# Learning Goals and Objectives

Listing course learning goals and objectives in a syllabus communicates course expectations to students. Well-written course learning goals and objectives tell students what they're expected to learn and how they'll show they learned it. Goals and objectives also help you design measurable activities and assignments, as well as clear instructions and grading criteria. Goals and objectives should align with program goals and objectives and reflect the most current course description on record. Additionally, goals and objectives are required elements of syllabi for all Penn State courses (Syllabus Requirements).

## Course Learning Goals

According to Faculty Senate Policy 43-00, "Course Goals are broad educational benchmarks describing general understanding and knowledge domains in each course."

*E.g., Students will demonstrate caring behaviors as part of a daily nursing routine.*

Goals are …

- broad, generalized statements about what is to be learned;
- targets to be reached, so they are expressed in future tense; and
- loosely defined and too "fuzzy" for designing assessment.

We can't measure what students learn without observing how well they apply that learning. Therefore, specific statements of what the learners *will do* in the course or *be able to do* as a consequence of taking the course (as opposed to what they will learn) are desirable.

## Course Learning Objectives

Faculty Senate Policy 43-00 states that "Course Objectives are more specific, should map to broader course goals, and represent unique, focused skill sets with learning outcomes that are assessable." Each objective should align with the course goals, and each course topic should have at least one corresponding learning objective that is *demonstrable, observable, measurable* and requires an *action*. Multiple topics can be aligned with an individual learning objective.

*E.g., Students will listen to patients' concerns and respond with explanations/instructions that are appropriate and medically accurate.*

Objectives are …

- student-centered and describe what they will do, not what the course or instructor will do;

- demonstrable, observable, measurable, and require action;
- expressed in future or present tense; and
- specific, explicitly stating
  - **active verb** associated with the task or activity that demonstrates learning at the desired level of attainment (see [Bloom's Taxonomy Active Verbs](#)),
  - the **task or activity** that demonstrates learning, and
  - the **conditions** that apply to the task or activity.

*E.g., Students will **listen** to patients' concerns and **respond [active verbs]** with **explanations/instructions [task]** that are **appropriate and medically accurate [conditions]***

For the sake of clarity, avoid using unmeasurable verbs and extraneous phrases like those below.

- Appreciate
- Explore
- Familiarize
- Know
- Learn
- Realize
- Recognize
- Understand
- Become aware of/familiar with
- Develop the ability to
- Familiarize themselves with
- Demonstrate an ability to
- Gain knowledge/understanding of

## References

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Common Sense Education. "What is Bloom's Taxonomy." (2016). [youtu.be/fqgTBwElPzU?si=bqnB2zFKcsBOU2I1](http://youtu.be/fqgTBwElPzU?si=bqnB2zFKcsBOU2I1)