

# COURSE GOALS & OBJECTIVES

**Course Learning Goals** are the instructors' visions for the course in a way to inform their pedagogical decision making that facilitates student learning. Some instructors find it useful to think through the following four criteria introduced by Wiggins and McTighe (1998):

- Big Ideas with value beyond the classroom
- Big concepts at the heart of the discipline: “doing” the subject.
- Concepts that help clarify abstract or often misunderstood ideas.
- Concepts with potential for engaging students.

Fink (2003) proposed the following questions, the answers to which may guide developing learning goals:

- What would I like the impact of this course to be on students, 2-3 years after the course is over?
- What would distinguish students who have taken this course from students who have not?

## Examples of Course Goals:

*This course has three specific aims:*

- (1) to introduce students to the range of research methods available to chemistry;*
- (2) to help students learn how to develop good questions and choose methods to best answer these questions, and*
- (3) to encourage the development of analytical skills that enable you to evaluate the quality of your own and others scholars' research.*

*The course is a general introduction of one of the four fields of anthropology: sociocultural anthropology ... the goals of this course are:*

- 1) to introduce students to basic concepts and methods of sociocultural anthropology.*
- 2) to deepen students' understanding of diverse social and cultural practices,*
- 3) to encourage students to critically reflect on their own cultural assumptions.*

**Course Learning Objectives** Learning objectives are specific statements of measurable student learning that are inspired by learning goals and inform the process of developing assessment plans as well as learning activities throughout the course. Learning objectives may be devised within three domains of learning that Bloom et al. (1956) described as, cognitive (knowledge), psychomotor (skill), and affective (attitudes).

The following criteria suggested by Jones, Noyd, & Sagendorf (2014) can help you to create effective course learning objectives:

- Clear and understandable to all (explain verbs; avoid jargon/acronyms)
- Focusing on demonstrated student performance (mentally, physically, or emotionally)
- Requiring high-level, developmentally-appropriate thinking (address student learning factors)
- Connecting components of the course (making learning about connections rather than collections)
- Worthwhile and significant (provide meaningful context; worth the time and energy; authentic)

The following model may indicate the process of developing learning objectives:

1. Reflect on a learning goal of the course in terms of students' specific learning that support it.
2. Reflect on the following question:
  - a. By the end of this course, what do you want your students to be able to know/think/do?
3. Identify the domain of students' learning
  - a. Cognitive
  - b. Affective
  - c. Psychomotor
4. Analyze the level of students' learning in that domain
5. Select an action verb related to that level
6. Write up to 5 learning objectives that would facilitate achieving the selected learning goal.

### Examples of Course Learning Objectives:

*After completing this course, students will be able to critique a literary work by breaking it down into its component parts, interpreting its meaning, and weighing its strengths and weaknesses.*

*After completing this course, students will perform calculations on the basis of existing wing designs.*

*After completing this course, students will be able to compare and evaluate scholarly theories of embodiment.*

## How Learning Objectives and Learning Goals are Related

- Both learning goals and objectives are centered around student learning.
- Learning objectives support learning goals.
- Learning goals inform the domains and levels of learning objectives.
- If we think of learning goal as a scone, learning objectives are the elements of the recipe to make it.

## How Learning Objectives and Learning Goals are Different

- Learning goals are general and intangible and convey general intentions; while, learning objectives are specific.
- Learning goals are abstract and difficult to measure; while learning objectives are measurable, attainable, and time limited.