

Reporting Units: How to Develop Objectives

*The difference between where we are (current status)
and where we want to be (vision and goals)
is what we do (objectives)*

Objectives state the specific activities or specific results to be achieved with regard to a particular goal. The most useful objectives are those that are time specific and that are stated in more quantitative, results-oriented terms.

Writing good objectives takes thought and practice.

Many people have difficulty writing objectives generally because they find it hard to separate ends and means. Objectives are statements of end results, measurable statements of benefits that clients will receive from your work. The statement “to buy a computer” is, therefore, not a good objective. It is the means to an end.

You can improve your ability to focus on end results by following this *7-step procedure* for writing better objectives:

- 1) **Determine your result areas:** Results areas are the key places you will look to see improvement in your client population or your processes. Examples include “timely response to data requests” or “students who understand key nursing concepts”.
- 2) **Determine Key Performance Indicators:** Key Performance indicators are quantified parts of your result area. By measuring your performance with these indicators, you are able to see how well you are doing. Examples include “number of reports filed by due date” and “scores on standardized tests”. Brainstorm a number of key performance indicators for each result area; then pick the ones that best reflect your intent.
- 3) **Determine Performance Standards (criterion):** Performance standards answer the question, “how much (or little) of this indicator do we need to consider ourselves successful?” Examples: “100% of reports on time” and “scores rising from the 80th to the 90th percentile.”
- 4) **Determine the Time Frame:** The time frame is the amount of time in which you want to reach your performance standards. It’s your deadline. You might, for example, decide you want scores to rise 10% by Fall 2005.
- 5) **Determine Costs:** In other words, answer the question, “Will there be a cost associated with reaching this objective?”
 - a. For objectives with a budget necessity, see section on submitting budget requests.
- 6) **Write the Objectives:** This step combines the data you have generated in the previous 5 steps. (See Section: **Writing Educational & Planning Objectives**)
- 7) **Evaluate the Objective:** Review your objective and answer the question, “Does this objective reflect the amount of change we want in the result area?” If your answer is “yes”, you probably have a workable objective. If not, chances are your

key performance indicator is wrong, or your performance standards are too high or too low. Go back to those steps and rework the process. (See Section: **Revising/Updating Your Strategic Plan**)

How many objectives should I have?

Reporting Units Only:

Minimum of 3 *Planning Objectives* without budget requests (at least 1 per goal)

Minimum of 3 *Educational Objectives* per program

So what is the difference between a Planning Objective and an Educational Objective?

- ✚ *Educational Objectives*—the focus of the objective is on “**student learning**”
- ✚ *Planning Objectives*—the focus is on administrative outcomes within the department; those things other than “student learning” that the department is currently working on.

Educational Objectives

- ◆ Defined in terms of the particular levels of knowledge, skills and abilities that students attain at the end or as a result of their engagement in an academic program.
- ◆ Evidence of what students can do as a result of having completed a course, program, or other learning experience.
- ◆ It is important to remember that educational objectives are to be stated and assessed for all students in the academic program as a group. Individual student assessment (grades) does not provide information about overall program outcomes. The focus of assessment is generally on graduates from the department’s major programs. Departments which provide general service courses may be involved in assessing general education (core) program success.

Developing Educational Objectives: Where Do You Start?

Educational objectives transform the general department student-learning goals you developed above into specific student performance and behaviors that demonstrate student learning and skill development along these goals.

Before drafting objectives, it might be helpful to consider these three questions, which focus on objectives in slightly different ways:

1. For each of your stated goals, what are the specific student behaviors, skills, or abilities that would tell you this goal is being achieved?
2. Ideally and briefly, what would a skeptic need (evidence, behavior, etc), in order to see that your students are achieving the major goals you have set out for them?

3. In your experience, what evidence tells you when students have met these goals? How do you know when they're "getting" it?

