



Association of Doctoral  
Programs in Health  
Sciences

# **Program of Merit**

## **Information & Criteria**

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## **OVERVIEW**

### **Purpose**

The Association of Doctoral Programs in Health Sciences (ADPHS) was informally established in November 2019 and incorporated in August 2021. In the association's early stages, a decision was made to form a Program Review Committee who would develop and implement a review process that, for eligible programs, would lead to a Program of Merit (POM) status awarded by the association. The intent was to create a formal framework that would lead to a variety of benefits for doctoral programs in health sciences. This POM status provides:

1. A mechanism whereby key stakeholders, including students and administrators, can verify that the program is consistent with established standards for doctoral programs in health sciences;
2. Guidance to the public and employers about the quality of the programs and their graduates;
3. A way for potential students to evaluate available programs and make a fully informed decision on the choice of doctoral program;
4. Improved marketability and enhanced recruitment of prospective students for programs; and,
5. Justification for requesting necessary resources to make programs more successful.

### **Eligibility**

Any program that is eligible to be, or is a Full Member in good standing of the ADPHS, may apply for the POM status.

## **PROGRAM EVALUATION PROCESS**

The steps in the process include 1) submission of an application, 2) establishment of a POM Review Team, 3) the applicant program's development and submission of a self-study, 4) the POM Review Team's assessment of the self-study and development of a recommendation statement, and 5) final decision by the ADPHS Program Review Committee. Except during the first year (2022), the ADPHS Program Review Committee will render decisions on POM applications (initial and continuation of status) twice per year in October and April. More details on the process, including timeline and cost, can be found below and in the Frequently Asked Questions section of this document.

### **Step 1 – Submission of Application**

The program will complete the POM Review Application Form that details the program's intent to submit a self-study for consideration of POM status and how it

meets each of the eligibility criteria. The application form also asks for contact information for the program's primary contact (i.e., program director) for the duration of the process.

The 2024 POM application deadline is July 1, 2024. Criteria for POM Status:

- Graduate Student Research and Publications
- Recruitment/Selection
- Diversity and Inclusion Practices
- Partnerships/Community Services
- Curriculum Design
- Faculty Scholarship and Professional Activities
- Faculty Teaching and Mentoring
- Faculty, Staff, and Student Recognition and Awards

The ADPHS Program Review Committee will respond within two weeks of the full application submission to confirm eligibility. If eligibility is confirmed, the applicant program will be sent an invoice for the POM application and review fee (\$1,200.00), which will be due no later than by or on the day that the program's self-study is due.

NOTE: If a program does not yet have Full Member status with the ADPHS at the time of application, a membership application and fee must also be submitted at this point in the POM process.

## **Step 2 – POM Review Team**

The ADPHS Program Review Committee will respond to the program director within 30 days of eligibility confirmation with the names of the three members of the committee who will make up the POM Review Team. POM Review Team members will be asked about potential conflicts of interest before agreeing to serve to review a specific program. Committee members who currently have or had a formal affiliation within the past five years with the applicant program, or who currently work for a program in the same state, will be automatically excluded from consideration. The director of the applicant program will be given 5 business days to review the POM Review Team and inform the ADPHS Program Review Committee of any potential conflicts of interest.

Each POM Review Team includes three members—a team leader and two additional members. All individuals serving on POM Review Teams are current members of the ADPHS Program Review Committee and have been trained on how to evaluate self-study reports. Efforts are made to select reviewers from diverse institutional settings with one reviewer from an institution comparable to the applicant's institution and/or applicant's program. Reviewers base their evaluations on their expertise and a set of guidelines that have been developed for this purpose.

### **Step 3 – Self Study**

After the applicant program's eligibility has been confirmed and a POM Review Team has been assigned, the applicant program has approximately five months to complete the self-study document based on the criteria provided.

- If the program would like to be considered by the ADPHS Program Review Committee in **April**, the self-study must be sent by the program and received by the committee between **January 1st** of the same calendar year.
- If the program would like to be considered by the ADPHS Program Review Committee in **October**, the self-study must be sent by the program and received by the committee by **July 1st** of the same calendar year.

