

The ACGME Program Self-Study: Developing Your Program Aims

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Objectives

- Define the concept of program Aims and the rationale for developing them
- List the steps for implementing program Aims
- Describe 4 steps to setting program Aims

Aims: Definition



- Program and institutional leaders' views of key expectations for the program
 - What kind of graduates do you “aim” to produce, for what kinds of settings and roles?
 - How does your program differentiate itself from other programs in the same specialty/subspecialty?
- Extension of your program's or department's/division's mission statement
- To start you can begin with your program's description on its web page
 - What do you like and want to keep, what do you want to change?

Why is it important to articulate Aims?

- Ensure alignment of your graduates with needs of patients and health care system
- Promote tailoring of your program to ensure that graduates achieve the learning outcomes necessary for their intended roles and practice¹
 - Example: If you intend to produce physician researchers, is your curriculum and mentorship system tailored in this way?
- Program Aims are a requirement of the Self-Study process in the current accreditation model

1. Hodges BD. “A *Tea-Steeping* or *i-Doc* Model for Medical Education?,” Acad Med 85(9) Sept Suppl 2010, pp. S34-S44.

Who should define Aims

- Input from:
 - Trainees
 - Program Leadership
 - Key Faculty
 - Others?
- Final approval from:
 - Chairman/Departmental Leadership
 - Institutional Leadership?
 - Others?



When to define Program Aims

- Aims are not static and they should be articulated proactively, not just in reaction to the Self-Study announcement
- Aims should be defined as part of your annual self-improvement process
 - Discussed by Program Evaluation Committee (PEC)
 - Articulated in Annual Program Evaluation
- Aims may change over time in response to:
 - Advances in the field
 - New training opportunities at an additional site
 - New demands on physician workforce

Defining and Implementing Program Aims

1. Define program Aims
2. Vet and communicate program Aims
3. Identify the activities in your program that advance and further the Aims
 - Consider both existing activities and new activities that you plan to initiate
 - Identify metrics for success
4. Measure your program's progress and success in meeting the Aims

Step 1:

Defining your Program Aims

- Consider several dimensions in describing them
 - Who are your residents/fellows?
 - What do you prepare them for?
 - Fellowship training?
 - Career in primary care?
 - Research?
 - Leadership positions?
 - Who are the patients/populations they will care for?
- Consider how you will measure success in achieving the Aims: What are the desired outcomes?
- Ideally, establish 3 to 5 discrete Aims
 - Some should be achievable in the near term, some should “aim high”

How to Make Your Aims Outcomes SMART

Specific (who and what)

Measureable (how much change is expected)

Achievable (how—with available resources)

Realistic (why—how does it relate to “Aim”)

Time (by when)



Sample Aims

- Educate residents to be excellent practitioners of medically directed anesthesiology in an anesthesia care team model
- Train individuals for expertise in population health and care of the medically underserved
- Produce excellent, independent practitioners who will be leaders in academic medicine
- Train residents to enter primary care practice

Discussion: Defining a Program's Aims

- What is your vision of YOUR ideal program?
 - Look at your program's description on your website—is it aligned with your vision?
 - Does everyone agree—make sure to elicit opinion of all stakeholders
- Are your program Aims actionable and measurable?
- Are the Aims current and relevant each year

Step 2:

Vetting and Communicating the Aims

- Finalize Aims with the PEC
 - Aims will be written up by (set date)
- Define who needs to vet Aims and who needs to know about the Aims
 - Chairman
 - Division head
 - Faculty
- How will we let both current and prospective trainees know?
 - Discuss at next meeting with trainees
 - Post on our program's website/web page

Your Next Steps (Example)

- Aims will be discussed (group, setting, and set date)
- Aims will be vetted by (individual/group and set date)
- Aims will be finalized in writing (set date)
- First discussion of current and planned activities to meet program Aims (set date)
- Individual responsible for recording data on ongoing progress toward achieving Aims (identify and charge person(s))

Steps 3 and 4

1. Define program Aims
2. Vet and communicate program Aims
- 3. Identify activities in program that advance and further the Aims**
 - Consider both existing activities and new activities that you plan to initiate**
- 4. Measure the program's progress and success in meeting the Aims**