LDRS 591

TWU Online

Sep 25, 2025

# Welcome

This is the course book for LDRS 591: Scholarly Inquiry. This book is divided into thematic units of study to help you engage with the materials. The course resources and learning activities are designed not only to help prepare you for the course assessments, but also to give you opportunities to practice various skills.

Below you will find information about how to navigate this book. Please read the full course syllabus located on the Course Home page in Moodle. It includes key information about the course schedule, assignments, and policies.

## Course Notes

Below is some key information on features you will see throughout the course.

|  |
| --- |
| ***Learning Activity***  This box will prompt you to engage in course concepts, often by viewing resources and reflecting on your experience and/or learning. Most learning activities are ungraded and are designed to help prepare you for the assessment in this course. |

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| ***Assessment***  This box will signify an assignment or discussion post you will submit in Moodle. Note that these demonstrate your understanding of the course learning outcomes. Be sure to review the grading rubrics for each assignment. |

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| ***Checking your Learning***  This box is for checking your understanding, to make sure you are ready for what follows. Ways to check your learning might include self-check quizzes or questions for discussion. These activities are not graded but are critical for you to be able to begin to develop evaluative judgement in this domain of knowledge. |

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| --- |
| ***Note***  This box signifies key notes. It may also warn you of possible problems or pitfalls you may encounter! |

If you have any questions, do not hesitate to ask. We are here to help and be your guide on this journey.

# Course Introduction

## Overview

**LDRS 591: Scholarly Inquiry** provides learners with an overview of the process, critical analysis, and associated skills required for scholarship and research. This course is designed for learners who may have little research experience and will introduce scholarly inquiry and various research approaches used in the field of leadership. The aim of this course is to provide learners with the necessary skills to become critical consumers and discriminating users of research. This course does not aim to develop intermediate or advanced skills in quantitative or qualitative research methods. Rather, the course provides an introductory “toolkit” that will support the work on your applied Master of Arts (MA) in Leadership activities and in further professional work.

**<Begin note-with-icon>**

The syllabus includes key information about the course schedule, assignments, and policies. Please read the full Course Syllabus located in the Moodle - Course Introduction page.

**<End note-with-icon>**

### Unit Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, the learner will be able to:

1. Evaluate potential research questions based upon problems in the leadership domain and distinguish among appropriate methods to address these questions.
2. Conduct a thorough review of scholarly literature using library and internet search skills.
3. Critique research studies using critical-analytic thinking skills.
4. Develop scholarly writing that reflects higher-order thinking and analysis.
5. Critically analyze scholarly literature.
6. Appraise the research process based upon the values and ethical standards of servant leadership.
7. Differentiate between and engage with types of scholarly approaches.

**<Begin note>**

This course is a pre-requisite for LDRS 697 and LDRS 698.

**<End note>**

### Resources

* American Psychological Association. (2020). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association: The official guide to APA style* (7th ed.). American Psychological Association.
* Cherry, M. G., Boland, A. & Dickson, R. (2023). *Doing a systematic review: A student’s guide* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.
* Rosch, D. M., Kniffin, L. E., & Guthrie, K. L. (2023). *Introduction to research in leadership*. Information Age Publishing.
* Additional articles will be assigned in specific units and will be available from the [TWU library](https://www.twu.ca/academics/library).

### Course Activities / Requirements

The course will follow an inquiry-based format. This involves exploring leadership issues collaboratively. Each unit will involve a variety of learning approaches. There will be regular opportunities for you to engage in the material through questions, small group discussion and a variety of scholarly articles that will allow you to apply key course concepts. You are expected to come to each unit prepared, having read weekly course materials in advance.

## Course Evaluation

The course grade will be determined by satisfactory completion of all requirements.

| **Assignment** | **% of Grade** | **Due Date** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Discussion Forum Posts | 20% | Weeks 1-5 (Mondays & Thursdays) |
| [A1: Annotated Bibliography & Critique](https://learn.twu.ca/mod/assign/view.php?id=1169688) | 20% | Unit 3 / Week 3 |
| [A2: Developing Your Research Question](https://learn.twu.ca/mod/assign/view.php?id=1169689) | 15% | Unit 4 / Week 4 |
| [A3: Scoping Literature Review](https://learn.twu.ca/mod/assign/view.php?id=1169690) | 30% | Unit 6 / Week 6 |
| [A4: Research Letter of Intent](https://learn.twu.ca/mod/assign/view.php?id=1169691) | 15% | Unit 6 / Week 6 |

## Course Communication and Syllabus

Please carefully read the [**Course Syllabus**](https://learn.twu.ca/mod/resource/view.php?id=1171447) located at the bottom of this Welcome page and keep up to date with [**Course Announcements**](https://learn.twu.ca/mod/forum/view.php?id=1089396). You may find the **Q&A Forum** useful for answering your questions.

## Course Navigation

This course is organized into the following sections/tabs in navigation bar across the top of the course page:

1. **Course Introduction**
   * This main home page has key course information.
   * Please see the [course syllabus](https://learn.twu.ca/mod/resource/view.php?id=1171447) and carefully read through the information.
2. **Weeks 1-6: Course Units**
   * These six sections contain all the course units and resources you need to complete the course.
   * Be sure to complete the learning activities as they will prepare you for the course assessments.
3. **Assessments**
   * In this section you will find the Discussion Forum and Assignment instructions and the Dropboxes to submit your assessments for this course.
4. **Reflective Journal**
   * Throughout this course, you will engage in reflective journal writing. A reflective journal is simply a record of your thoughts. There is no correct way to create this journal; rather, it reflects the way you think and the way you respond to learning. Journals can include traditional handwritten notes, Word documents, mind maps, pictures, stream-of-consciousness writing, audio recordings, important quotes, sketches, or drawings—use any combination that suits you. Experiment and have fun.
   * The purpose of journalling is to make you an active participant in your learning experiences as you engage with your instructor and your fellow students in the various activities throughout the course’s readings, activities, and discussions. Reflecting upon these learning events will help you gain a deeper understanding of the course materials and help integrate your learning into applied practice in everyday life and work.
   * Throughout the course, you will be reminded to write in your journal to ensure you are actively learning the material. To assist you, the course provides you with questions you can ask yourself to get your creative energies flowing. Reflective journalling is an activity you can and should complete on a regular or daily basis, even outside of our scheduled course activities.
   * This journal is not submitted or graded, but is an opportunity for you to reflect on, and engage with, the course content. The questions posed will often help you prepare for your assignments and are designed to help you successfully achieve the learning outcomes for each unit.

## Academic Integrity and TWU Policy

As scholars pursuing higher education, academic integrity is a core value of the entire TWU community. Students are invited into this scholarly culture and required to abide by the principles of sound academic scholarship at TWU. This includes, but is not limited to, avoiding all forms of plagiarism and cheating in scholarly work. TWU has a strict policy on plagiarism (see academic calendar). Learning what constitutes plagiarism and avoiding it is the student’s responsibility.

It will be assumed that you have read, understand, and agree to the information provided at the ‘Academic Dishonesty Policy’ button below. If you have any questions at all, please contact your instructor.

See the [**Course Syllabus**](https://learn.twu.ca/mod/resource/view.php?id=1171447) below for important policies to keep in mind as you take this course. Also see the TWU website for [**Student Policies**](https://www.twu.ca/about-us/policies-guidelines/student-policies).

## Student Support Services

### Writing Centre Sessions

Please note that you may be required to use the support of our writing centre coaches for this course. Plan to book your appointments well in advance, so that the coaches have time to work with you on each of your assignments. The Writing Centre is available to assist all students with their academic writing assignments in any subject at any stage of the writing process. This is a free service. Online Writing Sessions are available, for more information visit the [Learning Commons](https://create.twu.ca/learningcommons/) website or contact [writingcentre@twu.ca](mailto:writingcentre@twu.ca)

### TWU Library

Visit the [TWU library](https://www.twu.ca/academics/library) for readings and your research.

# 1. Introduction to Scholarly Inquiry

## Overview

Unit 1 will provide you with a general introduction to inquiry, familiarizing you with foundational concepts related to scholarly inquiry. This unit will focus on the philosophical foundations of research, the connection between leadership and scholarly inquiry, and what evidence-based leadership looks like. By the end of the unit, you will understand the importance of research and begin to evaluate the decision-making processes that you utilize in your professional life.

### Topics

This unit is divided into the following topics:

1. What is Scholarly Inquiry?
2. Leadership and Scholarly Inquiry
3. Philosophical Foundations of Research

### Unit Learning Outcomes

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

1. Distinguish between informal research and scholarly inquiry.
2. Reflect on why evidence-based decision making is important for leadership.

### Learning Activities

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

**<Begin learning-activity>**

**Estimated Time:**

* Read Chapters 1 and 2 in *Introduction to Research in Leadership* (Rosch et al., 2023).
* Reflective Journalling activities.

**<End learning-activity>**

### Resources

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

* **Textbook:** Rosch, D. M., Kniffin, L. E., & Guthrie, K. L. (2023). *Introduction to research in leadership*. Information Age Publishing.
* Brown, M. E., & Dueñas, A. N. (2020). A medical science educator’s guide to selecting a research paradigm: Building a basis for better research. *Medical Science Educator, 30*, 545–53. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40670-019-00898-9>
* Wallace, J. R. (2007). Servant leadership: A worldview perspective. *International Journal of Leadership Studies*, *2*(2), 114-32. <https://www.psychodramaaustralia.edu.au/sites/default/files/serveant_leadership_-_worldview.pdf>
* Other resources will be provided online throughout this unit.

## 1.1 What is Scholarly Inquiry?

Inquiry is “the process of developing skills to arrive at understandings of a problem, an issue, or a phenomenon, through the process of asking good questions, searching out good evidence, and arriving at well-reasoned conclusions” (Penner, 2017).

By now you are well aware of the applied nature of the Master of Arts (MA) in Leadership program. This feature may be an important part of what attracted you to the program. Why, then, study research methods? Why worry about scholarly inquiry? This course in scholarly inquiry will help you develop systematic thinking skills applicable in all realms of leadership and everyday life. As Rosch et al. (2023) note, research focuses professional knowledge to inform your leader-centric, group-centric, and context-centric concepts, guiding the broader view of your leadership position and contributing to your overall leadership practice (p. 23). Moreover, your leadership practice is ideally evidence-based; that is, based on evidence derived from systematic scholarly inquiry.

Indigenous (Canada’s First Peoples) knowledge systems offer a complementary perspective to scholarly inquiry by emphasizing relational, holistic, and ethical dimensions of knowledge. Unlike Eurocentric models that often compartmentalize knowledge, Indigenous inquiry focuses on the interconnectedness of all living things and aims to achieve harmony between people, the environment, and spirituality. As Battiste (2005) explains, Indigenous methodologies prioritize ethical relationships and community well-being, filling gaps in mainstream research by addressing the moral responsibilities of researchers.

For example, when Indigenous scholars ask questions, they often consider their impact on future generations and the environment. This approach enriches traditional inquiry by integrating ethical considerations into the process of evidence-gathering and analysis.

### 1.1.1 Activity: Exploring Research as Inquiry

**<Begin learning-activity>**

**Estimated Time:**

According to Plano-Clark and Creswell (2014), “research is a process of steps used to collect and analyze information in order to increase our knowledge about a topic or an issue” (p.4) and it is different than informal research.

**Watch** the following video “Research as Inquiry” from Bertrand Library at Bucknell University (2023) that gives an overview of research as inquiry:

<https://www.youtube-nocookie.com/embed/ufAJV76HW6g>

**Read** Chapters 1 and 2 in in *Introduction to Research in Leadership* (Rosch et al., 2023).

Start a **Reflective Journal**. This journal is not submitted or graded, but is an opportunity for you to reflect on, and engage with, the course content. The questions posed will often help you prepare for your assignments and are designed to help you successfully achieve the learning outcomes for each unit.

Next, write about the following in your Reflective Journal:

* How would you define research?
* Describe your experience with “research.”
  + Have you taken an undergraduate statistics course?
  + Is this your first time learning about research?
  + Have you published your own scientific paper?
* How might relational approaches to inquiry change the way you frame research questions?
* How can integrating ethical considerations into research contribute to leadership practices?

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

**<End learning-activity>**

## 1.2 Leadership and Scholarly Inquiry

On what basis are sound decisions made? What evidence do leaders rely upon for best outcomes? The need to evaluate evidence for best practices in leadership decision-making is widely acknowledged. Patton (2002) observes that “the emphasis on knowledge generation disseminated in the form of best practices has swept like wildfire through all sectors of society” (p. 329).

The MA in Leadership program emphasizes a vision of best practices in leadership. What do is meant by this? Put simply, “best practices” refers to those practices and initiatives that result in the best possible outcomes. What qualifies something as best practice? Identifying best practices starts by understanding the common sources of evidence available to leaders.

Take a moment to think about a recent decision you made as a leader. On what did you base this decision? Previous experience? Values? Company policy? Empirical evidence (e.g., data derived from research)? Expert opinion? Systematic inquiry, as represented by research, is one tool that leaders can use to inform best practices and their decision-making process.

Systematic inquiry is hardly new; first century writings demonstrate Bible evidence of systematic, logical, and empirical inquiry.

Consider the following passage from Luke, a physician trained in empirical methods of his day:

Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. With this in mind, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I too decided to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught (*The Holy Bible, New International Version*, 2011, Luke 1:1-4).

How does the research process differ from managerial activities such as decision-making and problem solving? Research shares with decision-making and problem-solving the systematic and disciplined procedure of identifying an issue or problem, deciding on an approach, formulating a plan, collecting and analyzing data, drawing conclusions, and implementing decisions based on this rigorous process. What distinguishes research from generic or everyday problem solving is its commitment to advance or generate knowledge that typically will be communicated to the larger academic or scientific community. Since the beginning of the 21st century, there has been remarkable growth in the foundations of research and research methodologies across the natural, applied, and social sciences, as well as the humanities.

### Boyer’s Model of Scholarship

The MA in Leadership program is focused on applied scholarship. In defining this, Boyer’s four-part Model of Scholarship (1997, as cited in Nibert (n.d.)) is useful. Boyer’s typology identifies four domains of scholarship: discovery, integration, application, and teaching. Marta Nibert (n.d.) discusses the model in her paper titled “Boyer’s Model of Scholarship.”

In the section titled “Application,” Nibert (n.d.) notes that the scholarship of application:

focuses on using research findings and innovations to remedy societal problems. Included in this category are service activities that are specifically tied to one’s field of knowledge and professional activities. Beneficiaries of these activities include commercial entities, non-profit organizations, and professional associations (para. 4).

Though Nibert’s primary audience is the professoriate, this material is relevant for MA Leadership learners. Application is highlighted because this program was designed to focus on the scholarship of application, although work in the capstone will likely include one or more of the other domains.

### Scholarship of Discovery

Boyer’s Scholarship of Discovery is the type of scholarship associated with traditional scholarly research. “Research is a systematic process of collecting, analyzing and interpreting information (data) in order to increase our understanding of a phenomenon abut which we are interested or concerned” (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010, p. 2). Boyer’s Scholarship of Discovery is often referred to as primary research**.** Primary research is narrowly focused and contributes to the body of knowledge by helping people understand one isolated part of reality in detail in the hopes that this understanding can be generalized to a broader part of reality. In traditional research, the Scholarship of Discovery falls into two distinct genres: quantitative and qualitative research. Each of these genres manifest in numerous variations, including hybrid models involving both quantitative and qualitative elements, designed for and suited to differing research questions.

### Scholarship of Integration

Boyer’s Scholarship of Integration is “the attempt to arrange relevant bits of knowledge and insight from different disciplines into broader patterns that reflect the actual interconnectedness of the world” (Boyer, as cited in Jacobsen & Jacobsen, 2004, p. 51).

The Scholarship of Integration often involves interdisciplinary collaboration and requires critical analysis and review of knowledge, followed by the creative synthesis of ideas to address specific topics or issues.

### Scholarship of Application

The Scholarship of Application is “the scholarship of engagement; seeking to close the gap between values in the academy and the needs of the larger world” (Boyer, as cited in Jacobsen & Jacobsen, 2004, p. 51). In the Scholarship of Application, knowledge is applied to the solution of societal needs and practice. In most cases, knowledge stemming from the Scholarship of Discovery and the Scholarship of Integration informs the solutions to problems. These scholarships are often associated with the context of formal education. Although the Scholarship of Application may happen within formal education contexts, it is most often associated with other settings (Boshier, 2009, p. 6).

### Scholarship of Teaching

Finally, the Scholarship of Teaching is “the scholarship of sharing knowledge” (Boyer, as cited in Jacobsen & Jacobsen, 2004, p. 51). The Scholarship of Teaching involves the reflective analysis of the knowledge about teaching and learning. This knowledge base itself is the product of the Scholarships of Discovery, Integration and Application combining as “active ingredients of a dynamic and iterative teaching process” (Boshier, 2009, p. 5). Boyer’s typology originally identified as the Scholarship of Teaching has expanded and is now widely known in literature as the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (Boshier, 2009).