### **Process-Related Questions**

During the period of time that a program is engaged in the self-study process (i.e., between the establishment of a POM Review Team and the submission of the self-study documents), the program has the option to email the team leader of the POM Review Team with questions related to the process of completing and submitting a self-study. However, self-study materials will not be reviewed by the POM Review Team in advance of the formal submission.

### **Step 4 - POM Review Team Assessment & Recommendation**

The team leader of the POM Review Team will conduct a preliminary review of the submission to ensure that it is complete. Confirmation of this, or a request for clarification/additional documents, will be provided to the director of the applicant program within two weeks of the submission of the self-study. If additional documents are required, the applicant program will have seven days from that notification to provide them.

The POM Review Team will then have approximately two and a half months to review the self-study and write a recommendation. The review of an applicant program's self-study materials follows an established process that is consistently used by all POM Review Teams. While no formal site visit will occur as part of this review, the POM Review Team will ask to schedule a series of group interviews with key stakeholders of the program (e.g., administrators, faculty/staff members, students, and alumni) during this review period. The POM Review Team may also contact the applicant program to request clarification or additional information as needed.

During the review, the POM Review Team will review each self-study criterion and provide a summary of their review and an articulation of strengths, weaknesses, and recommendations. Each criterion (except for Title of Program & Degree and History of Program will also be rated/scored (determined by consensus of POM review team members). Possible ratings are "exceeds expectations" (2 points), "meets expectations" (1 point), and "does not meet expectations" (0 points). The Program Mission & Goals/Outcomes, Curriculum, Culminating Experience, and Evaluation Activities criteria are considered essential, in that a program must "meet

expectations” in each of these in order to achieve POM status. Overall, to achieve POM status, a program that is undergoing a self-study for the first time must earn a total of 11 points; a program that has achieved POM status previously must earn a total of 12 points.

Once the POM Review Team has completed the review and written the recommendation, the written recommendation will be submitted to both the applicant program and the ADPHS Program Review Committee. This will be done no later than close of business on April 1<sup>st</sup> (for an April review by the ADPHS Program Review Committee) or October 1<sup>st</sup> (for an October review by the ADPHS Program Review Committee). Specific dates for the ADPHS Program Review Committee to meet and render decisions on POM reviews will be set/published at least one year in advance and will always be on the 15<sup>th</sup> or later of April or October.

After the submission of the written recommendation, the applicant program has one week to take the opportunity to respond and provide additional information or clarification where they choose (but this is optional). This information will be considered, along with the written recommendation of the POM Review Team, at the ADPHS Program Review Committee meeting.

### **Step 5 – ADPHS Program Review Committee Decision**

Once a decision has been made by the ADPHS Program Review Committee, it will be ratified by the ADPHS Executive Committee. The decision will be provided in writing to the applicant program within two weeks of the meeting. One of three possible decisions may be made by the ADPHS Program Review Committee:

1. POM Recommended Unconditionally
  - a. The program will be listed as a POM on the ADPHS website.
  - b. The program’s status will be announced to the ADPHS membership via the email listserv.
  - c. A POM certificate will be mailed to the director of the program.
  - d. A digital badge will be provided to the program that can be used for marketing purposes.
  - e. Each year of the POM designation, program graduates will be provided a digital badge that indicates that the student graduated from a doctoral program that is recognized as an Association of Doctoral Programs in Health Sciences Program of Merit.
2. POM Recommended Conditionally
  - a. Specific conditions, along with a timeline for resolution, are provided to the program. Extensions of the timeline can be requested by the applicant program but are not guaranteed.
  - b. During the time that the applicant program is addressing conditions, the application for POM status is essentially “on hold,” and the applicant program does not need to pay additional fees.
  - c. Once the applicant program provides documentation of the how the conditions were addressed, the ADPHS Program Review Committee will render a final decision.

- d. If the applicant program does not provide documentation of how the conditions were addressed by the specified deadline, the POM status will be denied by default. In this instance, the program will have to restart the application process, and pay all applicable fees again, should it choose to be reconsidered.

### 3. POM Denied

- a. The applicant program will be notified. In this instance, the program will have to restart the application process, and pay all applicable fees again, should it choose to be reconsidered.

