Continuing Competence Program

Guide to Writing SMART Learning Goals

SMART Goal Setting

SMART goal setting is a well-established tool that can be used to achieve and plan your yearly CCP learning goals. A SMART goal is (S) specific, (M) measurable, (A) achievable, (R) realistic and (T) timely:

Specific – Explain what you will learn and why.

Measurable – What will your outcome of this learning activity be? Once your learning goal is reached, how will you measure or evaluate what you have learnt?

Achievable – Be specific of how you will learn (i.e. course, webinar, journals, etc.).

Realistic – How does it relate to your dietetic practice and is it realistic for the timeframe given?

Timely – Set a timeline for when the goal should be achieved.

Using SMART goal setting will ensure a plan is set for your yearly CCP learning.

Examples of SMART Learning Goals

Example #1 (Professional Practice)

By the end of the year, I will review the *Right to Information and Protection of Privacy Act* and reflect on my dietetic practice sufficiently, to develop and implement an annual audit, appropriate documents and best practices to ensure the privacy of my clients in my private practice.

Example #2 (Communication and Collaboration)

By the end of the year, I will efficiently apply collaboration and negotiation principles in team work. I will achieve this goal by reading journal articles on negotiation and collaboration principles and by applying my learnings in team work. By continually improving my collaboration and negotiation skills, I will be better able to influence decisions pertaining to the nutritional care plan.

Example #3 (Nutrition Care)

In the next year I will deepen my knowledge, skills and judgement on recommending supplements by engaging in education activities such as the Dietitians of Canada Learning on Demand "Dietary Supplements and Mineral Supplements". The outcome of this goal will be that I will provide high quality client care when advising patients on supplements.

Example #4 (Population and Public Health)

By the end of the year, I will have furthered my competencies in the development and application of an appropriate marketing plan, in order to effectively promote the Healthy Eating Environment Policy in my organization. I will do this by speaking to upper management and learning new techniques through online resources. While developing the marketing strategies, I will also develop a tool to measure the effectiveness of marketing the policy.

Example #5 (Management)

By the end of the year, I will do a literature review to research clinical resources in order to identify a variety of indicators to evaluate the quality of clinical nutrition services offered. Based on the appropriate indicators, I will be able to recommend improvements to clinical nutrition services.

Examples of Work-Related Learning Goals

Example #1

Work Task (inadequately written): Between April 2018 and March 2019, I am going to take a Dietetic Intern.
SMART Learning Goal: Between April 2018 and March 2019, I am going to increase my knowledge and skills in the area of preceptorship by completing a Preceptor eLearning Course in order to effectively mentor a Dietetic Intern.

Example #2

Work Task (inadequately written): Between April 2018 and March 2019, I am going to create a new dining standard in a long-term care setting.
SMART Learning Goal: Between April 2018 and March 2019, I am going to increase my knowledge of best practices in dining standards to a long-term care setting by reviewing the national standards and reviewing recent research in this area. This will allow me to create a new dining standard in the nursing home that I am working in.

Examples of Inadequate Learning Goals

Example #1 – The goal is not specific enough to be a SMART goal

Inadequate: In 2019, I will learn more about the ketogenic diet.
Adequate: By the end of 2019, I will enhance my knowledge about the ketogenic diet by reviewing recent research and attending webinars. As a result, I will be able to provide up to date evidence based nutrition education to my patients.

Example #2 – The goal is a work task

Inadequate: In 2019, I will manage a complete patient tray audit to assess the supplement cost of the food service department.

Adequate: In 2019, I will enhance my knowledge of supplement use and efficacy in acute care by reading recent research and meeting with other food service managers and Clinical Dietitians. My updated knowledge will help in interpreting a planned supplement use tray audit and to help manage the nutritional supplement budget.

Example #3 – The goal is the learning outcome

Inadequate: In 2019, I will take my CDE exam.
Adequate: In 2019, I will update my knowledge on the current diabetes clinical practice guidelines by studying diabetes standards and clinical practices guidelines as well as diabetes education standards of Canada. The outcome of my studies will set the basis to pass the CDE exam and becomes certified.

Example #4 – The learning is not related to the scope of practice

Inadequate: In 2019, I will take courses and study towards my personal trainer certification. This certification will help me counsel my clients better on their physical activity goals.
Adequate: Choose a learning goal related to dietetic practice.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Why should learning goals be written as SMART goals?

A. Although not a requirement, setting SMART goals allow dietitians to self-reflect and engage in intentional learning to meet self-identified learning needs. They help the dietitian to focus on specific learning which will enable a dietitian to achieve the goal within the CCP year.

Q. How many learning activities should I complete for each goal?

A. There is no mandatory minimum of learning activities required. However, the learning activities must be sufficient to increase your understanding and lead to a meaningful learning outcome. During audit, the Quality Assurance Committee reviews the quality and credibility of the learning activities and the self-reflection should clearly identify the learning outcome of the member.

Q. What is the difference between a work goal and a learning goal?

A. Work goals or job tasks focus on carrying out specific tasks related to your job performance, while learning goals focus on increasing knowledge and competence. Work-related learning goals may be used in the CCP if there is new learning with an impact on professional competence. When using work-related learning goals, ensure they are different from job tasks. Job tasks do not necessarily lead to new learning. A work-related learning goal should focus on enhancing knowledge, skill or attitudes that underpin competence.