

# Writing Effective Goals and Learning Objectives Guideline

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Course level Goals are contributions expected to be made to student learning in completing a particular course within a degree program. They answer the question, *What are the teaching intentions of this course? What specific topics will the course cover? What should students gain from taking this course?*

Course level Learning Objectives are short but clear statement about the specific types of performance that students enrolled in a particular course are expected to demonstrate for successful completion of the course in order to serve as evidence that the goals have been achieved. Learning Objectives should identify demonstrable learning outcomes.

Learning Objectives can relate to knowledge, skills and/or perspectives that students should be able to demonstrate by the end of the course.

**Knowledge** – these are the subject matter objectives which articulate the content students should have learned.

**Skills** – these are cognitive thinking skills or behavioral skills by which students apply knowledge or by which knowledge is acquired.

**Perspective** – these are the affective objectives referring to attitudinal, personal and social dimensions of outcomes.

## *Tips for Writing Effective Learning Objectives:<sup>1</sup>*

- Learning objectives have two parts: an action verb and a content area. Utilize the action verb to specify the desired student performance followed by a specific description of the course-specific content target.
- Keep statements short and focused on a single outcome. This allows instructors to determine whether or not an objective has been met without having to distinguish between partial completion or success.
- To ensure that learning objectives are effective and measurable, avoid using verbs that are vague or cannot be objectively assessed. Use active verbs that describe what a student will be able to do once learning has occurred.
- Learning objectives should be student-focused and target the expected student outcome. To assist in maintaining a student-centered emphasis, start learning objectives with the phrase "The learner/student will be able to. . ."
- Include complex or higher-order learning objectives when they are appropriate. Most instructors expect students to go beyond memorization of facts and terminology; learning objectives should reflect instructors' expectations for student performance.

## *Using Bloom's Taxonomy to identify appropriate verbs:*

Benjamin Bloom created this taxonomy for categorizing level of abstraction of questions that commonly occur in educational settings. The taxonomy provides a useful structure in which to categorize test questions, as well as more broadly defined learning objectives.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://captain.park.edu/facultydevelopment/writing\\_learning\\_objectives.htm](http://captain.park.edu/facultydevelopment/writing_learning_objectives.htm)

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Competence	Skills Demonstrated
<b>Knowledge</b>	<p>Memorization of facts, language, concepts, principles, theories.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• observation and recall of information</li> <li>• knowledge of dates, events, places</li> <li>• knowledge of major ideas</li> <li>• mastery of subject matter</li> </ul> <p><i>Question Cues:</i> Define, Identify, Indicate, Know, Label, List, Memorize, Name, Recall, Record, Relate, Repeat, Select, Underline etc.</p>
<b>Comprehension</b>	<p>Management of knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* understanding information</li> <li>* grasp meaning</li> <li>* translate knowledge into new context</li> <li>* interpret facts, compare, contrast</li> <li>* order, group, infer causes</li> <li>* predict consequences</li> </ul> <p><i>Question Cues:</i> Arrange, Classify, Comprehend, Describe, Discuss, Explain, Express, Identify, Locate, Manage, Paraphrase, Recognize, Report, Restate, Review, Suggest, Summarize, Tell, Translate</p>
<b>Application</b>	<p>Use of understanding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* use information</li> <li>* use methods, concepts, theories in new situations</li> <li>* solve problems using required skills or knowledge</li> </ul> <p><i>Questions Cues:</i> Apply, Compute, Construct, Demonstrate, Dramatize, Employ, Give examples, Illustrate, Interpret, Investigate, Operate, Practice, Predict, Schedule, Shop, Sketch, Translate, Use</p>
<b>Analysis</b>	<p>Disassembly of Application</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* seeing patterns</li> <li>* organization of parts</li> <li>* recognition of hidden meanings</li> <li>* identification of components</li> </ul> <p><i>Question Cues:</i> Analyze, Calculate, Categorize, Compare, Contrast, Criticize, Debate, Determine, Diagram, Differentiate, Disassemble, Distinguish, Examine, Experiment, Inspect, Inventory, Question, Relate, Solve, Test</p>
<b>Synthesis</b>	<p>Assembly of Application</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* use old ideas to create new ones</li> <li>* generalize from given facts</li> <li>* relate knowledge from several areas</li> <li>* predict, draw conclusions</li> </ul> <p><i>Question Cues:</i> Arrange, Assemble, Collect, Compose, Construct, Create, Design, Formulate, Integrate, Organize, Perform, Plan, Prepare, Produce, Propose, Set up, Synthesize</p>
<b>Evaluation</b>	<p>Appraisal of own or someone else's Analysis or Synthesis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* compare and discriminate between ideas</li> <li>* assess value of theories, presentations</li> <li>* make choices based on reasoned argument</li> <li>* verify value of evidence</li> <li>* recognize subjectivity</li> </ul> <p><i>Question Cues:</i> Appraise, Assess, Choose, Compare, Contrast, Decide, Estimate, Evaluate, Grade, Judge, Measure, Rate, Revise, Score, Select, Value, Weigh</p>

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## *To write clear learning objectives:*

1. Write down the intended outcomes or desired end state.
2. Jot down, in words and phrases, the performances that, if achieved, would cause you to agree that the learning objective has been reached.
3. Phrase these in terms of **outcomes** rather than activities or programs.
4. Sort out the words and phrases. Delete duplications and unwanted items.
5. Repeat first two steps for any remaining abstractions (unobservable outcomes) considered important.
6. Write a complete statement for each “performance” or intended outcome, describing the nature, quality, or amount you consider acceptable.
7. Test the statements: If someone achieved or demonstrated each of these intended outcomes, would I be willing to say she has achieved the learning objective?
8. When you can answer yes, the analysis is finished.
9. Decide how to measure the actual outcome: can you measure it directly or indirectly through indicators?

## *Some Examples of Learning Objectives:*

- Comprehend how science is used as a method for building management practice.
- Know the types of research and evaluation approaches used to build the management knowledge base.
- Know how to locate research and theoretical literature that informs management practice.
- Know the elements and purposes of research questions and hypotheses.
- Know how research designs (case-level and group-level) are used to answer specific questions about management policy and practice.
- Comprehend the function of sampling in research and evaluation processes.
- Know the basics of qualitative and quantitative data analyses.
- Comprehend the role that research knowledge and skill has for critical thinking.
- Know the basics of critiquing published research.
- Know how research is used to build an evidence-based practice framework.
- Comprehend the ways that research is carried out in practice and program settings.