## **Appeals**

A program may appeal a final decision of "POM Denied." The appeal must be made in writing, include a detailed justification for the reason for the appeal, and must be submitted within 30 days of the communication of the final decision from the ADPHS Program Review Committee. The ADPHS Executive Committee, along with the leader of the POM Review Team who completed the review of the program's self-study, will consider the appeal and render a final decision. This final decision will be communicated to the applicant program within 30 days of the receipt of the written appeal.

## **MAINTENANCE OF STATUS**

The POM designation is good for five years from the date of its provision by the ADPHS. At the end of four years, the program will be notified that the POM status is nearing expiration.

- If the program has not undergone any substantive changes since the prior review, the program may choose to apply for a continuation of the status or allow the status to expire. An application for a continuation of status involves only the submission of the POM Continuation of Status Application and a reduced fee of \$1,000.00 (and does not involve a need for a POM Review Team or self-study process). The completed application and fee for a continuation of status must be received by the ADPHS Program Review Committee no later than two months prior to the expiration date of the program's POM status. The application will then be reviewed at the next ADPHS Program Review Committee meeting (either in April or October). A decision will be made, ratified by the ADPHS Executive Committee, and then provided in writing to the program within two weeks of that meeting.
- If the program has undergone substantive changes, the program may choose to initiate the full POM review process (as articulated in this document) or allow the status to expire.

Programs with the POM status must undergo a full POM review (including a self-study reviewed by a POM Review Team) every ten years.

In addition, any changes to where the program is housed (e.g., a shift in institution or college/school) or in program leadership that occur between POM reviews should be communicated to the ADPHS Program Review Committee.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### POM Review Timeline

What is the timeline for seeking the POM status?

To receive a POM status decision by the ADPHS Program Review Committee in <b>April:</b>	Initial application (and membership application/fee, if applicable) must be received by the ADPHS Program Review Committee between the dates of July 1 <sup>st</sup> – 31 <sup>st</sup> of the year prior.
	Completed self-study must be received by the ADPHS Program Review Committee by January 1 <sup>st</sup> of the same year.
To receive a POM status decision by the ADPHS Program Review Committee in <b>October:</b>	Initial application (and membership fee, if applicable) must be received by the ADPHS Program Review Committee between the dates of January 1 <sup>st</sup> – 31 <sup>st</sup> of the same year.
	Completed self-study must be received by the ADPHS Program Review Committee by July 1 <sup>st</sup> of the same year.

### Fee Structure

How much will it cost to apply for, complete the review process for, and maintain the POM status?

<b>Annual Fee for ADPHS Membership</b> (must be current to undergo POM review and maintain status):	\$1,000.00
<b>POM Review Application Fee</b> (payable at the time of initial application):	\$1,200.00
<b>Continuation of POM Status Fee</b> (payable at the time of an application for continuation of status):	\$1,000.00

### Substantive Change

When a program initiates the continuation of status application, they will be asked to provide a list of changes that have occurred since the last full POM review process. Changes that may be considered substantive, and would thus result in the need for a full POM review, include but are not limited to, shifts in where the program is housed (e.g., a change in institution or college/school), a change in admissions criteria that will result in a change to the student body, a change in how the program curriculum is delivered, and changes to program resources (e.g.,



personnel or budget) that will result in modifications to how students are supported.

# POM SELF-STUDY CRITERIA

## General Guidelines

All programs submitting a Self-Study Narrative to the Program Review Committee are expected to follow the guidelines indicated below. Non-adherence to these guidelines will result in the application being considered incomplete and returned to the program. Should you have questions, please make sure to reach out to your POM Review Team Leader.

