A Guide to the Knowledge Area Modules

Making the KAMs Work for You

Iris M. Yob, Ed.D.
Acknowledgments: We are grateful to Mark Bignell, Patricia Bresser, Robert Gerulat, Sally Miller, and Diana White for permission to reproduce excerpts of their work.
Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contents</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Basics</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guiding Principles</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Learning Agreement</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Breadth</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Depth</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Application</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing and Formatting Tips</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequently Asked Questions</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LA and KAM Submission</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Rubrics</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Basics

A Knowledge Area Module, or KAM, is a unit of study in a social science subject area. The study is conducted as an independent investigation for which students in a KAM-based program prepare a contract, known as a Learning Agreement. A Learning Agreement indicates the learning objectives that a student sets for himself or herself within the subject area, what resources the student has located to help meet those objectives, and how the student will demonstrate competently meeting those objectives.

At the completion of a KAM study, a student writes a comprehensive paper known as a KAM demonstration. This paper has three parts—Breadth, Depth, and Application. Each part is given a course number and is equivalent to four quarter credits. As a result, each component should be equivalent to the work expected from a one-quarter (four-credit) doctoral-level academic course. In the first part, the Breadth, the student critically examines the basic theories of the specific subject area. In the second part, the Depth, the student explores more closely an aspect of that subject area focusing on current research. The third part, the Application, is an opportunity for the student to undertake a project to demonstrate the relationship of what has been learned in the earlier parts to actual professional practice. The three parts of the KAM are interconnected, with the latter parts building on and developing what has preceded them.

The KAM has been designed this way to strengthen the connection between theory and practice. The theoretical base of the Breadth component becomes a foundation for examining current research developments in the Depth component, and together these form a conceptual and research base for informing practice in the Application component.

KAMs and Learning

KAMs are first and foremost about learning. A major part of writing a KAM demonstration is the research into seminal thinkers and current, peer-reviewed research. The objective is to learn something—a lot, actually—about a particular field of knowledge. The KAM demonstration is a vehicle for confirming that the student did, indeed, learn. Thus, the real effort should be directed to the learning as much as to the writing.

KAMs are about a special kind of learning. At the start of a student’s KAM work, learning will focus on the facts, research, and theories; however, the real learning—higher order learning—is about what a student does with the facts, research, and theories studied. So, students need to aim not only to
understand but also to critically analyze, evaluate, and synthesize what they understand in order to create something new. At the end of the doctoral program, students are assessed on whether they have been able to make a unique contribution to the body of knowledge. The KAMs are where students start practicing that skill during their program.

**Why KAMs?**

The rationale behind the KAM approach is recognition that students structure and shape their study program according to their own interests and purposes. In other words, students customize their own study program. While everyone examines the same general theoretical foundation in the Breadth to gain a broad overview of the knowledge area, even here individual students have the opportunity to focus particularly on those theories and approaches that are most central to meeting their own objectives. Then, in the Depth, students choose a topic within the field of inquiry that relates directly to their own professional interests and pursue that topic more narrowly and closely. In the Application, students develop a project for a real or imagined situation in their professional practice, based on the knowledge gained in the earlier parts of the KAM. So, each completed KAM demonstration is as unique as each KAM student's professional responsibilities and aspirations.

One of the primary advantages of this approach is that students can forge a link between their professional lives and their doctoral studies. Students design the KAM demonstration so that theory and practice inform each other. What individuals study can enhance their daily practice, and what they know from experience can provide a critical perspective on the ideas they are studying. In essence, students are scholar-practitioners—active practitioners within a profession. Their work is deeply informed by theory and research, and the KAM students' work informs their professional knowledge.

Forging an individualized study program is a significant way to develop the scholar-practitioner skills that students will carry with them beyond their doctoral program. Students learn library and Web-based skills for locating information, research findings, and theories; articulate ideas; exercise critical-thinking skills; bring themselves up-to-date with recent developments in their profession; enhance their ability to ask the right questions and seek answers to them; and practice problem solving. More importantly, students make an original contribution to the body of knowledge in each KAM—one of the hallmarks of doctoral work—by writing a reflective paper or developing a project that breaks new ground.

Through it all, students will learn much. They will also probably unlearn some things. The possibility of new perspectives and a clearer vision of one’s professional life, combined with the surprises that come with discovery, drive the KAM approach.
Why These KAMs?

There are as many as six KAMs per doctoral program. These KAMs are divided between core KAMs (which are consistent across all degree programs) and specialized or advanced KAMs (which are focused on a specialization area). In some programs, courses have been substituted for the core KAMs or the specialized KAMs.

The three core KAMs focus on the theories, analyses, and modes of inquiry typically employed in the social and behavioral sciences:

- KAM I: Principles of Social Change
- KAM II: Principles of Human Development
- KAM III: Principles of Organizational and Social Systems

Together, these KAMs help students to examine the basic units of the individual, people in small or large groups or people in interaction with one another, and whole cultures or societies. These KAMs also help students to ask why things are as they are and how they change or how they can be changed.

Along with the KAMs, students also take a series of research methodology courses. The research methodology sequence explores how inquiry is undertaken in the social sciences. Here, students learn the approaches and skills for conducting their own research and assessing the findings of others in their field. These courses depart from the general model of the KAM independent study. They are conducted as online seminars.

Finally, the KAM program may also require advanced or specialized KAMs, focusing on in-depth knowledge of the students’ area of study.

Role of the Faculty Member

While working on KAMs, students will find that faculty members take two distinct roles: mentor and assessor.

Faculty mentors guide and advise students throughout their entire program. Students will meet their appointed mentor in the Research Forum section, either SBSF 7100 or EDUC 8800 (in The Richard W. Riley College of Education and Leadership), and that person will typically stay with a student throughout the program. The mentor may even become the chair of the student’s dissertation committee. Of course, as interests change, students may request a different mentor so that they can work with a
person whose interests match their own and whose expertise they believe fits well with their needs as a scholar. It is particularly important for students to choose the right mentor at the time they form their dissertation committee. (The final decision regarding faculty mentor assignments rests with the associate dean or the associate dean’s designee.)

The assessor is the faculty member who works closely with students on a particular KAM. The assessor guides students in the development of their Learning Agreement and KAM and evaluates their work at the end. The mentor will be the student’s first KAM assessor and may work with the student directly on more than one KAM. Check each college’s specific policy on how many KAMs students may work on with their faculty mentor. For all other KAMs, students will invite a faculty member to work with them as their assessor. It is a good idea to consult with the faculty mentor when choosing assessors for the KAMs.

Mentors and assessors are the students’ learning partners. They listen to students as they envision their objectives and purposes and ensure that they translate these into an appropriate plan of study. Mentors and assessors encourage students to meet new challenges and set appropriately demanding objectives and standards for personal accomplishment. They ask questions so that students probe the central issues, and they point students toward relevant resources. Mentors explore the students’ own imaginative ideas, research options, and practical demonstrations with them. They look for students to evaluate their own work and progress. And assessors read and evaluate the students’ written work with respect. However, assessors do not copy-edit or proofread the students’ work for style. Students are responsible for these tasks and should master the essentials outlined in the APA style manual. If students need additional help with writing, they should consult the online Walden Writing Center.

Each faculty assessor has 14 calendar days from receipt of a student’s work to either approve it or advise the student as to how to improve it. It is a good idea for students to contact their assessor to make sure their submitted work has been received. If their paper seems lost or stalled in the process, students should contact their assessor.

Taking charge of one’s own learning and making it work may seem overwhelming. Although there is something comfortable about having an instructor prescribe a student’s path, it can also be stultifying and limiting—and frustrating if what one is studying is not important to the student as a scholar-practitioner. Faculty members do not dictate the study program, but they do act as guides for KAM students. They work with students to identify and formulate questions, seek out ways of finding answers to those questions, and forge links between the study program and the students’ professional interests.
Role of the Walden University Librarians

The librarians are significant resources in the KAM study program. Their role is to help students learn how to identify relevant literature, obtain resource materials, and evaluate information resources. Students meet library staff at residencies, and students can contact them by e-mail or phone for individual questions. The library’s guide to KAMs and guide to research on theory and theorists are also important resources to help students plan their research.

Role of the Writing Center Staff

The Walden Writing Center staff is dedicated to ensuring that students’ work in a writing-intensive program proceeds smoothly. The professional writing staff can provide observations on students’ writing strengths and challenges, and suggest ways that students can develop their writing. To schedule a one-on-one review, visit the Tutoring page. Other services, such as Grammarly and webinars, are also available. Look for more on the Writing Center’s services later in this Guide.

Role of the Academic Advisors

Academic advisors can counsel students on policies related to processing Learning Agreements and KAM demonstrations. They also track student progress through the program according to the specific progress standards that relate to Walden doctoral work. While they do not advise students on the content of their work, they can confirm whether a Learning Agreement or KAM demonstration has been received and approved. With their help, students are encouraged to follow work through the approval process. Also, the advisors may be a student’s advocate if a faculty member is not responsive to the student’s requests and reminders.
Guiding Principles

Vision for Social Change

A doctoral degree at Walden University is intended to meet a real need. Whether a student’s issue is managed healthcare, at-risk students, business downsizing, team building, multiculturalism, or some other area of social concern, the study program should be purposefully customized toward that issue. If students can see that their own work has the potential to make a real difference somewhere in their professional world, it will help those students maintain focus in their study, sustain a sufficient level of motivation to carry them through to graduation, and bring a greater sense of purpose and personal satisfaction to the students’ efforts.

Putting Imagination to Work

Bringing about social change in some corner of a professional world begins with a dream, however small it may seem in the grand scheme of things. There are no pre-established steps for either creating the dream itself or finding ways to express and explore it progressively in the successive KAMs. Rather, this task is for the imagination, another skill that improves with practice. So, students need to give themselves permission to “think outside of the box” as they work their way through the program, by looking for connections among theories, between theories and practice, between research questions and research methodologies, and within different sociocultural settings.

Pointing the KAMs Toward Dissertation Research

The dissertation is where the project for social change is most fully realized, but each KAM can be a step toward the dissertation and can be sustained by the same vision. If the context of the chosen area of study is sufficiently broad and deep, students will discover that most, if not all, KAMs will give them a firm grasp of the topic. The broad theoretical analyses, the in-depth examination of current research findings, and the application projects students design and test can combine directly to form an abundance of ideas, experimental approaches, and practical solutions on which to draw when implementing the dissertation study. The more carefully students plan their Program of Study in general and the KAMs in particular, the more they will be able to capitalize on this opportunity to prepare for the dissertation. Students may also discover that they will revise and refocus their dissertation topic through doing the KAM work, but that the ability to revise a plan is also significant preparation for the dissertation.

