

Writing Course Objectives

A Guide for Quality Matters Reviews at Columbia Gorge Community College
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Introduction and Overview

Quality Matter Standards

- 2.1 The course learning objectives, or course/program competencies, describe outcomes that are measurable.
- 2.2 The module/unit-level learning objectives or competencies describe outcomes that are measurable and consistent with the course-level objectives or competencies.
- 2.3 Learning objectives or competencies are stated clearly, are written from the learner's perspective, and are prominently located in the course.

What are good learning objectives?

A sound learning objective is an intent communicated by a statement describing a proposed change in a learner leading to a pattern of behavior that is observable and measureable.

In other words, what can a learner do after his or her time with you that he or she couldn't do before?

Good objectives should:

- Give the learner clear expectations of the course/unit.
- Inform the selection of instructional materials and the instructional strategy.
- Mirror the assessment strategy.

Forbidden terms

Here are some "forbidden" terms below to assist you in creating measurable objectives: understand, learn, know, become acquainted with, realize, recognize, internalize, appreciate, believe.

Course and Module Objectives

Course objective (QM standard 2.1):

What students should be able to do when the course is done.

Module/unit objective (QM standard 2.2):

What students need to be able to do during the course to achieve the course objectives.

The Peanut Butter and Jelly Example



Here is an example of a **bad** course objective:

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to understand the basics of peanut butter and jelly sandwiches.

Here are examples of a **good** course objectives:

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Select appropriate ingredients for a peanut butter and jelly sandwich.
- Assemble a peanut butter and jelly sandwich.
- Consume a peanut butter and jelly sandwich.
- Properly dispose of sandwich remains.

If we take the first course objective:

Course objective: *Select appropriate ingredients for a peanut butter and jelly sandwich.*

We can break it down into module objectives:

Module objectives:

- Differentiate between different types of breads.
- Identify different types of jams and jellies, including those appropriate for peanut butter and jelly sandwiches.
- List the features of different types of peanut butter.
- Describe accommodations for those with dietary preferences and/or restrictions.

Self-check questions

Do you need to work on your course level objective? Ask yourself:

What can students **do**, after taking your course, that they couldn't do before?

Do you need to work on module objectives? Ask yourself:

What must students be able to **do** before accomplishing the course objectives?

This gives you your subordinate (module-level) objectives.

Be sure to differentiate between subordinate objectives and entry-skills.

Do you have objectives that are immeasurable, vague or "fuzzy"? Ask yourself:

How are you planning on assessing this objective?

Multiple choice: define, identify

Fill-in-the-blank: recall, name, recite

Essay: [prompt] = objectives

Project: [final product] = objectives

Are you stuck? Ask yourself:

Your student is going to work at an entry-level job in the area of this course. What is he/she going to do at work? What earns him/her a paycheck?"

This will hopefully, at the least, giving you a jumping-off point.