Types of Educational Objectives

There are three types of educational objectives, which reflect different aspects of student learning:

1. Cognitive –What do you want your graduates to know?
2. Affective –What do you want your graduates to care about?
3. Behavioral –What do you want your graduates to be able to do?

Writing Educational Objectives: Where Do You Start?

When writing educational objectives, describe realistic and achievable outcomes in simple language. Even if an educational objective that is important to you seems difficult to measure, try to word the objective into language that focuses on student behavior.

Effectively worded objectives:

- Use action verbs that describe definite, observable actions that can be measured (See Section: **Bloom's Taxonomy & Verb Power**).
- Include a description under which the action takes place: "*when given x, the student will be able to...*"
- Indicate an appropriate level of competency that is assessable through one or more indicators (criterion)

Adapted from California State University, Bakersfield, PACT Outcomes Assessment Handbook (1999) and Diamond, Robert M., Designing and Assessing Courses and Curricula

Bloom's Taxonomy

Bloom's Taxonomy (1964) is a well-known description of levels of educational objectives. It may be useful to consider this taxonomy when defining your objectives.

Bloom's Taxonomy	
Knowledge	Observation and recall of information; knowledge of major ideas, events, dates, and places; mastery of subject matter
Comprehension	Understanding information; grasp meaning; translate knowledge into new context; interpret facts, compare, contrast; order, group, infer causes; predict consequences
Application	Use information; use concepts, methods, theories in new situations; solve problems using required skills or knowledge
Analysis	Seeing patterns; organization of parts; recognition of hidden meanings; identification of components
Synthesis	Use old ideas to create new ones; generalize from given facts; relate knowledge from several areas; predict, draw conclusions
Evaluation	Compare and discriminate between ideas; assess value of theories;

	make choices based on reasoned argument; verify value of evidence; recognize subjectivity
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Verb Power

Concrete verbs such as “define,” “argue,” or “create” are more helpful for assessment than vague verbs such as “know,” “understand,” or passive verbs such as “be exposed to.” Some examples of action words frequently used in objectives are included in the table below.

<u>Knowledge</u>	<u>Comprehension</u>	<u>Application</u>	<u>Analysis</u>	<u>Synthesis</u>	<u>Evaluation</u>
Define	Classify	Apply	Analyze	Arrange	Appraise
Identify	Describe	Compute	Appraise	Assemble	Assess
Indicate	Discuss	Construct	Calculate	Collect	Choose
Know	Explain	Demonstrate	Categorize	Compose	Compare
Label	Express	Dramatize	Compare	Construct	Contrast
List	Identify	Employ	Contrast	Create	Decide
Memorize	Locate	Use	Criticize	Design	Estimate
Name	Paraphrase	Illustrate	Debate	Formulate	Evaluate
Recall	Recognize	Interpret	Determine	Manage	Grade
Record	Report	Investigate	Diagram	Organize	Judge
Relate	Restate	Operate	Differentiate	Perform	Measure
Repeat	Review	Organize	Distinguish	Plan	Rate
Select	Suggest	Practice	Examine	Prepare	Revise
Underline	Summarize	Predict	Experiment	Produce	Score
	Tell	Schedule	Inspect	Propose	Select
	Translate	Shop	Inventory	Set-up	Value
		Sketch	Question		

What about Affective Objectives?

Bloom’s relates to *cognitive* domains; there is a similar taxonomy for *affective* objectives as well (Krathwohl, Bloom, & Masia, 1964):

1. Receiving –passive but attentive
2. Responding –complying and aware
3. Valuing –behavior consistent with attitude
4. Organization –bringing together different values and building internally consistent value system
5. Characterization –behaving according to “life style” and maintaining a consistent philosophy regardless of surroundings

Developing Planning Objectives: Where Do You Start?

The bulk of administrative and educational support units will identify planning objectives, which will be “process oriented”. These objectives describe how well the unit intends to function or improve its services. In administrative units, such as the Accounting Office, Facilities Services, Public Relations, etc., administrative objectives focus on specific functions or administrative procedures, which the unit personnel believe should be improved.