Boshier contends that Boyer’s four domains were conceived holistically as elements that overlap and interact, not as discrete elements, appearing in any predictable order, and are better viewed as an operating system than a list of discrete elements (Boshier, 2009, pp. 4–5). As such, it is helpful to view the model as a Venn diagram where each scholarship domain overlaps (see Figure 1).

**<Begin figure>**

**Figure ID:** #fig-image  
**Caption:** Boyer’s Model of Scholarship  
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**Figure ID:** u1\_1  
**Caption:**   
**Alt Text:** This figure demonstrates how the four domains of Boyer’s Model of Scholarship overlap and interact to create a holistic system of scholarship.  
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*Source:* Adapted from Nibert, M. (n.d.). *Boyer’s model of scholarship.* Expectations of Faculty in Higher Education.

LDRS 591 is designed to help you understand types of research, identify a research topic, develop a research question, and decide whether you will pursue a thesis track in your MA Leadership studies. Should you choose the thesis track, you will engage in Scholarship of Discovery, meaning you will conduct primary research.

**<Begin note>**

*Note:* Choosing the thesis track requires approval from the Department of Leadership Program Director.

**<End note>**

Most program students choose the capstone track, in which they conduct secondary research.

### 1.2.1 Activity: Applying Research to Leadership Decisions

**<Begin learning-activity>**

**Estimated Time:**

**Watch** the following video “Introduction to Research Design” from Research & Doctoral Services at Walden University (2015) where Dr. Patton introduces the concept of research as a scholar-practitioner:

<https://www.youtube-nocookie.com/embed/GYywR7SA03E>

**Respond** to the following in your Reflective Journal:

* Describe at least one example of a decision you have made as a leader.
* Consider the factors that went into that decision making process (e.g., values, research, policy, past experience, expert opinion).
* What do you consider as “evidence” in your decision making?
* In your own words, why is evidence-based decision-making important in leadership?

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

**<End learning-activity>**

## 1.3 Philosophical Foundations of Research

A professor once observed that a fundamental attribute of being human is the tendency to ask questions. Humanity is especially interested in three fundamental questions:

* What is real?
* What is true?
* What is good?

The philosophical category of metaphysics is concerned with what is real, and what is the nature of reality. The philosophical category of epistemology is concerned with the truth, and the nature and process of knowing. The philosophical category of axiology is concerned with what is good and how people can determine the nature of goodness. Much of history is a chronicle of the different ways people have answered these three fundamental questions. How people answer these questions reveals their perspective and worldview.

Every person bases their own thoughts, decisions, and actions on what is called a worldview. A worldview is “an interpretive framework through which one makes sense of themselves, other people, and the world around them” (Geisler & Watkins, 2003). It is like a pair of glasses that you wear when you are observing things about yourself, other people, and the world in which you live.

**Watch** the following short video “What’s Your Worldview? (Quiz)” by the Impact 360 Institute (2014) that explains the concept of worldview:

<https://www.youtube-nocookie.com/embed/VXnSE0uvwzM>

A discussion about worldview, or your perspective, is foundational to what you want to accomplish in this course.

Throughout this course you will continuously consider:

1. On what basis are sound decisions made?
2. What evidence do leaders rely upon for best outcomes when they are making decisions?

Each person has a preference for obtaining truth or a framework for understanding ourselves, others, and the world, and personal preferences abound. Researchers and consumers of research approach knowledge, learning, and life with a particular perspective. Understanding that perspective is essential before beginning the research journey and is especially important in leadership roles.

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**Figure ID:** #fig-image  
**Caption:** Research Paradigms  
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*Source*: <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s40670-019-00898-9> (Brown & Dueñas, 2020)

**Watch** the following helpful video “Ontology, Epistemology, Methodology and Methods in Research Simplified!” by Laura Killam (2015) that explains Paradigms, Ontology and Epistemology:

<https://www.youtube-nocookie.com/embed/hCOsY5rkRs8>

It is important to be aware of your worldview before you enter the research journey because it will inform the types of questions that you ask and the processes that you use to find the answers to your questions.

As an example, review this Christian worldview and explore how it can be applied to the research journey:

A Christian worldview asserts that God has created the world and everything in it, and that truth is arrived at through a study of God’s specific revelation (the Bible) and general revelation (creation). Christians believe not only in studying and understanding truth, but they also believe in a personal God that has revealed Himself through this created world.

The Christian worldview can be summarized in three words: Creation, Fall, and Redemption. Consider what these terms mean in the context of worldview. Initially, when God created the world, it was all good, whole, and harmonious. God created man in His own image. Originally man was created healthy in body, soul, and spirit (*The Holy Bible, New International Version*, 2011, Genesis 1:26-27, 31). As people rebelled against God, causing the Fall, the presence of sin corrupted all aspects of God’s good creation, and brought about much suffering. Where there was formerly harmony and wholeness, we now experience ourselves, our relationships, and the world around us as fractured, broken, and full of dis-ease (a literal discomfort with who we are) (*The Holy Bible, New International Version*, 2011, Genesis 3).

Despite the brokenness, Christians believe that God is actively working to bring about restoration and wholeness to His entire creation. Through Christ’s redemptive work on the cross, people are reconciled to God and are challenged to make all things as they were created and meant to be–very good. Redemption means that all things are made new in Christ(*The Holy Bible, New International Version*, 2011, Colossians 1:19-20).

The framework of Creation, Fall, and Redemption is important because it allows people to enter a discussion about research with confidence knowing that God’s redemptive work touches this area. Christians believe that we are called to study creation with the desire to take the knowledge we gain and use it to help and bless others; to work toward the restoration and healing of God’s creation. Christians are called to inquire, investigate, and ask questions, always with a view to serve others.

Another example of a worldview is an Indigenous worldview, which grounds reality, truth, and goodness in relational and interconnected terms. For example, drawing from Battiste (2005) and Menzies (2001), Indigenous philosophies often emphasize that reality is inherently interconnected and inseparable from the land, community, and spirituality (metaphysics). This relational understanding challenges individualistic approaches to research. Further, Indigenous ways of knowing prioritize collective experience, oral traditions, and lived knowledge passed down through generations (epistemology). Knowledge is not only “discovered” but also co-created and shared with respect to its cultural and environmental context. Finally, from an Indigenous perspective, what is “good” is often framed as what sustains harmony and well-being within the community and environment, making ethics a central consideration in the research process (axiology).

As Menzies (2001) explains, incorporating Indigenous perspectives into research requires rethinking the researcher’s role, emphasizing reciprocity, mutual respect, and the co-creation of knowledge with the communities involved.

**<Begin note>**

*Note:* It is beyond the purpose of this course to go deeper into this topic other than to make the point that our way of knowing and understanding the world around you—your worldview—influences how you approach all of life, including how you approach research and how you use research to inform your decision-making process.

**<End note>**

### 1.3.1 Activity: Exploring Your Worldview

**<Begin learning-activity>**

**Estimated Time:**

**Watch** the following video where Gary Gramenz (2013) explains “Philosophical Foundations for Research Methodology”:

<https://www.youtube-nocookie.com/embed/j758XBXD4r4>

**Read** “[Servant Leadership: A Worldview Perspective](https://www.regent.edu/acad/global/publications/ijls/new/vol2iss2/Wallace/WallaceV2Is2.pdf)” (Wallace, 2007).

**Read** “[A Medical Science Educator’s Guide to Selecting a Research Paradigm: Building a Basis for Better Research](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/338202096_A_Medical_Science_Educator%27s_Guide_to_Selecting_a_Research_Paradigm_Building_a_Basis_for_Better_Research)” (Brown & Dueñas, 2020).

**Reflect** on your own worldview. Then answer the following in your Reflective Journal:

* What motivates you? What are you driven by? (e.g. funding, social justice, the common good)
* Do you believe there is “one verifiable reality,” or that “multiple socially constructed realities” exist?
* In what ways can your research contribute to the well-being of the communities you are studying?
* What do you think counts as knowledge within the world?
* How do you think knowledge is acquired?
* Based on the Brown and Duenas article, what research paradigm resonates with you the most? (i.e., positivist, post-positivist, social constructivist, critical theory). Why does it resonate with you?

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

**<End learning-activity>**

## Summary

In this unit you learned about what scholarly inquiry is, how to become a scholarship practitioner, and what a worldview is. You also learned about the importance of scholarly inquiry for leadership, the implications of evidence-based decision making for leaders. In Unit 2, you will learn about types of scholarly research.

**<Begin checking-your-learning>**

Now that you completed the learning activities and assignments for this unit, check the list below to ensure you can do the following:

1. Can you distinguish between informal research and scholarly inquiry?
2. Can you discuss how scholarly inquiry applies to everyday decision making?
3. Reflect on why evidence-based decision making is important for leadership?

Review the unit topics more in depth as needed or continue to the next unit.

**<End checking-your-learning>**

## References

# 2. Understanding Types of Scholarly Literature

## Overview

Before you can effectively critique scholarly research, it is essential to first understand what scholarly literature is and why it matters. In graduate-level leadership studies, being able to engage with research critically is not just an academic exercise, but a vital leadership skill. Leaders must be able to evaluate research-based evidence, apply it thoughtfully in practice, and contribute to informed decision-making in their organizations and communities.

In this unit, you will be introduced to several common research methodologies that are frequently used in leadership and social sciences research:

* Quantitative Research
* Qualitative Research
* Mixed Methods Research
* Literature Reviews
* Systematic Literature Reviews
* Scoping Reviews

Understanding these research approaches will equip you to read academic studies with greater confidence, recognize the strengths and limitations of different methodologies, and assess the credibility of research findings. This knowledge is also essential for your upcoming assignments, particularly your systematic literature review, which is a major project in LDRS 697 and 698. Through this unit, you will begin building the foundational skills necessary to complete that review, as well as to become a more informed consumer of research throughout your leadership practice.

### Topics

This unit is divided into the following topics:

1. Quantitative Research
2. Qualitative Research Design
3. Mixed Methods
4. Literature Review vs. Systematic Literature Review
5. Scoping Review

### Unit Learning Outcomes

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

1. Describe the differences between a quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods research report.
2. Identify the key differences between traditional literature reviews and systematic literature reviews, including their purposes and methodologies.
3. Explain the purpose of conducting a scoping review and how it can inform the development of research questions.

### Learning Activities

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

**<Begin learning-activity>**

**Estimated Time:**

* Watch the video: “Qualitative & Quantitative Research–An Introduction.”
* Read Chapters 5-10 and 12 in *Introduction to Research in Leadership* (Rosch et al., 2023).
* Choose a peer reviewed article about transformational servant leadership. Review the article and identify the research methodology used.

**<End learning-activity>**

### Resources

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

* **Textbook:** Rosch, D. M., Kniffin, L. E., & Guthrie, K. L. (2023). *Introduction to research in leadership*. Information Age Publishing.
* The articles in this unit can be found through the [TWU library](https://www.twu.ca/academics/library).
* Other resources will be provided online throughout this unit.

## 2.1 Quantitative Research

The purpose of reviewing these materials is to become informed consumers of research, rather than to develop expertise as researchers. This unit gives a brief introduction to the quantitative and qualitative research methodologies.

Plano-Clark and Creswell (2015) assert that quantitative and qualitative research approaches are suited to various kinds of research questions: a quantitative research approach is indicated when the research problem requires explanation, while a qualitative research approach is indicated when the research problem requires exploration.

From a Christian perspective, becoming an informed consumer of research is deeply connected to the biblical call to seek truth, act justly, and serve others. Research is not merely a technical exercise or a pursuit of knowledge for its own sake; it is a means to align our actions and understanding with God’s purposes. Colossians 3:23 states, “Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men,” and reminds people that diligence and integrity in all tasks, including engaging with research, are forms of worship and service to God (*The Holy Bible, New International Version*, 2011).

To be an informed consumer of research from a Christian perspective means approaching inquiry with humility, recognizing that all truth ultimately comes from God—John 14:6: “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” This perspective calls people to critically evaluate the methodologies, assumptions, and conclusions of research, ensuring they align with ethical principles and the pursuit of justice (“To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God,” Micah 6:8.) For instance, quantitative methods may help you uncover patterns that inform fair policies, while qualitative methods allow you to listen deeply to the voices of traditionally marginalized individuals.

Additionally, research can be viewed as an act of stewardship, in which people responsibly use the knowledge, resources, and abilities God has entrusted to them to benefit others and bring glory to Him (“Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms.” 1 Peter 4:10.) Engaging with research critically and ethically ensures that your efforts do not exploit or harm but instead contribute to human flourishing and the common good.

Finally, becoming an informed consumer of research also requires discernment. Christians are called to weigh information carefully and assess its validity (“But test everything; hold fast what is good,” 1 Thessalonians 5:21) This discernment helps people navigate biases, incomplete evidence, or conclusions that may conflict with Christian values. By doing so, you uphold the integrity of our faith while embracing research as a tool to seek knowledge, promote justice, and serve God’s purposes in the world. This commitment to discernment extends beyond personal reflection and academic study. It also plays a crucial role in leadership, where decisions often have significant impacts on others. Leaders are called to apply the same thoughtful evaluation to the research they use in their professional roles.

Leaders often face complex situations that require thoughtful decisions grounded in credible evidence. For example, in an educational leadership context, a school principal may review research on different instructional models to determine which approach improves student engagement and achievement. By carefully evaluating the research methods and findings, the principal can select strategies that are both evidence-based and appropriate for the school’s unique community and goals. This ability to assess and apply research ensures that leadership decisions are thoughtful, ethical, and effective.

Learning to evaluate research equips you to make well-informed choices, apply findings responsibly in your organization, and lead with integrity and confidence. This skill will support you throughout this course and in your leadership practice, particularly as you work toward completing your systematic literature review project.

### Quantitative Methodology

Leedy and Ormrod (2010) assert that quantitative research has three purposes: to explain and predict, to confirm and validate, and to test theory. Rosch et al (2023) stated quantitative research is a process of describing relationships with numbers: “The central presumption of quantitative research is that concepts can be represented by numbers” (Rosch et al., 2023, p. 81).

According to Rosch et al. (2023), quantitative research is a structured method of inquiry that emphasizes measurement and analysis of numerical data to understand relationships, behaviors, and outcomes. Further, quantitative research is an approach that seeks to establish patterns and test hypotheses through rigorous statistical techniques. Quantitative research often begins with a clear hypothesis derived from theory or prior research. Further, quantitative research uses statistical tools to interpret data and validate hypotheses. Hypotheses are evaluated through methods such as surveys or experiments. For example, structured surveys can yield quantifiable data that researchers analyze to draw conclusions about leadership effectiveness or organizational dynamics (Rosch et al., 2023).

Quantitative research aligns with the Christian commitment to stewardship and truth-seeking. The Bible emphasizes the importance of seeking understanding and using it wisely—Proverbs 2:6: “For the Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.”. Researchers are encouraged to approach data analysis with integrity, ensuring that their work serves the greater good and aligns with ethical principles that prioritize the well-being of others.

In summary, quantitative research is a vital approach in the study of leadership, offering a systematic way to collect and analyze data, test theories, and derive insights that can inform leadership practices and strategies. Through structured methodologies and statistical rigor, it provides a foundation for understanding complex relationships and informing decision-making.

## 2.2 Qualitative Research

### Qualitative Methodology

In contrast to quantitative research, qualitative research has three distinct purposes: to describe and explain, to explore and interpret, and to build theory (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). These differing research purposes find expression in differing research processes, the kinds of data gathered, the approaches to data analysis, and finally in the ways findings are communicated.

Counter to quantitative research, qualitative research is a method of inquiry that focuses on understanding complex phenomena through the collection and analysis of non-numerical data, such as words, images, and experiences. In Chapter 8 of *Introduction to Research in Leadership*, Rosch et al. (2023) describe qualitative research as an approach that seeks to explore the depth and richness of human experience, particularly in social and organizational contexts.

Because qualitative research focuses on human experiences, it resonates strongly with Indigenous approaches to knowledge, which prioritize relationships, context, and interconnectedness. Menzies (2001) emphasized that Indigenous methodologies often involve storytelling, oral traditions, and respect for the lived experiences of participants. Researchers are encouraged to adopt a relational approach, viewing participants as co-creators of knowledge rather than subjects of study. This perspective ensures that research benefits the community and the academic field, embodying principles of reciprocity and respect.

To explore human experiences, qualitative research often involves conducting interviews, focus groups, or content analysis, which allow researchers to gather insights into participants’ perspectives, experiences, motivations, and emotions. Qualitative research is particularly valuable in leadership studies, as it captures the nuances of individual and group dynamics that quantitative methods might overlook.

Additionally, a key feature of qualitative research is its flexibility; researchers can adapt their methods as new insights emerge during the study. Rosch et al. (2023) note that this adaptability enables a deeper understanding of the context in which leadership occurs. The authors also highlight the importance of reflexivity, encouraging researchers to reflect on their own biases and influences throughout the research process.

