

**GOAL-SETTING**  
**LT Collab**  
**Nelson Mandela University**



*“Your goals are the road maps that guide you and show you what is possible for your life.”*  
Les Brown

<b>Goal-setting checklist</b>	
	1. Do you set goals?
	2. Do you write your goals down?
	2. Do you reach your goals?
	3. Do you break your goals into manageable parts?
	4. Does each of your goals have an action plan?
	5. Do you believe you have the ability to reach your goals?

*“Are you travelling the road of life without a map, or have you plotted a course for your future?”* J.A. Beatrice

**1. Introduction**

Goal setting helps you decide what is important for you to achieve in your life, it helps motivate you and can build your self-confidence.

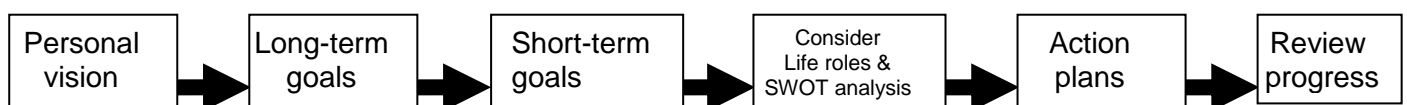
A goal is more specific than a dream. It is an outcome that you try to achieve through a detailed and realistic course of action. Goal-setting involves pro-active, short and long-term planning, which includes taking stock of your life and takes into account your values, abilities, interests, and priorities.

Studying is a process that can be under your direct control. Setting goals forms an important part of this process.

Motivation is affected by the following factors:

- Having clear, social, career and academic goals
- Taking responsibility for you own success or failure
- Believing in yourself
- Being able to look to yourself for rewards ([www.mindquestacademy.org/success](http://www.mindquestacademy.org/success))

**2. Process of goal-setting**



## 2.1 Your personal vision

Before you set goals, establish a personal vision, a mental picture of what you want to achieve in life - a vision that can serve as a strong motivating force throughout your university career.

### What do you hope to achieve in the following areas of your life:

Educational / academic  
Career / work  
Financial  
Family

Health / fitness  
Social / friends  
Community involvement  
Spiritual

*"The future depends on what we do in the present."* Mahatma Gandhi

## 2.2 Long-term goal

A long-term goal is the plan you are making for your future.

A long-term goal:

- helps you see the bigger picture
- focuses on the future
- directs your efforts
- needs to be challenging
- needs to be directed by a target date.



***E.g. of a long-term goal:*** Being able to fund my studies so that I can graduate in 4 years.

### What is your long-term academic goal (5-10 years)?

## 2.3 Short-term goals

Breaking long-term goals down into short-term goals.

Short-term goals:

- are smaller steps leading towards the long-term goal
- need to be specific
- need to be relevant and realistic
- need to be time-bound.

***E.g. of a short-term goal:*** Finding part-time work before the end of the month.

### What is your academic goal for this year?

## 2.4 Factors that may influence the achievement of your academic goals

### 2.4.1 SWOT analysis: strengths and weaknesses, opportunities & threats

To accomplish your goals, you need to know what factors can **help** you and what factors may **hinder** (prevent) you.

- S = Strengths**
- W = Weaknesses**
- O = Opportunities**
- T = Threats**
- } Internal factors,  
under your control
- } External factors,  
not always under your control

### YOUR PERSONAL SWOT ANALYSIS

INTERNAL FACTORS	
<p><b>STRENGTHS</b></p> <p>(e.g. strong motivation, good language skills, self-confidence, liking challenges, hard worker)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>What advantages do you have?</i></li> <li>• <i>What do you do well?</i></li> <li>• <i>What do other people see as your strengths?</i></li> </ul>	<p><b>WEAKNESSES</b></p> <p>(e.g. unsure of course choice, poor study skills, low self-esteem, do not manage time well)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>What could you improve?</i></li> <li>• <i>What should you avoid?</i></li> </ul>
EXTERNAL FACTORS	
<p><b>OPPORTUNITIES</b></p> <p>(e.g. resources on campus: library, Student Counselling &amp; Supplemental Instruction)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>What are the good opportunities facing you?</i></li> <li>• <i>What are the interesting trends you are aware of?</i></li> </ul>	<p><b>THREATS</b></p> <p>(e.g. transport difficulties, family demands, financial problems, alcohol use by family)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>What obstacles do you face?</i></li> <li>• <i>What is your competition doing?</i></li> <li>• <i>Is technology (e.g. computers) threatening you?</i></li> </ul>

(SWOT Analysis -Understanding Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats, n.d. in Snyders et.al. 2005:23).

You can use this information to assist you in setting relevant and realistic goals.

When formulating your goals, try to:

- Use your strengths to overcome weaknesses & threats
- Avoid or strengthen your weaknesses
- Use the opportunities in the environment
- Minimize the impact of possible threats

## 2.4.2 Life-roles

There are five major life roles namely: student, worker, citizen, homemaker & leisure each with its own responsibilities and activities that need to be taken into account when setting goals.

## 2.5 Action plans: translating goals into action

Each goal requires an **action plan** to make the goal a reality. Refer to SWOT analysis. Action plans need to be

### SMART:

- S** – Be expressed in terms of **specific** behaviour
- M** – Be **measurable** - in terms of time taken, work done or money earned
- A** – Be **attainable** - i.e. realistic for you to achieve
- R**– Be **relevant** - it should be related to your short-term goal, but still contribute towards your long-term goal and overall vision
- T** – Be **time-bound**, i.e. directed by a target date.



**Example of short-term goal:** *Finding part-time work before the end of the month.*

**Example of positives, strengths or opportunities that will support goal accomplishment:**

⇒ *I am a hard worker, I like challenges and I have worked part-time while at school*

**Example of obstacles, negatives, weaknesses or threats to goal accomplishment:**

⇒ *Do not know where to start. Will I have enough time? I do not have transport.*

**E.g. action steps:** *Refer to the positives and the negatives in the previous example box.*

**Action steps:** *By the end of this week I need to:*

⇒ *Draw up a timetable – know how much free time I have*

⇒ *List all my activities and decide about my priorities*

⇒ *Find out what public transport is available and what it will cost*

**What is your academic goal for this semester? (Revisit your academic goal for this year and break it in to short term goals.)**

**Action plans: what do you need to do to achieve your short term goals?**

## 3. Review your progress

- Review goals **often**. Have **reminders** on your walls or in your diary.
- Decide on specific **indicators** of your progress.
- **Reflect!** Learn from plans that do not work out - decide on a different strategy, make adjustments, and keep going.
- **Reward** yourself when you have achieved your goals.

## Bibliography

Adapted from Snyders, S., Vawda, A., Taljaard, N., Brophy, M. & Plaatjes, R. 2005. *How to make Higher Education easier*. Port Elizabeth: Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University.

Minnesota Literacy Council. 2006. *Motivation*. Retrieved November 19, 2007 from [www.mindquestacademy.org/success](http://www.mindquestacademy.org/success)

### Contact at LT Collab:

Francisco De Vega  
Ronelle Plaatjes

Francisco.Devega@mandela.ac.za  
Ronelle.plaatjes@mandela.ac.za