

INNOVATIONS IN MEDICAL EDUCATION: FAQ FOR SUBMITTING AUTHORS

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Innovations in Medical Education (IME) is a special submission category designed to take advantage of the SGIM annual meeting to disseminate new ideas and teaching methods to the membership. We understand that projects such as these sometimes only have preliminary results. However, an abstract that truly breaks new ground but has only initial results is an excellent candidate for IME. An abstract that focuses more on rigorous evaluation and less on innovation might be better suited to the Scientific Abstracts category.

How are IME submissions evaluated?

The IME criteria were adapted from those suggested by Glassick et al. in evaluation of scholarship [*Scholarship Assessed*, ISBN 0787910910]:

- Clear Goals
- Adequate Preparation
- Appropriate Methods
- Significant Results
- Effective Presentation
- Reflective Critique

Because these criteria were intended to apply to all forms of scholarship, not just *Innovations in Medical Education*, some clarification is due. What follows are brief explanations of each of the criteria.

Clear Goals

This is one of the most important criteria. An innovation in medical education should have a clear purpose, and that should be evident in the abstract. In fact, it is very difficult to apply the other criteria in the absence of goals, as they all depend on the objectives of the innovation. A secondary criterion is the importance of the goals: an innovation that addresses a widespread problem or issue will likely score higher than one that focuses on a local problem that few others face. A third criterion is that the goals are realistic and achievable. This will enhance the value of the objectives and the project.

Adequate Preparation

This criterion refers to whether an abstract establishes its place in the context of previous work. Due to space limitations, it is often difficult to do this in detail; however a sentence or two citing the most relevant background (or clarifying the lack thereof) would be appropriate.

Appropriate Methods

Were the methods used best suited to the goals? Were they novel and creative? This is another opportunity to showcase your innovations.

Significant Results

For IME, one does not have to have complete results, although preliminary reports of outcomes are strongly encouraged.

Effective presentation

Does your abstract clearly convey the goals, preparation, methods, and results of your innovation? A poorly-presented idea can distract the reviewer and therefore lead to rejection of what otherwise might be an excellent innovation.

Reflective critique

This category may be the most valuable to those considering implementing your innovation. What have you learned from your experiences? Would you do anything differently? Since most IME submissions are ongoing projects, what are your next steps?

What else makes a good IME submission?

At this point, you may be asking, “Where is the criterion for innovation?” The answer is that innovation can be appreciated in many of the above domains. For example, a project may have novel methods to address standard goals, or use standard methods to accomplish goals that are completely original.

The very best IME submissions are those that:

- State clear, well-defined goals
- Have good alignment among the domains—i.e. the goals clearly lead to preparation, which leads to methods, which leads to results, etc.
- Innovate in as many domains as possible (usually goals & methods, sometimes preparation or critique)
- Are clear, succinct, and compelling

Format

Please keep in mind that the criteria above are intended to guide reviewers, not to dictate the format of your abstract. Use a format that you are comfortable with and that suits your submission.

Relabeling and reorganizing sections and headings in an unfamiliar way is more likely to cause confusion than to help. However, be sure that your goals are clear, as they will drive the evaluation of the rest of the abstract.

We hope that these suggestions help with formulating your IME submission. If you have additional questions, feel free to contact the chair or co-chair of the IME review committee.

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