In summary, qualitative research provides a rich and detailed understanding of human behavior and organizational phenomena, making it an essential tool for exploring the complexities of leadership and decision-making.

The differing designs of quantitative and qualitative research lead to marked differences in how data are analyzed. Quantitative data is approached primarily through deductive reasoning, employing statistical analyses applied to numerical data, with stress on objectivity. In contrast, qualitative data is approached primarily through inductive reasoning with the goal being to uncover themes and categories, with acknowledgement of potential researcher bias and subjectivity. Typically, quantitative research findings are reported in a formal, scientific style with full display of numbers and statistics, while qualitative research findings are typically reported in a narrative form (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). Table 2.1 shows the similarities and difference between quantitative and qualitative research.

Table 2.1. Comparison of Quantitative and Qualitative Research Approaches

|  | **Quantitative** | **Qualitative** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **General framework** | * Seek to confirm hypotheses about phenomena * Instruments use more rigid style of eliciting and categorizing responses to questions * Use highly structured methods such as questionnaires, surveys, and structured observation | * Seek to explore phenomena * Instruments use more flexible, iterative style of eliciting and categorizing responses to questions * Use semi-structured methods such as in-depth interviews, focus groups, and participant observation |
| **Analytical objectives** | * To quantify variation * To predict causal relationships * To describe characteristics of a population | * To describe variation * To describe and explain relationships * To describe individual experiences * To describe group norms |
| **Question format** | Closed-ended | Open-ended |
| **Data format** | Numerical (obtained by assigning numerical values to responses) | Textual (obtained from visual artifacts, audiotapes, videotapes, and field notes) |
| **Flexibility in study design** | * Study design is stable from beginning to end * Participant responses do not influence or determine how and which questions researchers ask next * Study design is subject to statistical assumptions and conditions | * Some aspects of the study are flexible * Participant responses affect how and which questions researchers ask next * Study design is iterative; data collection and research questions are adjusted according to what is learned |

*Source:* [*Qualitative Research Methods: A Data Collector’s Field Guide*](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/215666086_Qualitative_Research_Methods_A_Data_Collector’s_Field_Guide) (Mack et al., 2009).

## 2.3 Mixed Methods Research

### Mixed Methods Methodology

Mixed methods research combines quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of complex phenomena. Rosch et al. (2023) describe mixed methods as a strategy that leverages the strengths of both methodologies, allowing researchers to explore questions from multiple perspectives.

Mixed methods research involves collecting and analyzing both numerical data and non-numerical data, which can enrich the findings and offer deeper insights. For example, researchers might use quantitative surveys to identify trends and patterns, followed by qualitative interviews to explore the meanings and experiences behind those trends. This approach enhances the validity and reliability of the research, as it provides a more holistic view of the subject matter (Rosch et al., 2023).

Mixed methods research reflects the biblical principle of seeking wisdom through multiple sources (“Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers, they succeed,” *The Holy Bible, New International Version* (2011), Proverbs 15:22). Combining quantitative and qualitative insights mirrors the Christian commitment to balance and thorough understanding in addressing complex issues.

Rosch et al. (2023) also highlight the importance of integrating the findings from both methods to create a cohesive narrative that informs leadership practices and theories. This reflects the biblical principle of seeking wisdom through multiple sources, as Proverbs 15:22 states, “Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers, they succeed.” Combining quantitative and qualitative insights mirrors the Christian commitment to balance and thorough understanding in addressing complex issues. By employing mixed methods, researchers can address complex questions that cannot be fully understood through a single methodological lens.

In summary, mixed methods research is a powerful approach in leadership studies, facilitating a multifaceted exploration of issues and contributing to a richer understanding of organizational dynamics and human behavior.

### 2.3.1 Activity: Comparing Research Approaches

**<Begin learning-activity>**

**Estimated Time:**

**Watch** the following videos:

* “Qualitative & Quantitative Research – An Introduction” by Tine Juhl (2017).

<https://www.youtube-nocookie.com/embed/RYmLE8UqCXU>

* “What is Mixed Methods Research?” by Michigan Medicine (2023).

<https://www.youtube-nocookie.com/embed/II_OoioL0-E>

**Reflect.** After reading the chapters assigned, write about the following in your Reflective Journal.

* Discuss the differences between qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods research reports.
* What are the potential challenges for studying servant leadership using a quantitative research approach?
* From a Christian perspective, how can your research serve others and reflect ethical stewardship of knowledge?
* How might Indigenous approaches to relational inquiry (e.g., storytelling, community consultations) inform your understanding of qualitative research?

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

**<End learning-activity>**

### 2.3.2 Activity: Identifying Research Methodologies in Practice

**<Begin learning-activity>**

**Estimated Time:**

1. Read the following three articles:
   * **Qualitative Article:** Canavesi & Martini (2022) – [Servant Leadership: a Systematic Literature Review and Network Analysis](assets/u2/Canavesi%20Martini%202021%20SL%20Qualitative.pdf)
   * **Quantitative Article:** Murari & Gupta (2012) – [Impact of Servant Leadership on Employee Empowerment](assets/u2/Murai_2012.pdf)
   * **Mixed-Methods Article:** Kendall (2025) [– Exploring gameplay to support leadership skills in nursing](assets/u2/Kendall_2025.pdf)
2. Please recreate the chart below in Word. Complete the chart below for each article. Be ready to explain how you determined the methodology used. [Click here for a Word template of the chart](assets/u2/Unit%202%20ID%20types%20of%20research%20learning%20actvity%20comparison%20chart.docx).

**Comparison Chart**

| **Criteria** | **Canavesi & Martini (2021)** | **Murari & Gupta (2012)** | **Kendall (2025)** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Research Purpose** |  |  |  |
| **Primary Data Collection Method(s)** |  |  |  |
| **Sample Size and Type** |  |  |  |
| **Data Analysis Approach** |  |  |  |
| **Language Cues (e.g., thematic, statistical)** |  |  |  |
| **Declared Methodology** |  |  |  |
| **Your Conclusion on Type of Study** (Qualitative / Quantitative / Mixed) |  |  |  |

**Reflection Questions:**

* What features helped you identify the methodology?
* How do the strengths and limitations of each approach show up in the findings?
* Which method would be most appropriate for your own research interests? Why?

**<End learning-activity>**

## 2.4 Literature Reviews vs Systematic Literature Reviews

Literature reviews serve as foundational tools for understanding the breadth and depth of existing research on a topic. They help scholars identify gaps in knowledge, establish a framework for future inquiry, and situate their work within broader academic conversations. This section explores traditional literature reviews, systematic literature reviews (SLRs), and scoping reviews, highlighting their differences and uses.

### Literature Review

Whether or not you realize it, you may have read literature reviews in your studies to date.

By definition, a literature review examines and evaluates published work related to a specific subject. In some cases, it focuses on research from a particular time frame. Rather than simply summarizing sources, a literature review follows a structured approach that blends summary with synthesis. While a summary highlights the key points from each source, synthesis involves reorganizing and integrating that information to present new insights or connections among the studies (Mastrodonato, n.d.).

Rosch et al. (2023) highlight that a traditional literature review is often narrative and subjective, summarizing existing research without adhering to a strict methodology. Traditional reviews may lack comprehensive search strategies and systematic analysis, leading to potential biases in how studies are selected and interpreted.

Additionally, Cherry et al. (2023) identified the primary functions of literature reviews as summarising, classifying, and critically evaluating, which help inform researchers about what has been done and what remains to be explored about a particular topic.

Rosch et al. (2023) emphasize that literature reviews play a crucial role in research, particularly in fields like leadership, by offering insights into theoretical frameworks, methodologies, and practical implications. Literature reviews help researchers situate their work within the broader academic discourse and can guide future research directions.

Additionally, peer-reviewed studies consistently highlight the importance of literature reviews in establishing a foundation for new research by summarizing existing work, identifying gaps, and guiding future inquiry (Cherry et al., 2023). Literature reviews play a crucial role in research, particularly in fields like leadership, by offering insights into theoretical frameworks, methodologies, and practical implications (Rosch et al., 2023). This flexibility can lead to biases in how studies are selected and interpreted, particularly when search strategies and analyses are not comprehensive.

From a Christian perspective, engaging with literature reviews reflects the biblical call to stewardship and the pursuit of truth. By thoughtfully analyzing and synthesizing previous research, scholars fulfill their responsibility to use knowledge wisely, align their work with ethical principles, and serve the greater good—Colossians 3:23: “Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men.” The narrative nature of traditional literature reviews aligns with this stewardship by encouraging researchers to thoughtfully engage with existing knowledge while remaining diligent and accountable in their efforts—Proverbs 21:5: “The plans of the diligent lead surely to abundance.”

Moreover, literature reviews can be understood as a form of storytelling, resonating with Indigenous methodologies that value relationality and interconnectedness (Battiste, 2005; Menzies, 2001). For Indigenous scholars, storytelling is an essential practice for weaving together diverse knowledge sources, preserving their integrity, and situating them within a broader relational context. Traditional literature reviews parallel this practice by connecting past knowledge to current and future inquiry, ensuring that the voices and perspectives within the research are acknowledged and respected.

### Systematic Literature Review

While traditional literature reviews provide a flexible narrative overview, more structured approaches, such as systematic literature reviews (SLRs), emphasize rigor and reproducibility.

A SLR is a comprehensive and structured approach to evaluating existing research on a specific research question or topic. Unlike traditional reviews, which provide a flexible narrative overview, SLRs emphasize rigor, reproducibility, and the minimization of bias by adhering to predefined protocols for search strategies and data synthesis (Rosch et al., 2023). According to Cherry et al. (2023), an SLR systematically identifies, evaluates, and synthesizes research studies using a defined protocol—which includes clear inclusion and exclusion criteria, a thorough literature search, and systematic data extraction. This structured process ensures that the review is transparent and reproducible, offering reliable conclusions that guide future research.

These methods minimize bias by following predefined protocols for search strategies and data synthesis, ensuring that the process is rigorous and reliable (Rosch et al., 2023). This structured approach embodies Christian values of diligence and integrity, reflecting the importance of producing trustworthy research that serves others responsibly. As Proverbs 25:2 states, “It is the glory of God to conceal things, but the glory of kings is to search things out,” highlighting the biblical principle of thoroughness and stewardship in the pursuit of knowledge.

This emphasis on diligence and intentionality finds a parallel in Indigenous perspectives on knowledge. From an Indigenous worldview, the careful and systematic nature of SLRs aligns with the respect and intentionality required in honoring and preserving knowledge. Both approaches value the ethical responsibility to ensure that information is situated within its proper relational and cultural contexts. By synthesizing information thoughtfully and respectfully, SLRs embody both the precision of systematic inquiry and the relational ethics foundational to Indigenous ways of knowing (Menzies, 2001).

While both traditional literature reviews and SLRs aim to synthesize existing research, their methodologies and purposes differ significantly. Traditional reviews offer a narrative and often subjective overview of research, providing flexibility in summarizing and critiquing studies without strict adherence to predefined protocols. This approach allows for creative integration of diverse perspectives but may introduce bias and limit reproducibility. In contrast, SLRs employ a rigorous, structured methodology to minimize bias, ensure transparency, and enhance reproducibility. By following predefined protocols, including clear inclusion and exclusion criteria, systematic data extraction, and comprehensive search strategies, SLRs provide reliable and objective insights that guide future research. These distinctions highlight the flexibility of traditional reviews for exploratory work and the precision of SLRs for generating trustworthy and reproducible findings. Both approaches play essential roles in advancing scholarship when used appropriately within their respective contexts.

Table 2.2 captures the key differences and similarities between literature reviews and systematic literature reviews. Additionally, [click here for a sample SLR](assets/u2/Paris%202012%20A%20Systematic%20Literature%20Review%20of%20Servant%20Leadership%20Theory%20in%20Organizational%20Contexts.pdf).

Table 2.2 Differences between Literature Reviews and SLRs

| **Feature** | **Literature Review** | **Systematic Literature Review** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Purpose** | Summarizes existing research | Provides a comprehensive and objective research synthesis |
| **Methodology** | Narrative and subjective | Structured, reproducible, and systematic |
| **Search Strategy** | May be selective and not exhaustive | Comprehensive and predefined search strategy |
| **Inclusion Criteria** | Often vague or informal | Clearly defined and strictly applied |
| **Data Analysis** | Qualitative and descriptive | Quantitative and qualitative synthesis |
| **Bias** | Higher potential for bias | Minimizes bias through systematic protocols |
| **Outcome** | Provides context and identifies trends | Aims to answer specific research questions with rigor |
| **Reproducibility** | Difficult to replicate | Designed to be replicable |

## 2.5 Scoping Review

A scoping review is a preliminary assessment of the available literature on a broad topic (Cherry et al., 2023). A scoping review, sometimes called a scoping search, should be the first search you conduct, using simple search terms to identify general literature relevant to your topic.

More specifically, a scoping review is a distinct type of evidence synthesis methodology that systematically identifies, evaluates, and maps the breadth of knowledge on a specific topic or field. Unlike traditional literature reviews or systematic literature reviews, scoping reviews are not comprehensive and do not aim to answer a specific research question. Instead, Cherry et al. (2023) state they are “performed to determine whether your topic area is suitable for a review by giving you a snapshot of the volume and type of evidence available” (p. 45). To determine whether a topic is suitable for researcher, scoping reviews systematically identify, evaluate, and map the breadth of knowledge on a specific topic or field. Unlike systematic reviews, which focus on answering narrowly defined research questions, scoping reviews address broader questions to explore and describe the extent and characteristics of existing literature (Sharma & Goyal, 2023).

In summary, the goal of a scoping review is to:

1. Understand the extent and type of research available on a topic.
2. Determine the relevance of a topic by evaluating the volume and diversity of existing evidence.
3. Identify trends, gaps, and areas for further study.

Scoping reviews must be conducted early in your research, before finalizing your research question. Doing so is useful in identifying underexplored fields, where mapping the range and type of studies can clarify concepts, identify gaps, and guide future research directions.

To ensure a transparent and reliable process, the following steps are critical when conducting a scoping review:

1. **Identify the Research Question** The research question is the cornerstone of a scoping review. It should be broad enough to capture the diversity of literature on the topic, yet clearly defined to maintain focus and direction. Using sub-questions can help balance the breadth of inquiry while ensuring the depth of analysis (Sharma & Goyal, 2023).
2. **Identify Relevant Studies** Develop a comprehensive search strategy that specifies databases, search terms, and other sources—such as organizational websites and key references. This step ensures that the review includes diverse and interdisciplinary perspectives, drawing from published and unpublished literature (Sharma & Goyal, 2023).
3. **Select Studies** Screen studies based on predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria. This process typically involves reviewing titles, abstracts, and full texts to determine relevance, where necessary. Employing multiple reviewers and using a flow diagram, as recommended by the PRISMA-ScR (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta-Analyses extension for Scoping Reviews) guidelines, enhances transparency and reproducibility (Sharma & Goyal, 2023).
4. **Chart the Data** Extract and organize key information from each study in a systematic format, such as a spreadsheet or database. Categories often include the author, publication year, study location, population, methodology, main findings, and limitations. This structured approach facilitates a clear overview of the evidence (Sharma & Goyal, 2023).
5. **Collate, Summarize, and Report Results** Synthesize findings into a narrative or descriptive summary that highlights the relationships between the evidence and the review objectives. Visual representations, such as tables, charts, or diagrams, can further illustrate the distribution and characteristics of the included studies (Sharma & Goyal, 2023).
6. **Consult Stakeholders (Optional)** Engage with stakeholders, such as experts or practitioners, to refine the research question, validate findings, or provide feedback. This step enhances the relevance and practical application of the review, particularly for interdisciplinary or applied topics (Sharma & Goyal, 2023).

Scoping reviews provide a comprehensive and flexible method for understanding the scope and characteristics of available evidence, particularly in areas where research is heterogeneous or evolving. By following these structured steps, researchers ensure their findings are robust, transparent, and useful for informing future studies. [Click here for a sample scoping review.](assets/u2/Reinders%20Sample%20Scoping%20Review.pdf)

This aligns with servant leadership principles by fostering informed decision-making that serves the greater good and prioritizes others’ needs. From a Christian perspective, the diligence and intentionality required in scoping reviews reflect the biblical call to seek truth and apply knowledge in ways that glorify God and benefit the community (Proverbs 3:13-14).

### 2.5.1 Activity: Scoping vs. Systematic Review

**<Begin learning-activity>**

**Estimated Time:**

**Watch** the following video “Systematic vs. Scoping Review: What’s the Difference?” by Carrie Prices (2021).

<https://www.youtube-nocookie.com/embed/YVckIl8_ZCg>

**Read** Chapters 5-10 and 12 in Introduction to Research in Leadership (Rosch et al., 2023).

✏️**Respond** to the following in your Reflective Journal:

* Discuss the differences between literature reviews, scoping reviews, and systematic literature reviews.