In fact, by the time students come to the dissertation proposal, they should have some understanding of what gaps exist in the collective knowledge on the issue they will address, a set of possible research questions, the essentials for developing the theoretical framework for their study, a good collection of
critical readings for the literature review, some preliminary ideas on the research design, and possibly even the results of a pilot study. Even more, students will have honed the skills of doctoral-level thinking and scholarly writing so that these have become second nature when it is time to write their dissertation.

Academic integrity is essential when producing scholarly work. Although students may be writing for a second, third, or fourth time on a topic (such as the dissertation theme), each time students visit that theme, their work should reflect new approaches and insights. In general, students may use only small portions of documents from their KAMs as background or foundation for additional development in a subsequent KAM or research project, at the discretion of the faculty member. It is not permissible to merely copy and paste substantial sections from one KAM to another unless the faculty member approves. When students use their own scholarly work in subsequent research, they should cite themselves as the primary author and their previous coursework or KAM demonstrations as unpublished works, as shown in the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association.* Students must also become familiar with Walden’s policy on Students’ Misuse of Their Own Scholarly Work, found under the Code of Conduct and University Policies and Code of Conduct in the *Walden University Student Handbook.*

**The KAM as a Whole**

Although a KAM has three identifiable components—Breadth, Depth, and Application—the final product should exhibit wholeness. Each of the KAM components is investigated within the same general field of inquiry, but this quality alone does not produce a unified KAM demonstration. Each component builds on the foundation laid in the previous ones and, moreover, provides a critical perspective for assessing the claims advanced in the other components. So, there is a retrospective and a prospective quality to the integration of the parts of a KAM, a review of what has preceded it and a preview of what is to come. Identifying and making explicit this interconnectedness is one indicator of a successful KAM demonstration.

**Preparation**

A KAM student should read all the materials that have been provided or that he/she has been asked to prepare. This expectation would seem to go without saying, but it can be tempting to neglect this important first step. The particular materials that support the KAMs include the following:

**Professional Development Plan and Program of Study**

The Professional Development Plan (PDP) and the Program of Study (POS) are the first pieces of writing that students produce when they begin their doctoral program. The PDP is a document that outlines a blueprint for approaching Walden doctoral studies. In consultation with the foundations course
instructor, students write the PDP to reflect their individual experience, achievements, and goals. The POS form is developed in consultation with an academic advisor to create an individualized plan for completing all degree requirements within a desired time frame.

The POS shows the order in which the students plan to undertake the KAMs. The POS also gives a brief overview of what students are likely to attempt in each of the components of Breadth, Depth, and Application for each KAM. Of course, what once is planned is not set in stone, and as students engage the resources and establish some experience on which to build, they may want to revise these early outlines. Nevertheless, the outlines do give students a starting point for thinking about each new KAM.

At the beginning of each quarter, students consult both the PDP and POS and develop a plan that outlines their goals for the quarter. At the end of the quarter, students report on their progress and check off on the POS any requirements met during the quarter. This way, students stay on track to graduate in a timely manner.

**Online Catalog and Student Handbook**

The [Walden University Catalog](https://www.waldenu.edu/catalog/) contains the degree requirements for each of the doctoral programs, providing course codes and titles for each KAM section. The [Walden University Student Handbook](https://www.waldenu.edu/student-handbook/) has separate sections describing the policies and procedures for the Learning Agreement and the KAM, including useful information on the appointment of assessors and approval processes.

**KAM Curriculum**

The curriculum for each KAM, accessible from the Center for Research Quality page on the [Learning Agreement and Knowledge Area Module](https://www.waldenu.edu/learning-agreement) and also on the program's home page, lists the syllabus and learning activities. Each guide outlines the content area, offers learning objectives, suggests references, and describes a variety of possible learning demonstrations for each KAM.

Even though the curriculum does impose a degree of structure, it is still more like an outline of possibilities than a collection of prescriptions and rules to follow. The Breadth is the most prescriptive component, for it defines a knowledge area and identifies its seminal thinkers—thus providing a theoretical base for the rest of the KAM. Within the Breadth, though, students can bring a particular perspective to bear on their selection of themes (e.g., ethnicity, gender, cultural context, professional objectives, and so on). Students should also explore a variety of themes or concepts in the Breadth. For example, in KAM 2, students should make sure to look at human development from a variety of perspectives. They should include several theories of human development, not just several theorists on behaviorism, for example. The Depth and Application encourage even greater discretion, for here
students identify the particular aspect of the study they want to pursue and how they will put it to work in a practical way.

The curriculum will help students frame their work in terms of Walden’s expectations. As KAM students gain a clearer idea of what they want out of the program and as they gain more confidence, they increasingly use it as a point of departure for delving into the knowledge area. From there, they look for additional resources and alternative approaches within the field of inquiry and develop their own particular demonstrations of competency. Scholarly expertise will grow as a result of practicing these skills.

**Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association**

This manual (6th edition, 2010) provides students with the information they need to know about formatting, citing, punctuating, and other grammar rules for writing KAM demonstrations. Although creativity is valued in other aspects of work at Walden, these rules are fixed, and this manual is a student’s rule book. The [Writing Center](https://www.waldenu.edu/support/writing-center) also provides additional online information about style and formatting preferences.

**SBSF 7100 or EDUC 8800 Research Forum**

This online forum for continuing research is designed to give students a place for conversation with their mentors and other KAM students, as well as ready access to a wealth of supporting materials, including samples of work and links to pertinent documents. Students are automatically enrolled in the research forum each quarter.

If students have not yet been appointed a mentor, they are assigned to a section with a temporary instructor. After a mentor has been assigned, students are assigned to their mentor’s Research Forum section. If students decide to invite a different faculty member to be their dissertation chair, they are transferred to the chair’s Research Forum section as soon as the appointment is made official.

The Research Forum includes a rubric for KAMs. The rubric is a guide for students who are writing the KAMs. This same rubric is used by faculty members when assessing student KAMs.

**KAMs as Creative Exercises**

Fashioning scholarly work and designing the KAM demonstrations are similar to painting a picture or composing a symphony; that is, they are all creative exercises. Even though students may use many of the same original materials as others, their choices and scholarly decisions along the way result in a final
product that is unique. Students may find some models or samples of complete KAM demonstrations, but they should not let these restrain their own thinking. Although a faculty mentor and KAM assessor can advise, the creative initiative lies within the individual student.

**Critical Thinking**

In creating the KAM demonstrations, it is helpful to adopt a critical mindset. In other words, in KAM work, students should look for weaknesses or oversights in proclaimed theories, demand evidence to support claims, question the way things are usually done, and avoid taking anything for granted.

Students may wonder what qualifies them to criticize well-respected, published theorists or researchers, especially when the students are new to their domain of knowledge. They should remember that no theorist has all knowledge and no one is without blind spots. For many theorists, their writings preceded the full testing of their ideas in real situations and often the corrective influence of alternative points of view. The theorists that students examine do not have the advantage of what students know from experience or from advances made since they wrote. Students have at their disposal an array of methodologies and new perspectives in social science research that was not available to earlier generations of scholars.

Today, scholars are much more sensitive to the fact that there can be differences in interpretation among different cultures or genders. Contemporary writers are more hesitant to make claims for all people for all times. They increasingly realize that their own cultural contexts and personal value systems help determine what they study, how they study it, and what conclusions they might put forward. On these grounds, not only may students criticize the ideas of others, they must do so if the collective knowledge is to continue to grow and be trustworthy in diverse situations.

Students should focus their critical analysis not only on the writings of others, but on their own work as a scholar and as a practitioner as well. This expectation requires a good deal of research and unhurried reflection along with a measure of the kind of common sense that grows out of experience.

**Library Collections and Other Resources**

Identifying and obtaining scholarly material is a significant part of the doctoral program. Because no specific textbooks are required reading to prepare for KAMs, identifying resources is a basic skill that students begin to practice from the initial KAM. They should explore online library catalogs and search library databases and scholarly websites to identify theoretical works and relevant research that match the requirements of the KAM and students’ professional and research interests. Students may find
books, journals, reports, Internet documents, and other resources to help them. For assistance in identifying scholarly material, consult the Walden Library website or contact the librarians at library@waldenu.edu.

The Walden Library offers access to more than 64,136 full-text online journals and 164,703 electronic books, as well as thousands of dissertations, reports, conference papers, and more. Students can access these materials immediately through the library’s research databases and other online collections. Students may explore the Walden Library website to become familiar with the resources available. The library also offers document delivery and reference services. Students can also contact the Walden librarians at library@waldenu.edu for guidance regarding options available for obtaining scholarly materials.

If students are affiliated with another local university or college, they may also be able to use that institution’s resources and services. If not affiliated with any of the local institutions, students can explore their library websites or contact the libraries to determine if they extend services to unaffiliated patrons. Students can also contact the Walden librarians at library@waldenu.edu for guidance regarding options available for obtaining scholarly materials. Students may request that the liaison librarian who works with the program of study set up a document delivery account for the student.

Filing System

Locating information is the first step in mastering resources; developing a filing and retrieval system is the second. Students may want to consider using a computer software filing system. Such downloadable software packages allow students to store and manage bibliographic references. Students collect references from online and Web-based databases, create instant bibliographies and reference lists, and import some text files from online sources. Some Walden students have found such software packages as ProCite, EndNote, Mendeley, or Zotero helpful. Other students use annotated notes and card files. Whatever system chosen, students will probably discover that they need to adapt it along the way to suit their own needs. The primary objective is that students maintain good records of the information they have discovered, including where they found it and the research strategy used to locate it. That way, when the information is next needed, the students can relocate it. They also have the full details for citing it in their work.

Comprehensive Notes

Students should read with a pen in their hands or a computer keyboard at their fingertips. That is, as they read, students should develop a record of their findings: the writer’s key ideas, the exact page where these ideas were found, pivotal quotes in the work that might be of use, and more importantly,
questions, criticisms, and other observations that come to mind. In other words, students should make their reading an active, creative exercise—and keep a record of it. Good record-keeping will also help keep writing honest. If an idea is already credited to another writer in their notes, students will not inadvertently claim it as their own.

