

AAPA Conference Submission Guide to Writing Learning Objectives¹

AAPA is committed to the development of sound learning objectives for conference submissions. Writing effective objectives is an underappreciated skill but not an insurmountable task. This guide is meant to assist AAPA submission candidates in developing excellent learning objectives.

High quality learning objectives help to:

- determine content,
- clearly communicate what the presentation aims to achieve,
- focus the learner and provide a basis for evaluation.

Learning objectives can be defined as the particular knowledge, skills, and abilities that faculty intends for participants to learn or develop. Learning objectives are more specific than learning goals, which take a 10,000-foot view of gains in a full course; instead, objectives have specific, measurable outcomes. Research shows that learning objectives enhance the process of learning when they describe specific, measurable takeaways.² Bloom’s Taxonomy is described as a framework for organizing evidence of learning into levels of complexity and maturity.

Bloom’s Taxonomy is widely utilized in higher education, describing 6 levels that capture lower to higher order thinking:

Bloom’s Level	Description
Remembering (lowest-order)	Students can retrieve relevant information from their long-term memory
Understanding	Students can determine the meaning of instructional messages, including oral, written and graphic communication
Applying	Students can carry out or use a procedure in a given situation
Analyzing	Students can break material into its constituent parts and detect how the parts relate to one another and to an overall structure or purpose
Evaluating	Students can make a judgment based on criteria and standards
Creating (highest-order)	Students can put elements together to form a novel, coherent whole or make an original product

Adapted from Krathwohl DR. (2002). A Revision of Bloom’s Taxonomy: An Overview. Theory Into Practice 41(4).

This chart maps action verbs commonly used in learning objectives matched to levels of Bloom’s Taxonomy:

Bloom’s Level	Sample Action Verbs
Remembering (lowest-order)	list, define, describe, recall, label, match, observe, identify, reproduce
Understanding	explain, describe, interpret, paraphrase, classify, restate, summarize, express, generalize, recognize
Applying	apply, choose, predict, use, illustrate, demonstrate, hypothesize, modify, interpret, develop
Analyzing	contrast, distinguish, test, differentiate, categorize, compare, analyze, research, examine, criticize, experiment, map, separate
Evaluating	evaluate, judge, predict, argue, persuade, convince, grade, recommend, rank, select
Creating (highest-order)	develop, create, design, construct, synthesize, compose, conjecture, formulate, imagine, invent

To draft effective learning objectives, faculty should consider the following formula identified on the example below. Top submissions effectively mix both lower and higher order action verbs in objectives aimed at the advanced medical learner.

Example:

At the conclusion of this activity, participants will be able to:

- Identify (ACTION VERB) patients (NOUN) at risk for type 2 diabetes (MEASURABLE DETAIL)
- Perform (ACTION VERB) screening and confirmatory testing (NOUN) consistent with current guidelines (MEASURABLE DETAIL)
- Diagnose (ACTION VERB) type 2 diabetes (NOUN) using current criteria (MEASURABLE DETAIL)
- Formulate and prescribe (ACTION VERBS) medication regimens (NOUN) consistent with current guidelines, patient comorbidities, and baseline A1C (MEASUREABLE DETAILS)
- Evaluate (ACTION VERB) response to treatment (NOUN) and intensify therapy (VERB) when a regimen is failing to meet goals (MEASURABLE DETAIL)

¹Adapted from Yale Center for Teaching and Learning. *Writing Intended Learning Outcomes*. ²Richmond, A., Boysen, G., and Gurung, R. (2016). *An Evidence-based Guide to College and University Teaching*. New York: Routledge.

³Wiggins GP, McTighe J. (2005). *Understanding by Design*. Moorabbin, Vic: Hawker Brownlow Education.