1. The self-study submission should consist of three PDF documents—1) the Self-Study Narrative, 2) Course Syllabi, and 3) Other Supportive Materials.
2. Please use the following naming format for each:  
NameofProgram\_DocumentTitle\_DateSubmitted. For example:  
UniversityofIndianapolis\_Self-StudyNarrative\_12122020.
3. Begin your Self-Study Narrative with a Title Page, which should include the names of your program and institution, the name and contact information of the program director, and the date of submission. (There is no predetermined template for this title page; as long as you have included the required information, the format is flexible.)
4. Starting on the second page of the Self-Study Narrative, include a Table of Contents (please use the Microsoft Word Table of Contents feature to create this such that the headings are active links). (There are many useful resources online that can walk you through how to use this feature in Microsoft Word. One such resources is the website, [Insert a table of contents](https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/insert-a-table-of-contents-882e8564-0edb-435e-84b5-1d8552ccf0c0) [https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/insert-a-table-of-contents-882e8564-0edb-435e-84b5-1d8552ccf0c0]).
5. Follow the criteria for each section to type the narrative. Use 1-inch margins and 11 or 12-pt font. Choose a traditional font, such as Arial, Times New Roman, or Verdana (preferred for accessibility reasons), and use it consistently throughout.
6. Note that there are four criteria (Program Mission & Goals/Outcomes, Curriculum, Culminating Experience, and Evaluation Activities) in which a program must “meet expectations” in order to achieve the Program of Merit Status.
7. In each criterion, there are a number of pieces of information requested. There is flexibility in how you organize your response; i.e., as long as you address each component of the criterion, the order in which you do so does not matter.
8. Consider supplementing the Self-Study Narrative with figures, charts, and tables when it is appropriate (e.g., graduation rates) to provide clarity or illustrate key points. Each section of the Self-Study Narrative criteria provides you with both required and optional supplemental materials. Please also note that you can provide active links within the Self-Study (e.g., a link to a website with your institution’s history and mission). However, if there is any concern that information at that link may change, or that the link may no longer be valid, between the time of submission and the POM Review Team’s reading of the Self-Study, please consider providing PDFs or screenshots.

9. As mentioned above, Supportive Materials should be provided in two PDF documents—1) Course Syllabi and 2) Other Supportive Materials. Each PDF document should begin with the same Title Page as the Self-Study Narrative and should also have a Table of Contents with headers that are active links. See the Supportive Materials Checklist below for more information on what to include in each of these documents.

### **Supportive Materials Checklist**

- Self-Study Narrative
- Course Syllabi
- Other Supportive Materials
  - Required\*
    - Documentation of university accreditation
    - University documentation that includes the university mission statement
    - University documentation that includes the program mission statement and goals/outcomes
    - University and program organizational charts
    - Curriculum vitae of program administrator
    - Faculty/staff handbook
    - Student handbook (university and program-level)
    - Curriculum guide
    - Curriculum matrix (i.e., program outcomes x course)
    - Course syllabi for all courses offered by the program
    - Culminating experience guidelines
    - Example final products of the culminating experience
    - Course/instructor evaluation template
    - Copy of program application
    - Table with data on the current student body
    - Table with retention and completion data
    - Faculty table
    - Faculty evaluation template(s)
  - Optional (NOTE: This is not an all-inclusive list; you may include additional materials not listed here.)
    - Link to/screenshots of website that details the university's history and mission.
    - Documentation of program establishment and/or curricular changes.
    - Documentation of the history, development, and adoption of the program's mission statement and/or goals/outcomes
    - Documentation of program administrator engagement with faculty, staff, and students (e.g., meeting agendas/minutes)
    - Program policies and procedures manual(s)
    - Documentation regarding assessments of and satisfaction with facilities, libraries, technology, human resources, security, and other services
    - Program budget

- Exit survey/interview templates
- Example assignments/rubrics
- Examples of recruitment materials
- Other program evaluation documentation
- Alumni survey template
- Most recent alumni survey results
- Examples of communication with alumni
- Table of community partners with brief summary of the nature of the relationship

## **Self-Study Narrative Criteria**

Please note that the word counts for each section represent maximum number of words allowed. Failure to adhere to these word counts will result in the application being considered incomplete and returned to the program.

### **I. Overview, History, & Description of Program**

- A. Title of Program & Degree
  - i. Articulate the official title of the program and the specific degree conferred.
  
- B. History of Program (500 words)
  - i. Describe the university's history and accreditation status.
  - ii. Explain the history of the program (i.e., when, how, and why it was developed and any recent, more significant changes to the intent/purpose of the program).