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

**<End learning-activity>**

## Summary

In conclusion, the exploration of quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods research methodologies demonstrates the diverse approaches researchers can take to address complex questions. Quantitative research, with its emphasis on numerical analysis and structured methods, provides a systematic framework for uncovering patterns, validating theories, and explaining relationships (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010; Rosch et al., 2023). This approach aligns with the Christian value of stewardship, emphasizing diligence and integrity in managing and interpreting data to serve the greater good.

Conversely, qualitative research offers rich insights into human experiences and complex phenomena through methods like interviews and observations. This approach captures the nuances of leadership and group dynamics, resonating with Indigenous perspectives that value relationality, storytelling, and the interconnectedness of knowledge (Menzies, 2001; Rosch et al., 2023). By prioritizing relationships and context, qualitative research fosters deeper understanding and reciprocity, ensuring that inquiry benefits both researchers and communities.

Mixed methods research integrates the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative approaches, offering a holistic view of multifaceted issues. This methodology reflects the Christian principle of seeking wisdom through multiple sources—Proverbs 15:22: “Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers, they succeed.” By combining diverse perspectives, mixed methods research enhances the validity of findings and supports comprehensive decision-making in leadership contexts (Rosch et al., 2023).

The unit also highlighted the essential roles of literature reviews, systematic literature reviews, and scoping reviews. Traditional literature reviews provide narrative overviews, while SLRs emphasize rigor and reproducibility through structured protocols that minimize bias and ensure transparency (Cherry et al., 2023; Sharma & Goyal, 2023). Scoping reviews, meanwhile, offer a broad assessment of available evidence, helping researchers refine their focus and identify knowledge gaps. These methodologies—when approached with respect for relationality and intentionality—align with both Indigenous values of honoring knowledge and Christian principles of stewardship and service.

As you develop as a consumer of research, understanding these methodologies equips you to critically evaluate scholarly work, apply evidence-based practices, and contribute to informed leadership. By incorporating the principles of servant leadership, relational ethics, and the pursuit of truth, researchers can ensure their work serves the needs of their communities while advancing knowledge in meaningful and impactful ways.

**<Begin checking-your-learning>**

Now that you have completed the learning activities and assignments for this unit, check the list below to ensure you can do the following:

1. Can you describe the differences between a quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods research report?
2. How can scoping reviews help researchers refine their research questions?
3. What are the main characteristics that differentiate a traditional literature review from a systematic literature review?
4. How does the methodological rigor of systematic literature reviews contribute to research transparency?
5. How can the principles of servant leadership guide researchers in applying the findings of a scoping or systematic review to serve the needs of their communities?
6. From a Christian or Indigenous perspective, how can respect for relationality and stewardship influence the way researchers approach literature reviews and evidence synthesis?

Review the unit topics more in depth as needed or continue to the next unit.

**<End checking-your-learning>**

## References

# 3. Developing a Research Purpose & Question in Leadership Research

## Overview

Unit 3 focuses on the essential steps for developing a robust research question within the context of leadership studies. It is divided into three key topics: establishing a clear purpose in leadership research, connecting personal leadership goals to servant leadership principles, and formulating effective research questions. The unit emphasizes understanding the significance of leadership research, aligning personal and professional objectives with servant leadership, and employing strategies to create clear, relevant, and researchable questions. Through reflective activities, you will identify your research interests, brainstorm themes, and craft questions that will guide your inquiries and contribute to the leadership field.

### Topics

This unit is divided into the following topics:

1. Establishing Purpose in Leadership Research
2. Connecting Your Leadership Goals and Purpose to Servant Leadership
3. Developing a Research Question

### Unit Learning Outcomes

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

1. Understand the purpose and significance of leadership research.
2. Identify a topic of interest in leadership studies.
3. Learn strategies to clarify your research purpose.
4. Develop strong, researchable questions that guide effective inquiry.

### Learning Activities

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

**<Begin learning-activity>**

**Estimated Time:**

* Watch “How to Use Your Interests to Inform Your Literature Review” about asking significant questions.
* Read Chapter 2 in *Introduction to Research in Leadership* (Rosch et al., 2023).
* Reflective Journal (optional)
* Crafting a Draft Research Question

**<End learning-activity>**

### Resources

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

* **Textbook:** Rosch, D. M., Kniffin, L. E., & Guthrie, K. L. (2023). *Introduction to research in leadership*. Information Age Publishing.
* Other resources will be provided online throughout this unit.

## 3.1 Establishing Purpose in Leadership Research

It is important to establish a purpose in leadership research. LDRS 591, LDRS 697, and LDRS 698 are not just about completing an assignment to graduate from the Master of Arts (MA) in Leadership program. Instead, these courses are about developing scholarly inquiry skills to inform and strengthen your personal and professional leadership practices. According to Rosch et al. (2023), the purpose of research in leadership goes beyond answering questions—it aims to inform leadership practices, challenge assumptions, and inspire positive change within organizations and communities.

Leadership research is also an opportunity to live out the call to steward the gifts and knowledge God has given you. Scripture reminds that “whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men” (*The Holy Bible, English Standard Version*, 2016, Colossians 3:23). Research, then can be a way to seek wisdom and truth that glorifies God and serves others. Leaders are called to align their efforts with God’s purposes, fostering environments of justice, love, and service within their spheres of influence.

As you begin thinking about a research topic that interests you, it is important to be aware of your broad goals as a leader. On a personal level, consider how your research might reflect your calling and contribute to God’s work in the world. Additionally, it is important to align your academic and professional goals to get the most out of your research. Cherry et al. (2023) emphasize that research questions should align with both scholarly interests and practical applications, as this alignment ensures sustained motivation and relevance. For Christian leaders, this alignment extends to spiritual principles, ensuring that your research honors God, benefits others, and supports the pursuit of truth.

### 3.1.1 Activity: Defining Your Research Purpose:

**<Begin learning-activity>**

**Estimated Time:**

**Watch** “How to Use Your Interests to Inform Your Literature Review” by Leigh A Hall (2019a) about asking significant questions.

<https://www.youtube-nocookie.com/embed/2pC91y3pVTM>

Try using the following three statements to help you get clarity about what exactly you want to investigate.

If you can fill out these statements, then you likely have a narrow enough topic with enough direction to perform some great research.

1. I am researching \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (What: Topic),
2. because I want to find out \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (So What: Issue/Question),
3. in order to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (Now What: Application/Purpose).

**Read** Chapter 2 in *Introduction to Research in Leadership* (Rosch et al., 2023), “Beginning the Process of Research in Leadership.” Pay close attention to the “Tips for Finding Your Research Purpose” on page 34.

1. **Reflect.** Then respond to the following questions in your Reflective Journal about how your research topic aligns with your broad goals as a leader: How can my research reflect my faith/religious beliefs and contribute to advancing God’s purposes in leadership?
   * Consider how your work could serve others, glorify God, and promote values like integrity, humility, and love in leadership practices.
2. What are the key values or principles I strive to uphold as a leader, and how might they shape my research interests?
   * Reflecting on your values can guide you toward topics that resonate with your personal leadership philosophy, such as ethical decision-making or fostering inclusive environments.
3. What challenges or opportunities have I encountered in leadership that I feel passionate about addressing or exploring further?
   * Personal experiences often reveal areas where more research or understanding is needed, potentially inspiring questions related to overcoming obstacles, supporting team dynamics, or adapting to organizational change.
4. How do I envision my research impacting others, both within my organization and in the larger leadership field?
   * How can my research honor the voices and experiences of marginalized or underrepresented communities, including Indigenous peoples?
   * Considering the potential impact can help you focus on issues with meaningful applications, whether they are directly practical (e.g., improving team performance) or more theoretical (e.g., understanding leadership behaviours).
5. Which leadership skills or qualities do I wish to develop further, and how might a research project support this growth?
   * Identifying areas for self-development, such as enhancing emotional intelligence or strengthening adaptive skills, can steer you toward topics that foster both professional and personal growth.
6. What are the broader social, cultural, or organizational trends in leadership that intrigue me, and how might I contribute to these conversations?
   * Identifying emerging trends, like diversity and inclusion or technological impacts on leadership, helps ensure your research is relevant to ongoing developments in the field.

These questions encourage reflection on how a research topic can serve your goals as a leader and contribute valuable insights to the broader leadership field.

Based on your reflection, consider the following steps to define your research purpose:

1. **Connect with Current Issues**: Cherry et al. (2023) recommend examining pressing issues within the field, such as equity in leadership or adaptive leadership in crisis situations.
2. **Reflect on Personal and Professional Goals**: Identify what motivates you in this research area—are you driven by a desire to promote ethical practices, develop inclusive cultures, or enhance organizational performance?
3. **Seek Feedback**: Discuss your ideas with peers, mentors, or practitioners to see if your topic resonates or to get suggestions for refining your purpose.
4. **Write Your Purpose**: The purpose of my research is to ….

**<End learning-activity>**

## 3.2 Connecting Your Leadership Goals and Purpose to Servant Leadership

The Master of Arts in Leadership program values the application of best practices to your personal and professional practice. MA Lead is founded in Greenleaf’s (1977) servant leadership which has ten characteristics:

1. Listening
2. Empathy
3. Healing
4. Awareness
5. Persuasion
6. Conceptualization
7. Foresight
8. Stewardship
9. Commitment to the growth of people
10. Building community

Greenleaf’s (1977) servant leadership characteristics provide a foundational framework that supports skills and attributes necessary for effective leadership. The above characteristics were addressed throughout your course work, while developing your understanding of servant leadership.

For example, in Strategic Leadership, servant leadership emphasizes foresight and conceptualization, which are essential for effective strategic planning. Leaders who adopt this model prioritize long-term goals that benefit all stakeholders, not just the organization. This inclusive approach encourages decision-making that reflects both ethical considerations and community well-being.

In Team Leadership and Conflict Resolution, servant leadership’s focus on empathy, healing, and commitment to personal growth is vital. Servant leaders actively listen to their team members, promoting an environment of empathy that supports constructive conflict resolution. This approach builds stronger, more cohesive teams, where members feel understood and valued.

In Leadership Values and Ethics, servant leadership can serve as a model that places integrity, stewardship, and the greater good at the forefront of leadership decisions. It promotes a culture of ethical responsibility by prioritizing service over self-interest, ensuring leaders make decisions that positively impact all stakeholders.

One more example seen in the course is results-based leadership, which emphasizes measuring what matters. Servant leadership aligns well with this approach by valuing accountability and stewardship. Through a results-oriented lens, servant leadership drives goals that align with organizational values, measuring success not just by financial outcomes but also by positive impacts within the organization and on the community.

By integrating servant leadership across these subjects, leaders are encouraged to view their role as one of service, prioritizing ethical considerations, community impact, and individual personal growth. This approach ultimately aligns leadership practices with a deep commitment to serving others and advancing the common good.

In summary, the characteristics of servant leadership are at the core of MA Lead and enrich the understanding of what it means to lead effectively in a complex and dynamic environment.

Thinking about your personal, academic, and professional goals, which servant leadership characteristics are most relevant to your topic?

Try using the following three statements to help you get clarity about what you want to investigate.

If you can fill out these statements, then you likely have a narrow enough topic with enough direction to perform some great research.

1. I am researching \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (What: Topic),
2. because I want to find out \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (So What: Issue/question),
3. in order to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (Now What: Application/Purpose).

## 3.3 Developing a Research Question

Now that you have identified your research purpose and goals and connected them to servant leadership characteristics, you will have a research topic of interest. It is important to note that a topic of interest is a broad research idea, but you must still develop a clearly focused research question that you are interested in exploring.

Developing a research question is a critical step in the research process since it serves as a bridge between the broader purpose of the study and the specific inquiry that guides data collection and analysis. According to Rosch et al. (2023), researchers usually have a central research question that guides their work and is inherently more concrete than the overarching purpose they aim to address. While the purpose articulates the research’s general goals and intentions, a well-crafted research question provides clarity on the specific aspects of the topic that will be explored. A research question not only guides the research design but also help readers understand the investigation’s scope and the methods that will be employed to gather and analyze data.

Crafting effective research questions can be one of the most challenging aspects of conducting a research study (Rosch et al., 2023). It requires a deep understanding of the topic, critical thinking, and the ability to articulate specific inquiries that can be systematically investigated. Rosch et al. (2023) highlight that this process is iterative; researchers often refine their questions multiple times as they engage with the literature, gather preliminary data, or reflect on their evolving understanding of the topic. This iterative nature allows researchers to adjust their focus based on insights gained during the initial stages of their inquiry, leading to more robust and meaningful research outcomes. By approaching research question development as a dynamic and flexible process, researchers can enhance the relevance and impact of their studies, paving the way for insightful conclusions and contributions to their field.

As you begin drafting your research question, be sure it is:

* **Clear**: The question should be specific and straightforward.
* **Relevant**: Ensure that the question addresses a significant aspect of leadership.
* **Researchable**: The question should be feasible to investigate given the time and resource constraints.

#### Developing Your Questions

1. **Start with “What,” “How,” or “Why:”** These words foster exploratory questions that allow for deeper understanding.
2. **Align with Your Purpose**: Cherry et al. (2023) highlight that research questions should flow naturally from the study’s purpose.

#### Example Questions

* Why does empathy enhance team collaboration in Canadian emergency rooms?
* What impact do K-12 leaders’ commitment to the growth of people have on employee engagement?
* How does a business leaders’ foresight impact strategic planning in organizations facing change or crisis?

### 3.3.1 Activity: Activity: Crafting a Draft Research Question

**<Begin learning-activity>**

**Estimated Time:**

Respond to the following in your Reflective Journal:

1. **Reflect on Your Purpose**
   * Begin by revisiting your research’s overarching purpose. Write a brief statement using two to three (2-3) sentences that encapsulates what you aim to achieve with your study. Consider aspects such as personal interests, professional goals, or gaps in existing literature related to leadership.
   * Example:
     + “The purpose of my research is to explore how people development can enhance employee engagement in remote work environments.”
2. **Brainstorm Key Themes**
   * Based on your purpose statement, brainstorm three to five (3-5) key themes or areas of interest. These themes will serve as the foundation for your research question.
3. **Draft Potential Research Questions**
   * Using your themes, formulate two to three (2-3) draft research questions. Make sure to start each question with “What,” “How,” or “Why.” As you draft, keep the following criteria in mind: clarity, relevance, and feasibility of research.
4. **Evaluate Your Questions**
   * Assess each of your draft questions against the following criteria:
     + **Clear:** Is the question specific and easy to understand?
     + **Relevant:** Does it address a significant aspect of leadership?
     + **Researchable:** Is it feasible to investigate given your time and resource constraints?
   * Revise any questions that do not meet these criteria.

**<End learning-activity>**

## Summary

This unit focused on developing effective research questions in leadership studies, primarily drawing from Rosch et al. (2023) and Cherry et al. (2023). It emphasized the importance of establishing a clear research purpose that aligns with personal and professional leadership goals and guides inquiry. You also reflected on your leadership values, experiences, and broader trends to identify relevant topics while connecting servant leadership characteristics to leadership practices.

The unit outlined a structured approach to crafting focused research questions, highlighting clarity, relevance, and feasibility of research. Through reflective activities, you articulated your research purpose, brainstormed themes, drafted questions, and evaluated them, ensuring you are well-prepared to explore meaningful leadership issues.

## References

# 4. Accessing and Evaluating Scholarly Literature

## Overview

In this unit, you will focus on gaining familiarity with various genres of scholarly literature and getting a sense of how these genres contribute to your own scholarly endeavours. Through first-hand experience you will begin locating, organizing, and evaluating relevant scholarly literature. Two of the major assignments in this course hinge on your ability to conduct an annotated bibliography and critique. Although these assignments are not due until the later in the course, your work in this unit is the foundation for those assignments. The learning activities in this unit will walk you through practical readings and video tutorials on how to access and evaluate scholarly literature.

### Topics

This unit is divided into the following topics:

1. Accessing Scholarly Literature
2. Utilizing Scholarly Literature
3. Evaluating Scholarly Literature

### Unit Learning Outcomes

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

1. Employ different search strategies to locate different sources of scholarly literature.
2. Evaluate the credibility and reliability of sources of scholarly literature.
3. Document key sources related to your research topic area.

### Learning Activities

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

**<Begin learning-activity>**

**Estimated Time:**

* Watch “Preparing Research Questions for a Database Search” to learn how to access scholarly literature and follow the directions about searching for books in the [TWU Library](https://www.twu.ca/academics/library).
* Read Chapters 5 and 8 in *Doing a Systematic Review: A Student’s Guide* (Cherry et al., 2023).
* Read Chapters 2, 13, and 14 in *Introduction to Research in Leadership* (Rosch et al., 2023).
* Watch “Evaluating Journal Articles” about how to develop research skills.
* Assessment: Contribute to the Course Discussions. See the Assessment tab in Moodle for details.

