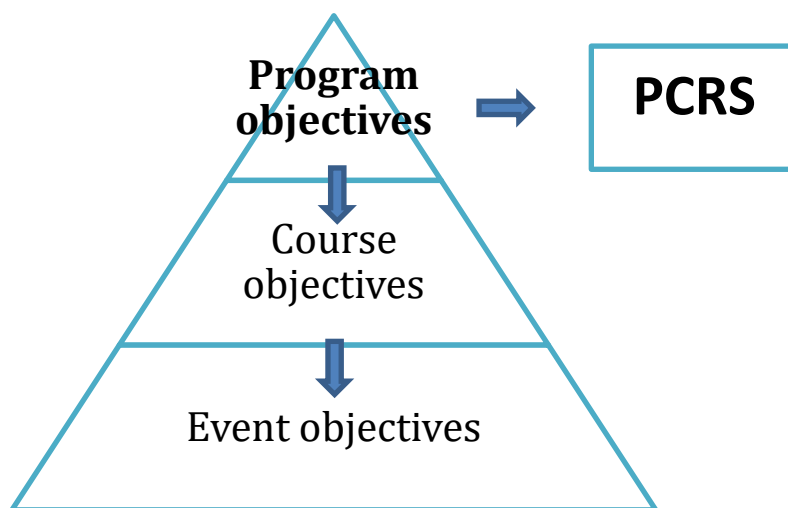


AAMC Curriculum Inventory Newsletter – August 21, 2019 Using the Physician Competency Reference Set (PCRS)

The PCRS in the AAMC Curriculum Inventory (CI)

Program objectives are the learning objectives students are expected to meet by graduation from their medical school program. All medical schools must have program objectives as an essential component of their local curriculum inventory (Liaison Committee on Medical Education [LCME] [standards](#) 6.1, 8.2). However, the language schools use to write their program objectives are diverse. Schools can refer to a number of models or choose not to refer to any models, in writing their program objectives. So that the AAMC Curriculum Inventory (CI) program can compare across medical school programs, a normalizing standard for program objectives is needed.

The [Physician Competency Reference Set](#) (PCRS) allows AAMC to draw comparisons among schools by area of interest (e.g., cultural competence, physician self-care, cost awareness, etc.). The PCRS acts as a normalizing standard at the program objective level, with all medical schools linking their unique program objectives to the PCRS in their AAMC CI submissions. This is a required element of all AAMC CI submissions.



With linkages between program objectives and the PCRS, the kinds of questions that can be answered include:

- What competencies schools are incorporating into their curricula;
- Where in their curricula schools are incorporating expectations and competencies;
- How schools are teaching and assessing competencies; and
- In what context and/or content competencies are being taught.

The PCRS in schools' program objectives

In addition to schools using the PCRS as required in the AAMC CI, through data analysis of the AAMC CI we find that schools also see value in using the PCRS as a model for writing their program objectives. Approximately 28% of schools appear to be using the PCRS as a model when writing their program objectives.

Table 1. Schools using PCRS as a model for their own program objectives	Academic Year					
	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Number of schools with program objectives that exactly match the PCRS ⁽¹⁾	4	4	7	6	6	10
Number of schools with program objectives that contain the PCRS ⁽²⁾	9	13	18	24	23	24
Number of schools with program objectives similar to the PCRS ⁽³⁾	1	3	3	5	5	5

- (1) The first row in the table above shows schools who use the PCRS exactly as worded for their program objectives.
- (2) The second row in the table above shows schools who use the PCRS wording exactly but also add their own their additional words before and/or after the PCRS language. Some of the additional text is minor (e.g., the school added their own program objective ID codes like PROG 1, PROG 2) to the PCRS.
- (3) The third row in the table above shows schools that have used relevant components of the PCRS and edited the wording for their own institution. For example:
 - PCRS: "Provide health care services to patients, families, and communities aimed at preventing health problems or maintaining health."
 - School program objective: "Work with patients in preventing health problems or maintaining health."

We see an upward trend of schools using the PCRS from year to year. This may be because while the PCRS were published some years ago, redesigning a curriculum from the program objective level is a potentially years-long process. Because a medical school's program objectives dictate the underpinning curriculum (content, methods, etc.), and all program objectives must be met by all graduates, curriculum change that results from program objective level change is complex and time-intensive.

The PCRS in schools’ course and event learning objectives

In addition to schools using the PCRS within their program objectives, through data analysis of the CI we find that schools also see value in using the PCRS as a model for writing their course and event learning objectives.

Table 2. Schools using PCRS as a model for their course and event objectives	Academic Year					
	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Number of schools with <i>course</i> objectives that contain the PCRS	4	10	11	15	18	18
Number of schools with <i>event</i> objectives that contain the PCRS	0	1	2	6	7	6

Going forward

If you’d like more information about the PCRS, the full PCRS and a narrative of their development are available through [Academic Medicine](#). Since the PCRS’ publication in August 2013, there have been 8,286 full text views. Even though linking school program objectives to the PCRS is required for a successful CI submission, schools can use the PCRS as a source of inspiration for writing their own learning objectives.

Please join us for the next [AAMC Building Better Curriculum](#) webinar series on Wednesday, September 11 at 1:00pm EST by registering [here](#). Our guest speakers include:

- Corrin Sullivan, Assistant Dean of Curriculum at The University of Nevada Las Vegas
“Incorporating Community Service, Palliative Care Rotations, and Intersession Programming
- Rebecca Keller, Assistant Dean for Medical Education at Albany Medical College
“Service Learning Linked with Preclinical and Clinical Experiences”

As always, if you have any questions, comments, or suggestions, please reach out to ci@aamc.org.

Onward!

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