

# Developing & Using Learning Objectives in Postgraduate APP Programs

*Practical Handout for New NP & PA Residency/Fellowship Programs*

## Purpose of This Handout

This guide provides a practical framework for creating, implementing, and evaluating learning objectives within postgraduate APP training programs. It integrates curriculum design, formative feedback, and summative evaluation to support competency-based education.

## Formative vs. Summative Feedback

| Feature  | Formative        | Summative                  |
|----------|------------------|----------------------------|
| Purpose  | Improve learning | Evaluate performance       |
| Timing   | Ongoing          | End of rotation/period     |
| Focus    | Growth           | Competency                 |
| Examples | Daily feedback   | End-of-rotation evaluation |

Key Principle: Summative evaluation should reflect consistent formative feedback—there should be no surprises.

## How to Develop Effective Learning Objectives

- Start with the end in mind (what independent practice looks like)
- Use SMART criteria (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound)
- Use observable action verbs (apply, interpret, prioritize, develop)
- Focus on clinical performance—not just knowledge
- Include behavior, conditions, and measurable criteria
- Align each objective to an assessment method
- Limit to 3–5 high-value objectives per rotation

## Standard Objective Template

By [timeframe], the resident will [action/behavior] under [conditions], achieving [criteria].

Example:

By the end of the rotation, the resident will independently manage chronic diseases (HTN, DM, COPD) with ≥85% adherence to guidelines based on chart audit.

## Developmental Progression

| Stage | Expected Level                    |
|-------|-----------------------------------|
| Early | Identify, recognize               |
| Mid   | Apply with supervision            |
| Late  | Independently manage & prioritize |

## Implementation in Your Program

- Embed objectives into each rotation
- Train preceptors to give objective-based feedback
- Use objectives in formative discussions
- Align objectives with evaluation tools and milestones
- Regularly review and revise objectives based on outcomes

## Bottom Line

Effective learning objectives drive curriculum, feedback, and evaluation. When aligned properly, they accelerate development of competent, independent APP providers.