Supplemental Materials:

- ii. Documentation of university accreditation\*
- iii. Link to/screenshots of website that details the university's history and mission.
- iv. Documentation of program establishment and/or curricular changes.

- C. Program Mission & Goals/Outcomes (1,000 words) - **ESSENTIAL**
  - i. Provide the program's official mission statement, and describe its broader fit with the college/university.
  - ii. Articulate the program's goals/outcomes.
    - a) How are these made accessible to the program's students and the broader public?
    - b) How are these congruent with both doctoral-level education and the program's mission?

Supplemental Materials:

- University documentation that includes the university mission statement\*
- University documentation that includes the program mission statement and goals/outcomes\*

- Documentation of the history, development, and adoption of the program's mission statement and/or goals/outcomes

D. Organizational Structure & Administration (750 words)

- i. Articulate the organizational structure of the program, with reporting relationships defined.
  - a) How does the program fit within the overall structure of the university?
- ii. Explain the program's governance structure in a way that clearly outlines roles, responsibilities, and accountability for decision making.
  - a) How is the program administrator (i.e., the individual responsible for leading/administering the doctoral program) selected or appointed and renewed?
  - b) How is the program administrator evaluated (and how often does this occur)? To whom do they report?
  - c) What is the authority/autonomy of the program administrator? What role do they have in budget determinations and oversight?
  - d) How does the program administrator engage with faculty, staff, and students to advance the program's mission and goals/outcomes?
- iii. Describe the background and qualifications of the current program administrator.

Supplemental Materials:

- University and program organizational charts\*
- Curriculum vitae of program administrator\*
- Documentation of program administrator engagement with faculty, staff, and students (e.g., meeting agendas/minutes)

E. Policies (750 words)

- i. Describe how policies are communicated to faculty, staff, and students.
  - a) Where are university policies located, and how are they communicated?
  - b) Where are program-level policies located, and how are they communicated?
- ii. Describe how program-level policies are developed and maintained.

Supplemental Materials:

- Faculty/staff handbook\*
- Student handbook (university and program-level)\*
- Program policies and procedures manual(s)

F. Program Support (750 words)

- i. Describe the support received by the program administrator to lead/administrate the program.
- ii. Describe the support for faculty teaching, scholarship, and service, given the present resources and responsibilities.
  - a) What supports are available to support faculty teaching?
  - b) What supports are available to enable faculty research, such as release time, travel/conference funds, and/or faculty development funds?
- iii. Describe the program's administrative staffing (e.g., secretarial, technical, graduate assistants, federally-funded work study students, and departmentally-funded assistants) and their adequacy to support the program.
- iv. Describe the facilities used (e.g., office space, classrooms, laboratory space and equipment, computers/technology, library resources, and media) and their adequacy to support the program.
- v. What resources are available to support student success and activities (e.g., funds, placements).
- vi. Describe how the program budget is maintained and its adequacy to support the program.

#### Supplemental Materials

- Documentation regarding assessments of and satisfaction with facilities, libraries, technology, human resources, security, and other services
- Program budget

#### G. Curriculum (1,000 words) - **ESSENTIAL**

- i. Describe the program's curriculum, including overall credit hours.
  - a) Does the program have areas of concentration, tracks, and/or specializations?
- ii. Describe the rationale for the curriculum content, organization, and coherence. How do the course offerings serve the needs of those in the program and the college/university?
- iii. Describe the process by which the curriculum is reviewed and updated.
  - a) How often does this occur?
- iv. If the program is part of any dual programming (e.g., dual degrees or degree + certificate), please describe those curricular options.
  - a) Describe how the integrity of the doctoral program is maintained in each of those dual programs.

#### Supplemental Materials:

- Curriculum guide\*
- Curriculum matrix (i.e., program outcomes x courses)\*
- Course syllabi for all courses offered by the program\*

- H. Culminating Experience (1,000 words) - **ESSENTIAL**
- i. Describe the culminating experience (dissertation, thesis, project, capstone), including the expectations of the student and how it is evaluated by the faculty/program.
    - a) How is it aligned with the nature and mission of the program?
    - b) How does it meet doctoral-level expectations?
    - c) For programs with supervised culminating experiences, how are the qualifications of those supervising evaluated (e.g., how are dissertation chairs, mentors, and/or committee members approved)?

