

Writing Objectives

A Guide to Writing Course and Event Objectives

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What are Course and Event Objectives?

Course and event objectives are measurable statements that demonstrate the learning goals for our curriculum. Objectives provide a map for when and where knowledge, skills, and attitudes are taught. In addition, objectives communicate expectations for each component of the curriculum so various stakeholders share a common understanding. The Liaison Committee on Medical Education, or LCME, provides the following definitions.



Learning objectives: A statement of the specific, observable, and measurable expected outcomes (i.e., what the medical students will be able to do) of each specific component (e.g., course, module, clinical clerkship, rotation) of a medical education program that defines the content of the component and the assessment methodology and that is linked back to one or more of the medical education program objectives. (Elements 6.1, 8.2, 8.3, and 9.1). **MCW refers to these objectives as course or event objectives.**

Medical education program objectives: Broad statements, in measurable terms, of the knowledge, skills, behaviors, and attitudes (typically linked to a statement of expected competencies) that a medical student is expected to exhibit as evidence of his or her achievement of all programmatic requirements by the time of medical education program completion. (Standards 6 and 11; Elements 6.1, 8.2, 8.3, 8.4, 8.7, and 9.4). **MCW refers to these objectives as [Global Competencies](#).**

What is Bloom's Taxonomy?

Bloom's Taxonomy of the Cognitive Domain is a model used to classify objectives by levels of complexity. The model is composed of six hierarchical levels: Remembering, Understanding, Applying, Analyzing, Evaluating, and Creating. Lower order thinking skills, or LOTS, are depicted in the first three levels, with higher order thinking skills, or HOTS, being depicted in the top three levels.



The [Bloom's Wheel](#) illustrates the taxonomy in a circular rather than hierarchical fashion. The inner circle indicates the level of learning, with the middle ring providing associated action verbs for each level. The outer ring of the diagram suggests related activities educators can plan for students to engage in each level of learning. Feel free to use the wheel when writing your objectives and planning learning activities.



How Do I Write Objectives?

To [write objectives](#), you begin with a common sentence stem. Typically, objectives are written as a bulleted list following the common stem. The stem should provide Who and When information about the associated objectives. For our examples (below), the Who is the student and the When is by the end of the related course or session.

Following the common stem, you will write each learning goal in a measurable, observable statement. Determine the learning outcome, or how your learners will demonstrate their new knowledge, skills, and/or attitudes. Next, choose a verb that indicates what your learners will do. Avoid using the name of the Bloom’s level, as they are far too vague to provide a measurable action. Then, write the verb and learning outcome into a measurable statement that, when combined with the common stem, forms a complete sentence.

At MCW, course objectives can only be changed with Curriculum and Evaluation Committee (CEC) approval. However, event objectives can be added and modified by a course director and/or coordinator at any time without CEC approval.

Example of a Course Objective*:

At the end of this course, the student will:

- Perform advanced cardiovascular, pulmonary and abdominal physical examination maneuvers.

Example of an Event Objective*:

At the end of this session, the student will:

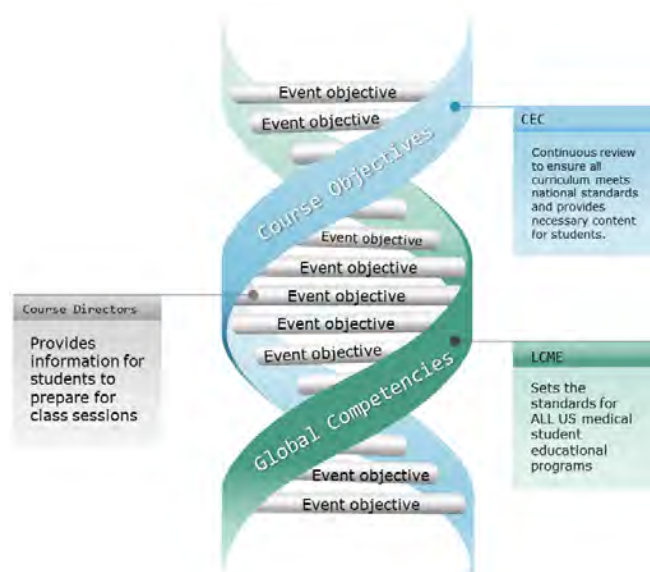
- Be able to differentiate benign from pathologic heart murmurs.

**Objective examples used with permission from the M1/M2 Bench to Bedside Course.*

Why Do Objectives Matter?

Objectives serve several purposes, each one important to the education mission. Objectives are used to communicate important curriculum information to accrediting bodies, such as the LCME. They allow for curriculum mapping and auditing, showing curriculum developers and where gaps and overlaps exist.

Objectives link multiple levels of activities to one another. Event level objectives should “map,” or relate to, course level objectives. Course level objectives are required to map to program level objectives, such as [MCW’s Global Competencies](#).



Objectives also communicate goals and expectations to the learners themselves. They hold the course leaders and learners accountable for what is taught, learned, and assessed.