How to write SMART objectives

An objective is a clear statement of something that needs to be accomplished over a period of time. SMART objectives are:

- **Specific** – states exactly what you need to achieve
- **Measurable** – includes a quality or quantity measure
- **Agreed** – between you and your Reviewer
- **Realistic** – can be challenging but must be achievable
- **Timebound** – with a clear end date or timescale

Here are some tips for ensuring that your objectives are SMART:

**SPECIFIC**

Objectives should clearly state what you are expected to achieve, using action verbs to describe what has to be done. For example:

- **Not specific**: Encourage more people to join the Sports Centre
- **Specific**: Increase membership of the Sports Centre
- **Not specific**: Conduct research
- **Specific**: Formulate plans for research on topic X

**MEASURABLE**

Objectives should include a quality and/or quantity reference so that you can measure whether or not you have achieved them. For example:

- **Not measurable**: Increase membership of the Sports Centre
- **Measurable**: Increase membership of the Sports Centre by 10%
- **Not measurable**: Formulate plans for research on topic X
- **Measurable**: Formulate plans for research on topic X and submit grant application to X Research Council.

**AGREED**

Objectives should be agreed between you and your Reviewer, relevant to your job and driven by University strategy and School/Institute/Section plans. Your Reviewer will help ensure that your objectives are relevant and appropriate.

**REALISTIC**

Objectives should be challenging but achievable i.e. they should not be unrealistic. For example, it might be realistic to plan to lose 10 pounds in weight but it would be unrealistic to plan to lose 10 pounds in one week. Objectives should also take account of the skills, knowledge and resources needed to achieve them. You may need to consider whether you need any training or development (or other support) in order to achieve the objective.
**TIMEBOUND**

Objectives should include a time reference, such as a specific deadline. For example:

*Not timebound*: Increase membership of the Sports Centre by 10%

*Timebound*: Increase membership of the Sports Centre by 10% over the next six months

*Not Timebound*: Formulate plans for research on topic X and submit grant application to X Research Council

*Timebound*: Formulate plans for research on topic X and submit grant application to X Research Council by 1 June 2009.

The time reference for other objectives might be in terms of frequency or turnaround time. For example:

*Timebound*: **Once a month**, update all library web pages and printed guides

*Timebound*: Circulate minutes of Committee Y **within five days** of the meeting.

If there is a particularly long timescale involved, you may need to break your objective down, identify the steps you need to take to achieve your overall objective and work out how long each step is likely to take so that you can agree a target date.