## Learning Objectives

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### What are learning objectives, and why are they important?

A clear learning objective states knowledge, a skill or an attitude a learner will be able to demonstrate upon completion of the program or course. The learning objectives are the most important section of your program or course outline because they:

• define the type, breadth and depth of learning students are expected to achieve

• provide objective benchmarks for assessment

• clearly communicate expectations to students

• clearly communicate graduates’ knowledge and skills to prospective employers

• define units of learning

• guide the instructor and the student

The Private Training Regulation requires that:

* Learning objectives must be relevant to the career occupation for which the program is intended to prepare the student
* The program title must be consistent with the learning objectives

### What should learning objectives look like?

Learning objectives are written as statements (usually in a point-form list) using action verbs such as: identify, recognize, describe, demonstrate, analyze, calculate, design, diagnose, assess.

Examples: Upon successful completion of this program/course, students will be able to:

* **identify** potential safety hazards in the workplace
* **demonstrate** professional standards of waste prevention
* **design** an effective marketing plan for a small business

Learning objectives must be measurable or observable. Evaluation methods such as written and practical exams are chosen based on the program’s learning objectives, and evaluation tools are designed to measure how well students are meeting them.

Avoid using words such as *understand, know, appreciate, learn*, which are not measurable and/or relate to the process of study rather than the end result.

### How many learning objectives should a program have?

This varies depending on the scope of the program. Learning objectives are the foundation on which a curriculum is built. There should be enough learning objectives to establish the program’s breadth and depth of study – the major areas within its field that are covered - and to show how a successful graduate will be prepared for the career occupations listed in the application and program outline. Learning objectives in a program outline will be more general than those included in course outlines.

### Should every learning objective for the program be in the program outline?

In general, no. If the program consists of courses, each course outline will have a list of learning objectives for that course, and together they provide greater detail of the learning objectives of the program as a whole. The objectives in the program outline will be broader and more general.

However, if the program does not consist of individual courses, the learning objectives in the program outline must provide all the detail a student or an instructor need.

### What is the PTIB looking for in the learning objectives section of an outline, and why?

When a new program application requiring approval is reviewed, or substantive changes to an approved program are applied for, the registrar will consider whether the learning objectives of the program are (or remain) relevant to the career occupations listed on the program outline.

As well, the Private Training Regulation refers to learning objectives in the contexts of both new program approval and ongoing program compliance: various aspects of program design and delivery (such as admission requirements, intake model and maximum class size, course order, program length) must be appropriate to enable students to meet the learning objectives of the program.

For PTIB staff to determine whether program design and delivery, as described in your application, will enable students to achieve learning objectives, the objectives must be properly expressed, and there must be enough of them to show the full breadth and depth of the curriculum.

### Common problems with learning objectives in program and course outlines

PTIB staff may ask you to revise your learning objectives if:

* They are not student-focussed (e.g. they describe what the program covers, rather than specifying skills/knowledge a graduate will be able to demonstrate)
* They are vague or too broad
* They are too few to effectively show the program’s scope
* They are too specific to effectively show the program’s scope
* They do not use action verbs
* They are not measurable or observable

Until the learning objectives are expressed effectively other aspects of the program cannot be assessed in relation to them.

You may be asked to revise your program title and/or career occupations if learning objectives are not relevant to the career occupation for which the program is intended to prepare the student, or if the program title is not consistent with the learning objectives.

At a designated institution, ensuring appropriate learning objectives is a responsibility of the Senior Educational Administrator (SEA). Revisions should be done in consultation with the curriculum designer.

### Some online resources on learning objectives and how to write them

* <https://uwaterloo.ca/centre-for-teaching-excellence/teaching-resources/teaching-tips/planning-courses/course-design/writing-learning-outcomes>
* <http://www.bumc.bu.edu/cme/files/2012/07/13-Tips-for-writing-objectives.doc>
* <https://www.cmu.edu/teaching/designteach/design/learningobjectives.html>
* <https://teachonline.asu.edu/2012/07/writing-measurable-learning-objectives/>

*This is not meant to be an exhaustive list of requirements relating to this subject found in the Private Training Act, Private Training Regulation, and/or Fees and Student Tuition Protection Fund Regulation.
It is your responsibility to be aware of all regulatory requirements that apply to your business.*