Example

Notes on:


p. 2 “The different voice I describe is characterized not by gender but theme. Its association with women is an empirical observation…. But this association is not absolute….“ [Note: How does this relate to the title of the book which focuses on women’s development? Will she actually show that men too may use this “voice”?

p. 2 central assumption: way people talk reveals how they see the world.

p. 3 makes distinction between her research that looks at moral problems in people’s experience and other research that focuses on subjects thinking about problems presented to them by researcher.

p. 6 “…how accustomed we have become to seeing life through men’s eyes.”

p. 8 separation and individuation different for males than females. [Claim based on Chodorow’s work but is she the only theorist who makes this argument? Why don’t Freud and some of the other psychologists also notice this?]

Write

When the reading and planning are complete, students may find themselves staring at a blank sheet of paper (or blank computer screen), not sure how to craft that first sentence. Or, writer’s block may come at some other critical juncture of a KAM demonstration. The most effective preparation for writing is to
outline and organize the paper before beginning. After that step, one solution to writer’s block is to walk away from the task for a time, focus on other things, and then come back to make a fresh start. Another solution is to skip the opening and write a portion of the paper that flows more easily. The text of the paper does not have to be written in the order in which it is presented. Whatever strategy works, ultimately the student just needs to write. When students make a start, then they will find the pen (or keyboard) will do some of the work for them. Sooner or later, the ideas will begin to take shape, and whole paragraphs will start to appear. Putting some thoughts down in writing will give students ideas about how to improve what they have said and where to go from there.

**Edit**

Students should act as the first friendly critic of their own work. As independent scholars, students are responsible for correct spelling and grammar, the application of the conventions of scholarly writing, and the clarity and persuasiveness of their ideas. Polished writing is the end result of multiple drafts and fine-tunings. It is not unusual for the refining and editing of a scholarly paper to take as long as writing the first draft. It is a good rule to leave an iteration (or rewrite) of the work untouched for a day or two and then to read it again with a fresh perspective. Reading the work aloud to oneself or others also reveals where the continuity of ideas or the development of an argument might need some adjustment.

**Iterations as Learning Opportunities**

A request by a faculty mentor for further iterations of the work is not an indication of failure but an opportunity to strengthen the work by extending ideas or reaching a higher standard of thinking or communication. At least one iteration request is normal, and several requests are not unusual. The review of KAM demonstrations by the students’ faculty assessors is similar to the review process for other scholarly endeavors. A research project, such as a journal article or book chapter, has not only been carefully reviewed by the writer, but has undergone further reviews by peers and colleagues before it is published. The goal of the review process in each case is to make the final product stronger and clearer.

**Quality and Integrity in Scholarship**

Doctoral students are active participants in the scholarly enterprise. The integrity of scholarship as a whole ultimately depends on the integrity of individual scholars, especially since scholarship is a community activity shared among peers and colleagues. Students must be sure to acknowledge all sources they use for ideas or wording. Accurately citing sources is critical to the integrity of the work; students must be sure to check their style manual for proper citation methods. Evaluate the work of others respectfully. Represent the findings of others accurately. And, to develop as a member of the community of scholars, students should strive to make each KAM demonstration reflect their best endeavors.
Balance

Balance growth and haste, completion and perfection. There is a fine line between working through the KAMs and the writing of the dissertation. It is the line between not doing enough and doing too much. No KAM demonstration is going to be perfect, but every KAM demonstration should show measurable growth in the student’s ability as a researcher, a scholarly thinker, and a communicator. Students should not strive for perfection, but they should also not sacrifice quality for haste, for haste is the antithesis of reflective and productive thinking.
The Learning Agreement

The Learning Agreement (LA) is the plan that students create for a KAM to help them focus and design their KAM research. The LA is also a contract, in that students agree to study the KAM according to the plan outlined. A student saves time by allowing the faculty assessor to give feedback and guidance on the framework of the study before fully investing the time and effort in researching and writing the KAM.

The basic components of a LA are the following:

- An overview of the KAM—that is, a summary statement of what students plan to accomplish in each component of the KAM, with an indication of how each of the components is related
- Separate outlines of the Breadth, Depth, and Application components, in each case listing the objectives, the references students plan to consult, and a description of how they will demonstrate that they have met the objectives

Students can find sample LAs in their Research Forum and a writing template for LAs on the Writing Center website.

How does the LA work? Students submit the LA to their faculty assessor, who may or may not have further suggestions or questions for revision. A rubric for LAs can be found in the student’s Research Forum. The rubric can guide students as they develop their LA and will be used by their assessor to evaluate their LA. By reviewing their LA, the assessor assures that the students’ plan for the KAM appears workable, is sufficiently comprehensive, and meets basic expectations.

KAM Assessor

For the student’s first KAM, the faculty mentor serves as the assessor. For all other KAMs, students invite faculty members to serve as their assessors. It is a good idea to consult with the faculty mentor before making these invitations. Students should also check the KAM Policies and Processes section of the Walden University Student Handbook for their college’s or school’s policy on how many KAMs the faculty mentor may assess for each student.

As a general rule, students should use their KAMs to work with a wide variety of faculty members, especially individuals who share similar interests with students. Students probably want to invite such faculty members to participate on their dissertation committees.
Getting Started

Students are not able to write an effective LA until they have familiarized themselves with the curriculum for that KAM. Students can access the curriculum via the Learning Agreement and KAMs page of the Center for Research Quality website, in the Research Forum and through their program’s home page.

After students have a sense of what the KAM is about, they need to locate and examine possible resource materials. Students should browse reference works, such as handbooks and subject specific encyclopedias, look for research on related topics on the Web, or search other information sources. Doing an overview of the resource materials first will enable students to make informed selections among theories, topics to be examined in depth, and possible application projects. It will also determine what resources are available locally and what resources students will need to acquire by other means. Students should also consult with the KAM assessor for suggestions, based on the student’s interests, and to agree on the initial set of literature to read. Then, with reference materials at hand, the curriculum open, and the PDP fresh in mind, the student is ready to begin.

Finding a Theme

KAM curriculum guides are written to encompass a field of knowledge, but the KAM demonstration is limited by the parameters of students’ own interests and by approximately 30 pages of writing for the Breadth component and 25–30 pages for the Depth component. Students do not have to cover the whole field, but they do need to explore a coherent and identifiable element within that field. In other words, students should find a theme that is important to them and develop that topic throughout their paper. The curriculum gives students some suggestions for themes: students may choose one of these or develop another of their choosing.

Writing the Objectives

Be Specific

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NO</th>
<th>YES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Analyze several social change theories. (Avoid that word “several” and other vague alternatives.)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Analyze the social change theories of Marx, Blumer, Durkheim, and Toffler in terms of their underlying assumptions about human nature and destiny.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Not only does this objective identify the theorists
to be studied but also the particular perspective or theme that will be used in the analysis.

Examine a problem in my professional field from the perspective of social systems theory.

Examine the problems associated with managed healthcare in district X from the perspective of social systems theory.

Now is the time to decide which problem.

**Demonstrate Learning**

*Hint: The objectives should read like examination questions.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NO</th>
<th>YES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Understand the difference between open and closed systems.</td>
<td>Differentiate between open and closed systems in terms of organization, purpose, and effect.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Understand” is not a demonstration. Ask what can be done to demonstrate understanding.</td>
<td>If students “differentiate” between open and closed systems, they will have demonstrated their knowledge of them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appreciate the role of social and cultural context on human development.</td>
<td>Describe and explain significant ways in which social and cultural context can affect human development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What can one do to demonstrate that he or she do “appreciates”?</td>
<td>Describing and explaining will show that the student appreciates the impact of social and cultural context on human development.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Lower Order Objectives as Starting Points for Higher Order Objectives**

Higher order objectives indicate that students are making their own original contributions to the field of study; lower order objectives indicate that they will be merely repeating in some way the thoughts of others. Although some summary of the ideas of authorities in the field of knowledge may be useful, students should always keep the summary short and endeavor to go beyond it. It is recommended that students incorporate higher order demonstrations such as the following:

**Analyze**: Take the work apart to examine its basic assumptions, structure, evidence, reasons, conclusions, logical implications, and so forth.

**Compare**: Expose patterns of similarity in the basic assumptions, structure, evidence, reasons, conclusions, and logical implications among different writers.

**Contrast**: Find where writers differ from each other in basic assumptions, structure, evidence, reasons, meanings, and logical implications.

**Synthesize**: Blend the ideas and contributions of a number of writers into a coherent whole.

**Integrate**: Harmonize the disparities among theories to give a comprehensive view of the knowledge area.

**Evaluate**: Appraise the strengths and weaknesses of a theory against identifiable criteria.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LOWER ORDER OBJECTIVES—NO</th>
<th>HIGHER ORDER OBJECTIVES—YES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Summarize the major points in the human development theories of Piaget, Maslow, Kohlberg, and Fowler.</td>
<td>Synthesize the human development theories of Piaget, Maslow, Kohlberg, and Fowler to produce a comprehensive picture of normal human development at key stages across the lifespan.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The theories may be unfamiliar to the student, but a KAM demonstration is not the place to merely write a disconnected series of book summaries.

Discuss the strengths and limitations of the stage theory approach.
Here a theme approach looks for parallels among the theories and is followed by a critical analysis.

List the key features of open and closed systems.

A list should be merely the beginning—to explore an application, prepare a critical response, undertake a comparative analysis, or make some other original contribution.

Compare and contrast the key features of open and closed systems.

Analyze the administrative structure of school district X against these features.

From this analysis, prepare a set of recommendations for the school district that could make the work of the classroom teacher more effective.

The list is put to use in several ways.

**Combined Objectives**

Ensure that the combined objectives of the Breadth, Depth, and Application are logically interconnected and interdependent. Each component of the KAM builds on what has preceded it and anticipates what is to come.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NO</th>
<th>YES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Breadth:</strong> Critically examine the theory of Piaget in cognitive development, Kohlberg in moral development, and Erikson in social development.</td>
<td><strong>Breadth:</strong> Compare the theories of Bandura, Mead, and Erikson in the sociocultural development of adolescents and young adults.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Depth:</strong> Critically examine research based on the work of Jung as it relates to human development.</td>
<td><strong>Depth:</strong> Critically examine research on African-American adolescents’ and young adults’ sociocultural development against the general theories of Bandura, Mead, and Erikson.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Application:** Design a counseling workshop for women contemplating abortion, using the findings of Gilligan.

**Application:** Design a manual for use in youth services to promote healthy sociocultural development in young African Americans.

