

Professionalism in Aerospace Medicine

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If I were to ask you, or aerospace medical colleagues as a group, to create a word cloud to explain your understanding of “professionalism,” what would you say? Words or phrases like advanced education and training, skilled or specialized work, formal qualifications, ethical standards, discipline, and career opportunities would come to mind. Individuals of the same profession are recognized by society and each other as members of groups, whether that be through licensure, board certification, employment in a large organization, membership in a professional specialty organization, contributions to research and education through journals and attendance at national and international meetings, or recognition by peers through academic rank at a university or fellowship in a specialty organization.

As a professional in aerospace medicine, you have already come a long way in your career. This has required your success in school, undergraduate education, medical school or postgraduate training, residency training, employment, and ongoing maintenance of competency. Congratulations! What should you be doing to advance your professional development throughout your career? The answer will vary depending on your background, training, and interests, though it will almost certainly involve one or more professional organizations.

There are many aerospace medicine associations, the most prominent being the Aerospace Medical Association (AsMA), the European Society of Aerospace Medicine (ESAM), and the International Academy of Aviation and Space Medicine (IAASM). AsMA is an association of both individuals and associations, the latter including national aerospace medical organizations in many

countries, many of which are listed as Affiliate Organizations within AsMA. There are also focused organizations, which may be listed as either Constituent or as Affiliate Organizations, such as the International Airline Medical Association, the Space Medicine Association, the Society of U.S. Air Force Flight Surgeons, etc. It is common for an AsMA, ESAM, or IAASM member to belong to more than one of these smaller organizations.

In AsMA, fellowship (<https://www.asma.org/about-asma/related-organizations/fellows-associate-fellows>) brings together those who have achieved special recognition by their peers. For many, this starts with Associate Fellowship (<https://asmaaf.org/>). A candidate for Associate Fellow must be a full member of AsMA for at least 5 years. After review, applications are submitted to the AsMA Executive Committee for approval, and successful candidates are inducted at the Associate Fellows breakfast during AsMA's Annual Scientific Meeting. If you have been an AsMA member for 5 years or more, you should apply for Associate Fellowship now.

AsMA Fellows have an analogous application process, though with far greater scrutiny of their education, training, and professional accomplishments. An AsMA member may be nominated by a current AsMA Fellow if they have been a member of AsMA for at least 7 years and meet the requirements of the AsMA Fellows Evaluation Committee. Once nominated by a Fellow, the Fellow candidate must complete an online application. A points system is used, based on years of membership, meeting attendance,



The Fellows class of 2024 at Honors Night. Those who were able to be there are pictured with the incoming Fellows Chair Dr. Dan Van Syoc (far right) and outgoing Fellows Chair Dr. Warren Silberman (far left).

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Dr. Orford at the Fellows Dinner in Reno, NV, in 2022. Left to right are Dale Orford, Dr. Robert Orford, Lois Moser, Dr. Ed Feeks, and Dr. Royce Moser.

AsMA committee work, AsMA leadership, national or international leadership, etc. You should ask at least one or two Fellows, especially those you know well, to look over your application before you submit it. Commonly, applicants overlook professional activities or accomplishments which would qualify for points. "Talking through" your career with a Fellow after he or she has had an opportunity to read your application will often identify "hidden gems" that you can use.

The International Academy of Aviation and Space Medicine (<https://www.iaasm.org>) was founded in 1955 to provide international leadership and mentorship and to advance the knowledge and understanding of aviation and space medicine through worldwide initiatives in education, training, research, and practice. Anyone may attend IAASM Congresses, which are held annually around the globe, every second year in conjunction with

AsMA, ESAM, and the local national aerospace medical society as the International Congress of Aerospace Medicine. IAASM also provides scholarships to young doctors from disadvantaged regions or backgrounds for specialty training in aerospace medicine.

There are three IAASM membership categories: Full Members, otherwise known as Academicians, who have a minimum of 10 years' experience in aviation and space medicine practice and a leadership role; Associate Members (who have a minimum of 5 years' experience), with the expectation that they will apply for Full Membership upon achieving 10 years of practice in aerospace medicine; and Corporate Members. Applications for Full Membership are reviewed by the Selectors' Committee. Medical and/or postgraduate qualifications, aeromedical practice, and experience are assessed. Two letters of recommendation from Members of the Academy that you know well are required. If possible, one of the letters of recommendation should be from a Selector. You should ask them to review your application (which includes your résumé) before they write their letter and before your submission. Consider asking to review a copy of their letter to the Selectors to ensure that it is accurate and supportive of your application. If you believe that you qualify for any of the IAASM membership categories and if you plan to submit an abstract, or to attend an International Congress of Aviation and Space Medicine, you should review the requirements and begin your application today. IAASM also has Affiliates (young doctors or scientists at an early stage in their careers, also limited to 5 years), who are able to benefit from mentoring by an Academician.

Wishing you the best for a successful career in aerospace medicine!

AsMA is a family. No one belongs there more than you!