Bringing It All Together

# Overview

So, I turned my mind to understand, to investigate and to search out wisdom… (Ecclesiastes 7:25).

Scholarly research has the power to influence policies, inform best practices, and contribute to the flourishing of communities. As a leader, your role is not only to consume knowledge, but to apply it wisely and judiciously. These two adverbs, wisely and judiciously, should not be overlooked. In leadership practice, decisions grounded in credible research must be made with discernment, humility, and integrity.

Plano Clark and Creswell (2010) remind us that we read research “to learn new knowledge about topics, to become informed on policy debates, and to find suggestions for improving your practice” (p. 15). Throughout this course, you have learned how to engage with research in ways that reflect these goals.

Now, as you conclude LDRS 591, you will synthesize what you have learned and apply it to your own scholarly journey. You have explored different types of research, developed a research question, accessed and evaluated scholarly literature, and conducted a scoping review to refine and narrow your topic. In this final unit, you will draw these elements together by writing a Letter of Intent. This letter will outline your proposed research direction and demonstrate your readiness to transition into either the Capstone (Systematic Literature Review) or Thesis track in the MA in Leadership program.

## Topics

This unit is divided into three topics. See the [**Unit 6 Topics**](https://learn.twu.ca/mod/book/view.php?id=1171452) link at the bottom of this page for the course notes on these topics.

1. Understanding the Ethical Responsibilities of Leadership Research
2. Connecting Research Questions to Leadership Practice
3. Writing a Letter of Intent to Propose a Capstone or Thesis Project

## Unit Outcomes

When you have completed this unit, you should be able to:

1. **Explain** the ethical responsibilities of conducting leadership research, including Christian and Indigenous perspectives on knowledge, accountability, and stewardship.
2. **Connect** a research question to real-world leadership practice, identifying its relevance to your professional context and leadership goals.
3. **Demonstrate** your readiness to pursue either the capstone or thesis track by drafting a clear, concise, and practice-informed Letter of Intent.
4. **Reflect** on how evidence-based research informs ethical leadership decision-making and contributes to positive organizational and societal change.
5. **Synthesize** your research journey by articulating how your question, literature review, and leadership context inform your proposed study direction.

## Learning Activities

Here is a checklist of learning activities you will benefit from in completing this unit. You may find it useful for planning your work.

1. Reflecting on your Scholarly Inquiry Journey
2. Drafting Your Letter of Intent

## Resources

Here are the resources you will need to complete the unit:

Rosch, D. M., Kniffin, L. E., & Guthrie, K. L. (2023). *Introduction to research in leadership*. Information Age Publishing.

# Understanding the Ethical Responsibilities of Leadership Research

Leadership research is not conducted in a vacuum; it occurs within real communities, organizations, and systems, and it often influences policies, practices, and people. For this reason, ethical responsibility is central to scholarly inquiry in leadership studies. Researchers are not only accountable for methodological rigor but also for the social, cultural, and relational impacts of their work.

Ethical leadership research requires careful consideration of how knowledge is gathered, interpreted, and applied. This includes respecting the dignity, rights, and perspectives of participants and communities, ensuring informed consent, maintaining confidentiality, and minimizing harm. In particular, researchers must be vigilant about how power dynamics, personal biases, and organizational interests may influence the research process and outcomes (Israel & Hay, 2006).

From a Christian worldview, ethical research reflects stewardship, humility, and justice. Proverbs 2:9–10 speaks of the value of wisdom in guiding just and fair actions: “Then you will understand what is right and just and fair; every good path. For wisdom will enter your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul.” As servant leaders, scholars are called to use research as a means of service by seeking truth, advancing equity, and contributing to the flourishing of others (Greenleaf, 1977).

Indigenous perspectives also enrich our understanding of research ethics. Indigenous scholars emphasize relational accountability, meaning that researchers are responsible not only for what they learn but also for how they relate to the people and knowledge systems involved (Wilson, 2008). Knowledge is not seen as a commodity to be extracted but as something to be shared with respect, reciprocity, and permission.