The difficulty with this set of objectives is that each component is built around the ideas of different theorists and a different issue without identifying any interconnections between them. There is a sense of continuity between the components and consistency in the theoretical framework.

---

**Choosing References**

**Primary Sources**

Primary sources are the original works, written by the researcher or scholar, describing or summarizing his or her own work. A student should plan to read the original works of the major writers rather than focusing on summaries or replications of their work, or responses to their work by others. If the original work is not available in a language with which the student is familiar, he or she should read a direct translation. Any commentator who responds to another’s work is making his or her own interpretation based on a particular perspective that a student may or may not share or find to be appropriate in the particular study. Making one’s own interpretation and response to the seminal thinkers in a field of knowledge is an important part of being an independent scholar.

**Secondary Sources**

Secondary sources are commentaries on the original writings of others. They may be useful in identifying critiques or analyses that have already been made. Again, the bibliography link in the curriculum guide can direct students to secondary sources. Students should not let the secondary sources do their higher order thinking for them. They should be subjected to the same kinds of critique and analysis as the primary sources.

**Wikipedia and Similar Sources**

Online sources such as Wikipedia and many other websites have not been reviewed or edited for accuracy. Browsing some of these sites might be useful to give students an orientation to a topic, or to gather a list of good search terms and names of theories and theorists, but peer-reviewed references are more reliable, are required for the Depth component, and should be cited in the KAM itself. Students should read more on the use of and limits to Wikipedia in the library’s Quick Answer, Can I use Wikipedia?
Use of References

Students should include only those references that they know they can obtain and have read. Even though some titles in the suggested reference links of the curriculum might seem to match the students’ purposes well, students should not include them among their references unless they actually have access to them. In some cases, the listed references are no longer in print (although they may be found in library collections or as secondhand copies). Students should remember that the LA is a learning contract, and the expectation is that they have actually consulted the sources they have listed.

Students should list sufficient references to accomplish their objectives. There is no predetermined number of references to include in the list. The guiding principle here is to consult sufficient references to meet the objectives students have set for themselves. Most often, students select three or four theorists who can substantiate their proposed study. It is also possible for a study to explore multiple works written by a single theorist or to develop a theme from many theoretical sources, in each case taking just a relatively small part of each theorist’s body of work.

In the Depth, students should list all the references they will use for their annotated bibliography (a minimum of 15 peer-reviewed, research articles) and possibly several major comprehensive works that deal with the topic being addressed.

A distinction should be made between major works and shorter articles. In the LA, students should list the major works they will consult and any seminal journal articles, Internet sources, chapters from edited collections, reports, and other papers that might be used. In the Depth and Application, shorter works and more journal articles are used because the focus of the study has moved to current research and practical applications based on one or more of the foundational theories studied in the Breadth.

The reference list should be presented using APA style. At this point, students need to demonstrate that they have mastered the conventions that are used in a reference list. Consult the APA manual.

Designing the Demonstrations of Mastery

Doctoral work is characteristically written work. In all Breadth and Depth components and in most Application components, a scholarly paper will be at least a part of the typical demonstration that students have met their stated objectives. In designing a KAM demonstration, students must be sure that it matches their stated learning objectives. If students believe that an alternative to a written paper (for instance, a video, Web-based, computer or audio presentation) might better satisfy their objectives
in the Application component, they should consult with their KAM assessor and gain approval before moving ahead.

In the Breadth, the demonstration should encompass the objectives students have outlined in approximately 30 pages.

**Example**

If the objectives state:

*Define “social change.”*

*Compare theories of social change proposed by K. Marx, S. Vago, and A. Toffler.*

*Critically examine these theories from the perspective of the 21st-century social realities of economic globalization, the growing gap between rich and poor, and technological advances.*

Then, an appropriate demonstration would read:

*In a scholarly paper of about 30 pages, I will establish a working definition of “social change” and compare and critically assess the theories of social change of Marx, Vago, and Toffler as they relate to 21st-century social realities.*

In the Depth, the students’ demonstration should include both an annotated bibliography of at least 15 peer-reviewed, research articles and a literature review paper of about 25 pages.

**Example**

*I will prepare a critical annotated bibliography of 15 journal articles and a literature review paper of about 25 pages on the role of the family in Hispanic child and adolescent development.*
In the Application, in particular, students can design a demonstration that is more practical in nature. Here they can create a project of a different form from the scholarly paper, although a scholarly commentary of about 10 pages is often needed to establish the connection between the project and its theoretical and research foundations. Students should consult the curriculum for project suggestions.

**Example**

_I will develop a series of four workshops for parents on meeting the developmental challenges of middle school children and append a rationale of about 10 pages drawing on the theories discussed in the Breadth and the current research findings discussed in the Depth._
The Breadth

Students have the opportunity to do the following in the Breadth of a KAM:

- Build a foundation of theoretical knowledge and explore how the concepts, constructs, and principles are interrelated in a field of study relevant to the social sciences.
- Develop the students’ scholarly skills in researching and writing.
- Practice the skills of making an original scholarly contribution.

Approaching the Breadth

The typical demonstration for the Breadth is a scholarly paper that grapples with the theories of seminal thinkers in a field of inquiry. The following suggestions may help students to create such a doctoral-level work.

Familiarization

Students should familiarize themselves with the theorist’s own work. Students should not rely on the interpretations of others, but should read the writer’s own words for a better sense of the total picture he or she developed, the nuances of thought, the evidence for the claims made, the logical development of arguments, and possibly the underlying assumptions and values that guided his or her thought. Students usually find the original works much more lively and wide sweeping than commentaries written on them by others.

Perspective

Before students begin to write, it is a good idea to choose a particular strategy, theme, or viewpoint through which they will examine the theories within the Breadth. Students should provide a broad overview of the field of knowledge, as the curriculum indicates, in approximately 30 pages. However, students cannot do justice to all theories and all perspectives. Instead, students should focus on their perspective, particularly on the higher order objectives. In effect, the perspective and how students approach it represent the original contribution they make to the discussion surrounding the field of inquiry. Students may be able to identify their perspective in an answer to one of these types of questions:

- How does this topic relate to the student’s area of special interest?
- What questions would the student like to have answered in this knowledge area?
- What patterns or common themes emerge among these writers?
- What makes each writer different from the others in the field?
Finding the perspective will direct the students’ reading and give purpose to their writing so that they do not get lost in an overwhelming amount of detail and possibility. If students have prepared well in the LA, the perspective they choose can be reflected there in their learning objectives. At the very least, the perspective adopted needs to reflect the higher order objectives set for this KAM.

When the theme is developed, students can read with greater focus, looking for ideas and arguments made by the writers on their particular topic. This strategy will help students navigate through their body of writings without being overwhelmed.

**Examples of Perspectives Taken in Effective KAM Breadths**

In KAM I, a student identified three common focuses in the writers she studied: economics, technology, and international relations.

In the same KAM, another student compared and assessed theories of social change from the point of view of their relevance in a multicultural world.

Another student summarized the grounding metaphors used in social change theories as described by Lauer and used them to analyze and compare the theories she studied in KAM I.

Yet another student in KAM I identified and analyzed the factors affecting social change, categorizing them either as intrinsic or extrinsic factors.

In KAM II, one student looked at human development theorists from the perspective of the impact of poverty.

In KAM II, another student examined the interplay between the development of cognitive and moral skills.

In KAM III, a student chose to synthesize the theories of three theorists to give a comprehensive view of systems.
Another student in the same KAM looked at systems theories through the lenses of complexity, flexibility, and stability.

Students can find other possible themes suggested in the curriculum.

**Writing the Breadth Essay**

The challenge of the Breadth component of the KAM demonstration is to write a scholarly essay that reflects doctoral-level thinking throughout it. In effect, this expectation means that students need to address the lower order objectives succinctly and optimize the writing in regard to the higher order objectives. Some suggestions for doing that follow.

**Organization**

The student should break down the case he or she is making into sections. The appropriate style of headings as described in the APA style manual and demonstrated in the curriculum to mark off the sections should be used. The student should be sure that there are logical connections between the sections so that the structure of the argument is clear to the reader. The students should be sure to include in each section only what is relevant to that section.

Students should avoid using the theorists as section organizers. The danger with having the theorists’ names as the section headings is that students will be tempted to write book summaries in each section. If students use facets of their chosen theme as section organizers, it will help them write an original essay and make their case.

Students should announce their perspective and purpose in the opening paragraph. The opening paragraph sets the stage for what will follow. Students should not only know themselves, but they should also tell their readers what their emphasis will be. In that way, students can flag their intentions in the opening and put all the following effort into meeting those intentions. Students might also want to announce how the paper is organized and what they will deal with in the upcoming sections.

*Examples of Stage-Setting Opening Paragraphs*

*The Breadth component of KAM I addresses the area of social change through the works of theorists Robert Lauer, Alvin and Heidi Toffler, Arnold Toynbee, Kurt Lewin, and community*
organizer Saul Alinsky. The major concepts of each are analyzed and evaluated. Lauer’s myths of social change are used throughout to compare and contrast the arguments of the others. Both historical and more contemporary works are highlighted to give a broad range of perspectives. (Patricia Bresser, KAM I Breadth)

The purpose of this forum will be to explore the ideas advanced by several theorists whose contributions have caused significant discussion within the domain of human development. Each writer has observed ways in which culture and nature have had an impact on human development, and therefore sees human beings as a part of a larger context in a multicultural environment. The areas covered in this forum will include but not be limited to biological, sociocultural, cognitive, moral, and psychological aspects of human development.... The panel for this forum spans the historical spectrum from Aristotle (384–322 BCE) to Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) and Daniel Goleman. (Mark Bignell, KAM II Breadth)

Development

Doctoral students should think of writing the essay as if they are telling a story, following the story line from beginning to end. Or to put it another way, in the essay, students should make a case, building it point by point from the beginning.

The most common pitfall for beginning KAM demonstration writers is organizing the Breadth component as a series of book summaries of each of the key theorists, with a few pages tagged onto the end of the paper that address the higher order objectives of synthesizing, comparing, contrasting, evaluating, and integrating. This approach fails to tell the story or make the case throughout. Furthermore, it fills up the essay with a recapitulation of somebody else’s ideas—and that is lower order thinking. Scholarly writing involves comparing, contrasting, evaluating, synthesizing, or integrating the ideas of many theorists and/or authors topic-by-topic or theme-by-theme—not theorist-by-theorist.

