



MERI 2026 Abstract Writing Guide

How to write a strong abstract for each submission format

Medical Education Research and Innovation (MERI) Conference | Wayne State University School of Medicine | Tuesday, December 1, 2026 | Abstracts due Sunday, October 18, 2026

The rules that apply to every abstract

- 300 words maximum for the abstract body (the word count does not include your title or author list).
- One submission per individual.
- Abstracts previously presented at national conferences are not eligible. Original completed or in-progress work conducted at WSUSOM is highly encouraged.
- Student and resident submissions require a sponsoring faculty or staff member who has reviewed and approved the work before submission.
- Presenters must be available in person on December 1 during their format's window: posters 9:00 to 10:30 AM, orals 10:45 to 11:45 AM.
- Scope: MERI is for work whose central question is about teaching, learning, or assessment in medicine and the health professions. If your outcome is a patient outcome or a clinical process, see the Scope Guide before submitting, and ask us before the deadline if you are unsure.

How your abstract is reviewed

Initial review determines whether your submission is in scope for MERI, using the Scope Guide's criteria. There is no point-based scoring at the abstract stage, so the best way to succeed is to make your educational question unmistakable and complete every section of the format below. Accepted work is then judged on site at the conference, where clarity, significance, and a well-told story matter.

What strong abstracts have in common

- A short, descriptive title that says what the project is (save the clever titles for the poster conversation).
- One clear message: a reader can state your takeaway in a sentence after one read.
- A logical sequence: each section sets up the next, with nothing important missing.
- Plain language: minimal jargon, abbreviations spelled out at first use.
- Stated significance: why this matters for learners, educators, or assessment.
- Conclusions sized to the data: claim what you showed, not more.

Format 1: Research (completed work)

For scholarly investigations with a question, a method, data, and findings. Your abstract uses four sections; suggested word budget in parentheses.

Background (about 75 words). What problem or question does this address, and why does it matter for medical education? End this section with your purpose or research question stated in one sentence.

Methods (about 75 words). Design, setting, participants, what you did, and how you analyzed it. Name the analysis, even briefly; a reader should be able to tell how you got from data to findings.

Results (about 100 words). Your actual findings, with numbers where you have them (sample sizes, key statistics, or representative themes for qualitative work). Results deserve the largest share of your words.

Conclusion (about 50 words). The takeaway and its implication for teaching, learning, or assessment. What should a reader do differently, or study next, because of this work?

Format 2: Innovation (completed work)

For something new you designed or implemented: a curriculum, tool, program, or process, grounded in educational theory and evaluated, even if early.

Problem Statement (about 75 words). The clearly identified learner or system need your innovation addresses, and the rationale or theory behind your approach.

Methods (about 85 words). What you built and how you implemented it: audience, setting, timeline, and what makes it different from what existed before. Include your evaluation approach.

Results (about 90 words). Evaluation findings to date: participation, learner outcomes, feedback, or early indicators. Preliminary data is acceptable for innovations; say plainly what stage the evidence is at.

Conclusion (about 50 words). Lessons learned and what would help others adopt or adapt the innovation.

Format 3: Work in Progress

For projects still in development or without final results, in either the Research or Innovation category. In place of results, reviewers look for a credible plan.

Background / Problem Statement (about 75 words). The question or need, and why it matters. Identical standard to completed work.

Methods (about 75 words). Your design and, importantly, your analysis plan (for research) or evaluation plan (for innovations). A defined plan is what separates a work in progress from an idea.

Preliminary Data (about 90 words). Early findings, trends, or partial data. If data collection has not started, describe progress to date: instruments built, approvals obtained, participants recruited.

Next Steps (about 60 words). The remaining work and a realistic timeline to completion.

Proposing a Workshop

Workshops are proposed on the same form but are not written as abstracts. You will describe your working title, format (hands-on skills session, guided discussion, or demonstration), what participants will do and take away (150 characters), intended audience, and any space or AV needs. Strong proposals are interactive by design: participants should practice something, not watch something. Workshop leads present in person on December 1, 1:30 to 2:30 PM.

Before you submit: a final checklist

- ☐ My title says what the project is.
- ☐ My educational question or need is stated in one sentence a non-expert could repeat.
- ☐ Every section of my format is complete, and I am at or under 300 words.
- ☐ Abbreviations are spelled out at first use.
- ☐ My conclusion claims only what my data (or plan) supports.
- ☐ My sponsor has reviewed and approved this submission (students and residents).
- ☐ I am available in person during my format's presentation window on December 1.

Questions? Contact meri_conference@groups.wayne.edu before the October 18 deadline. We would rather help you strengthen a submission than decline it.