

University of Houston Clear Lake

Student Internship Learning Contract

A learning contract is a way to make clear to all parties what you (the student) want and expect to learn and in what ways that will happen. The learning contract includes specific goals and objectives and represents a joint effort between the intern, the on-site supervisor and the advisor (UHCL intern supervisor).

The development of a learning contract begins with the specification of goals which are general statements, written specifically by and for you (the student) about what you want to accomplish and when. Then you develop objectives, which are more specific statements; they are the building blocks of goals. Next come learning activities which are the experiences you plan to have that will help you meet your objectives. Finally, assessment entails the ways you and others will see how well the objectives have been met.

The learning contract goals, objectives, activities, and assessment procedures that you initially write should not be rigid and unchangeable. You may have good reasons to make changes along the way. This is fine, as long as the changes are made explicitly and negotiated with the same people with whom you negotiated your original agreement.

Goals: A goal is a general statement about what you want to learn and/or accomplish. It is not a statement about what you are going to do. If what you come up with first is a statement about what you want to do, try asking yourself why you want to do this activity? What do you want to gain? The answer to this question is a clue to your goal. There are four possible categories for your goals: a) knowledge, b) skills, c) personal growth, and d) career development. You may include some of each of these goals in your contract.

Knowledge goals describe new information you want to learn:

- Understand how a Health/Wellness Program operates
- Know what services a Physical Therapy Clinic provides
- Understand the physical limitations of cardiac patients

Skill goals describe things you want to learn to do:

- Perform electro-stimulation in a Physical Therapy clinic
- Provide a smoking cessation program to employees
- Perform and interpret health-risk appraisal

Personal growth and development goals involve the ways in which you hope to grow and change as a person:

- Understand why I have trouble being patient
- Learn to be more assertive
- Determine whether I have the compassion to do this work
- Become more open-minded and less judgmental

Career development goals focus on ways that your experience can help you clarify your career plan:

- Determine if I have the skills and/or desire to work in Physical Therapy
- Determine if administrative work is the direction I want to take
- Determine if I enjoy working with the elderly

OBJECTIVES: Objectives are more specific statements that form the components of your goals. They should be written, whenever possible, in observable terms. Each goal should have at least one objective written for it.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES: Learning activities are the things (experiences and activities) that you will do to achieve your objectives. It is sometimes helpful to take one objective and consider what the obstacles are to achieving it. Learning activities may include people, experiences, and/or material resources.

ASSESSMENT: Assessment involves identifying the your areas of strength and those areas in need of improvement. The final assessment/evaluation will result in the your final grade recommendation for the internship. Assessment may include direct observation of the your work, dialogue with you, review of the your work, and/or surveying of co-workers.

LEVELS OF LEARNING: Part of the process of developing a learning contract is paying attention to different levels of learning that need to take place along the way. It is also important to start where you are in terms of your learning and experience. It is often helpful to think in terms of three sequential levels of learning: a) orientation, b) apprenticeship, and c) mastery.