Staying On Point

KAM writers should not put anything into the essay that does not relate to the case they are building. Some of the theories studied will be fascinating in any number of ways and will tempt KAM students to explore them in all their ramifications. KAM writers should resist this temptation. For instance, when pursuing a study of social change in the sphere of economics, students might find Marx’s comments on religion interesting, but not relevant—so, they should make a note to come back to them later, but leave them out of this essay. KAM writers have a task to do, a destination to reach, an argument to develop. It is tempting to include a short biography of the theorist, but students should ask whether background and demographic information about the theorist has anything to do with the theme of the Breadth portion of the KAM. In the end, students will probably know more about the theorists and the
theories than appears in their essays because they will have selected from what they know only those points that relate to their story line. These choices do not mean, of course, that KAM students will leave out anything the theorist might say that would undermine the student’s case—that must be addressed—but students should leave out what is unrelated to the topic. KAM students must faithfully represent the complexity of the author’s ideas, but they should not attempt to reproduce the theory in all its details; the author has already done that task.

**Direct Quotations**

Students should use direct quotations where pivotal or fundamental points are made by the author. These quotations should be brief, properly cited, and accurately reproduced. Also, they should be woven into the story line to make a point. Most often, students will need to make connecting and interpreting comments to capitalize on a quote’s significance to the argument. KAM writers should avoid filling up their papers with quoted material—the author has already written a book of his or her ideas. The KAM students’ job is to do something with those ideas. And, it is important to remember that if one is going to summarize a theorist’s ideas, one still needs to cite the source.

*Example of an Effective Use of Quotations*

In the post-positivist era, other paradigms exist that contrast sharply with the positivist and empiricist epistemologies discussed above. These would include constructivism. Merriam (1998) noted that

> the key philosophical assumption... upon which all types of qualitative research are based is the view that reality is constructed by individuals interacting with their social worlds. Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how they make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world. (p. 6)

These key philosophical assumptions apply to this study because, as a qualitative ethnographic study, the intent of the research is to understand and interpret the meanings people have constructed concerning the organizational culture of which they are a part. (Robert Gerulat, dissertation)

**Paraphrasing**

KAM students should paraphrase when large sections of an author’s work are needed to establish their case. A succinct summary of a theorist’s ideas is sometimes needed as a foundation for the argument. Paraphrased information should be properly referenced and used to some purpose. Phrases directly quoted from the writer can be woven into the paraphrase, in which case they should be denoted by quotation marks and referenced separately.
Example of a Paraphrase With Quotations

According to Lauer (1991), in order to understand social change one not only has to define it; one has to evaluate the myths that surround it. For some, social change occurs with a change in attitude by an individual or group. For others a change in some social structure or organization is required. Lauer’s perspective was that “social change is an inclusive concept that refers to alterations in social phenomena at various levels of human life from the individual to the global” (p. 4). Some of the levels he described include organizations, community, and society. Lauer believed that social change is evident whenever there is “alteration at any level of social life” (p. 6). The direction of the change and how rapidly or slowly the change occurs should be the focus of study. Invariably there is a relationship between change on one level and change on another. For instance, an individual’s attitude about affirmative action may lead that individual to try to effect change in the company (institution) for which she or he works. However, Lauer cautioned that one cannot assume that change on one level (individual) will automatically lead to change on another (organization). (Patricia Bresser, KAM I Breadth)

Secondary Sources

KAM writers should use secondary sources to enrich their critique and analysis. The theories that students examine in the Breadth are chosen because they are foundational to the field of inquiry. Many of the theories were developed by an earlier generation of thinkers who have since passed from the scene. Given their significance and longevity, these original works have been discussed by later scholars in published commentaries and evaluations. To become part of the conversation, students need to know what central issues have been identified, especially those that relate to their theme. Again, these ideas should be used in the argument in the same way as the original author’s comments are used: with due acknowledgment, with critical commentary, and as support for the students’ own argument (not as a substitute for it).

Example of an Effective Use of Secondary Sources

Bandura has been criticized for minimizing the impact or interplay of developmental stages in learning, because he argued that the child’s environment was more of an influence on new behaviors than was the child’s intrinsic desire to learn new skills (Crain, 1992). These arguments have been made particularly by the followers of Piaget, who are focused on the cognitive processes of the child rather than the influences in the immediate environment. Bandura also raised questions about Kohlberg’s stages of moral development in children. Bandura was in agreement here with Skinner, looking at behavior instead of hypothesizing about what is occurring during the thinking process.
(Here the writer has stated the criticism and determined if there is any basis for it. Then, she expands on the criticism, adding her own reasons and arguments, as you will see below.)

The disagreement with the developmental theorists seems to be part of a certain weakness in the social learning approach in which the “black box” that is the brain, the cognitive and emotional center, is examined from the outside rather than the inside. In Bandura’s work, one finds no sense of awe, wonder, or even acknowledgment of the capability of humans to reflect, create, and love. Indeed, if Bandura is to be believed, people are all great imitators, using their cognitive skills to choose who they will imitate. While the self-efficacy appraisal is a form of reflection, there is no generalization of that sort of self-evaluation to the human condition, to an appreciation of the human capacity for philosophy, art, and love. (Diana White, KAM II Breadth)

Original Opinion

Students should develop their original opinions into a scholarly argument. Where to begin? After students have read the theories and maybe reviewed some secondary commentaries on them, they must challenge themselves with this simple question: What is the student’s own opinion of this theory within the parameters set for this study? That will give the student a starting place. Now the KAM student needs to expand those original opinions and hunches into a scholarly argument. Here is how an original intuition might develop into a scholarly argument.

State the original hunch. Kohlberg’s theory of moral development seems right when I read it, but it doesn’t seem to explain what my clients do, especially the Southeast Asian refugees I am working with.

Get to the bottom of the hunch by asking some questions. What do I mean when I say a theory is “right”? What do I mean when I say that my clients don’t fit the theory?

Formalize the hunch. What makes Kohlberg’s theory convincing? For what does Kohlberg’s theory fail to account?

Make a list of answers for each question. Kohlberg’s theory was built on a longitudinal study over many years and in many different cultural settings; it was built on the established philosophical foundation of Platonic idealism; his studies were replicated and his findings confirmed by others; etc. On the other hand, my clients do not always approach a moral choice so reasonably—their choices are often more intuitive, and making the right choice seems less important to them than pleasing others, especially
authority figures, including myself; they are easily persuaded to change their decisions, etc. Gilligan’s work illustrates these same discontinuities.

Develop a formal statement of findings. Now that I have the answers for each question, I can develop these answers into a formal statement of findings, supported with evidence from case histories, reasons, and the findings of other theorists and researchers.

Write the opinion as a scholarly argument. By the time students write the final statement, their opinions are replaced by an objective, reasoned argument.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NO</th>
<th>YES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I feel that Kohlberg is probably right when he...</td>
<td>Kohlberg is probably right when he... because...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(The reader is not particularly interested in others’ feelings.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe that Piaget should have taken into account...</td>
<td>I believe Piaget did not take into account... because...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(The student’s own beliefs are not as important as the reasons for those beliefs.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The writer of this essay argues against this viewpoint...</td>
<td>I argue against this viewpoint...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(If this is the student, say so.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In my opinion, the three theorists are in greatest agreement when...</td>
<td>The three theorists are in greatest agreement when...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(The student’s opinion may be right, but the reader is looking for supporting arguments.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In my experience as a classroom teacher, social change never</td>
<td>In a typical classroom, social change is not likely to occur</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
occurs when...

(A case cannot be made on anecdotal evidence: both the writer and the reader know that they have not lived long enough to experience all the possibilities.)

when... because...

At this point, the KAM writer may be wondering how a reader will recognize that this writing is the student’s original contribution to the scholarly discussion if all mention of the student’s opinions, beliefs, and experiences is omitted. With scholarly work, a reader will know that the writer is making the claim or argument by the absence of a reference to the writings of another author. That is, the KAM writer takes full credit for all claims not credited to somebody else.
The Depth

KAM students have the opportunity to do the following in the Depth component:

- Become familiar with significant resources (e.g., journals, databases, reports, texts, and Web-based sources) in the chosen field.
- Bring oneself up to date with current research findings on the topic.
- Discover the methodologies and instruments adopted by other researchers in this field.
- Find ways to improve the practice of the profession.
- Locate a place in the research literature to contribute an original study.

Annotated Bibliography

In the Depth component, KAM writers prepare an annotated bibliography of at least 15 current peer-reviewed research articles, preferably no older than 3–5 years from the date of the submission of the KAM, on the chosen topic. This bibliography is a significant step toward fulfilling the opportunities listed above and contributing to the dissertation literature review, where current findings are assessed. Here are some suggestions for maximizing the benefits of undertaking an annotated bibliography.

Journal Articles

Prepare annotations for journal articles (in print or online) rather than for books or large monographs. Journal articles are typically brought to public view much more quickly than books. So journal articles bring a researcher up-to-date with the very latest developments.

Furthermore, a journal article is a report on a specific piece of research. Books may draw on current research, but they typically do much more, by including philosophies, theories, conceptual analyses, applications, and other broad sweeps of information. In the case of the annotated bibliography, the focus is on specific research undertakings.

Select a wide variety of journals. Students should use this opportunity to familiarize themselves with the range of research sources available on this topic. A search in an appropriate database will be invaluable. Finding relevant articles in a number of different journals is likely to open up the variety of conceptual perspectives and research approaches that have been taken on the topic. The Walden librarians can help develop strategies for locating and evaluating journal articles. It is a good idea to locate more than the required number of sources and to include in the annotated bibliography only the most relevant and instructive ones.
Select scholarly, peer-reviewed articles. The articles selected must meet the quality standards of scholarship. Journals use a variety of methods for evaluating and selecting which submitted manuscripts will be published. The most demanding method is the refereed review process, where masked manuscripts are evaluated by experts in the field of study. Because of the rigorous nature of this process, articles appearing in refereed journals are considered to be high-quality scholarly material.

Other peer-review processes, which do not rely on masked reviews, may not be as rigorous and yet may still meet the standards of quality set by scholars and are generally acceptable for doctoral-level writing. In all peer-review processes, submitted manuscripts are evaluated by at least one expert in the field of study before they are published. For suggestions on how to determine if a journal is refereed or peer-reviewed, consult the Frequently Asked Questions section of this guide.

