COURSE OBJECTIVES

DESCRIPTION
Course objectives are the broadest category of learning objectives, and represent learning outcomes that should occur by course completion. Like all objectives, course objectives reflect a gain in factual, conceptual, procedural, or metacognitive knowledge.

Course objectives often resemble course topics or sections of a course textbook, compared to module objectives which resemble class topics or chapters of a course textbook, or assignment objectives which resemble portions of what was learned or sections of a chapter of a course textbook.

Objectives are typically formed in the ABCD format:
- Audience – Your students and their characteristics, including demographics, prerequisite knowledge, etc.
- Behavior – The observable outcome that reveals students have learned the objective.
- Conditions – The environment, tools available, and time span in which the student will perform the observable outcome.
- Degree – The “degree of mastery,” or how effectively they perform the outcome. To understand, consider a rubric: rubrics have levels of achievement with the upper two reserved for passing. These upper two levels would be similar in purpose to Degree.

WHY
Course objectives serve the course in several ways:
- You can use course objectives to help plan your course at a high level.
- Students use course objectives to guide their learning and recognize most important content.
- Students use course objectives to compare courses and see how different courses fit together within a program of study.

BEST PRACTICES TO CONSIDER
- There should be about 5-10 learning objectives per course.
- These objectives should be the knowledge and skills that are result from taking the course as a whole, rather than specific activities or lectures.
- Use verbs that describe observable phenomena. Avoid words that describe phenomena difficult to assess, such as know, understand, and learn.
- Include your course objectives in the syllabus.
- Discuss the course objectives in the introductory lecture to the course. You can go the extra mile and present them as a model, illustration, or outline.
- Use student-centered language.
MORE INFORMATION

The Educational Value of Course-level Learning Objectives/Outcomes
- This resource from Carnegie Mellon University surveys the research supporting the importance of learning objectives to student achievement.
- URL: http://www.cmu.edu/teaching/resources/Teaching/CourseDesign/Objectives/CourseLearningObjectivesValue.pdf

Writing Learning Outcomes Handbook
- This handbook created by the Office of Planning and Assessment at Texas Tech University guides you through the process of constructing purpose statements, learning outcomes, assessment and grading plans, course outline, and adding these items to a syllabus. It also includes a work area for your use in developing a course.

Developing Course Objectives
- This tutorial by the Illinois Online Network has information about objectives and leads you through the ABCD method of writing them.
- URL: http://www.ion.uillinois.edu/resources/tutorials/id/developObjectives.asp

Creating Course Goals and Learning Objectives
- This site provides several course objective examples. In addition, strategies are listed that help you develop objectives according to course material that may be included in your online course.
- URL: http://teachingcommons.depaul.edu/Course_Design/developing_a_course/goals.html

Here’s a Way to Make Your E-Learning Course Objectives Interesting
- This site visually explains how to make course objectives more appealing to your students. Synchronous and asynchronous tools help support the overall idea of this source: learning course objectives is fun.
- URL: http://www.articulate.com/rapid-elearning/heres-a-way-to-make-your-e-learning-course-objectives-interesting/

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