Supplemental Materials:

- Culminating experience guidelines\*
- Example final products of the culminating experience\*

- I. Evaluation Activities (1,000 words) - **ESSENTIAL**
- i. Describe how the program engages in systematic and integrated planning and improvement through program evaluation.
    - a) Describe the types of assessment that occur in the program (e.g., course/instructor evaluations, exit surveys/interviews, major assignments with rubrics, strategic plan, annual or periodic institutional program reviews), as well as the timing of those assessments.
    - b) Describe how the data is used for the purposes of quality improvement (e.g., to determine if program mission and goals/outcomes are being met, if graduates are successful in applying their learning to employment and/or advanced study within their chosen field, etc.).

Supplemental Materials:

- Course/instructor evaluation template\*
- Exit survey/interview templates
- Example assignments/rubrics
- Other program evaluation documentation

- J. Students (750 words)
- i. Describe the target demographic for student recruitment. Include a brief description of the support received by the program for student recruitment.
  - ii. Describe the admissions process, including qualifications for admittance.
    - a) Describe how the program engages in the recruitment of a diverse student body (such as but not limited to students from a variety of professions, underrepresented minorities, first generation students, students from the LGBTQIA+ community, students with a disability, etc.).

- iii. Describe the current study body, including academic status (part-time or full-time and how these are defined) and concentration/track/specialization, if appropriate.
- iv. Describe the program's retention and completion rate.
  - a) Describe how the program engages in the retention of a diverse student body (such as but not limited to students from a variety of professions, underrepresented minorities, first generation students, students from the LGBTQIA+ community, students with a disability, etc.).
- v. Describe the advisement process.

Supplemental Materials:

- Copy of program application\*
- Table with data on the current student body\*
- Table with retention and completion data\*
- Examples of recruitment materials

K. Alumni (500 words)

- i. Describe the alumni career paths taken post-graduation.
- ii. Describe how the program engages or remains connected with alumni (e.g., an alumni survey), as well as the results of that engagement.

Supplemental Materials:

- Alumni survey template
- Most recent alumni survey results
- Examples of communication with alumni

L. Faculty (750 words)

- i. Provide a faculty table, focusing on instructional faculty who have taught in the past two academic years. This table should include each faculty member's name, degree(s), teaching/research specializations, courses taught, years of service, and status (full or part-time).
- ii. Describe the process by which both full and part-time faculty are evaluated.
- iii. Within the narrative space, explain if the faculty numbers are sufficient in number and expertise to meet the teaching and advising needs of the program.
- iv. Describe the use of adjunct faculty within the program.
- v. Describe how the faculty composition reflects the diversity goals of the university. If there is a need for improvement, provide specific recommendations.

Supplemental Materials:

- Faculty table\*
- Faculty evaluation template(s)\*



- M. Relationship with the Community (250 words)
- i. Describe current relationships with organizations or agencies (including other institutions of higher education) at the local, state, or national level.
    - a) How are these connections consistent with the mission of the doctoral program?
    - b) In what ways do program faculty provide service to the community at the local, state, and national level?
    - c) To what extent has the community been involved in providing feedback to the program?

Supplemental Materials:

- Table of community partners with brief summary of the nature of the relationship

**II. Analysis of Program Strengths & Opportunities for Improvement**

- A. Results of Efforts Articulated in Previous Self-Study (if applicable)
  - i. If the program has previously held POM status, use this section to report on the progress of previously articulated goals.
- B. Current Strengths & Opportunities for Improvement
  - i. In this section, provide a balanced discussion of specific strengths, immediate and future opportunities and challenges, and areas for potential improvement. The evaluation should consider any trends in the data and factors that may account for those trends.
- C. Goals
  - i. This section provides an opportunity to use information gathered and the analyses conducted in the self-study process to think strategically about educational and strategic goals and the specific steps needed to reach these goals. In this section, articulate both five-year program goals and the specific steps the program will seek to meet those goals.