The most reliable method of identifying scholarly articles is to search scholarly databases that cover the student’s discipline. The material in research databases is selected to support scholarly research, so the material in these databases will generally meet the standards of scholarship. This fact does not mean that one can assume that every piece of research found in these databases is without flaws. In all situations, students must critically analyze any material used. Also, with the student’s assessor’s approval, a pertinent newspaper editorial or other non-scholarly piece may be used to round out the bibliography.

Consider what should be included in an annotated bibliography. The length of an annotated bibliography is not fixed, but it is important to include not only a summary of the article but also the student’s own response to it. The length of the annotations may be determined by the significance of this topic to the dissertation research. To maximize the benefits of preparing an annotated bibliography, students should include the following elements.

**Full Bibliographic Details**

*Example*

Make sure this follows correct APA formatting (hanging indent, double spaced):

Summary of the Research Method and Its Findings

Example

The authors described the construction and rationale of an honors course in science and religion that was pedagogically based on Lawson’s learning cycle model. In Lawson’s model, the student writes a short paper on a subject before presentation of the material, and then writes a longer paper reevaluating and supporting his views. Using content analysis, the authors compared the answers in the first and second essays, evaluating them based on Fowler’s stages of development. Examples of student writing are presented with the authors’ analysis of the faith stage exhibited by the students, which demonstrated development in stages 2 through 5.

Critical Assessment of the Article

Here are some questions students might address at this point:

- Was the research question well framed and significant?
- How well was the research related to the existing body of knowledge?
- Did the article make an original contribution to the existing body of knowledge?
- Was the theoretical framework for the study adequate and appropriate?
- Has the researcher communicated clearly and fully?
- Was the research method appropriate?
- Is there a better way to find answers to the research question?
- Was the sample size sufficient?
- Were there adequate controls for researcher bias?
- Is the research replicable?
- What were the limitations in this study?
- How generalizable are the findings?
- Are the conclusions justified by the results?
- Did the writer take into account differing social and cultural contexts?

Example

The authors made no specific effort to support spiritual development in the course. They were interested in the interface between religion and science, teaching material on ways of knowing, creation myths, evolutionary theory, and ethics. They exposed students to Fowler’s ideas, but did not relate the faith development theory to student work in the classroom. There appears to have been no effort to modify the course content based on the predominant stage of development, and it is probably a credit to their teaching that they were able to conduct such a course with such diversity in student faith development. However, since Fowler’s work is based largely within a Western Christian setting, some attention to differences in faith among class members would
have been a useful addition to the study. There was no correlation between grades and level of faith development.

**Statement of the Value of the Article to the Student in Particular or the Profession in General**

Here it is helpful to comment not only on the findings but also on what students might have learned about research methodology, including both research approaches and instruments (interviews, questionnaires, published pen and paper tests, and so forth) that they might adapt for their own research purposes.

**Example**

Fowler’s work would seem to lend itself to research of this sort, but this is the only example found in recent literature. This study demonstrates the best use of the model, which is assessment. While the theory claimed high predictive ability, the change process chronicled is so slow and idiosyncratic that it would be difficult to design and implement research that had as its goal measurement of movement in faith development continuum.

(The above examples were submitted by Diana White as part of the annotated bibliography for the KAM II Depth.)

**Writing the Depth Essay**

KAM students also write a Depth essay. The Depth essay is a literature review, similar in style and purpose to a dissertation literature review but smaller in scope. The essay should total at least 25 pages (in addition to the annotated bibliography), but again, the ultimate length of the demonstration depends on meeting the objectives given in the LA. Many of the same qualities that characterize a good Breadth essay apply to the Depth essay as well—building a case, demonstrating critical thinking, adopting the appropriate style conventions, and so forth. In addition, students may find the following suggestions helpful.

**Bird’s Eye View**

The Depth essay is a response to all the articles included in the annotated bibliography, when taken as a whole. The KAM student needs to step back from the individual annotations and take a “bird’s eye view” of them. What patterns are seen in this group of articles? There may be patterns or themes in the kinds of questions researched, the problems addressed, or the issues examined. These patterns might very
well serve to organize the essay into sections. Also, students should ask themselves what kinds of research methods were used in the studies. Are there a variety of methods and instruments, or has there been a consistency in the research approach, the kinds of subjects in the studies, or the data collected? What other kinds of research approaches and questions could be adopted to fill in gaps in understanding this topic? Another important question to consider is this: Have these studies built on each other or on an earlier foundational study, constructing and adding to the body of knowledge around a center of understandings or earlier findings? In an opening introduction to the essay, identify the themes of the essay, laying out how they were used to organize the paper.

**Write Critically**

Having discovered the themes, students should write each section by bringing into play all the articles that have addressed the theme. Compare and contrast the articles, show how one built on another or filled in a gap raised by another, or synthesize how they all work together to expand knowledge of the topic. Students need to do more than just summarize what is in the articles. They must use higher order thinking to do something critical and creative with the studies.

Students can look for related webinars at the Writing Center, such as “Writing the Literature Review” for additional assistance in critical writing.

**Probe for Gaps**

One of the purposes of a literature review is to go beyond a mere summary of what is already discovered about an issue to find where there might be omissions or blind spots in the literature. Students should note if the researchers they examined in the annotated bibliography consistently left out a specific group of subjects, a significant but related research question, or a different research method that would add new understandings if included. Students need to look for gaps in the literature that they or some other researcher might fill. The critical responses students have written throughout the annotated bibliography may supply some ideas. Throughout the Depth essay, students should be flagging any gaps, thereby building an argument for what they would consider to be important next steps in this research community.

**Strong Conclusion**

There are two significant items to include in the conclusion: a brief summary of the themes and final recommendations for future studies. In fact, the final recommendations may be based on the summary of themes. KAM students might also consider adding a statement about the significance of either what is already known or what additional understandings should be added to the body of knowledge, especially with regard to making some steps toward positive social change.
The Application

KAM students have the opportunity to do the following in the Application:

- Assess an aspect of their professional world in terms of the theory and research examined in this KAM.
- Use the information garnered in the Breadth and Depth to initiate some element of social change in their professional work.
- Test the theories and research findings examined in the KAM in a real-life situation.

Parts of an Application

The Application component of the KAM should include two parts: a full description of the project and reflections about the project.

Describe the Project

Students should explain why this project was undertaken, what the context was, who was involved, why the project was important, what the project was, and (where appropriate) how successful the project was. They should include any media or other electronic artifacts used. It is important for students to describe the ethical considerations involved in preparing for and/or undertaking the project, particularly in dealing with human subjects or in guaranteeing the right to privacy to those involved in the project.

Reflect on the Project

The reflective piece (usually about 10 pages) should show how the project was influenced by the theories studied in the Breadth and/or the research findings discussed in the Depth. In other words, the project should be connected to the other parts of the KAM. Future developments of the project, where appropriate, should be indicated. Students should also note how they would improve it, or what could make it more effective.

Students need to include a clear statement that indicates how the project can help change the professional field or bring about some aspect of positive social change, whether potential or realized. This statement needs to be specific rather than in general terms about this element.

Signs of a Successful Application

The Application section of the KAM demonstration is the design and/or implementation of a project that grows out of the Breadth and Depth, accompanied by a commentary of about 10 pages that makes the connection between the theory and research previously studied and the project. The project should
relate to a genuine need within the profession. It is usually more satisfying to be able to implement the actual planned project, but it is not always possible in the course of completing the KAM. Students need to discuss the matter of implementation with their assessor when creating the LA so that, together, the student and assessor can determine whether or not to carry out the project and report on its implementation as part of the Application. Students should remember that proposing original data collection (interviews, surveys, etc.) requires submission of an Institutional Review Board (IRB) application, which can complicate and delay the KAM review, submission, and approval process.

A successful Application meets the following criteria:

- It is demonstrably informed by theory and/or current research findings.
- It is a practical project that deals with a concrete situation.
- It is oriented toward social change (on an appropriate scale).

Example of Opening Paragraphs of Application

In recent years there has been a significant increase in the recognition of gerontology as a healthcare specialty area of practice. Gerontological and geriatric professional societies have formed and more research dollars are being directed toward issues in aging (Ferraro, 1997). Because the elderly segment of the population is the fastest growing, it seems a natural progression that a great interest has developed in healthcare of the elderly.

In 1998, Allegheny University of the Health Sciences performed a needs assessment in the greater Philadelphia region and determined that the local healthcare community would benefit from the implementation of a graduate-level gerontological nurse practitioner program at the university. Statistics provided by the national nurse practitioner certifying board revealed that proportionally there was a surprisingly low number of nurse practitioners certified in gerontology in this geographic location. As a result, the university decided to implement such a program, and a curriculum was developed. The national certifying body published a program outline, identifying the general areas that should be incorporated into any gerontological nurse practitioner curriculum, and this outline was used as a general reference for developing the curriculum. Development of the specific content was assigned to the board-certified gerontological nurse practitioner on the faculty. After the curriculum was completed, it was reviewed by an advisory board consisting of board-certified geriatricians (medical doctors), a gerontological nurse practitioner, and a gerontologist. The advisory board offered two minor suggestions for change that were incorporated into the course objectives. The final curriculum
was approved by the Pennsylvania Boards of Nursing and Medicine and the state Department of Higher Education.

*In this Application section, the final curriculum will be analyzed with respect to the theories of aging represented in the Breadth demonstration and the research and scholarly publications discussing normal aging in the Depth demonstration.* (Sally Miller, KAM II Application)

Because the Application section is a practical project, students are not asked to write another paper. Instead, they should give a full account of the project (see the curriculum for suggestions) and add a brief paper (8–10 pages) that reflects on the project, showing how the theories of the Breadth and/or the research studies of the Depth informed and shaped the project.
Writing and Formatting Tips

A significant part of the effectiveness of scholarly writing is the style, correctness, and presentation of the scholar’s ideas. Here are some basic points about writing to keep in mind.

**Simple and Interesting**

Although scholarly writing has style conventions, it does not have to be wordy, stuffy, or dispassionate. Writers should avoid colloquialisms and slang, but they should not strive to sound academic. Sentences should not be long and complex. The students’ convictions about what they are writing, dynamic evidence, and honest voice should not be lost in tedium. Crispness, curiosity, honesty, and enthusiasm are ingredients of impassioned scholarship.

**Spelling**

Students need to check their spelling. A word-processing program’s spell-checker cannot tell that the first component of a KAM demonstration is Breadth, not Breath, or that the developmental psychologist is Erikson, not Erickson.

