APADS

ASSOCIATION OF PAN-AFRICAN DOCTORAL SCHOLARS, INC.

APADSorg.org

APADS Critical Friend Community Guidelines

A Scholarly Partnership Built on Trust, Reflection, and Accountability



The APADS Critical Friend Program connects doctoral scholars through purposeful peer relationships that encourage reflection, constructive challenge, accountability, and scholarly growth. These guidelines establish shared expectations for creating a respectful, productive, and supportive Critical Friend relationship.

1 PURPOSE OF THE CRITICAL FRIEND RELATIONSHIP

- **Peer-to-Peer Scholarly Support.** A Critical Friend is a trusted peer who listens, asks thoughtful and sometimes challenging questions, offers another perspective, and supports a scholar's continued progress. The relationship is collaborative rather than supervisory.
- **Support, Not Supervision.** A Critical Friend does not replace a dissertation chair, faculty advisor, institutional mentor, counselor, editor, or other professional. Each scholar remains responsible for their academic decisions, institutional requirements, and scholarly work.

2 COMMUNITY EXPECTATIONS

- **Respect and Reciprocity.** Critical Friends engage one another with respect, openness, cultural awareness, and professional courtesy. Both scholars contribute to the relationship and recognize that effective peer support is reciprocal.
- **Constructive Challenge.** Critical Friends are encouraged to ask questions, examine assumptions, offer alternative perspectives, and provide thoughtful feedback. Critique should strengthen the scholar and the work rather than judge or diminish either.
- **Reliability and Accountability.** Participants should honor agreed meeting times, communicate when circumstances change, and make a reasonable effort to remain engaged. Each pair determines a meeting rhythm that works for both scholars.

3 CONFIDENTIALITY AND TRUST

- **Protect the Relationship.** Conversations, personal experiences, research ideas, and scholarly work shared within the Critical Friend relationship should be treated as confidential. Information should not be shared with others without the scholar's permission.
- **Recognize Reasonable Limits.** Confidentiality does not require a participant to remain silent about threats to safety, serious misconduct, harassment, or circumstances that should appropriately be reported to APADS or another responsible authority.

4 SCHOLARLY INTEGRITY

- **Support the Scholar, Not Produce the Scholarship.** Critical Friends may brainstorm, question, critique, review, discuss, and provide feedback. They should not write another scholar's assignments, dissertation material, research findings, or other academic work.
- **Maintain Academic Responsibllity.** Each scholar remains responsible for following the academic integrity, research, authorship, AI-use, and other requirements established by their university or academic program.

5 COMMUNICATION AND BOUNDARIES

- **Establish Your Working Relationship.** Critical Friends should discuss how often they wish to meet, preferred methods of communication, reasonable response times, and the kinds of support each person finds most useful. Expectations may be revisited as scholars move through different stages of their doctoral journeys.
- **Maintain Appropriate Boundaries.** Participation does not require unlimited availability or access to another scholar. Critical Friends should respect personal time, professional obligations, privacy, and the boundaries established by each participant.

6 WHEN A CRITICAL FRIEND PARTNERSHIP IS NOT WORKING

- **Speak Early When Possible.** Scholars are encouraged to communicate respectfully when expectations, availability, or needs have changed. Sometimes a partnership simply needs to be recalibrated.
- **Rematching Is Acceptable.** Either participant may request assistance or a different Critical Friend without blame or penalty. APADS recognizes that not every pairing will develop into an effective scholarly relationship.
- **APADS May Intervene When Necessary.** APADS reserves the right to discontinue or modify a Critical Friend pairing when these Community Guidelines are repeatedly disregarded or when continuation of the relationship would not serve the participants or the APADS community.

7 GETTING HELP

- **APADS Is Available to Assist.** Questions, concerns, requests for assistance, or requests for rematching should be sent to apadshelpdesk@gmail.com. Participants do not need to resolve significant problems within a Critical Friend relationship on their own.