In the context of the MA in Leadership, understanding these ethical responsibilities will guide your decisions as you design your research question, choose your sources, and determine how to represent and apply knowledge. Whether you pursue a capstone or thesis track, your research should demonstrate integrity, cultural awareness, and a commitment to the common good.

# Connecting Research Questions to Leadership Practice

In earlier units, you explored how research questions emerge from real-world leadership challenges and are shaped by the needs of organizations, communities, and broader systems. You learned how to refine your topic by conducting a scoping review, ensuring your question is grounded in both the literature and relevant leadership contexts.

Now, as you prepare your Letter of Intent (LOI), it is important to review your revised research question and clearly articulate how your research question connects to leadership practice. What leadership problem or opportunity are you seeking to understand more deeply? Why is this question relevant to your field, organization, or community? How might insights from your research contribute to more ethical, effective, or innovative leadership?

A strong LOI not only states your question but explains why it matters and how it aligns with your leadership experience, interests, and goals. Whether you are pursuing the capstone or thesis track, your proposed inquiry should reflect your desire to grow as a reflective and responsible leader; someone who applies evidence to practice and contributes meaningfully to positive change.

## Writing a Letter of Intent to Propose a Capstone or Thesis Project

The LOI is your opportunity to clearly communicate your proposed research direction as you transition into either the Capstone (Systematic Literature Review) or Thesis track in the MA in Leadership program. This is more than an administrative requirement. It is an opportunity for you to synthesize your learning, articulate your research focus, and demonstrate how your proposed study will support your development as a scholar-practitioner.

Your LOI should present a clearly defined research question and explain its relevance to leadership practice. Reflect on how this question emerged from your scoping review and why it is meaningful to you as a leader. How does your inquiry respond to real challenges in your workplace, sector, or community? What contribution do you hope your research will make to the field of leadership?

In addition to connecting your research question to leadership practice, your LOI should describe how this project aligns with your future leadership goals. Consider the following:

* How will this project strengthen your capacity to lead with integrity, evidence, and clarity?
* In what ways will this research inform your decisions, influence policy, or improve outcomes for others?
* How does this work align with your vocation, values, or long-term leadership aspirations?

A well-crafted LOI demonstrates that you are ready to engage in graduate-level inquiry with purpose, focus, and ethical responsibility. It should be clear, concise, and grounded in both scholarly literature and practical relevance.

## 6.1.1 Learning Activity: Reflecting on your Scholarly Inquiry Journey

✏️ **Reflect.** As a final entry in your Reflective Journal, complete the following:

1. As you prepare to write your Letter of Intent, consider what you have learned in this course and write a reflection explaining why you think evidence-based decision making is important for the servant leader.
2. How will you use scholarly evidence in your leadership practice moving forward?

**Note: Your Journal is not graded but will help you in your assessment for this unit.**

## 6.2.1 Learning Activity: Drafting Your Letter of Intent

This activity is designed to guide you in preparing a thoughtful and well-structured Letter of Intent for your capstone (Systematic Literature Review) or thesis project in the MA in Leadership program.

## **Step 1: Reflect on Your Research Journey**

In your journal or notes, respond to the following reflection prompts:

* What topic have you explored throughout this course?
* How did your research question evolve through your scoping review?
* What did you learn about the existing literature, and what gaps still remain?
* Why does this topic matter to you personally or professionally?

