

Approved Terminology for Learning Objectives in Continuing Medical Education

Learning objectives articulate the anticipated outcomes of an educational activity. They provide a clear framework for what participants are expected to learn and achieve. Objectives may encompass both discipline-specific elements (such as knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviors) and broader competencies (including communication, ethical reasoning and professional values). Well-defined objectives assist learners in setting personal goals and serve as benchmarks for evaluating the effectiveness of the educational experience.

Importance of Clear Objectives

1. **Guiding Educational Design:** Clearly stated objectives inform the selection of instructional materials, content, and teaching methodologies.
2. **Assessing Learning Outcomes:** Objectives provide a basis for evaluating whether the intended learning has occurred. They enable the development of assessments that accurately measure participant achievement.
3. **Enhancing Learner Engagement:** When learners know the objectives, they are better able to organize their study efforts and stay focused on the desired outcomes.

Incorporating objectives into the activity design of the education to be presented serves to structure content and delineate the activity into manageable units. Objectives are to specify the expected performance criteria, allowing participants to gauge their progress and success.

Crafting Effective Learning Objectives

Effective learning objectives in continuing medical education are to be learner-centered, measurable and observable. Learning objectives typically consist of three components:

- **Who:** The learner or participant
- **How:** An action verb describing the expected performance
- **What:** The content or skill to be learned

Examples:

- The learner will be able to **identify** the key symptoms of Type 2 diabetes.
- Participants will be able to **demonstrate** proper hand hygiene techniques.
- The physician will be able to **explain** the guidelines for hypertension management.
- Health care providers will be able to **perform** basic life support procedures.

Suggested Action Verbs for Objectives

To ensure learning objectives are measurable, consider using the following action verbs:

- **Cognitive Domain:** analyze, apply, assess, compare, define, describe, evaluate, explain, identify, interpret, list, recognize, summarize
- **Psychomotor Domain:** assemble, calibrate, demonstrate, operate, perform, practice
- **Affective Domain:** advocate, appreciate, value

The following table of verbs specify the expected level of learning and facilitate the development of appropriate assessment methods in continuing medical education.

Knowledge	Comprehension	Application	Analysis	Synthesis	Evaluation
define	classify	apply	analyze	arrange	assess
identify	compile	calculate	calculate	assemble	compare
label	conclude	demonstrate	categorize	compose	critique
list	discuss	develop	classify	construct	decide
match	describe	interpret	criticize	design	determine
name	explain	locate	compare	develop	establish
recall	express	operate	contrast	diagnose	evaluate
recognize	give examples	perform	determine	manage	judge
record	identify	practice	differentiate	organize	justify
relate	interpret	predict	distinguish	plan	measure
repeat	recognize	present	examine	propose	rate
select	summarize	report	outline	relate	recommend
state	translate	use	test	summarize	select

Words to Avoid

appreciate	believe	improve	learn
approach	grasp the significance of	increase	thinks critically
become	grow	know	understand

Aligning Objectives with the College's Continuing Medical Education Mission

When developing learning objectives ensure they align with the overall mission of the Fertitta College of Medicine. The college's mission establishes a community-centered medical school dedicated to serving underserved populations through compassionate care, innovative education and a strong commitment to increasing health outcomes for all. The sole mission of the college and the Continuing Medical Education Program is to close the gap between rural and urban health care and improve the quality of health outcomes across the State of Texas.

For assistance in formulating learning objectives or for further guidance, please contact the Office of Continuing Medical Education at comcme@central.uh.edu .