

Development of Learning Objectives

Villeneuve, L. (1995). *Cahier d'encadrement du stage supervisé*. Montreal: Éditions Saint-Martin, p. 11-12

• Purpose

This tool is used to clarify the student's objectives, reflect the educational institution's objectives and the requirements of the target profession, and judge whether the objectives are realistic. It also shows the learners' commitment and involvement in their professional and personal advancement.

• Link with proposed tools

This tool ties together the information collected through the field observation worksheet, the inventory of knowledge, skills and attitudes, and the learning contract.

• Instructions for supervisor

1. Practise this methodology until you are proficient at it.
2. Attitudes tend to be overlooked at times and the emphasis put on knowledge and skills. As a result, students learn theory but are unable to make meaningful contact with their clients. In addition, there is no pre-established criterion to assess attitudes for the summative evaluation.
3. Explain to the students the conditions for achieving the general objectives established by the educational institution. That information will give them a good picture of the placement and help them decide on specific objectives.
4. Identify the specific objectives deemed essential for practising the profession and addressing the issues targeted during the field placement or clinical experience.

• Instructions for supervisee

1. Determine the target learnings in light of the field observation worksheet and the inventory of knowledge, skills and attitudes.
2. Note down training needs or associated objectives based on the general objectives established by the educational institution.
3. Follow the guidelines for developing learning objectives (see below).
4. Discuss those guidelines with a third party to be certain the objectives are clear and understandable.
5. Keep your notes for use in writing the learning contract.

• Guidelines³

1. Differentiate between general and specific objectives

A general objective is a statement that **indicates** the desired learning outcome. It defines learning results and represents a particular point in a course or activity which should be reached within a relatively short time frame (e.g. “Upon completion of the field placement/clinical experience, the student will be able to develop and deliver an intervention plan and evaluate the results”).

A specific objective is a statement that **describes** the desired learning outcome and is expressed in terms of observable behaviours. It could be said to translate the underlying general objective (e.g. “Upon completion of the field placement/clinical experience, the student will be able to recognize all the components of an action plan, develop an action plan for five different problem situations, or realize how the action plan will affect beneficiaries in five specific problem situations).

General and specific objectives are usually established by the educational institution. As for the learning contract, student and supervisor seek to harmonize institutional, professional and field requirements and the student’s needs.

2. Make a list of specific objectives or learning needs to be addressed during the field placement/clinical experience, with regard for the link between them and the general objectives.
3. Translate the student’s needs into specific objectives, where applicable, using the formula “Upon completion of this field placement/clinical experience, I will be able to . . .”

An objective is always expressed by a verb and should not be qualified by the words *good, adequate, better, more* or other such words whose precise meaning is not always clear. Comparisons are to be avoided in wording objectives. The focus should be on attaining a goal.

4. Spell out the student’s intention in order to determine what kind of objectives are involved. The guiding question will be “**What do I mean by . . .?** (e.g. **knowledge**: know how to develop or recognize an action plan; **skill**: be able to develop an action plan from its components; **attitude**: know how to deliver the action plan at the patient’s pace).
5. Single out the intentions that will become specific objectives (e.g. **skill**: be able to develop an action plan from its components; **attitude**: know how to deliver an intervention plan at the beneficiary’s pace).
6. Word the objectives precisely as per the relevant practice standards. The way the objectives are worded is significant in that it points to the type of objective involved: knowledge, skill or attitude. The distinction between these three areas of knowledge will dictate the action needed to achieve the objectives. Here are some guidelines for writing objectives.

Knowledge objectives

general verb followed by content of objective

Examples of general verbs: *learn to, know how to, know, acquire, elaborate, review.*

Skill objectives

general verb followed by verb indicating action, achievement or performance

Examples: general verb (*learn to, know how to*), followed by verb such as *make, perform, use, become able to, be authorized to.*

Attitude objectives

general verb followed by verb expressing attitude, belief, feeling or opinion

Examples: general verb (*learn to, know how to*) followed by verb such as *listen, accept, be aware of, like, respect, empathize with, be congruent, be responsive to.*

7. Take account of each area of knowledge upon choosing specific objectives. Where practical training is concerned, knowledge acquisition and the improvement of attitudes or values must be harmonized.