**<End learning-activity>**

### Resources

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

* **Textbook:** Rosch, D. M., Kniffin, L. E., & Guthrie, K. L. (2023). *Introduction to research in leadership.* Information Age Publishing.
* Cherry, M. G., Boland, A., & Dickson, R. (2023). *Doing a systematic review: A student’s guide* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.
* Video tutorials found at: <https://libguides.twu.ca/library_research/all_video_tutorials> (Trinity Western University, 2016).
* Other resources will be provided online throughout this unit.

## 4.1 Accessing Scholarly Literature

This topic will help you gain familiarity with various genres of scholarly literature and help you get a sense of what scholarly sources of information are available, given your own research interests. In this topic, you will also gain first-hand experience in locating, organizing, and evaluating relevant scholarly literature.

Accessing scholarly literature can often be a frustrating process for a couple reasons. First, much of it is published in academic journals or databases that may require subscriptions or institutional access, which means it is not always freely available online. Even with access through a university library, students may struggle to navigate databases or know which sources are most credible and relevant. Second, it takes time to determine what key search terms to use for your chosen topic. It is critical that you complete the learning activity 4.1.1 to better understand how to locate literature and ease potential frustration.

Once you begin locating research it is important to organize your files. For example, as you begin locating research, save your files in folders titled with general topic areas to help keep your findings organized. Additionally, if you are researching the impact of empathy in healthcare, you might save resources in folders titled “empathy,” “healthcare staff,” and “patients.” As you deepen the breadth of your research, you may add additional folders or subfolders with more specific keywords.

### Indigenous Knowledge and Literature in Research

Indigenous knowledge systems offer valuable perspectives on leadership, community building, and relational ways of knowing. Accessing literature from an Indigenous perspective involves recognizing oral histories, community storytelling, and collective wisdom as valid and respected sources of knowledge. These forms of knowledge may not always appear in traditional scholarly journals or academic databases.

In many cases, Indigenous research may be classified as *grey literature*. Grey literature refers to materials produced outside of traditional academic publishing and commercial distribution channels (Cherry et al., 2023). It includes sources such as reports, policy documents, government publications, white papers, working papers, conference presentations, newsletters, and community plans. Grey literature is often created by organizations that work directly with communities, such as Indigenous organizations, non-governmental organizations, and government agencies, to document programs, share findings, and preserve knowledge for practical use or wider distribution. Because it is not subject to the lengthy processes of academic publishing, grey literature is often more current and directly connected to community priorities and emerging issues.

When conducting research from an Indigenous perspective, it is important to include these types of sources. Consider exploring materials authored by Indigenous scholars, Elders, or organizations, and reflect on how traditional knowledge and community-based wisdom align with your research goals.

### Genres of Scholarly Literature

Part of your planning and organizing is to recognize various genres of scholarly literature and to be aware of the limitations inherent in each. There are three distinct categories of documents where you can find research reports: books, journal articles, and grey literature as described above (Cherry et al., 2023).

You will often see this sequence followed: A research project is completed, and the research is first published in a Master’s thesis, PhD dissertation, or as a paper in a symposium or conference.

The research report is then submitted to a professional journal for publication and eventually it is incorporated into a book. By the time a dissertation is successfully defended, the actual research may have been conducted two to three years prior. It could easily take another three years for a journal article to make it through the peer-review process and be published. Therefore, the research referenced in the final published journal article could be at least five years old. It could easily take another five years for high quality publishers to work through their review processes and publish something in a book, taking away from the currency of the information.

Table 4.1 below summarizes the relative advantages and disadvantages of each genre of scholarly literature. See Chapter 5 in *Doing a Systematic Review: A Student’s Guide* (Cherry et al., 2023) for more details about types of evidence available to you:

**Table 4.1 Advantages and Disadvantages of Scholarly Literature Genres**

| **Genre** | **Advantages** | **Disadvantages** | **Utility** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Summaries** (encyclopedias and handbooks) | Generally highest quality | Tend to be dated | Establish a general working knowledge of the field. |
| **Books** | Generally high quality | Can be dated | Establish mainstream thought. Most foundational literature is found in books. |
| **Journal Articles** | Generally high quality and provide a clear description of actual research. Generally more current than books or summaries. | Generally, will not give a full development of application and implications. | Best available balance between quality and currency |
| **Early-stage Materials** (e.g., conference papers, dissertations, newspapers, personal websites) | Most current cutting-edge ideas are found in these materials. | Little review for quality (except for dissertations) and ideas are not usually well developed | Valuable for establishing trends in current thought. Use cautiously |

It is notable to mention that high quality journals are determined by the peer review process, the journal’s Impact Factor (IF), and by professional reputation. Peer review is a process used in academic publishing to ensure the quality and credibility of research. In this process, experts in the same field carefully evaluate a manuscript to assess its originality, accuracy, and significance before it is published. Peer review helps maintain high academic standards and provides authors with constructive feedback to improve their work.

The impact factor is a measure of the frequency with which the average article in a journal has been cited in a particular year. The IF is used to measure the importance or rank of a journal by calculating the times its articles are cited. The IF can be found on the home page of most online journals. Knowing where to find this information is important because it allows you to quickly assess the standing of a journal when selecting sources for your research. While impact factor is not the only indicator of quality, it can help you identify widely recognized and frequently cited journals that may contain influential or highly regarded research.

Peer review is the process used by publishers and editors of academic and scholarly journals to ensure that the articles they publish meet the accepted standards of their respective discipline. Manuscripts under consideration for publication are sent to independent experts in the same field (the author’s scholarly or scientific peers) who evaluate the quality of the scholarship, reliability of findings, relevance to the field, appropriateness for the journal, and other discipline-specific criteria.

In summary, understanding how scholarly research is reviewed, published, and ranked is essential for becoming an informed and responsible consumer of research. Tools like peer review and impact factor help you evaluate the credibility, quality, and relevance of academic sources. By using these tools effectively, you can select strong, trustworthy research to support your leadership decisions, academic writing, and future projects.

### 4.1.1 Activity: Research Skills for Lifelong Leadership Learning

**<Begin learning-activity>**

**Estimated Time:**

**Read** Chapters 13 and 14 in *Introduction to Research in Leadership* (Rosch et al., 2023). These two chapters specifically discuss “becoming a critical scholar” and “a lifetime of learning in leadership.”

**Watch** the tutorial video on the [TWU Library](https://www.twu.ca/academics/library).

* Click on the library link “How to search for articles.” Begin by selecting one of video tutorials in the section on multi-disciplinary databases such as “Academic Search Complete”.
* Watch the video tutorial to get an idea of how to search for a topic in a multi-disciplinary database.

Keeping in mind your specific research topic, use the Academic Search Ultimate database at the TWU library to locate a good example of a journal article**.**

To do this you will need to:

1. Go to the [TWU Library home page](https://www.twu.ca/academics/library).
2. Click the databases tab and then click the articles and databases link which brings you to a different screen.
3. In the Database Research Guide screen, you will need to select “A-B” from the A-Z list of databases at the bottom of this page.
4. Select a relevant database such as “Leadership.”
5. You will be asked to sign in as a student with your pass ID and password to access the online database.
6. Once you have signed in, you will be able to type your topic or question in the search window of the selected database.

**Searching for Books**

1. Go to the [TWU Library](https://www.twu.ca/academics/library) and click “Research Guides.”
2. At the top right, click “Research Help.”
3. Choose “Research Tutorials.”
4. On the left side of the screen, click “How to Search for Books.”
5. Scroll to the bottom of the screen and click “Using EBSCOhost eBooks.”
6. Watch the “Book Searching Tutorial” video to get an idea of how to search for a topic found in an e-book.
7. Keeping in mind the research topic you identified, use the library catalog to locate a good example of an e-book.

**Respond** to the following in your Reflective Journal.

* Reflect on your experience searching for a journal article and an e-book related to your topic**.** What search terms did you use? Which databases did you try? What worked well, and what challenges did you encounter?

This reflection is a chance to practice describing your search process, which you will need to include in your upcoming assignment. Use this opportunity to think critically about how you locate scholarly sources and how you might improve your search strategies moving forward.

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

Finally, the library is a great resource with support opportunities such as one-to-ones and workshops. [Click here for library support or to book an appointment for research help.](https://libguides.twu.ca/help?_gl=1*1npsrd0*_ga*MTc4MzI2NDA1OS4xNzM3ODYyMDE0*_ga_NZ4GVM10JT*czE3NTI1MTYzNTAkbzEzMCRnMSR0MTc1MjUxNjM2MSRqNDkkbDAkaDA.)

**<End learning-activity>**

## 4.2 Utilizing Scholarly Literature

After you have determined which sources you will be accessing, you need to conduct a search and then keep track of your literature search and results. Table 4.1 is an example of how to track your literature search. It is designed to help you document and reflect on your research process as you search for scholarly sources. Keeping detailed notes about where, how, and what you search will help you:

* Stay organized and efficient in your research process
* Avoid repeating unsuccessful search strategies
* Reflect on your approach to improve future searches
* Identify the most relevant and useful databases and search terms
* Practice a skill that will support your Scoping Review assignment (e.g., documenting your search process for a systematic literature review)

**How to use the table:**

1. **Search Date**: Record the date you conducted the search.
2. **Database/Source**: Write the name of the database, journal site, or search engine you used (e.g., ERIC, JSTOR, Google Scholar).
3. **Keywords Used**: List the main keywords or phrases you entered in your search. Include combinations or Boolean operators if used (e.g., “transformative learning” AND “early childhood education”).
4. **Filters Applied**: Note any filters you used, such as date range, peer-reviewed only, or full text available.
5. **Number of Results**: Record how many total search results were returned.
6. **Relevant Articles**: Indicate how many of those results were useful or relevant to your topic.
7. **Key Findings/Themes**: Briefly summarize what you learned from the articles you found. Look for repeated concepts or themes that could inform your literature review.
8. **Notes**: Add any reflections or additional thoughts, such as challenges faced, questions that emerged, or next steps.

Table 4.2 Literature Search Table Template

| **Search Date** | **Database/Source** | **Keywords Used** | **Filters Applied** | **Number of Results** | **Relevant Articles** | **Key Findings/Themes** | **Notes** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | e.g., ERIC, JSTOR | “Barriers early childhood educators,” “transformative learning” | e.g., 2010-present, peer-reviewed | 50 | 5 | e.g., Barriers include lack of resources, resistance to change | Add additional notes or reflections here |

You may use this table throughout your literature search process. It will be a helpful reference when writing your assignment and can also be included as an appendix if your instructor requires evidence of your search strategy. [Click here for a literature search table template](file:///C:\Users\jodi.mcbride\OneDrive%20-%20Trinity%20Western%20University\Documents\591%20Curriculum%20Revision\New%20Units\Literature%20Search%20Tracking%20Template.docx).

You can also manage your references using an online reference manager that will help you collect, organize, cite, and share your references according to the referencing style you will be using. There are several free, online reference managers available such as [Zotero](https://www.zotero.org/), [RefWorks](https://www.refworks.com/refworks2/help/Welcome.htm) and [EndNote](http://endnote.com/). TWU library has a research guide that describes [how to use EndNote](http://libguides.twu.ca/EndNote/)(n.d.). The library guide will help you sign up for a free EndNote account and will teach you to use EndNote to download and store your citations in folders, input citations into Word documents, and create reference lists.

### Review Scholarly Literature

After you have retrieved and organized the results from your database searches you will begin reviewing them. To save time, you do not need to read every article in their entirety.

Instead follow these steps:

1. Review the titles and abstracts.
2. For articles that seem related to your research topic, read the introduction, discussion, and conclusion sections. Then, examine the reference list.
3. If the article still seems worthwhile, read the entire article.

As you work through this process you will develop a collection of literature relevant to your study. Keep these sources organized by using a summary or abstract chart. The chart below is an example of how to keep your sources organized. There is no single correct way to do this, but you will need to develop some sort of system that works for you.

| **Reference** | **Research Problem** | **Purpose, Research Question, or Hypothesis** | **Data Collection/Procedure** | **Results/Findings** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Author(s), Year, Title, Source | Briefly state the issue the study addresses | Briefly summarize the study’s purpose, research question, or hypothesis | Outline the methods used (e.g., interviews, surveys, sample size) | Summarize main results or findings relevant to your research |

### Reviewing Literature is an Iterative Process

Be aware that the research process is not always linear. You may have a great research topic or question in mind, but as you begin your initial database and library searches you may find yourself changing or refining your topic. This is a normal part of the process.

Sometimes you will not find any information about your topic because the topic is too new, and no one has done any significant research on the topic yet. Or you may not find information on your topic because you are not using the appropriate search terms or keywords.

If you are having difficulty finding research articles and books on your topic, re-examine your key search terms using strategies such as:

1. Look up synonyms for your keywords.
2. Find and use key terms found in the literature you do have.

### 4.2.1 Activity: Applying Boolean Searches and Review Techniques

**<Begin learning-activity>**

**Estimated Time:**

**Read** Chapter 5 in *Doing a Systematic Review: A Student’s Guide* (Cherry et al., 2023).

Go to the [TWU Library](https://libguides.twu.ca/library_research/home) and click “How to Develop Research Skills.” Begin by watching all the video tutorials under the section “Upgrading Your Research Skills.” There are several short videos in this section on Boolean searches, search history, and other search techniques.

**Respond** to the following in your Reflective Journal:

* Briefly describe your experiences with upgrading your research skills.
* What did you find worked well, what did not?
* What Boolean searches did you use, what inclusion or exclusion criteria did you select?

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

**<End learning-activity>**

## 4.3 Evaluating Scholarly Literature

Once you identify several articles and/or books related to your research topic and skimmed them for relevance, the next step is to evaluate your information sources. Unfortunately, not all information you find will be credible and reliable. Just because you find articles and books at the library does not mean that the information will be accurate or high quality.

As an MA Leadership student, and as a professional, it is imperative that you can critically evaluate information you read to conduct quality research yourself, inform policies, and improve your professional practice.

As an MA Leadership student and a professional, it is imperative that you critically evaluate the information you read. This skill equips you to conduct high-quality research, inform ethical policy decisions, and improve your professional practice. Making decisions based on reliable research leads to more effective leadership. For example, suppose a study suggests that employees are more engaged when given flexible work hours. A manager might use that insight to redesign team schedules to include flexible start times, aiming to improve morale and productivity.

However, not all research is equally trustworthy. If that study was based on a small group from a single department, while a broader study involving several organizations found that structure and routine were more beneficial for engagement, then relying on the smaller study could lead to poor outcomes. This is why the ability to assess the reliability, context, and methodology of research is essential; it ensures you are making informed, ethical, and effective leadership decisions grounded in credible evidence.

This critical lens not only helps leaders evaluate the quality of individual studies, but also encourages them to consider the broader implications of how knowledge is produced and applied. Rosch et al. (2023) define a “critical scholar” as someone who approaches research with a reflective, questioning mindset. Critical scholars challenge conventional wisdom, dominant power structures, and widely accepted norms within their field, often focusing on issues related to justice, equity, and the broader societal impacts of research. They do not take data or theories at face value but analyze how they are constructed, who benefits from them, and who might be marginalized by them.

A critical scholar applies a high level of intellectual rigor to their work by asking deep questions and interrogating the assumptions, power dynamics, and social structures underpinning research. Rigor in this context refers to the critical scholar’s commitment to challenging the status quo and conducting research that holds up to scrutiny, methodologically and ethically. A critical scholar applies a high level of intellectual rigor to their work by asking deep questions and interrogating the assumptions, power dynamics, and social structures underpinning research. Rigor, in this context, means more than following proper methodology. It involves evaluating who is represented in a study and how its conclusions may impact different groups.

For example, imagine a leadership study that claims collaborative leadership styles are the most effective in all workplace settings. Upon closer inspection, the study was conducted only in creative industries like marketing and design. A critical scholar would question whether these findings apply equally to sectors with different operational cultures, such as healthcare or manufacturing. They would dig deeper, considering how context, participant demographics, and underlying assumptions influence the findings. This level of inquiry ensures that research is not only methodologically sound but also ethically grounded and socially aware.

The importance of being a critical scholar lies in ensuring that research does not simply reproduce existing biases or inequalities. Instead, it becomes a tool for promoting social justice and equity. By fostering a more inclusive understanding of leadership and organizational behavior, critical scholars help shape systems that better serve diverse populations and future generations.

To critically evaluate a source for quality and credibility, consider the following:

* **Authority**: Who is the author? What are the author’s credentials, such as their educational background, past writing experience, and expertise on the topic? Is the author’s name cited in other sources or reference lists? A simple google search will help you explore these questions.
* **Currency**: When was the source published? Is the source current or out of date for your topic? Remember the general rule is to use sources that have been published within the past ten years.
* **Purpose**: What is the author’s intention? Is the information the author’s opinion or is the author communicating evidence-based results? Who is the author’s intended audience: the academic community or consumers? Is the author’s point of view objective and impartial? Is the article or book’s language free of emotion or bias?
* **Content**: What kind of information is provided in the article or book? Is it a research article, popular book, or an opinion piece on a blog? If it is a research article, what methodology is used (quantitative, qualitative, etc.). Is the information provided backed up with references or sources? What is the length and quality of the reference list?
* **Publication type and process**: Who published the source? Was the source peer-reviewed? Is the publisher a university press or a large reputable publisher? Is the source published from a government agency? Is the source self-published?
* **Bias and special interests**: According to Cherry et al. (2023), bias occurs in many forms, including language bias and publication bias. For example, “language bias occurs because studies that report positive findings are mostly likely to be published in English-language journals” (Cherry et al., 2023, p. 53) and studies reporting negative or null findings are most likely to be published in non-English language journals. Publication bias occurs when studies reporting positive findings are more likely published in peer-reviewed academic journals. See Chapter 3 in *Doing a Systematic Review: A Student’s Guide* (Cherry et al., 2023) for more detail.

