

Course Planning Tip Sheet

Learning Outcome vs. Learning Objective

A *learning outcome* describes the overall purpose or goal from participation in an educational activity. Courses should be planned with a **measurable learning outcome** in mind. *Objectives* are used to organize specific topics or individual learning activities to achieve the overall *learning outcome*. The learning outcome is identified from the gap analysis. The learning outcome is a reflection of the desired state.

Current State	Desired State	Identified Gap	Gap due to knowledge, skill and/or practice	Methods used to Identify Professional Practice Gap	Learning Outcome	Method of Evaluation
What is currently happening?	What should be happening?	Difference between what is and what should be.	Why do you think the current state exists? What is the underlying or root cause?	What evidence do you have to validate the gap exists?	What do you want learners to be able to do as a result of participating in this activity?	How are you going to measure that change?

*See page 3 for examples of gap analyses with corresponding learning outcomes and evaluation methods.

Objective: Statements that define the expected goal(s) of an educational activity. Learning objectives can be used to structure the content of an educational activity. Objectives may include tasks such as "list", "discuss" or "state."

Outcome: A written statement that reflects what the learner will be able to do as a result of participating in the educational activity. The outcome addresses the educational needs (knowledge, skills, and/or practices) that contribute to the professional practice gap and achieving the learning outcome results in narrowing or closing that gap. The learning outcome can assess the overall impact of multiple objectives.

Learning Outcomes

- Are measurable and capable of being assessed
- Are an outcomes-based approach
- Are Learner-centric
- Are explicit descriptions of what a learner should know, be able to apply and/or be able to do as a result of participating in the educational activity
- Must be based on the desired outcome of the educational activity
- Frame the context for objectives (why is it important to "list", "discuss" or "state" information?)
- Provide measurable evidence of progress in closing the practice gap

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Learning outcomes connect the identified practice gap with the related educational need, while objectives are written as tasks:

Learning Outcome	Learning Objective
Knowledge: Demonstrate knowledge of evidence-based treatment for hypertensive patients by passing post-test with score of $\geq 80\%$.	List 5 side effects of anti-hypertensive agents.
Competence/Skill: Correctly identify required actions to manage patients in hypertensive crisis by analyzing a case study.	Discuss risks associated with untreated hypertension.
Performance: Utilize an evidence-based protocol.	State normal range for blood pressure.

The learning outcome demonstrates the behavior the learner will exhibit at the conclusion of the educational activity:

Learning Outcome	Learning Objective
Knowledge: At conclusion of the educational activity, participants will self-report knowledge gain of effective communication styles using a 5 point Likert scale.	Describe characteristics of effective communication styles.
Competence/Skill: At conclusion of the educational activity, participants will self-report an intent to change practice by applying evidence-based communication strategies.	List 5 methods of creating a safe environment for holding a confidential conversation.
Performance: At 6 month post-program evaluation, participants will self-report using SBAR for safe patient hand-off communication.	Define the components of the SBAR patient hand-off tool.

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Gap Analysis with corresponding Learning Outcome and Evaluation Method

Example 1

Current State	Desired State	Identified Gap	Gap due to knowledge, skill and/or practice	Methods used to Identify Professional Practice Gap	Learning Outcome	Method of Evaluation
New monitors have been purchased for the ICU.	Nurses know how to set up and use the monitors accurately and safely.	Nurses currently do not know how to use the new monitors.	<p>Knowledge- have not had exposure to new monitor; do not know basic features of monitor system</p> <p>Skill- don't know how to use the new monitor</p> <p>Practice- have not used the new monitor in patient care</p>	The majority of nurses in the ICU have no experience with the new monitors; new technology	Nurses will successfully demonstrate knowledge related to use of new monitoring system.	Nurses will pass post-test with a score of 90% or greater with content focused on safe use of new monitoring system.

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Example 2

Current State	Desired State	Identified Gap	Gap due to knowledge, skill and/or practice	Methods used to Identify Professional Practice Gap	Learning Outcome	Method of Evaluation
Pediatric patients in respiratory distress are placed on a non-rebreather facemask within 5 minutes of presentation to the Emergency Department 100% of the time, but frequently the facemask is not applied correctly.	Pediatric patients in respiratory distress are placed on a non-rebreather facemask <u>applied correctly</u> within 5 minutes of presentation to the Emergency Department 100% of the time.	Frequent inappropriate non-rebreather facemask application for pediatric patients in respiratory distress.	Lack of skill in correctly applying facemask to pediatric patients in respiratory distress.	Direct observation by Clinical Nurse Specialist; comments from respiratory therapist in ED; comments from ED medical staff	Registered Nurses in the Emergency Department will apply a non-rebreather facemask correctly to all pediatric patients in respiratory distress.	Successful return demonstration of application of a non-rebreather facemask for pediatric patients in respiratory distress.

Example 3

Current State	Desired State	Identified Gap	Gap due to knowledge, skill and/or practice	Methods used to Identify Professional Practice Gap	Learning Outcome	Method of Evaluation
40% of patients 65 and older in our community health clinic are receiving the pneumococcal vaccine consistent with national guidelines.	100% of patients 65 and older in our community health clinic receive the pneumococcal vaccine consistent with national guidelines.	60% of patients 65 and older in our community health clinic are not receiving the pneumococcal vaccine consistent with national guidelines.	Knowledge – unaware of updated guidelines.	Chart audit; 75% of nurses report they are not familiar with updated national guidelines and therefore were not providing information about the vaccine	Registered nurses will demonstrate they know the updated vaccine recommendations for all patients 65 and older	Complete post-test with passing rate of 80% or greater

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Example 4

Current State	Desired State	Identified Gap	Gap due to knowledge, skill and/or practice	Methods used to Identify Professional Practice Gap	Learning Outcome	Method of Evaluation
Nurses are unfamiliar with the process of scholarly publication.	Nurses are aware with the process of scholarly publication.	Nurses have not been educated about the steps for manuscript development and submission.	<p>Knowledge- nurses do not know the steps for manuscript development and submission.</p> <p>Skill- nurses do not know how to submit a manuscript to a journal for publication.</p>	Needs assessment showed that 70% of nurses reported low levels of knowledge and confidence with writing and publication process; Number of nursing publications are below organizational target.	Nurses have increased knowledge and confidence of the publication process and submit manuscripts for publication.	Nurses will self-report increased knowledge and confidence of the publication process on post course evaluation.

References:

1. 2015 ANCC Primary Accreditation Provider Application Manual.
2. California Board of Registered Nursing, Title 16.
3. Keating, S. (2011). *Curriculum development and evaluation in nursing*. New York, NY: Springer Publishing Company.