ACM Fellow Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

This information is intended to complement the Nominating Process page. Please see that page for a general description of what a nomination includes and how it is submitted. For additional information on how to prepare strong nominations and endorsements, please refer to 2017 Fellows Chair Marc Snir's article "The Informal Guide to ACM Fellow Nominations."

Is there a minimum age or experience requirement for Fellow candidates?

There is no specific requirement, but there must be compelling evidence that his/her impact already (not just potentially) ranks in the top 1% of ACM's professional membership worldwide.

What does the Committee look for in a nomination?

The areas of achievement evaluated for Fellow are listed under Nominating Process. Use your limited space carefully to describe the candidate's impact on the profession; it should be understandable to a layman. Be brief, but also explicit. Avoid superlatives and overworked words such as "seminal" and "unique." Instead, indicate the importance of the candidate's work by describing its specific consequences (e.g., a new line of research taken up by others, a system or product in widespread use, an important conjecture resolved). The ideal candidate will have distinguished personal technical accomplishments, distinguished technical leadership, and distinguished ACM and/or other professional community service. The more "concentrated" the accomplishments are into one or two areas, the more outstanding their impact needs to have been.

Note in that the criteria for ACM Fellow are significantly different from those for academic promotion. For Fellow, the emphasis in on breadth of impact, not accomplishments per se. A recycled promotion case, however strong, is unlikely to be effective.

How should I choose my endorsers?

The choice of endorsers is crucial. The Committee tends to trust the judgment of endorsers who are recognized authorities in their field, such as ACM Fellows. However, it is critical that each endorser be personally familiar with the work of the candidate so he/she can provide firsthand testimony of its importance and impact. Collectively, endorsers should represent a variety of perspectives and viewpoints, in order to show the breadth of that impact. In general, it's better to choose endorsers from outside the candidate's own organization. Choose endorsers who can address specific areas of accomplishment in detail and give evidence of the overall reach of their impact.

Do the endorsers need to be ACM Fellows?

All endorsers must be ACM Professional Members. It is strongly recommended, but not required, that they be ACM Fellows.

Why should I contact the endorsers in advance?

The nominator should contact the endorsers to confirm that they are willing to serve as endorsers for the candidate. Nominators should be confident that the endorsers will comply and submit endorsements that will strengthen the case for the candidates.

The nominator should emphasize and remind the endorsers of the deadline date for submitting and confirming the endorsements (a two-step process). You should also tell each endorser what she/he will need to do and make sure their email will accept an automated message from "fellow@acm.org", since that email will have the URL/link to confirm the endorsement after it has been submitted by the endorser. Endorsement requirements are listed under Nominating Process, so point them to that webpage (and this one), or include the information in your message.

What suggestions should I give the endorsers?

Tell the endorsers they need to provide personal commentary that offers concrete evidence of how the candidate's work has had impact on the computing field. Short or generalized endorsements, or ones that simply re-state information from the nomination, are not effective. Each endorsement should make it clear that the endorser knows the candidate's work well and is able to provide unique insights into the candidate's achievements. A successful package will have endorsements describing the candidate's impact from different, personal perspectives.

It is up to the nominator to help endorsers understand what is required. Endorsements that appear to be derived from a template (in terms of content and/or style), or that merely echo of the nominator's comments will actually weaken the case for your candidate.

Should I contact more than 5 endorsers?

It is possible to seek more than the 5 endorsements required, as a safeguard in case an endorsement arrives late. Be aware, however, that the Fellows Committee will only see the first 5 that were submitted – so try to make sure those are the strongest you can get.

An error message says the character limit has been exceeded – but my computer says it's within the limit.

ACM's character limit counts spaces and hard returns. You will need to shorten the text within the form field in order to submit.

After submitting a nomination/endorsement, can I access it to make minor changes?

No. However, if there is a minor correction/change that is important, please contact fellow@acm.org.

How can I check on the status of an ACM Fellow nomination?

To track endorsements, you will need to log in at myACM.org with your ACM Web Account username and password and follow the link "My Advanced Member Grade Nominations". The tracker allows the nominator to see if endorsements have been submitted and/or confirmed.   Be sure to check that these endorsements are confirmed, not merely submitted.   If not confirmed by the application deadline, the endorsement will not be considered (nor counted toward the requirement).

An endorser(s) submitted the endorsement after the deadline – must I resubmit the nomination?

If the nomination does not have all 5 endorsements submitted and confirmed by the deadline, it will not be considered that year. An updated nomination will need to be submitted the following year, although the existing endorsements are retained at ACM Headquarters and may be re-used.

What if an endorser did not receive the email message to confirm his/her endorsement?

The email may have been caught in a spam filter, or the email address may have been entered incorrectly. Please have the endorser contact fellow@acm.org immediately.

An endorser incorrectly answered "No" to one of the qualifying questions, and now the endorsement has been rejected. Can it be fixed?

Ask your endorser to contact fellow@acm.org. We will make the correction and send your endorser a URL to confirm the change.

In trying to confirm an endorsement, the endorser received an error message saying it was a bad URL – what should he/she do?

Be sure to cut and paste the entire URL into the browser address field (remove any hard returns). If there's still an error, contact fellow@acm.org.

When will I know if my nominee has been selected and how will I be notified?

The committee normally completes its selections within 3 months of the deadline. All nominators whose submissions were complete by the deadline will receive a notification once the selection process is finished.

If my nominee is not selected can I resubmit the nomination?

You may resubmit a new nomination after the following two review cycles have passed *(i.e., if the nomination was not selected in 2015, a new submission is allowed in the 2018 cycle)*. A new nomination and new endorsements are required. It may help you to know that each nomination is considered independently of the others being submitted. Thus, if yours is unsuccessful it is because the candidate did not meet the criteria for ACM Fellows, or because the nomination and/or endorsements did not adequately make the case.