### 4.3.1 Activity: Evaluating Sources for Credibility and Quality

**<Begin learning-activity>**

**Estimated Time:**

**Watch** “How to Evaluate Sources” from the Stanford University Libraries (2017) to learn more about how to evaluate your sources.

<https://www.youtube-nocookie.com/embed/bZ122WakNDY>

**Read** Chapter 8: “Quality Assessment: Where Do I Begin?” in *Doing a Systematic Review: A Student’s Guide* (Cherry et al., 2023).

**Watch** the following videos:

* “Assessing Online Resources” from the [TWU Library](https://www.twu.ca/academics/library)
* “Evaluating a Journal Article” from the [JCU Library](https://www.youtube.com/@jculibrary1) (2016)

<https://www.youtube-nocookie.com/embed/z6dOGkpI6H4>

Respond to the following in your Reflective Journal:

* Briefly describe how you found your online sources and whether you think they will be helpful resources for your topic.
* What sources of information will you use the most to conduct research on your topic?
* How will you evaluate these sources to make sure they are credible and reliable sources of information?

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

**<End learning-activity>**

## Summary

In this unit, you learned how to access and evaluate scholarly literature, including books, journal articles, and grey literature. You explored different genres of academic sources and developed strategies for organizing your literature searches. You also considered the value of Indigenous knowledge and the importance of including diverse perspectives in your research. Practical tools such as search tracking tables, reference managers, and summary charts were introduced to support your research process. Most importantly, you were introduced to the concept of becoming a critical scholar; someone who engages with research reflectively and ethically to inform leadership decisions, promote justice, and serve the common good. These foundational skills will support your success in upcoming research and course assignments.

**<Begin checking-your-learning>**

Now that you have completed the learning activities and assignments for this unit, check the list below to ensure you can do the following:

1. Can you identify a research topic of interest?
2. Can you employ different search strategies to locate different sources of scholarly literature?
3. Can you evaluate the credibility and reliability of sources of scholarly literature?

**<End checking-your-learning>**

## References

# 5. Using a Scoping Review to Refine and Narrow Research Questions

## Overview

After drafting initial research questions, researchers often find their inquiries are too broad for effective study. This unit focuses on refining and narrowing research questions based on preliminary research and scoping reviews. A well-defined question is essential for guiding research design, data collection, and analysis.

### Topics

This unit is divided into the following topics:

1. Scoping Review and Refining Research Questions
2. Steps to Refining Your Research Question based on Your Scoping Review

### Unit Learning Outcomes

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

1. Understand how scoping reviews help you refine research questions.
2. Learn strategies to narrow down broad research inquiries.
3. Develop focused and researchable questions aligned with leadership studies.

### Learning Activities

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

**<Begin learning-activity>**

**Estimated Time:**

* Reflective Journal (optional)
* Watch “How to Write a Research Question for Your Literature Review.”
* Review your sample broad and revised draft research questions and use the checklist provided to critique and revise your initial research question.

**<End learning-activity>**

### Resources

* Video: “How to Write a Research Question for Your Literature Review”
* “[The Seven Sacred Teachings](https://www.nwpolytech.ca/services/indigenous/sacred_teachings.html)” (Northwestern Polytechnic, n.d.)“[Re-Conceptualizing Research: An Indigenous Perspective](https://fpcfr.com/index.php/FPCFR/article/view/173/142)” (Ormiston, 2010)
* Other resources will be provided online throughout this unit.

## 5.1 Scoping Review and Refining Research Questions

Remember from Unit 2, that a scoping review is a preliminary assessment of the available literature on a broad topic (Cherry et al., 2023). Scoping reviews serve to map existing literature and highlight gaps, which can directly inform the specificity and relevance of a research question (Cherry et al., 2023). Conducting a scoping review is an effective strategy to refine and narrow a research question, especially in the initial research stages. From a Christian perspective, this process reflects the values wisdom and stewardship. In the Bible, Proverbs 4:5 states, “Get wisdom, get understanding,” and 1 Peter 4:1-11 says, “Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace.” By thoroughly examining existing knowledge, researchers exercise wisdom in focusing their efforts where they can best serve others and address real-world challenges.

A scoping review’s primary purpose is to provide an exploratory overview of a broad research area, often addressing emerging or complex topics with diverse data (Gupta et al., 2023; Pham et al., 2014). Scoping reviews clarify the volume, nature, and range of research on a topic (Pham et al., 2014). Further, scoping reviews can identify gaps in literature (Cherry et al., 2023).

A gap in the literature refers to an area where there is limited, outdated, or missing research on a particular topic. It means that despite previous studies, certain questions remain unanswered, specific populations have not been studied, or emerging issues have not yet been explored.

Identifying a gap helps researchers justify the need for their study and shows how their work can contribute something new to the field. For example, if most studies on remote work focus on tech companies, a gap might be how remote work affects healthcare workers or teachers. Recognizing such gaps allows you to build your research around addressing those unexplored areas.

Christian values encourage addressing these gaps with a heart for justice and service, focusing on issues that uplift marginalized communities or improve human flourishing (Micah 6:8; Zachariah 7:9). Similarly, from the perspective of Canada’s First Peoples, Indigenous frameworks advocate for research that empowers communities and restores balance. In context of Canada’s history, this means addressing areas of colonization and inequity (Ormiston, 2010).

For example, let’s say your topic is about the integration of social emotional learning in K-12 schools, and your research question is: How are SEL frameworks implemented across diverse socioeconomic K-12 school contexts? You would then conduct a scoping review to map existing studies on the integration of social-emotional learning (SEL) frameworks in K-12 schools, highlight gaps in research on effective implementation strategies across diverse socioeconomic contexts, and identify the need for longitudinal studies to evaluate the impact of SEL on academic outcomes and student well-being. From a Christian lens, this review could consider how SEL frameworks foster virtues such as compassion, humility, and resilience, aligning with a biblical vision of holistic development (Colossians 3:12). Through an Indigenous lens, the review could explore how SEL frameworks honor relationality, community values, and the inclusion of culturally responsive approaches that respect Indigenous ways of knowing and being (Ormiston, 2010).

Additionally, scoping review methodology, initially proposed by Arksey and O’Malley (2007) and later refined by Levac et al. (2010), includes defining research questions, identifying research studies, and summarizing findings. This process can be seen as a prayerful and intentional discernment of priorities, aligning with the biblical call to seek wisdom and understanding (Proverbs 2:3-5). Integrating Indigenous principles, researchers are reminded to engage respectfully with knowledge systems, ensuring that their methods honor the voices and traditions of the communities represented (Ormiston, 2010).

At this stage in the process, you have designed an initial research question, identified relevant studies related to your question, and conducted a scoping review to summarize the findings. Now it is time to revise and narrow your research question based on the findings of your scoping review. This step is crucial because it ensures that your research question aligns with the current state of knowledge, addresses identified gaps and remains feasible within the available evidence and resources.

A Christian perspective calls for humility and purpose in this refinement, recognizing the opportunity to glorify God through meaningful contributions to the field (Colossians 3:23). Similarly, wisdom, one of seven Indigenous sacred teachings, is using one’s gifts to build peaceful and healthy communities (Northwestern Polytechnic, n.d.). A well-refined question not only sharpens your study’s focus but also enhances its relevance and potential to contribute meaningful insights to the field and your community.

## 5.2 Steps to Refining Your Research Question Based on your Scoping Review

**Step 1: Clarify Key Concepts (Terminology and Definitions)**

A scoping review is instrumental in clarifying key concepts by helping researchers navigate the terms and definitions prevalent in a field. This is achieved by systematically examining existing literature to identify how terms are used and understood within various contexts. By doing so, researchers can align their research question with the established discourse, ensuring consistency and relevance (Gupta et al., 2023).

For example, if a scoping review reveals varying definitions for a term like “student engagement” in K-12 education, ranging from behavioral participation to emotional connection, the researcher can adopt or refine a definition that best suits their study. This alignment sharpens the focus of the research and improves communication with the academic community and stakeholders by using language that resonates with existing frameworks.

In some cases, researchers may find that different terms are used interchangeably to describe the same concept. For instance, terms like “student involvement” or “classroom participation” might be used in the literature to refer to aspects of “student engagement.” Recognizing and consolidating these terms under a consistent definition enhances clarity and avoids redundancy.

Additionally, as researchers conduct a scoping review, they may encounter terms specific to their narrow area of focus that are new to them. For example, within studies of emotional engagement, a term like “affective attunement” might appear in the context of describing the emotional resonance between students and their learning experiences. Learning these nuanced terms allows researchers to refine their understanding of the research topic and frame their study in a way that is precise and informed by the latest developments in the field.

By clarifying key concepts and integrating relevant terminology, researchers set a solid foundation for their study and avoid ambiguity that could hinder the interpretation of findings. This process ensures that their work contributes meaningfully to the academic discourse and is accessible to stakeholders within the field.

### 5.2.1 Activity: Clarifying Key Concepts in Your Scoping Review

**<Begin learning-activity>**

**Estimated Time:**

After reviewing your scoping review, respond to the following questions in your Reflective Journal to help you clarify key concepts:

1. What are the most used terms in the literature related to your research topic, and how are they defined by different authors?
2. Are there variations in the usage or interpretation of key terms across different studies or contexts? If so, what might explain these variations?
3. Do the definitions of key concepts align with your intended research focus, or do you need to adopt a specific definition or framework?
4. Select 2-3 important terms from the articles you have read that relate to your research topic. For each term, choose a definition from the literature, being sure to cite that definition. (You will include this in your upcoming assignment.)

**<End learning-activity>**

**Step 2: Highlighting Gaps**

A key outcome of a scoping review is its ability to identify gaps in existing literature, which provides a foundation for shaping meaningful and impactful research questions. By systematically mapping the current body of knowledge, scoping reviews reveal areas that are under-researched, inconsistently studied, or where evidence is outdated or conflicting (Pham et al., 2014). This process allows researchers to pinpoint voids in knowledge that require further investigation.

For example, a scoping review on digital literacy in K-12 education might reveal an abundance of studies focused on middle and high school students but limited research on elementary-level digital literacy instruction. Recognizing this gap enables the researcher to develop a question specifically addressing digital literacy interventions for younger students. Similarly, gaps in methodology, such as a lack of longitudinal studies or insufficient diversity in sampled populations, can inform the design and scope of future research.

By highlighting these gaps, scoping reviews ensure that new research contributes to advancing the field rather than duplicating existing work, while also addressing practical or theoretical needs that have not yet been explored.

### 5.2.2 Activity: Highlighting Gaps

**<Begin learning-activity>**

**Estimated Time:**

After conducting your scoping review, respond to following questions in your Reflective Journal to help you systematically examine your findings to uncover gaps and focus your research efforts on areas with the most potential for contribution in your field:

1. Which areas related to my research topic have few or no studies addressing them?
2. Are there specific populations, settings, or contexts that are under-represented in existing literature?
3. Are there inconsistencies or contradictions in the findings across studies that indicate areas requiring further investigation?
4. What trends or emerging themes in the literature suggest areas where research has not yet kept pace with practical or theoretical developments?
5. What insights from the literature stand out?

**<End learning-activity>**

## 5.3 Step 3: Assessing Feasibility

Assessing the feasibility of a research question involves evaluating whether the question can be practically addressed given the available resources, literature, data, and time constraints for a systematic review. A scoping review is instrumental in this process, as it provides a comprehensive overview of the existing evidence and identifies areas with sufficient data to support research efforts (Pham et al., 2014).

By understanding the scope and availability of data, researchers can determine whether their question is too broad, too narrow, or misaligned with existing literature. For example, if the scoping review reveals a lack of empirical studies on a specific intervention, researchers might refine their question to focus on related interventions with more robust evidence. Alternatively, if the review uncovers abundant but heterogeneous data, the research question can be tailored to focus on a specific subset of studies or outcomes that are most relevant.

This process ensures that research questions are both actionable and meaningful. Aligning the question with available evidence allows researchers to design studies that are achievable within the scope of their resources, while also contributing valuable insights to the field. Assessing feasibility minimizes wasted effort and increases the likelihood of producing impactful research.

### 5.3.1 Activity: Assessing Feasibility

**<Begin learning-activity>**

**Estimated Time:**

Respond to following questions in your Reflective Journal to help you assess the feasibility of your research question:

1. Does the existing literature provide sufficient data to address my research question, or are there significant gaps that may hinder my ability to investigate it?
2. Is my research question specific enough to be addressed within the available time, resources, and scope of my study?
3. Does my research question target a manageable scope of literature, avoiding being too broad or too narrow for a systematic review?

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

**<End learning-activity>**

### 5.3.2 Activity: Refining Your Research Question

**<Begin learning-activity>**

**Estimated Time:**

**Watch** “How to Write a Research Question for Your Literature Review” (Hall, 2019b):

<https://www.youtube-nocookie.com/embed/65L-kq6jVjc>

**Review** the following sample general Research Questions (RQ) and corresponding revised specific Research Questions. Seeing how they differ will help you learn why a clear, focused research question is essential for a successful systematic review.

1. **General Question**: What factors influence patient satisfaction in healthcare settings?
2. **Revised Specific RQ**: How do communication strategies used by primary care physicians impact patient satisfaction in urban outpatient clinics?
3. **General Question**: What are the effects of technology on student learning?
4. **Revised Specific RQ**: How does the use of gamified learning platforms affect math achievement among middle school students in rural schools?
5. **General Question**: What drives employee engagement in organizations?
6. **Revised Specific RQ**: What is the impact of flexible work policies on employee engagement in technology startups with under 500 employees?

Use the checklist below to **critique** and revise your initial draft research question:

| **Item** | **Description** |
| --- | --- |
| **Identify Specific Aspects of Interest** | From your review, highlight specific elements that intrigue you. For example, if your broad topic is “leadership in education,” narrow it to aspects such as “the influence of transformational leadership on student engagement.” |
| **Clarify Key Concepts** | Identify and define the most important concepts and terms in your scoping review. Provide definitions based on how these terms are used in the literature. Cite your sources to show how different authors define or apply these terms and note any variations in usage that may influence your understanding of the topic. |
| **Identify Gaps** | What areas of your topic are under-researched, inconsistently studied, or where evidence is outdated or conflicting. |
| **Utilize the “Five Ws” Technique** | Answer the following questions to refine your focus:   1. **Who**: Who are the subjects/participants of your research? (e.g., educators, students) 2. **What**: What specific behaviors or phenomena are you studying? (e.g., building community, engagement strategies, digital literacy) 3. **Where**: In what context will your research occur? (e.g., high schools, online learning environments) 4. **When**: Are you focusing on a specific timeframe? (e.g., during the transition to remote learning) 5. **Why**: Why is this question significant in leadership studies? |
| **Check for Clarity and Specificity** | Ensure your refined question is clear, specific, and straightforward. Avoid vague language, and make sure the research question is easily understandable. |
| **Evaluate Relevance** | Confirm that your revised research question addresses a significant, specific, aspect of leadership and aligns with your research purpose. Ensure your research has the potential to contribute meaningfully to the field. |
| **Assess Feasibility of Research** | Ensure your research question is feasible to investigate within your given time and resource constraints. Consider data and literature availability. |
| **Iterate and Seek Feedback** | Share your refined question with peers, mentors, or faculty. Gather constructive feedback to further clarify and strengthen your inquiry. |

**<End learning-activity>**

## Summary

This unit explored how to refine and narrow a research question using insights from a scoping review. Scoping reviews are crucial for mapping the current state of research, identifying gaps, and ensuring alignment with existing knowledge. Through this process, your learned to clarify key concepts, highlight under-researched areas, and assess the feasibility of their research questions.

The unit incorporated Christian perspectives, emphasizing values such as stewardship, justice, and the pursuit of wisdom, as well as Indigenous perspectives, which highlight relationality, respect for cultural knowledge, and empowering communities. Both perspectives encourage research that serves broader human and community flourishing.

Practical strategies for narrowing your research question included clarifying definitions of important terms related to your research topic, identifying knowledge gaps, and assessing the scope and relevance of available data and literature.

You should now be able to develop a focused research question that is feasible, relevant, and contributes meaningful insights to your field of study.

