

Creating Learning Objectives

To make the most of your cooperative education experience, you will want to give some serious thought about what you want to learn on the job and how you will be able to know if you are achieving your goals. Gaining clarity about what you want to learn, the skills you need to develop, and the areas in which you can excel on the job, will help ensure a productive relationship with your supervisor and create a more purposeful and mutually beneficial co-op experience.

Together with your on-site supervisor, please develop 3-5 learning objectives which will help you and your employer to monitor, assess, and measure your performance.

Using these learning objectives, you and your supervisor will then periodically review and assess your job performance and offer your Faculty Co-op Advisor a summary evaluation at the conclusion of your co-op employment period.

Here are some ideas, suggestions, and sample learning objectives to help you craft your learning objectives:

Learning objectives should be specific, measurable, realistic, and attainable.

1. Begin by creating a list of personal/professional strengths and areas for improvement. Include both technical and professional skills and personal attributes.
2. With this list in hand, ask yourself these questions:
 - What technical skills would I like to acquire during this co-op experience?
 - What do I do well and can contribute to the organization? (manage a work project, analyze a problem, write a technical report, work well in a diverse team....)
 - What “employability” skills would I like to improve upon? (self-confidence, communication, accepting constructive criticism, leadership or organizational abilities.)
3. Other questions to consider include:
 - What career or functional areas would I like to learn more about during this co-op work session?
 - What does the job market look like in terms of growth or opportunity in my chosen area of study?

4. **CAREFULLY READ THE POSITION DESCRIPTION.** Make sure your learning objectives are in line with the actual duties and responsibilities of the job. Once you get have some time on the job you may find you want to refine or redirect some of your learning objectives. Do this with your employer.
5. Review your learning objectives with your supervisor frequently. These discussions will help you understand the employer expectations, allow you to ask for specific assistance, and make sure you are participating in meaningful work.
6. Last, but not least, as you develop learning objectives, make sure you and your supervisor have some concrete ideas for how you can specifically achieve your goals. Attaching a realistic and attainable indicator of achievement will ensure that you are able to meet your learning objectives.

SAMPLE LEARNING OBJECTIVES and MEASURES OF ACHIEVEMENT

Learning Objectives (Skills and Knowledge Sought)	Measure of Achievement
To understand the functional areas of the company and how the engineering division supports the company's products and services	Will create an organizational chart with roles/functions of primary areas based upon interviews with managers.
To become proficient in laboratory safety rules, standard operating procedures and precautions	Will be able to explain and demonstrate general safety rules and procedures
To seek clarification and assistance when presented with unfamiliar tasks	Will initiate bi-weekly meetings with my supervisor and present written questions and possible approaches to new tasks.
To gain greater confidence in ability to present information and concepts in a group setting	Will develop a PowerPoint/Poster presentation for my supervisor, other interns, and engineers on a major project