Educational support units such as the Library, Career Services, Counseling Center, and other units that contribute to student learning often use a second type of planning objective, one focused on the outcome of the student’s involvement with the unit. These units can be expected to establish planning objectives which are a mix of “process oriented” statements describing what the unit intends to accomplish and “outcomes oriented” planning objectives describing what the clientele (often students) will be able to accomplish following service by the unit.

Administrative and educational support unit planning objectives usually can be classified as process, outcome, or satisfaction oriented.

- ▶ **Process oriented** statements of planning objectives relate to what the unit intends to accomplish and most frequently found to describe a) the level or volume of unit activity, b) the efficiency with which the unit’s processes are conducted, or c) compliance with external standards of “good practice in the field” or regulations. For example: “number of transactions processed” or “cost per _____”.
- ▶ **Outcome oriented** objectives concerning the ability of clients after services have been provided by the unit are another type of objective.
- ▶ **Satisfaction oriented** planning objectives are the most common type of administrative objective. These range from overall “client satisfaction” to more specific surveys of client satisfaction with components of individual services.

Example Planning Objectives

Outcome Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✚ Students will have the ability to utilize library resources following a library orientation. ✚ Graduates will have the ability to write a resume. ✚ Faculty will have the ability to utilize instructional media based on equipment and training provided by Media Resources.
Process Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✚ Library will be efficient in book acquisitions. ✚ The number of workshops provided by the TLC will increase by 2%.

Satisfaction Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">  Students will be satisfied with Library circulation service.  Vendors will report prompt payment.
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TIP: The unit should first identify a potential long list of objectives supporting the activities described in the mission statement. From this long list, the unit should choose *between 3 - 5 planning objectives for assessment at any one time*. Those objectives selected initially should be:

1. Targeted on those areas which the unit staff believe can be improved

by using the currently available resources and personnel

2. Related to the services the unit provides

3. Relatively easy to assess within one assessment cycle

4. Directly under control of the unit

Do not do away with the "Long List" of potential objectives. After one or more assessment cycles, evidence will indicate which of the initial 3 to 5 statements are being accomplished or have reached a plateau, and the unit will want to reevaluate the long list.

Writing Planning Objectives: Where Do You Start?

1. Objectives must be focused on quality of services and be consistent with unit goals and university mission.
2. Objectives must be measurable; direct measurement is preferred over indirect measurement.
 - a. *Direct Measure:* Turn-around time and process completion rates; data error/accuracy rates/ participation rates in special events; % of time that network servers were kept online, etc
 - b. *Indirect Measure:* survey of satisfaction with services
3. Objectives must measure something realistic, useful and meaningful.
4. Objectives should be limited in number. A focus should be on accomplishing those elements of the unit's mission that are considered fundamental during the current planning period.
5. Objectives must be explicitly stated. Describe specific results experienced by clients when they interact successfully with your unit. From the SACS perspective, students are the primary clients for all units.
6. Objectives must be accompanied by a target performance standard.
 - a. Example: "A minimum of 80% of clients who return evaluations will rate counseling as positive."

Summary: Writing Objectives

➤ To be useful, objectives should contain 3 basic elements:

- A verb that describes an observable action
- A description of the conditions under which the action takes place “when given X, you will be able to...”
- Time-bound
- The acceptable performance level

Example Planning Objectives

- Institutional Research will create a QuickFacts booklet and section of the IR website to enhance ease of use of university information by fall 2004.
- Academic Advising will develop an academic advising model for undeclared students by March 2005.
- Billings & Collections will decrease the number of customer complaints by 5% by fall 2004.

Example Educational Objectives

- Students can identify the role that cultural diversity plays in defining what it means to be a social being.
- Students will demonstrate professional responsibility including the effective use of supervision and practicing in accordance with ethical principles and legal standards.

How do I enter my Objectives into TracDat?

Access the TracDat Manual Online:

www.oie.eku.edu