**<Begin checking-your-learning>**

1. How does incorporating Indigenous or Christian perspectives influence the way you refine your research question?
2. What are the key elements of assessing the feasibility of a research question, and how can a scoping review assist in this process?
3. What steps can you take to ensure that your research question is narrowly focused and set in context of current knowledge identified in your scoping review?

**<End checking-your-learning>**

## References

# 6. 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 (2014) 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 the following 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 Learning Outcomes

When you have completed this unit, you will 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.

**<Begin learning-activity>**

**Estimated Time:**

* Reflecting on your Scholarly Inquiry Journey
* Drafting Your Letter of Intent

**<End learning-activity>**

### Resources

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

* **Textbook:** Rosch, D. M., Kniffin, L. E., & Guthrie, K. L. (2023). *Introduction to research in leadership*. Information Age Publishing.
* Other resources will be provided online throughout this unit.

## 6.1 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.

## 6.2 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.

## 6.3 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.

### 6.3.1 Activity: Reflecting on your Scholarly Inquiry Journey

**<Begin learning-activity>**

**Estimated Time:**

**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.

**<End learning-activity>**

### 6.3.2 Activity: Learning Activity: Drafting Your Letter of Intent

**<Begin learning-activity>**

**Estimated Time:**

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.

*Note:* 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.

**<End learning-activity>**

## 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.

**<Begin 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.

**<End checking-your-learning>**

## References

# 7. APA Resources and Activities

## Overview

This unit explores the fundamentals of APA 7 formatting, emphasizing its role in establishing professionalism, credibility, and ethical writing practices. From title pages to in-text citations and references, each component of APA style contributes to clarity and trust in academic and professional writing. By adhering to APA standards, you will learn to present your ideas in an organized, professional way that respects the work of others.

### Topics

This unit is divided into the following topics:

1. The Purpose of APA 7
2. Title Page Formatting
3. Headings
4. Citations
5. References
6. Spacing and Margins

### Unit Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, you will:

1. Understand the importance of APA formatting in promoting professionalism, accountability, and ethical behavior.
2. Develop skills in formatting title pages, headings, and references.
3. Apply correct spacing, margins, and citation techniques to enhance document clarity and credibility.

### Learning Activities

**<Begin learning-activity>**

**Estimated Time:**

* Designing Your Title Page
* Headings Part 1
* Headings Part 2
* Citations
* Formatting References Puzzle
* Space and Margins Puzzle

**<End learning-activity>**

## 7.1 The Purpose of APA 7

In professional and academic writing, APA 7 formatting serves as a critical guide for consistency, clarity, and credibility. Established by the American Psychological Association (APA), APA format is widely used in fields such as psychology, education, and social sciences. But why is it important, and how does it relate to professionalism and leadership?

#### Why APA 7 Matters for Professionalism

Using APA style is not just about following rules; it demonstrates a commitment to precision and attention to detail. A well-structured, accurately formatted document reflects professionalism and respect for the work of others, as it prioritizes clear communication and proper citation of sources. By adhering to APA guidelines, writers convey their information clearly, minimize ambiguity, and ensure their audience can easily follow and verify their sources. This fosters trust and credibility, qualities that are essential for servant leadership and a professional reputation.

#### Why APA 7 Matters for Leadership

Effective leadership requires solid ideas and the ability to communicate those ideas effectively and responsibly. APA formatting supports leadership by providing a standardized way to present research, insights, and recommendations that others can easily understand. Leaders who use APA demonstrate ethical responsibility by giving proper credit to the work of others, thereby modeling respect for intellectual property and encouraging a culture of accountability. In this way, using APA 7 aligns with servant leadership principles by placing the needs of others first, and fostering a climate of trust and ethical behavior (Coetzer et al., 2017; McMahone, 2012). Furthermore, mastering APA style highlights a leader’s commitment to fostering accountability and a climate of ethical behavior.

Additionally, as servant leaders strive toward ethical practices, APA is a tool for exhibiting accountability by attributing ideas responsibly. This culture of accountability extends beyond APA adherence, setting a standard that encourages ethical, respectful communication and stewardship of knowledge. By promoting accurate citations, servant leaders cultivate an environment that respects the intellectual contributions of all, enhancing organizational integrity and ethical behavior (Coetzer et al., 2017; McMahone, 2012).

Throughout LDRS 591, your instructor will guide you in exploring key elements of APA 7 formatting to elevate your writing and support you in developing professional, clear, and ethically responsible written communications that create a culture of trust and accountability.

## 7.2 Title Page Formatting

Creating a title page in APA 7 format for your assignments is more than just a formality; It is an important step in presenting your work professionally. A well-structured title page clearly displays essential information, such as your name, the course, your instructor’s name, and the assignment date, making it easy for readers to identify your work. It sets the tone for the rest of your paper by showing attention to detail, an appreciation for academic standards, and respect for guidelines. Additionally, following APA 7 title page requirements models accountability and professionalism, preparing you for the academic and professional standards expected in your field.

### 7.2.1 Activity: Designing Your Title Page

**<Begin learning-activity>**

**Estimated Time:**

By the end of this activity, you will be able to create a correctly formatted APA 7 title page with all required components.

1. Review title page elements at: <https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/paper-format/title-page>
   * Note the essential elements of an APA 7 title page:
     + Title of the Paper: bolded and centered, three to four lines down from the top
     + Author’s Name: first name, middle initial, last name
     + Department and University Affiliation
     + Course Name and Number
     + Instructor’s Name
     + Due Date: month, day, year
2. Review the format requirements:
   * Font: Times New Roman, 12-point (or another APA-approved font)
   * Page Number: Set the page number in the top right corner
   * Double-spacing and centered alignment
3. Create Your Title Page:
   * In a Word document, practice formatting your own title page using the template:
     + Line 1 (centered, bold): Title of the Paper
     + Line 2: Student Name
     + Line 3: Department, University
     + Line 4: Course Name and Number
     + Line 5: Instructor’s Name
     + Line 6: Due Date
4. Apply Feedback and Compare:
   * After creating your title page, pair up and compare your work with a partner’s.
   * Check each other’s formatting for spacing, alignment, and correct placement of elements.
   * Make any necessary adjustments based on feedback.

**<End learning-activity>**

## 7.3 Headings

Using headings in APA 7 for your assignments is essential for clear organization and readability. Headings guide readers through your paper’s structure, making it easy to follow your main points and understand how each section connects to your overall argument. This logical flow not only enhances your work’s professionalism but also demonstrates your ability to communicate ideas clearly and concisely. By adhering to APA’s structured heading levels, you are practicing skills in organization and clarity; Qualities valued in both academic and professional writing. Using headings also makes it easier for others to locate specific information quickly, which is especially helpful in collaborative or evaluative settings.

### 7.3.1 Activity: Headings Part 1

**<Begin learning-activity>**

**Estimated Time:**

* [Headings Part 1](https://learn.twu.ca/mod/resource/view.php?id=1176289)
* Practice identifying and applying the correct heading levels in an APA 7-style research paper. See [Headings Part 1.docx](https://learn.twu.ca/pluginfile.php/1424895/mod_book/chapter/42915/Headings%20Part%201.docx).

**<End learning-activity>**

### 7.3.2 Activity: Headings Part 2

**<Begin learning-activity>**

**Estimated Time:**

* [Headings Part 2](https://learn.twu.ca/mod/resource/view.php?id=1176290)
* Practice identifying and applying the correct heading levels in an APA 7-style research paper. See [Headings Part 2.docx](https://learn.twu.ca/pluginfile.php/1424895/mod_book/chapter/42915/Headings%20Part%202.docx).

**<End learning-activity>**

## 7.4 Citations

Imagine you have spent weeks working on a project at work; A presentation with detailed research and new ideas that you are excited to share with your team. Now, picture someone taking your presentation, removing your name, and presenting it as their own work without mentioning you. How would you feel?

Just as people expect acknowledgment for their own ideas and hard work, using citations in academic or professional writing gives credit to the original authors who inspired or informed our work. Citing sources shows respect for others’ contributions, demonstrating that you value their ideas enough to share them with others. This is not just about avoiding plagiarism; it is about building a culture of respect, trust, and professionalism. Properly formatted citations help ensure that others can verify and follow up on the sources you have used, creating a chain of knowledge that strengthens our shared understanding.

### Citations and Stewardship

Citing sources aligns closely with the concept of stewardship in servant leadership. Peter Block (2013) defines stewardship as “holding something in trust for another,” (p. xx) a principle that underscores people’s responsibility to care for and respect others’ contributions. In servant leadership, stewardship means leaders hold knowledge, resources, and responsibilities in trust—not for personal gain, but for the benefit of the community and society.

Applying this principle, citing sources in our work becomes an act of stewardship. You are acknowledging and preserving the intellectual contributions of others and using them in a way that respects their origin and purpose. Just as servant leaders use openness and persuasion over control, citations allow people to transparently share ideas, enabling others to trace, verify, and build upon those ideas for the collective good. This practice reflects a commitment to serve the academic and professional communities by fostering a culture of respect, integrity, and shared knowledge.

### Citations and Indigenous Storytelling

In Indigenous storytelling, stewardship and proper acknowledgment are essential aspects of preserving and respecting knowledge. Land acknowledgments are an important practice in recognizing Indigenous stewardship and the original keepers of the land (Hanson, 2009). For example, you may notice the land acknowledgement on the [course syllabus](https://learn.twu.ca/mod/resource/view.php?id=1171447):

“We acknowledge that Trinity Western University, Langley campus is located on the traditional ancestral unceded territory of the Stó:lō people.”

This practice reflects the values of respect and responsibility toward those who have historically cared for and continue to care for the land.

Similarly, Indigenous oral traditions are rich with stories passed down through generations, where each storyteller holds a piece of collective memory and knowledge in trust, as noted by Elders and knowledge keepers. This stewardship of knowledge is not just about the storyteller; it is about honoring the voices and wisdom of those who came before (Hanson, 2009).

Just as citing sources in academic work gives credit to the original thinkers, land acknowledgments recognize Indigenous peoples as the rightful stewards of the land. This practice emphasizes respect and gratitude (Hanson, 2009), connecting to Peter Block’s (2013) idea of stewardship as “holding something in trust for another,” (p. xx) recognizing the historical and ongoing relationship Indigenous Peoples have with the land. Additionally, just as citing a source respects the intellectual property of others, acknowledging original knowledge keepers of an Indigenous story honors those who have preserved this wisdom over generations.

Citations in Western academia give credit, while in Indigenous traditions, “oral footnoting” attributes the story to a specific elder or ancestor, reflecting the storyteller’s responsibility to the collective memory (Hanson, 2009). This act of stewardship, both in academic and Indigenous contexts, upholds a culture of respect, ensuring that knowledge is shared ethically, responsibly, and for the benefit of future generations.

### 7.4.1 Activity: Citations

**<Begin learning-activity>**

**Estimated Time:**

Practice formatting APA 7 in-text citations by solving a puzzle using the correct citation style for paraphrased and direct quotes. See [Citations Activity.docx](https://learn.twu.ca/pluginfile.php/1424895/mod_book/chapter/42916/Citations%20Activity.docx).

**<End learning-activity>**

## 7.5 References

As Indigenous storytelling practices and academic citations embody stewardship and foster a culture of sharing knowledge responsibly and respectfully, so do references. Like using citations, including references is another way to practice servant leadership in written communication.

A shift toward servant leadership in organizations today reflects a movement away from traditional, hierarchical structures to one rooted in ethical, compassionate, and inclusive leadership (Spears, 2010). This approach, defined by principles like stewardship, empathy, and commitment to the growth of others (Spears, 2010), aligns deeply with the practice of using APA references in academic and professional writing. APA referencing allows people to ethically credit original thinkers and contributors, building trust and transparency in their work. From a servant leadership perspective, using citations is an act of stewardship; It involves holding knowledge in trust for others, using it responsibly, and ensuring that ideas are shared openly for the benefit of the entire community.

APA references also embody key servant leadership traits, such as commitment to the growth of others and building community. By providing accurate references, we not only acknowledge the efforts of others but also empower our readers to explore the original sources, deepening their understanding and engagement with the topic. This aligns with servant leadership’s dedication to individual growth and the creation of a collaborative, knowledge-sharing environment (Spears, 2010). In this way, references help build a community of learning, where ideas circulate ethically and openly.

Further, servant leaders rely on awareness and foresight, seeing the broader impacts of their actions on others (Spears, 2010). By referencing sources, writers exercise these qualities, understanding that their work does not stand alone but is part of a larger discourse. This approach supports a responsible, forward-thinking culture where ideas are treated with respect and integrity, creating a positive and ethical academic and professional environment.

### 7.5.1 Activity: References Formatting Puzzle

**<Begin learning-activity>**

**Estimated Time:**

Practice formatting references according to APA 7 guidelines by solving a puzzle that involves properly formatting citations for journals, books, and web sources. See [References Formatting Puzzle.docx](https://learn.twu.ca/pluginfile.php/1424895/mod_book/chapter/42917/References%20Formatting%20Puzzle.docx).

**<End learning-activity>**

## 7.6 Spacing and Margins

### 7.6.1 Activity: Space and Margins Puzzle

**<Begin learning-activity>**

**Estimated Time:**

Practice identifying and correcting the spacing and margin errors in the provided document to meet APA 7 formatting standards. See [Space and Margin Puzzle.docx](https://learn.twu.ca/pluginfile.php/1424895/mod_book/chapter/42918/Space%20and%20Margin%20Puzzle.docx).

**<End learning-activity>**

## Summary

In this unit, you explored the essentials of APA 7 formatting and its impact on professionalism, accountability, and ethical communication. By mastering APA guidelines, you learned to present your work with clarity, structure, and respect for others’ intellectual contributions. Each element, from title pages to citations, reinforces a commitment to high standards and fosters trust within academic and professional communities.

As you apply these formatting skills, remember that APA style is more than just a set of rules—it is a tool for clear, responsible, and credible communication. This foundation not only enhances your academic work but also prepares you to uphold the integrity and ethical standards valued in leadership and professional settings.

## References

# Common Questions Used for Reflective Journalling

* In your view, what were the most important points in the readings, videoclips, or discussions with your fellow students and tutors?
* What information did you already know?
* What new knowledge, ideas, or perspectives have you gained?
* What information was easy to remember or learn? Why?
* What concepts did you find more difficult? Why?
* How can you apply this knowledge to your work or current experience?
* How has this knowledge helped you to make sense of your current or previous experience?
* Has your understanding of a personal or work-related situation changed after studying these concepts?
* Did you agree or disagree with any of the material? If yes, how did you react and why?
* If you could have the opportunity to engage in further learning, what would it be?
* What further questions would like to ask the author of your readings?
* What other articles, books or discussions would be of interest?

# Course Assessments

Your course grade will be determined by the satisfactory completion of all requirements. Due dates are as follows:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Assignment** | **% of Grade** | **Due Date** |
| Discussion Forum Posts | 20% | Weeks 1-5 (Mondays & Thursdays) |
| Assignment 1: Annotated Bibliography & Critique | 20% | Unit 3 / Week 3 |
| Assignment 2: Developing Your Research Question | 15% | Unit 4 / Week 4 |
| Assignment 3: Scoping Literature Review | 30% | Unit 6 / Week 6 |
| Assignment 4: Research Letter of Intent | 15% | Unit 6 / Week 6 |
| **Total** | **100%** |  |

### Weekly Discussion Forums (20%)

Submit your Discussion Forum posts and replies below.

**Discussion Grading Rubric**

| **Description** | **Possible Points** |
| --- | --- |
| Initial Post | 1.5 |
| 2 response posts | 1.5 |
| At least 1 reference | 0.5 |
| Posted on time | 0.5 |
| **Total** | **4.0** |

#### Week 1 Discussion Forum

**Instructions**

After completing the learning activities in this unit, respond to the prompt(s) below in this week’s discussion post. In your response, aim for **300-500 words** and incorporate **at least one reference** from course materials or relevant external sources. **Always write using APA 7 format.** Engage with your classmates by **responding to at least two posts**, offering constructive feedback or additional insights to further the discussion.

**Prompts**

1. Begin by introducing yourself and explaining what your experience is with research. Next, discuss what you have learned about the differences between informal research (everyday problem solving) and scholarly inquiry (formal research).
2. Review the Brown and Dueñas (2020) article and respond to the following questions:
   * What research paradigm resonated with you the most?
   * If you had to choose one, which one would you pick and why?
3. Next, review the Wallace, J. R. (2007). *Servant leadership: A worldview perspective* and then respond to the following questions:
   * What is your worldview (perspective)?
   * How do you base decisions on this worldview?

#### Week 2 Discussion Forum

**Instructions**

After completing the learning activities in this unit, respond to the prompt(s) below in this week’s discussion post. In your response, aim for **300-500 words** and incorporate **at least one reference** from course materials or relevant external sources. **Always write using APA 7 format.** Engage with your classmates by **responding to at least two posts**, offering constructive feedback or additional insights to further the discussion.

