

The SMART principle

The SMART principle is useful for writing good work objectives. SMART objectives ensures that they are:

Specific - Measurable - Achievable - Relevant - Time-framed

- Specific:** Is the objective clearly defined?
Work objectives should state specifically what needs to be achieved; they need to clearly specify the intended outcomes. Vague objectives lead to vague attempts to achieve them! Express the desired action and result using active verbs such as: *increase, develop, implement, publish, decrease, set up, negotiate, etc.* (see useful verbs for describing objectives listed below).
- Measurable:** Is it clear what success is and how one would know when it is achieved?
This means that it is possible to monitor progress and outcomes and determine the extent to which objectives are achieved. Consider both qualitative and quantitative indicators of success. It should be possible to evaluate the progress based on evidence. Therefore, objectives need to include a way of verifying whether the objective is being progressed, has been achieved and to what standard. Measures may be qualitative (quality of work, satisfaction) or quantitative (numbers achieved, costs incurred, revenue achieved). Generally there are four ways to measure; *quality, quantity, costs (or revenue) or time.*
- Achievable:** Is the objective realistic, yet challenging?
While objectives should provide challenge, they must also be achievable – there is no point setting yourself and staff up for failure! Consider the requirements and level of the role as well as the availability of resources.
- Relevant:** Is the objective important; does it add value?
To be meaningful and worthwhile, the objectives must be relevant to the level and priorities of the individual's role, as well as aligned with and contributing to University and School/Unit goals. When setting work objectives, identify the key priorities for the University / Portfolio/ Unit that relate to the staff member's position and identify how the individual can add value or contribute to achieving these priorities.
- Time-framed:** What are the timeframes in which the objective should be achieved?
Clear target dates should be set for achieving work objectives and completing interim steps. Timeframes – which can include miles stones – are useful for enabling individuals to monitor progress toward the objectives as well as to allow for interim adjustments that may be required due to changing priorities. Although the Planning, Development and Review process is annual, objectives can be set for longer timeframes. This may be particularly appropriate for research based objectives, with the ability to set milestones for the annual review cycle.

Useful verbs for writing objectives

achieve	comply	draft	improve	obtain	revise
acquire	conceive	edit	increase	organise	save
act as	consult	eliminate	initiate	originate	select
adopt	contribute	engage	instigate	participate in	serve
analyse	control	ensure	introduce	perform	set up
answer	coordinate	establish	investigate	plan	solve
arrange	correct	evaluate	launch	prepare	source
assist	create	exceed	learn	present	streamline
attain	decrease	extend	lead	produce	submit
audit	define	facilitate	liaise	publish	supervise
avert	demonstrate	formulate	maintain	recommend	support
award	design	gain	manage	rectify	test
build	develop	generate	maximise	represent	train
carry out	direct	guide	monitor	research	turn around
coach	deliver	handle	motivate	restructure	visit
communicate	devise	identify	negotiate	review	win
					write