**Guidance note no. 6 – Learning Objectives**

Each training program should be formulated using Learning Objectives (Los).

The determining and then writing of specific LOs is an essential prerequisite to successful training. In short, the establishment of LOs will help the trainer to work out how the different elements of training design integrate together in order to form a coherent training event or course which supports progression towards the achievement of the aims and LOs.

There are several reasons why formulating clear LOs is important at the planning stage.

* LOs describe what a learner should be able to demonstrate by the end of the course/pro‑ gramme. LOs clarify intentions ‑ both for the trainer and for the learner. Everyone understands what the focus of the training involves, and thus possible misunderstandings are avoided.
* Formulating LOs helps ensure the training is relevant to the learner’s needs, and deliverable within the time available. Without LOs, training may be simply unfocussed, or far too ambitious.
* Because LOs will be assessed, trainer and learner have the opportunity to appreciate the extent to which training has been successful. Further, learners acquire an ‘I can do’ attitude to training which reinforces the notion of competencies-based training within the organisation or public service.

LOs should always be achievable, but require increased levels of knowledge and skills as the learners’ level of awareness and experience of training increases.

Specifying LOs helps trainers with the choice of training technique.

All of this suggests the need for precision in language. Clarity of expression will help ensure clarity of thought at subsequent stages. Yet this is not too difficult a task. There are two helpful tips: first, that LOs should be ‘SMART’; and second, that they should be written in language that suggests measurability.

In the English language it is said that good learning LOs should be **SMART:**

**S pecific** ‑ Any objectives must be concrete, clear and unambiguous. It should target something specific – for example clear understanding of a topic.

**M easurable** ‑ The objective will include some indication of how learner progress may be measured.

**A ttainable** ‑ The objective should be appropriate for those undertaking it.

**R elevant** ‑The objective should be relevant to those under‑ taking the course.

**T ime-specific**. The objective should specify the time parameters in which the task should be completed.

Second, it should be possible to measure the level of success in attaining each LO. This is much easier to do than it seems.

LOs are expressed using a stem (that gives a time limitation) followed by a statement that begins with an **active verb** (outlining what learners will be able to demonstrate) + **object** (what is to be learned) + a **qualifying phrase** (that provides the context and degree of mastery expected). For example:

By the end of this session, you will be able to:

* List the procedural powers provided by the Budapest Convention (knowledge)
* Compare and contrast the differences between digital and traditional evidence (knowledge, skills)
* Critically evaluate standards and good practices for digital evidence (skills)

By the end of this course participants will:

* Acquire the basic theories related to andragogy and experiential learning (knowledge)
* Discuss the challenges of training adult professionals (knowledge)
* Recognize and handle different dynamics that can occur during training (knowledge, skills)
* Experience and assess the effectiveness of various training techniques (knowledge, skills)
* Identify the most suitable training techniques to be used when training on cybercrime and electronic evidence (skills)
* Practice training delivery in a protected environment

Try to avoid using verbs such as *understand, appreciate, be familiar with,* and *know* in LOs as these verbs do not clearly indicate what level of understanding or knowledge a learner must demonstrate in an assessment.

It is also important to realise that there may be very different ways of expressing objectives. But all use a simple formula:

**active verb** (outlining what students will be able to demonstrate)

+ **object** (what is to be learned) + a **qualifying phrase**

Some verbs, for example, will be more challenging than others. ‘Restate’ suggests little more than memorisation and repetition; while ‘explain’ calls for a greater element of mental processing and comprehension.

**Remember to consider the following when you write your LOs**

* What knowledge, skills and attitudes do your participants already have when they enroll on the course?
* What knowledge, skills, attitudes and values do you want them to develop?
* What will learners need to do to demonstrate that they have achieved the LOs?

It is fine to use the same active verb more than once in the LOs if it is expressing what you want learners to be able to achieve.

The idea of differing levels of sophistication in knowledge and understanding can be illustrated using Bloom’s Taxonomy It is possible to develop a table of ‘active verbs’ distinguishing between ‘lower’ (or more basic) and ‘higher’ (or (or more basic) and ‘higher’ (or more advanced) LOs

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