**Prompts**

1. **Reflect on Methodologies**: Based on your understanding of the three research methodologies (quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods), discuss which methodology you believe is most effective for studying leadership practices. Provide reasons for your choice, citing specific examples from the readings.
2. **Literature Reviews**: Compare and contrast traditional literature reviews with systematic literature reviews. What are the key differences in their purposes and methodologies, and why do you think these differences matter in leadership research?

#### Week 3 Discussion Forum

**Instructions**

After completing the learning activities in this unit, respond to the prompt(s) below in this week’s discussion post. In your response, aim for **300-500 words** and incorporate **at least one reference** from course materials or relevant external sources. **Always write using APA 7 format.** Engage with your classmates by **responding to at least two posts**, offering constructive feedback or additional insights to further the discussion.

**Prompts**

In Unit 3, we focused on the critical steps involved in developing a research question within the context of leadership studies. As you reflect on the topics of establishing purpose, connecting personal leadership goals to servant leadership, and formulating effective research questions, please address:

1. **Establishing Purpose**: Reflect on the importance of establishing a clear purpose in your research. How does understanding your personal and professional leadership goals shape the way you approach your research topic? Provide specific examples of how your values or experiences have influenced your research interests.
2. **Servant Leadership Connection**: Discuss how servant leadership characteristics resonate with your research interests. Which specific servant leadership characteristics do you believe are most relevant to your research topic, and why? Explain how these characteristics align with your purpose and can enhance your inquiry.
3. **Drafting a Research Question**: Based on your reflections, draft a potential research question that you would like to pursue for your capstone project. Ensure that your question is clear, relevant, and researchable. Briefly share the rationale behind your choice and discuss why this topic is significant to you.

#### Week 4 Discussion Forum

**Instructions**

After completing the learning activities in this unit, respond to the prompt(s) below in this week’s discussion post. In your response, aim for **300-500 words** and incorporate **at least one reference** from course materials or relevant external sources. **Always write using APA 7 format.** Engage with your classmates by **responding to at least two posts**, offering constructive feedback or additional insights to further the discussion.

**Prompts**

In Unit 4, we explored the process of accessing and evaluating scholarly literature, which is crucial for developing robust research practices in leadership studies. For this DQ you, will find and critically evaluate a scholarly article.

1. Use search strategies to locate a **qualitative** article based on your topic of research interest. Share what key search terms, library, and databases you used to locate the article.
2. Evaluate the credibility and reliability of the article you found based on authority, currency, purpose, content, publication type/process, and bias/special interests.

#### Week 5 Discussion Forum

For this week’s Discussion, post a rough draft of your scoping review. Even if your draft is not complete, post what you have.

Give at least 2 classmates constructive feedback to help them improve their work.

Post your initial draft by Saturday at Midnight, and your follow up posts by Monday at Midnight.

## Assignments (80%)

Submit your completed Assignments below.

### Assignment 1: Annotated Bibliography with Article Critique (20%)

The purpose of this assignment is to create an annotated bibliography that reviews, summarizes, and critiques relevant literature on your chosen topic. Each annotation should assess the credibility and trustworthiness of the article, considering elements such as the research methodology used, author credentials, publication date, purpose, content, potential bias, and limitations.

**Instructions**

1. Choose Your Topic
   * Select a focused research topic that aligns with your interests and area of study.
   * This topic will guide the selection of articles for your annotated bibliography.
2. Locate and Select Relevant Literature
   * Conduct a search for peer-reviewed, credible, and relevant sources related to your topic.
   * Choose 5 articles to include in your bibliography. You must include at least one Quantitative Study, one Qualitative Study, One Mixed Methods Study, and one Systematic Literature Review.
   * Begin your search by starting broadly. Using your keywords, search the TWU Library. Then search specific databases such as Academic Search Ultimate and Business Source Complete. Then use internet sources such as Google Scholar or the Directory of Open Access Journals to find credible sources.
3. Structure of Each Annotation For each article, provide a full APA 7 reference citation, followed by a 150–300 word annotation that includes:
   * Summary: Briefly summarize the main purpose, scope, and findings of the article.
   * Article Type: Identify the type of article (e.g., qualitative, literature review, etc.) and note any relevant features, such as whether it is primary or secondary research.
   * Author Credentials: Briefly describe the author’s qualifications, affiliations, or expertise in the topic area.
   * Currency: Note the publication date and explain why it is appropriate for your topic. Assess whether the article is current enough to be relevant.
   * Purpose and Content: Describe the purpose of the article and evaluate the quality and depth of content, including the clarity and thoroughness of the information presented.
   * Bias and Limitations: Assess the presence of any noticeable bias in the article, such as the author’s stance or the publisher’s perspective. Note any methodological or other limitations, such as small sample sizes, lack of diversity in the study population, or outdated sources.
4. Assess Trustworthiness and Credibility Include a brief critique of the article’s trustworthiness. Comment on why the article can be considered credible based on factors like:
   * The reputation of the journal or publisher.
   * Peer-review status.
   * The methodological rigor and objectivity of the study.
   * Whether the article is widely cited by other reputable sources (if known).
5. Format and Presentation
   * Follow APA 7th Edition formatting for all citations and organization of the bibliography.
   * Alphabetize your bibliography entries by the last name of the first author.

**Submission Requirements**

Submit a document that includes:

* A title page and page numbers
* Your annotated bibliography, with each article following the structure outlined above.

**Assignment 1 Rubric**

| **Criteria** | **Description** | **Possible Points** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Topic Selection and Relevance** | Selected topic is clearly focused, aligns well with field of study, and guides the annotated bibliography. | 5 |
| **Selection of Sources** | Includes 5 high-quality, peer-reviewed sources with required diversity in study types (quantitative, qualitative, mixed methods, systematic review). | 10 |
| **Annotations: Summary** | Provides concise, thorough summaries of purpose, scope, and findings for each article; demonstrates strong understanding of source content. | 20 |
| **Annotations: Article Type and Methodology** | Correctly identifies article type and research methodology for each source, with clear distinctions between primary and secondary research. | 10 |
| **Annotations: Credibility and Currency** | Thoroughly evaluates author credentials, publication date, and relevance of currency to the topic for each article. | 10 |
| **Annotations: Purpose, Content, Bias, and Limitations** | Provides detailed and critical assessment of article purpose, content quality, any biases, and limitations; demonstrates insight and critical thinking. | 15 |
| **Trustworthiness and Credibility Critique** | Offers strong critique on each article’s trustworthiness based on journal reputation, peer-review status, methodology rigor, and citation frequency if applicable. | 15 |
| **APA 7 Formatting** | Consistently follows APA 7th Edition for citations, references, and bibliography organization; alphabetized correctly and adheres to all formatting standards. | 5 |
| **Writing Quality and Presentation** | Writing is clear, professional, and free of errors; annotations are well-organized and concise with a coherent flow. | 10 |
| **Total Points** |  | **100** |

### Assignment 2: Developing Your Research Question (15%)

In this assignment, you will describe your leadership interests (personal and/or professional) and generate research questions amenable to scholarly inquiry.

The Master of Arts in Leadership program values the application of best practices to your personal and professional practice. MA Lead is founded in Greenleaf’s (1977) servant leadership which has 10 characteristics:

1. Listening
2. Empathy
3. Healing
4. Awareness
5. Persuasion
6. Conceptualization
7. Foresight
8. Stewardship
9. Commitment to the growth of people
10. Building community

Take time review these characteristics, their meaning and significance in leadership practices. Then reflect on and articulate some of the salient leadership interests in your personal and professional life and practice. Here are some brainstorming questions to help guide you:

* What problem do you see in your workplace that needs to be addressed?
* What specific aspects of your leadership style do you find most challenging, and why?
* What are your personal, academic, and professional goals?
* Where you see the greatest need for change in the field you want to work in as a leader?
* Consider what is working well in your field and how could you discover best practices? What is not working well? How can it be improved or changed?

After identifying some salient leadership interests, consider which servant leadership characteristics are most relevant to your topic.

**Instructions**

Write a **two-page paper (excluding title page and references)** describing your leadership interests (personal and/or professional). Describe which servant leadership characteristics are most relevant to your research interest (no more than two characteristics). Based on these leadership interests, generate a research question that will guide your scholarly inquiry.

**Include the following sections in your paper in APA 7 format:**

1. **Title Page**
2. **Introduction**: In the opening paragraph, state the salient leadership interests in your personal and professional life and practice. Identify one problem or topic that you would like to investigate and provide a brief introduction to your topic.
3. **Servant Leadership**: Write 2-3 paragraphs describing which servant leadership characteristics are **most** relevant to your research interest (no more than two competencies). Explain why they are relevant to your research interest.
4. **Research Topic**: Next, include the following three statements to clarify what you want to address in your question. If you can complete these statements, you will have a narrow enough topic, with enough direction, to perform some great research.
   * I am researching \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (What? Topic)
   * because I want to find out \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (So What? Issue/question)
   * in order to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (Now What? Application/Purpose).
5. **Research Question & Rationale**: Write the research question you want to pursue for your capstone project. Write a 2-3 paragraph rationale for why you chose this question. Discuss why this topic is important to you.
   * Be sure your Research Question (RQ) is formatted as a question.
   * Check your RQ to be sure it is specific and that it can be answered through research. **Be aware that you will likely refine your research question by the end of this course.**
6. **References**: Include an APA 7 formatted reference list.

*APA 7: Be sure to use APA formatting for all in-text citations and references.*

**Assignment 2 Rubric**

| **Criteria** | **Description** | **Possible Points** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Introduction** | Clearly and concisely describes leadership interests with a strong, focused statement on the research topic. The topic introduction is compelling and engaging. | 15 |
| **Servant Leadership** | Thoughtful analysis of relevant servant leadership characteristics, demonstrating a deep understanding of relevance to the research interest. | 20 |
| **Research Topic Statements (What, So What, Now What)** | Each statement is precise, relevant, and clearly articulates topic, issue, and purpose, demonstrating readiness for scholarly inquiry. | 20 |
| **Research Question (RQ) Development** | The research question is specific, researchable, and well-supported by rationale, providing a clear path for inquiry. | 20 |
| **Personal/Professional Relevance** | Provides strong, reflective reasoning for topic selection and connects to personal/professional interests in a meaningful way. | 10 |
| **References & APA 7 Compliance** | Reference list and in-text citations are complete, accurate, and consistently follow APA 7 format; formatting is excellent. | 10 |
| **Overall Clarity, Organization, & Length** | Paper is well-organized, flows logically, and adheres to length requirements. Writing is clear, concise, and engaging. | 5 |
| **Total Points** |  | **100** |

### Assignment 3: Scoping Literature Review (30%)

In this assignment, you will conduct a scoping literature review to explore the breadth and depth of existing research relevant to your topic. Scoping reviews provide a broad understanding of the volume and type of evidence available, helping to assess the feasibility and potential direction for future in-depth research.

**Instructions**

1. **Introduction**: Begin with a brief overview of your topic and the purpose of the scoping review. Briefly introduce the topic, explain its relevance in leadership research, and outline the purpose of the scoping review. Provide a summary of the review’s aims, including any specific topic you intend to explore. Some questions to help your write the introduction are:
   * What was your research about? (Provide a general but engaging introduction that describes the context of your paper.)
   * What generated your interest in this research?
   * What problem does your research address?
   * Why is your research important? How does your paper address the problem?
   * What is your research question?

To conclude this section, provide a brief statement outlining the purpose of the scoping literature review. For example, you may use the sentence: The purpose of this scoping literature review is to present an overview of available literature about [insert topic] and determine whether this topic is suitable for more in-depth research.

1. **Methods**: Summarize your search process, including keywords, databases, and selection criteria. Mention any inclusion or exclusion criteria applied.
2. **Search Strategy**: Include your search strategy table showing how you found and narrowed sources. Include 1-2 paragraphs explaining the table.
3. **Results**: Organize your findings by grouping the literature into major themes or categories that reflect trends, concepts, or focus areas within the literature. For each theme, summarize relevant findings and synthesize information from multiple sources, emphasizing:
   * Common findings across studies,
   * Unique insights from specific articles, and
   * Contrasts or differences that highlight diverse perspectives in the literature.
4. **Discussion**: Reflect on the major findings and insights from your review, noting any significant research gaps or areas of limited understanding within the existing literature. Briefly discuss potential directions for future research based on these observations.
5. **Conclusion**: Conclude with a summary of your main findings, key insights, and any gaps in the literature. Reinforce the significance of your topic and suggest how future research could address identified gaps. Offer any final thoughts on the topic’s significance or potential practical applications in the field of leadership.
6. **APA Compliance and Presentation**:
   * Follow APA 7th Edition for title page, in-text citations, headings, and reference formatting.
   * Ensure clear, concise, and well-organized writing, with each section of the paper contributing to a coherent and informative review.

**Requirements**

* **Sources:** Select and analyze a minimum of 10 scholarly sources. You may use the five sources from your annotated bibliography if they are relevant.
* **Length:** Maximum of 10 pages, excluding the title page and references.
* **Format:** Follow APA 7th Edition guidelines for citations, references, and formatting.

**Assignment 3 Rubric**

| **Criteria** | **Description** | **Possible Points** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Introduction** | Provides a clear and engaging introduction that contextualizes the topic within leadership research. Effectively introduces the scoping review’s aims, addresses key questions, and presents a focused research question that guides the review. | 10 |
| **Methods** | Describe the search strategy, including keywords, databases, and selection criteria. | 15 |
| **Search Strategy** | Include your search strategy table showing how you found and narrowed sources. Include 1-2 paragraphs explaining the table. | 10 |
| **Results** | Organizes findings into well-defined themes or categories that reflect key trends and concepts. Summarize relevant findings that reflect key trends and concepts. Note common findings across studies, unique insights from specific articles, and contrasts or differences | 25 |
| **Discussion and Analysis** | Offers insightful analysis of your results, discussing how they enhance understanding of the leadership topic. Identifies significant research gaps, discusses limitations within the literature, and suggests meaningful directions for future research. | 20 |
| **Conclusion** | Summarizes the scoping review’s main insights, emphasizing key findings and research gaps. Conveys the topic’s significance and its potential impact or application in leadership practice. | 5 |
| **Format and APA 7 Compliance** | Follows APA 7th Edition formatting for title page, in-text citations, references, and headings. Presentation is clear, concise, and well-organized, with a logical flow between sections | 10 |
| **Overall Writing Quality** | Writing is scholarly, concise, and free of grammatical errors. Ideas are clearly presented and contribute to an informative, cohesive review. | 5 |
| **Total Points** |  | **100** |

### Assignment 4: Research Letter of Intent (15%)

In this assignment you will demonstrate your scholarly inquiry learning by writing a research letter of intent (1 page excluding title page and references). The letter of intent is suitable for thesis track proposal or reframing in LDRS 697/698 as a systematic literature review.

Before you begin LDRS 697/698, you must choose a capstone or thesis track. Your options are:

* Capstone: Conduct an extensive Systematic Literature Review (secondary research).
* Thesis Track: Conduct primary research.

After choosing option 1 or 2, write a one-page (plus title page and references) letter of intent, explaining which option you choose. In the letter of intent, you will briefly describe the background of your research problem, your research question, and proposed methods. Be aware you must have approval from your professor to pursue the thesis track.

**Instructions**

Write a one-page letter of intent including the following:

1. **Background of the Research Problem:** Short paragraph, building an argument based on the literature and your personal/professional experience, regarding why this is an important research study. This can be a succinct summary of what you’re learned in your scoping literature review.
2. **Research Question:** clearly state your revised research question.
3. **Proposed Methods:** Include a short, detailed, succinct description of how you plan to gather and analyze data (thesis track: primary research) or capstone (systematic literature review), to answer your research question. Explain why the option you chose is best suited to answer your research question.
4. **Conclusion:** Summarize why this study matters, your RQ, and the methodology you will use to answer this RQ.
5. **Reference Page**

*As always, be sure to use APA 7 formatting for all aspects of this paper, including Title Page, Tables, Citations, and Reference List.*

**Assignment 4 Rubric**

| **Criteria** | **Description** | **Possible Points** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Background of the Research Problem** | Provides a clear, concise background that builds a compelling argument for the study’s importance. Draws effectively on both literature and personal/professional experience to establish relevance and context. | 25 |
| **Research Question** | Presents a focused, specific, and researchable question that aligns directly with the research problem and chosen methodology. | 20 |
| **Proposed Track** | Clearly explain your proposed track (primary research or systematic literature review) and why it is suitable for addressing the research question. Describes data gathering and analysis strategies effectively. | 25 |
| **Conclusion** | Summarizes the study’s significance, the research question, and track. Offers a compelling final rationale for the study’s relevance and chosen track. | 10 |
| **APA 7 Compliance & Formatting** | Adheres to APA 7th Edition format for title page, references, in-text citations, and overall structure. Paper is well-organized, clear, and professional in presentation. | 10 |
| **Overall Writing Quality** | Writing is concise, scholarly, and free from errors. Communicates ideas clearly and maintains a professional tone throughout. | 10 |
| **Total Points** |  | **100** |

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