**Pronoun-Subject Agreement**

For example, “a student should be in regular contact with their faculty mentors” is not correct because “student” is singular and “their” is plural. Correctly stated, this sentence should read, “A student should be in regular contact with his or her faculty mentor.”

**Proper Format and Style**

Write paragraphs that contain more than one sentence. For instruction about and examples of paragraph development, see the Writing Center’s paragraph resources.

Do not add spaces before or after a dash. Write “this— that”; not “this — that.” Consult the APA 6th edition manual for additional punctuation examples and other conventions. See the Writing Center’s punctuation resources, as well.

Writing templates for LAs and KAMs can be found on the Writing Center website. From the Writing Center’s main page, under the “Graduate” tab, choose “Learning Agreement (LA)” or “Knowledge Area Module (KAM)” from the dropdown list. Those pages provide links to examples and templates. The templates indicate the parts of the LA and KAM that need to be included, as well as their layout and pagination.
**Standard Formatting**

- Standard margins are 1 inch: top, bottom, and sides.
- Standard tabs are ½ inch.
- Times New Roman is preferred, with 12-point font size.
- Use double-spacing for the body of the text, both within and between paragraphs.
- Begin a new paragraph with a standard tab.

**Quotations**

The correct way to present quotations of 40 words or more is in block quotes. Indent the quotation on the left (a ½-inch tab, the same as a new paragraph) and double-space the entire quotation. Do not use quotation marks with block quotes. The author citation appears in parentheses after the last period. Thus:

> While much of the research in social systems has focused on organizational principles, there remains a body of theory that attempts to deal with disorganization or apparent chaos, and yet it still draws on the natural sciences.

> Chaos theory represents the most recent effort by social scientists to incorporate theory and method from the natural sciences. Most importantly, chaos theory appears to provide a means for understanding and examining many of the uncertainties, nonlinearities, and unpredictable aspects of social systems behavior. (Krasner, 1990, p. 3)

> Yet even here, behind the chaos is another kind of organizational principle, one which looks at repeating levels of chaotic patterns.

Shorter quotations should be included within the text. Use quotation marks and place the period after the author citation. Thus:

> One of the features of chaos theory that researchers are acknowledging is that “the chaotic processes can occur at the level of individuals and small groups, as well as at highly aggregated levels of analysis” (Kiel & Elliot, 1997, p. 140). This makes the application of chaos theory flexible and seemingly universal.
**Citing Authors**

Students need to know the rules for citing more than one author. When referring to two authors, always cite both surnames. When referring to three, four, or five authors, include all the names the first time. Thereafter, refer to the first author only, followed by et al. and the date of publication, as in (Smith et al., 2013). Within the same paragraph, refer to the first author only, followed by et al. (no comma or date). Writers would then continue to use this et al. format throughout their entire KAM; citations used in the Breadth and then used in the Depth or Application sections would still use et al. in these subsequent sections.

When referring to six or more authors, cite only the name of the first author and use et al. and the year in all references. See APA section 6.12 or the Writing Center’s citation resources for further information and for examples.

**Application Projects**

Because completed KAMs are submitted as one document, as much as possible, the Application project should be included within the document. If the project includes a PowerPoint presentation, there are directions at the Writing Center for uploading and viewing a PowerPoint presentation within a Word document.

**Organization**

Students need to use the correct organizational structure. For the KAM, include these parts in this order:

- Title Page (no page number)
- Abstract for Breadth (no page number)
- Abstract for Depth (no page number)
- Abstract for Application (no page number)
- Table of Contents (begins on page i, with pagination centered at the bottom)
- List of Tables (if applicable; pagination continues)
- List of Figures (if applicable; pagination continues)
- Breadth Component (begins on page 1, with pagination at the top right)
- Depth Component (pagination continues from Breadth)
  - Annotated Bibliography
  - Literature Review Essay
- Application Component (pagination continues from Depth)
  - Project Description
  - Reflection on Project
- References (pagination continues from text)
A KAM template is available through the Writing Center to ensure students adhere to the proper structure.
Frequently Asked Questions

With which KAM should I begin?

You may begin with any of the first three KAMs, referred to as the core KAMs. In planning your work, keep in mind that the first component of the research methodology sequence, RSCH 8100, should be completed within the first year of your program along with your first KAM.

Beyond that, some students simply start with the first KAM and work consecutively, knowing that in the end, they need to do them all. Others prefer to start with the one they may know a little about already (for instance, an AMDS student may start with KAM III: Principles of Organizational and Social Systems or an Education student may begin with KAM II: Principles of Human Development). This approach allows students to master KAMs without also working with an unfamiliar knowledge area at the same time. Others make their choice dependent on which KAM has a certain timeliness. For instance, they know there is a project they are about to embark on that would be a relevant application for one particular KAM. Another factor that needs to be taken into consideration is the amount of support you find through the Research Forum documents that will help you decide where to start. In the end, in consultation with your faculty mentor, you make the choice.

Can I change my Learning Agreement once it is approved?

After work begins on a KAM demonstration, you can revise the LA to meet your learning needs better, although this type of change rarely happens if the LA has been well prepared. You may want to change your LA if you find yourself in one of the following situations:

• You now have more relevant references than the ones you listed.
• You had planned on covering too little or too much of the knowledge area.
• You have thought of an even more compelling application project than the one you first proposed.

The faculty assessor must approve any changes to the LA. The revised LA must be submitted in the same way as the original. That is, use the Submit LAs and KAMs area of the Research Forum if your faculty mentor is also your KAM assessor; if not, send it as an e-mail attachment to the assessor and also send a copy to the faculty mentor via the Research Forum. Students will receive an e-mail stating their revised LA has been approved and received by the registrar’s office. After the most recent LA has been approved and processed, a student is ready to begin the KAM evaluation and submission process.

Who assesses my LA and KAM demonstration?

The designated KAM assessor reviews the LA and KAM, and submits a rubric for each, as it is ready, via the rubric submission areas of the Faculty Portal. The LA and KAM documents are submitted with the faculty rubric. See the KAM Policies and Processes section of the student handbook for a detailed
explanation of assessor policies. This section also includes information about the submission and evaluation of Learning Agreements and KAM demonstrations.

**Can I change my KAM assessor?**

Yes, you can change your assessor, but these requests are rare. Unusual circumstances may lead you to consider such a request. If you are not able to resolve differences with your assessor and want to request a change, contact an academic advisor. A change may mean a considerable delay in completing the KAM, so do so only after making every effort to work out issues with the assessor.

The university encourages students and instructors to discuss problems or differences in expectations in a frank and open manner. When students and instructors address problems promptly, they can often resolve issues with minimal disruption to the learning experience. However, in some cases, differences are not easily resolved. Should you want to request a change in assessor, you must contact an academic advisor, who will consult the associate dean or the associate dean’s designee. Any change in faculty services can be made only during the add/drop period of each term.

**After I have submitted my LA, how long do I wait before I start writing?**

Each assessor has 14 calendar days to evaluate a student submission. You will know your LA is approved when you receive official notification by e-mail from the Office of the Registrar. However, in the meantime, you should begin to research your topic and may start the writing process. Keep in mind, however, that you might have to make some changes after you hear from your assessor.

**How should I submit the LA and KAM to my assessor?**

The LA and later the KAM are sent to the assessor electronically, either by using the LAs and KAMs submission area in your Research Forum (if the assessor is your faculty mentor) or as an e-mail attachment (if the assessor is not your faculty mentor). If your KAM assessor is not your faculty mentor, also submit a copy to your faculty mentor via the Research Forum.

**How do I submit my approved LA and KAM demonstration?**

When your assessor approves the LA or KAM demonstration, he or she will prepare an evaluation using a rubric. The rubric lets you know what your assessor is looking for; therefore, you can use the rubric to help you improve your work while it is in process. When your assessor is ready to approve your work for final submission, he or she will use the same rubric for the final evaluation.
If the assessor determines that changes are necessary to the LA or KAM, the assessor electronically returns the evaluation form and/or any additional comments and questions to you so that you can revise and resubmit the Learning Agreement and/or KAM. When your LA and later your KAM are final, your assessor will forward them to the registrar along with the completed rubrics, with a copy to you.

**How long should a KAM demonstration take to write?**

The honest answer is that a KAM demonstration takes as long to write as it takes to write. A month’s release time from work responsibilities can obviously shorten the time. Moving to a new house, changing jobs, having a baby, or taking on additional responsibilities can obviously lengthen the time. You might make your calculated guess at the timeline by allowing 4–8 months for the first KAM, and 2–4 months for subsequent ones, if you are able to devote up to 20 hours a week to the task. Do not be discouraged if your first KAM demonstration takes longer and requires more revisions than you anticipate. Treat the initial KAM as a training ground. Focus your energies on the learning process, but don’t procrastinate on completing the written demonstration.

**What is “doctoral-level writing?”**

Doctoral-level writing is characterized by the following:

- An original contribution informed by higher order thinking (e.g., analysis, comparison, contrast, synthesis, integration, and evaluation)
- Integrity of scholarship (e.g., acknowledging sources and reporting results honestly)
- Correct applications of the conventions of scholarly writing (e.g., referencing, formatting, punctuation, spelling, and grammar)

While none of these characteristics is sufficient in itself to define doctoral-level quality, each of them is necessary.

**When should I consult with my faculty mentor?**

Your faculty mentor will visit with you via your Research Forum through the Mentees’ Café, Contact the Mentor area, the two Discussion posts, and during the first week of the quarter when you submit your Quarter Plan and the last week of the quarter when you submit your Quarter Report and your updated Program of Study. The faculty mentor is also available via e-mail whenever you have a question or want to discuss something. When you are working together on a KAM, you will have more contact.

For your first KAM, you may want to arrange weekly contact, or you may want to share rough drafts of parts of the KAM demonstration for feedback, or you may prefer to submit a finished draft. The faculty mentor may also have some preferences for a contact schedule. Later KAMs may require less close contact. It would be ideal to talk with each of your KAM assessors to establish a contact schedule.
If my KAM looks different from somebody else’s KAM, who is right?

In some respects, all KAM demonstrations will look alike. The conventions of style, for instance, apply to every piece of scholarly writing. In many demonstrations, the same key writings may be discussed and the same essential theories or research may be examined. Beyond these few elements, however, every KAM demonstration will be different because each represents the particular thinking, purposes, and efforts of a different scholar.

What is APA style?

