

Module 2

Learning Objectives Self-Test

- a) Consider the following 'learning objective' statement, accompanying a course on “The History of the Second World War”:

"Demonstrate significant understanding of the events leading to the war and of the war's consequences"

Why is this not an effective learning objective?

One way to think about learning objectives is as guidelines that outline everything you would like students to know by the end of a course or course module and could offer an alternative instructor enough direction to actually teach your course/course module in your place. Although it would be desirable that, by the end of a “History of the Second World War” course, students reach an understanding “of the events leading to the war and of the war’s consequences,” such a statement is too general, in some respects self-evident, and, thus, not helpful to you or anyone else who would be teaching the course.

- b) The following statement appears quite often in the list of graduate courses' learning objectives:

"Students will develop analytical and critical skills and employ them in decision making"

Why is this is not an effective learning objective? What are the learning objectives underlying this statement?

Similarly to the previous example, although such an outcome is desirable, it is too broad and not easily linkable to specific competencies and learning activities. Assuming that the course in question involves reading research studies, this broad statement may be converted into the following set of learning objectives:

Students should be able to

- i) distill the key concepts presented in a reading,
- ii) identify the main assumptions underlying the study, and
- iii) place the study and its results within the context of related literature.

- c) These sample objectives come from an "Introduction to Psychology" course:

"The objectives of this course are to provide you with a general background of psychophysical and physiological perception research and of the relevance of such research beyond the academia (e.g. in communications, marketing, art, health services, etc.). Developmental-perception topics will be incorporated throughout the semester. This course will place an emphasis on vision, and secondarily, on audition; however, all five senses will be covered."

This is clearly a course description, not a set of course objectives. What learning objectives can you distill from the above description?

- Describe the basic neural processes underlying each of the five senses and identify similarities and differences among them
- Describe how physics and physiology interact to give rise to visual, sonic, tactile, etc. sensations
- Use examples from your own experience to explore and reflect on the relationship between perceptual and physical “realities”
- Construct examples of how understanding the psychophysiology of perception can inform safety, efficiency, and preservation within a given sense
- Use the concepts and principles introduced in the course to explain visual, auditory, etc. “illusions”