

## Developing a Learning Plan

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A learning plan is an agreement between a preceptor and student where the objectives of the learning experience, the activities to accomplish, the learning objectives and the means by which the educational effort will be evaluated are identified. It should be set jointly with the learner and can evolve over time.

A learning objective is a statement that identifies an educational outcome related to a student's knowledge, skills and attitudes. Learning objectives can be used to measure educational outcomes and can serve to:

- Encourage learners to take responsibility for their own education by asking them to design learning experiences that best match their individual learning styles and by allowing them input into the means of evaluation.
- Foster emergence of strategies for effective performance.
- Increase attention to relevant aspects of the task.
- Encourage persistence in behavior.
- Stimulate effort.

Not all learners share the same interests or needs, nor do they arrive with the same skill sets, backgrounds, and life experiences. Deliberate, collaborative development of learning objectives will allow preceptors to individualize learning experiences and optimize learner resources. There are no right or wrong objectives per se; the objective needs to match the student's needs and the resources available.

Preceptors should help their students develop learning objectives that:

- Target improved student learning
- Target personal, professional, and technical skill development
- Target efficient and effective use of available expertise and resources for student learning
- Target collaborative practice skills through interprofessional education experiences.

Students should develop learning objectives that:

- Target clinical skills specific to a particular site or population (e.g. assessment, intervention methods, etc.)
- Target those skill sets transferable to many clinical settings (e.g. documentation, time management, etc.)
- Target collaborative practice skills

The learning objective should include a SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Time limited) goal statement and include strategies to attain the objective.

**What Factors do I Need to Consider?**

**Preceptors** should consider:

- Unique opportunities available at the site and their suitability for student involvement
- Staffing expertise and availability
- Interprofessional Educational opportunities for students
- Facility constraints

**Students** should consider:

- Transferable skills brought to the placement from previous clinical experiences
- Potential site specific opportunities
- Perceived clinical strengths, weaknesses, and challenges
- Previously identified goals for improvement

**Remember**

Developing 'really useful' learning objectives will ensure that you are providing students with the best possible learning experience - one that capitalizes on the opportunities and expertise available in your facility, meets placement requirements and is consistent with facility requirements and workload challenges.

Developing 'really useful' learning objectives, in collaboration with your students, will ensure that an achievable plan that clearly outlines expectations, specifies process and that includes an objective evaluation process is formulated.