

# Articulating own goals, developing goal-setting strategies

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## **Purpose**

A learning contract enables course participants to use a goal-setting strategy, and to articulate and plan their own goals.

## **Description**

Participants are encouraged to think about their goals for a training course, or programme of study and to coach each other. The framework for the session and the learning contract is based on Whitmore's (2002) GROW model. Participants are encouraged to ask open-ended questions, to listen and not advise. The session is interactive, allowing students to discuss the learning contract template and co-coach each other. It lasts about 90 minutes. Participants may focus on short-term goals (for example, time management), medium-term goals (for example, a placement proposal) or long-term goals (for example, a dissertation). The learning contract can form the basis of a future coaching discussion with a tutor or trainer. Materials required are copies of the learning contract template.

## **Process**

Encourage the participants to use the following template, and, if this is helpful, explain the purpose of each section.

### ***Learning contract***

A Learning Contract will help you to:

- be positive about your knowledge, skills and values
- specify what your goals for learning are
- establish when and how you will achieve these
- articulate what resources and support you need to achieve your goals.

#### ***1 Goals***

- (a) What are my main goals for this course, or this year? *(e.g. to pass the course with an upper second, to achieve the learning outcomes, to enjoy myself)*

#### ***2 Reality***

- (a) What skills and strengths do I have? *(e.g. I am independent, as I travelled to India in my gap year; I am caring, as I look after my grandmother; I am bright, as I passed my degree)*
- (b) What have I done and considered so far? *(e.g. I have joined the library and learned how to get web access and e-journals; I have bought a wall planner)*

#### ***3 Options***

- (a) What options do I have? *(e.g. get the books from the library for my first assignment; make a space to study in my house; join a sports club)*
- (b) What obstacles stand in my way? *(e.g. tiredness, laziness, fear of getting things wrong)*
- (c) How will I deal with these obstacles? *(e.g. make sure I eat and sleep properly; remind myself why I am here; I want to be a Vet; have a go at everything; I know I can do it)*

#### ***4 What? When? Will?***

- (a) What are my target dates for these long-term goals? *(e.g. an upper second degree in July 2013)*

- (b) Are there any short-term, medium-term goals on the way? (*e.g. yes, success in all my assignments*)
- (c) What support and resources do I need? (*e.g. tutors, library support staff, friends and family*)
- (d) When will I get access to these? (*e.g. plan a meeting with my tutor*)
- (e) What will I feel like when I achieve the goals? (*e.g. relieved*)
- (f) What single step will I take towards these goals? (*e.g. email my tutor and ask for a meeting*)
- (g) When will I take the steps? (*e.g. today at 4 pm*)
- (h) How committed am I, on a scale of 1–10? (*e.g. 10!*)

*Signed*

*Date*

### **Pitfalls**

Some people may not respond well to being asked to plan, preferring to take a more relaxed approach to life and studies.

### **Bibliography**

Whitmore, J. (2002) *Coaching for Performance* (2nd edition), London: Nicholas Brealey Publishing.