#### **Step 2: Connect Your Research to Leadership Practice**

Write a brief paragraph (5–7 sentences) explaining how your research question connects to a real leadership issue in your context (e.g., workplace, sector, or community). Consider how your research could:

* Improve leadership effectiveness
* Inform decision-making
* Address a challenge in policy or practice
* Advance equity, ethics, or servant leadership

#### **Step 3: Identify Your Future Goals**

Write a short paragraph describing how your proposed capstone or thesis aligns with your future leadership goals. Reflect on:

* The kind of leader you are becoming
* How your research will contribute to your professional growth
* What outcomes or impact you hope your work will have

#### **Step 4: Outline Your Letter of Intent**

A LOI is a one page document, so it is important your writing is clear, direct, and concise. Using the following structure, create a one-page outline or draft:

1. **Introduction**  
   Introduce your proposed research topic and briefly state your intent to pursue either a capstone (SLR) or thesis.
2. **Background and Research Question**  
   Share your refined research question and explain how it emerged through the course.
3. **Connection to Leadership Practice**  
   Explain the practical relevance of your topic and how it addresses a current leadership issue.
4. **Research Track and Rationale**  
   Indicate whether you plan to pursue a capstone or thesis and why this track is best suited to your learning goals.
5. **Leadership and Career Goals**  
   Connect your research to your personal development as a leader and future aspirations.

**Remember to always include in-text citations following APA 7.**

#### **Optional**

Exchange drafts with a peer and give each other constructive feedback based on the outline above. Focus on clarity, relevance to leadership, and alignment with graduate-level writing expectations.

# Unit Summary

In this final unit, you brought together the key components of your scholarly inquiry journey. You examined the ethical responsibilities of leadership research, drawing on both Christian and Indigenous perspectives of stewardship, accountability, and relational knowledge. You reflected on how research questions emerge from real-world leadership challenges and refined your ability to articulate their relevance to leadership practice. Most importantly, you applied what you learned throughout the course to draft a Letter of Intent that clearly outlines your research question and proposed direction.

By completing this unit, you have demonstrated that you are ready to begin your next step in the MA in Leadership program. Whether you pursue the Capstone (Systematic Literature Review) or Thesis track, you now possess the foundational research skills, critical thinking capacity, and clearly defined research question needed for LDRS 697 or 698. You have engaged deeply with scholarly literature, practiced evidence-based reasoning, and connected inquiry to meaningful leadership contexts.

As you move forward, may your research journey be marked by wisdom, humility, and a commitment to the flourishing of others. Remember, research is not simply an academic exercise, but a form of leadership practice that can shape lives, communities, and systems. You are ready. Step forward with confidence.

## Checking Your Learning

Before completing this unit, ask yourself the following questions:

1. Have I explained the ethical responsibilities of leadership research, including how Christian and Indigenous perspectives inform my understanding of knowledge, accountability, and stewardship?
2. Can I clearly connect my refined research question to a real-world leadership issue in my workplace, sector, or community?
3. Have I identified how my proposed research could inform leadership practices, policies, or decision-making?
4. Can I articulate how my capstone or thesis project aligns with my leadership values and future goals?
5. Have I drafted a concise and well-structured Letter of Intent that demonstrates my readiness for graduate-level research?
6. Do I understand how evidence-based research contributes to ethical decision-making and servant leadership in practice?

If you answered “no” or are unsure about any of these, revisit the unit resources, activities, or your journal reflections before finalizing your Letter of Intent.

## References

Greenleaf, R. K. (1977). Servant leadership: A journey into the nature of legitimate power and greatness. Paulist Press.

Israel, M., & Hay, I. (2006). Research ethics for social scientists: Between ethical conduct and regulatory compliance. SAGE Publications.

Plano Clark, V. L., & Creswell, J. W. (2010). Understanding research: A consumer’s guide (1st ed.). Pearson.

Rosch, D. M., Kniffin, L. E., & Guthrie, K. L. (2023). Introduction to research in leadership. Information Age Publishing.

Wilson, S. (2008). Research is ceremony: Indigenous research methods. Fernwood Publishing.

The Bible. (2011). New International Version. Zondervan. (Original work published ca. 600 BCE).  
**Note:** For Ecclesiastes 7:25 and Proverbs 2:9–10.