The American Psychological Association (APA) has developed a set of style conventions used in scholarly writing and adopted by many universities, including Walden University. You will find these conventions fully explained and described in the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th edition, 2010). For additional information, consult the Writing Center website.

What is a scholarly database?

A scholarly database is an electronic index of scholarly materials. Most of the scholarly databases provided by Walden University also link to full-text electronic copies of materials, including journal articles, dissertations, books and book excerpts, conference papers, and reports. You can access, read, print, and save these full-text documents directly from the databases. Read more about how to find scholarly, peer-reviewed articles in the library’s Quick Answer: How do I find scholarly, peer-reviewed journal articles?

However, databases may offer only the citations and abstracts for some sources. If you identify a citation as appropriate for your work in a database that does not offer the full text, you may be able to locate the full text in another Walden library database. Otherwise, you may need to obtain the material from your local library, through Walden’s Document Delivery Service, or via the World Wide Web or commercial resources. To set up a document delivery account, please e-mail the Walden library at library@waldenu.edu. Let the librarians know that you are a KAM student who would like to use the DDS service, and the liaison librarian to your program of study will set up an account for you.

Explore the Walden Library website to learn more about our databases. Click on Search & Find, then on Articles by Topic to find the research portal for area of study.
In general, materials indexed by scholarly databases are selected because they meet the quality standards of scholarly research. Still, you should always apply your own critical-thinking skills to determine the quality of research, regardless of where you found the material.

Explore the Walden Library website to learn more about our databases. The Articles by Topic section of the site contains the links to access the databases. Use this section of the library site to find the resources recommended for your area of study.

The development of scholarly database searching skills is vital to your success at Walden University. The Walden librarians are eager to assist you in developing these skills. Contact the librarians early and often for tips on searching for scholarly material on your topic. They can guide you through the use of specialized searching tools and strategies to optimize your efforts. You can contact the librarians by e-mailing library@waldenu.edu

**Where do I get books and articles?**

The first place to check for obtaining articles is the Walden library. The library offers 106 databases containing millions of full-text articles. You might also obtain articles from the library’s Document Delivery Service or from other online sources.

Local academic libraries can be excellent resources for photocopying journal articles that are not available through the Walden databases. Visit your local libraries’ websites or contact them to determine what access you have to their collections, resources, and services.

You may also want to consider purchasing books that will be central to your research, from online and local bookstores. Explore the “Books” section of the Walden Library website for more information. If all the above resources fail, contact the Walden librarians to explore other possible options.

**How do I know if a journal is peer reviewed?**

Click here to read how to search for peer-reviewed journal articles and how to verify peer review using the library’s resources.

**How do I set the margins on my computer?**

Technical questions such as this should be directed to the Student Support Team.
Is my KAM demonstration graded?

KAM demonstrations do not receive a letter grade. Rather, they are treated the same way as other scholarly contributions. They are reviewed by an expert—in this case, the assessor of your KAM demonstration—revised until they satisfy the expectations of doctoral-level writing and are accepted. On your transcript, you will be awarded an S for satisfactory, which is equivalent to a B or better. On the rubric form, your assessor will have indicated a rating for each component of the KAM demonstration as well as an overall rating for the KAM. This rating is not noted on the transcript. Satisfactory completion of all KAMs is required before a draft of the dissertation can be submitted for review by your dissertation committee.

May I reuse parts of my own previous writing?

It is permissible to quote from your own previous work, as long as you do so in small doses and give full citation references. However, scholarship is a developmental process, and each time previous work is revisited, it should show growth of thought and expression. Treat your own previous work as you would treat the work of others, both in terms of how you cite it and in terms of critically evaluating it. It is not permissible to cut and paste whole paragraphs or sections from one KAM demonstration to another or from a KAM demonstration to your dissertation. See the Writing Center for guidance on how to cite your previous work correctly.

Walden’s policy on Students’ Misuse of their Own Scholarly Work is found in the Walden University Student Handbook, under University Policies and Code of Conduct, then Code of Conduct.

Are essays required demonstrations?

Extended written papers are the most common means of communication among scholars. Mastering this skill is an important outcome of a doctoral program. However, an alternative to a written paper (for instance, a video, a PowerPoint presentation, an audio recording, or a Web presentation) may be substituted for at least part of a KAM demonstration, particularly in the Application component. Consult your KAM assessor for more information.

Should I submit my KAM demonstration online?

All LAs and KAM demonstrations are to be submitted as electronic documents via the appropriate assignment area in the Research Forum, or via e-mail, if the KAM assessor is not your faculty mentor. Paper, fax, or other nonelectronic submissions are not accepted.

How do I know if my KAM demonstration has been approved?

You will receive the assessor’s evaluation as a graded rubric and notification of acceptance of your KAM demonstration from the Office of the Registrar. If you have submitted your work and have not heard back, contact your KAM assessor. Be sure to keep copies of all your documents and acknowledgments.
Where can I get help with my writing?

Apart from the APA manual on style, you can consult Walden’s online Writing Center. You should check the Writing Center’s site for tips as well as for draft review services if you need assistance.

What if I still have questions?

The program director and academic advisors in your program, as well as the Walden University librarians and writing center staff, are all available to answer questions you may still have. You are encouraged to avail yourself of the support services offered through Walden.
LA and KAM Submission

Use of Turnitin

All final KAM demonstration documents are submitted to the Turnitin database via the Turnitin submission process in the Research Forum. All matches (a similarity index greater than 0%) will be examined, ignoring common phrases, block quotations, and references. For all other matches, a focus on the actual content in the paper and not necessarily the source of the match as identified by Turnitin is appropriate.

LA and Rubric Submission

When the assessor approves the LA, the assessor submits the LA and the associated rubric to the registrar via the KAMs tab on the Faculty Portal. A copy is sent to the assessor, the faculty mentor, and the student.

KAM Demonstration and Rubric Submission

When the assessor approves the student’s KAM demonstration, the assessor submits the rubric and the completed KAM indicating approval via the KAMs tab on the Faculty Portal. A copy of the approval is sent to the assessor, the faculty mentor, and the student.

KAM Policies and Procedures

Complete KAM Policies and Procedures are found in the *Walden University Student Handbook* under Learning and Research Resources.
The Rubrics

Rubric for Developing and Evaluating Learning Agreements

Purpose

The purpose of this rubric is to guide students and assessors as they work together to develop high-quality Learning Agreements (LAs) for Knowledge Area Modules (KAMs). The rubric is designed to provide faculty assessors the opportunity to offer both formative and summative evaluation of the LA.

Rating Scale

A two-level rating scale is used for scoring each of the quality indicators in the rubric. A satisfactory rating (S) indicates that the component of the LA appears adequate for successful KAM writing. An unsatisfactory rating (U) indicates that the component needs more work to provide an adequate plan for the KAM. Not applicable (NA) is indicated when an indicator on the rubric is not relevant to the KAM.

Note: LAs are not graded other than being recorded as satisfactory or unsatisfactory.

Constructive Feedback

Providing constructive feedback plays a major role in a student’s ability to develop a KAM, master a unit of study, and use the KAM process to make progress toward satisfactory completion of the Ph.D. program. A space for comments is provided for each quality indicator. This space can be used to provide specific guidance for revision and to provide positive feedback for high-quality efforts and noteworthy improvements.
**DEFINITIONS OF RATINGS FOR QUALITY INDICATORS**

S  =  Acceptable as written: all crucial elements are included and adequately described

U  =  Must be revised and resubmitted because one or more required element(s) are missing or inadequate

NA  =  Not applicable: this quality indicator does not apply to the LA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories Evaluated</th>
<th>Check One</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Form:</td>
<td>[ ] S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The cover page of the LA lists the KAM number and title; the student’s name, identification number, and e-mail address; the program name and specialization; the KAM assessor’s and faculty mentor’s names and e-mail addresses; and the date of submission. The layout and pagination follow the writing template for LAs.</td>
<td>[ ] U</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[ ] NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overview:</td>
<td>[ ] S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The overview summarizes briefly (one paragraph is usually sufficient) what is planned for each component of the KAM and how the components are related.</td>
<td>[ ] U</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[ ] NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breadth:</td>
<td>[ ] S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcomes are few, clear, appropriate, and demonstrate higher order thinking in the acquisition and integration of theory-based knowledge. Key themes and authors are identified. The reference list supports the outcomes, uses primary sources as much as possible, and is written in correct format. The description of the Breadth demonstration indicates the length of the paper (approximately 30 pages) and describes how it will demonstrate the student’s learning.</td>
<td>[ ] U</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[ ] NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depth:</td>
<td>[ ] S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcomes are few, clear, appropriate, and demonstrate critical thinking in the acquisition and integration of research-based knowledge. The theme of the Depth is drawn from the Breadth and relates to the student’s professional interests. The reference list supports the outcomes, identifies at least 15 current (preferably from the last 3–5 years) and relevant peer-reviewed research articles for examination, and is written in correct format. The planned demonstration includes both an annotated bibliography and critical literature review paper (approximately 25 pages).</td>
<td>[ ] U</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[ ] NA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Application:
Outcomes are few, clear, appropriate, and identify a practical application of the theories and research of the earlier components. The reference list is included where appropriate. Unless a different format is suggested by the project being pursued and is permitted by the assessor, the planned demonstration includes both the project and a critical analysis (approximately 10 pages) that connects the project to the theories and research examined in the earlier parts of the KAM.

Comments:

Overall:
The planned KAM shows a development of ideas/theme(s) from theory to research to practice. The plan is designed to satisfy the student’s professional interests and encourage original thinking. The LA reflects creative thinking around some aspect of social change and respects the diversity encountered within the student’s profession. The LA free of grammar, punctuation, and spelling errors and has a professional appearance.

Comments:

---

**Rubric for Developing and Evaluating KAMs**

**Purpose**
The purpose of this rubric is to guide students and faculty assessors as they work together to develop high-quality Knowledge Area Modules (KAMs). The use of the rubric is intended to provide ongoing and flexible evaluation and reevaluation of KAMs as they are developed. The rubric is designed to provide an opportunity for faculty assessors to offer both formative and summative evaluation of the KAMs.

**Quality Indicators**
Quality indicators are specified in the rubric for five general categories: (1) Overall Organization of KAM, (2) Breadth Component, (3) Depth Component, including the Annotated Bibliography and Depth Narrative, (4) Application Component, and (5) Overall Structure and Writing of KAM. Quality indicators are intended to relate to the scholarly quality and integrity of each part of the KAM. