentials Committee conducts the initial review of the applications and makes recommendations to the Board of Trustees concerning advancement.

The Review

The advancement review process for Fellow status includes the following steps:

- The candidate submits a complete application to the National Center by one of the two annual deadlines.
- The National Center reviews the application to confirm all required materials are included (application form, curriculum vitae, recommendation letters, payment, etc.).
- The Credentials Committee evaluates each application holistically based on the submitted materials and provides advancement recommendations to the Board of Trustees.
- The Board of Trustees makes the final decision on advancement. While the Board typically follows the Committee's recommendation, it may consider additional information that could influence the final outcome.

Maintaining Fellow Status

Fellow status is maintained by paying the annual Professional Member dues. Fellowship is more than a membership category—it reflects your ongoing commitment to ACSM and its future.

If a Fellow's membership becomes delinquent for more than one year, their fellowship status may be subject to review. The following actions apply based on the length of delinquency:

- **Up to 12 months of lapsed membership:** Submit dues payment to reinstate status.
- **13 to 24 months of lapsed membership:** Submit a letter to the Credentials Committee explaining your absence, along with one year's dues payment.
- **25 or more months of lapsed membership:** The member must meet the minimum criteria and reapply for fellow status, including submission of a new fellowship application and payment of one year's dues.

Process for Appealing a Decision by the Board of Trustees

Applicants who are not advanced to Fellow may submit an appeal to the Board of Trustees. Upon receiving an appeal, the Board will convene an Appeals Panel composed of the Executive Committee of the College and the Chair of the Credentials Committee. The Appeals Panel will review only the materials originally submitted to the Credentials Committee with the fellowship application. If a candidate has additional information to support their case, it must be submitted to the Credentials Committee directly. The Committee will then reconsider the application during the next regularly scheduled review period.