



Setting Goals

Key Accountability or Goal... What's the Difference?

People often ask...“What is the difference between a key accountability and a goal? Aren't they the same thing?”

Key accountabilities and goals are both statements of work-related outcomes. However, although often linked, key accountabilities and goals are really two different things.

A key accountability is a major ongoing responsibility of a job as clearly defined and detailed on the position description. Key accountabilities describe what the person in that position is responsible for regularly producing or providing — i.e., the expected “deliverables” of the position. Expected outcomes (or deliverables) are typically established by the supervisor with input from the incumbent.

A goal is a broad statement about a desired outcome with one or more specific objectives that define in precise terms what is to be accomplished within a designated time frame. A goal may be performance-related, developmental, a special project, or some combination.

Key accountabilities are ongoing job responsibilities. Goals come and go. As goals are completed, new goals are set by the employee and supervisor. Most often, goals are set annually, but timing may vary. Goals may or may not be directly related to the regular accountabilities associated with a particular position.

Key accountabilities remain relatively stable over time, whereas goals may frequently change as needed to meet emerging priorities and departmental needs.

Key Accountability or Goal... What's the difference?	
Accountability	vs. Goal
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ A statement of work output that is established and detailed in the position description as the normally expected deliverables 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ A statement about a specific work-related achievement to be accomplished within a specific time frame
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Clearly defined and established ongoing job responsibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Annual goals may be related to performance, development, a special project or a mix
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Remain fixed over time with infrequent changes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ May change frequently to meet emerging needs and priorities

Are there different types of goals?

There are three major types of goals... Performance Goals, Special Projects/Assignments, and Workplace Learning/Development Activities.

Performance goals relate to the employee’s role within the department and the key accountabilities of his/her position. A performance goal could involve problem-solving, innovation, or implementation of some type of improvement. When developing performance goals, ask these questions:

- ◆ What are the results that need to be achieved?
- ◆ What are the most critical tasks and activities that the employee is responsible for in his/her day-to-day role at Lehigh?

Special Projects/Assignments are designed to achieve a departmental plan and/or to support the University’s mission. This includes participation in University or inter-departmental committees and task forces. An employee may be given a special project to take advantage of his/her unique talents or background. To identify possible special projects, ask these questions:

- ◆ What must be accomplished this year in order to support Lehigh’s mission and institutional goals?
- ◆ Does the employee possess special skills or experience that would be a good match for a particular initiative?

Special projects may change depending on the institution’s strategy and priorities.

Developmental goals may relate to building skills, experience, or behavioral competencies. To create meaningful developmental goals, ask these questions:

- ◆ What success factors (behavioral competencies) need to be developed in order to achieve the goals and handle the job accountabilities?
- ◆ What types of skills are required to remain current or expand in present role?
- ◆ What sort of knowledge or experience is needed to advance or move into another role?

Goals... What are the Three Major Types?	
Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Reflect support of the department, stem, and/or University ◆ Relate to basic job accountabilities
Special Projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Include “stretch” assignments to build experience ◆ Based on departmental plan or organizational need ◆ May be within department or elsewhere in University
Developmental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Enhance performance in current role (i.e., increase depth of knowledge or skills) ◆ Preparation for a new or future role

What are SMART goals?

When it comes to setting goals, a useful acronym to remember is S.M.A.R.T.

Goals should describe accomplishments, not activities.

The S.M.A.R.T. acronym provides a certain methodology to develop meaningful goals.

Let's take a look...

The S.M.A.R.T. Acronym

S	=	Specific
M	=	Measureable
A	=	Achievable
R	=	Relevant
T	=	Time-bound

S.M.A.R.T. Goals

Specific: Goal objectives should address the five Ws: who, what, when, where, and why. Make sure the goal specifies what needs to be done with a timeframe for completion. Use action verbs such as create, design, develop, implement, produce, etc. *Example: Resolve accounting discrepancies within 48 hours.*

Measurable: Goal objectives should include numeric or descriptive measures that define quantity, quality, cost, etc. How will you and your staff member know when the goal has been successfully met? Focus on elements such as observable actions, quantity, quality, cycle time, efficiency, and/or flexibility to measure outcomes — not activities. *Example: secure pledges from ten new donors by the end of each week.*

Achievable: Goal objectives should be within the staff member's control and influence; a goal may be a stretch but still feasible. Is the goal achievable with the available resources? Is the goal achievable within the timeframe originally outlined? Consider authority or control, influence, resources, and work environment support to meet the goal. *Example: Obtain the XYZ professional certification within two years.*

Relevant: Goals should be instrumental to the mission of the department (and ultimately, the institution). Why is the goal important? How will the goal help the department achieve its objectives? Develop goals that relate to the staff member's key accountabilities or link with departmental goals that align with the institutional agenda. *Example: Develop and implement a diversity recruitment plan that increases the number of diversity candidates by ten percent.*

Time-bound: Goal objectives should identify a definite target date for completion and/or frequencies for specific action steps that are important for achieving the goal. How often should the staff member work on this assignment? By when should this goal be accomplished? Incorporate specific dates, calendar milestones, or timeframes that are relative to the achievement of another result (i.e., dependencies and connections to other projects). *Example: installation of x new fire alarms in next six months.*

Remember the S.M.A.R.T. acronym when establishing goals and objectives. This formula for goal-setting helps ensure that both supervisors and employees share the same understanding and clarity on goals set during the performance management cycle.

Let's look at some other examples:

For an organization or department...

Not SMART "Improve our student service."

SMART "Achieve and maintain an average student service rating of at least 4.0 (out of a possible 5.0) on our annual survey by 11-20-20."

For an exempt staff member...

Not SMART "Create our 2020-21 strategic goal plan."

SMART "Create our departmental 2020-21 strategic goal plan, obtain final approval from the Budget Committee, and discuss it with our department so individuals can begin setting their performance objectives for 2021 in the 4th quarter of 2020."

Not SMART "Improve project management skills."

SMART "Take the Project Management Essentials workshop on 10-17-20, report what was learned to our team by 11-01-20, and apply the relevant concepts while implementing our 2021 marketing plan."

For a nonexempt staff member...

Not SMART "Send out welcome letters to our new students."

SMART "Produce and distribute personalized welcome letters, error free, to all new students in our department by 9-26-20."

Not SMART "Be more receptive to coaching suggestions and feedback."

SMART "At our monthly progress meetings, ask for feedback on what you are doing well and what things to improve. Keep a notebook with this information, try out the suggestions, and document each week what worked and what didn't."

For an exempt or nonexempt staff member...

Not SMART "Keep our department's Website up-to-date."

SMART "Solicit updates and new material for the Website from our department managers on the first Friday of each month; publish this new material by the following Friday. Each time material is published, review the Website for material that is outdated and delete or archive that material."

Setting goals is a collaborative process between supervisors and employees. This ensures the right balance between departmental needs and individual interests.

Setting goals is a two-way process, from the top down and from the bottom up. Individual goals should align with departmental goals, which in turn, should align with the University's institutional goals.

Routine or consistent responsibilities... what sort of goals can be set?

Many positions on campus have well defined, routine, or consistent key accountabilities. Defining goals for these types of positions can seem a bit challenging. Here are a few ideas to get started.

Continuous Improvement — Try defining goals with the objective of improving quality of service, increasing efficiency or effectiveness, and/or reducing costs or resources.

Nontraditional Roles — Look for possible goals that go beyond the traditional responsibilities such as mentoring or training others.

Institutional/Departmental Initiatives — Collect information about new institutional initiatives that may be coming up. Maybe there is a way for an individual in an otherwise routine position to contribute. For example, integrate the role of committee or team member into a special project goal.

Under-Utilized Abilities — Many people have skills or expertise beyond their defined position within the department. Find out what kinds of hobbies or activities people engage in outside of work. Develop a special project or assignment that takes advantage of an individual's hidden talents or previously untapped knowledge. Just be sure the project also serves the needs of stem/college/department and thereby the University.

Deadlines and Standards — Consider including a time-bound goal or some other method of measurement that can be applied to a routine key accountability. For example, answer departmental phones within two rings; or complete and turn in a daily activity log sheet before the end of each shift.

Goals for Positions with Routine Accountabilities	
Continuous Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Goals that focus on improving quality, efficiency, effectiveness, or reducing costs or resources
Non-Traditional Responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Goals that go beyond traditional responsibilities◆ Goals that develop new skills or experience
Institutional Initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Goals that allow individuals to contribute to institutional and/or departmental initiatives and projects
Under-Utilized Abilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Goals that take advantage of skills or knowledge that aren't normally utilized in the standard duties of a position
Deadlines & Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Goals that add time-bound constraints or tighter standards of performance for specific job duties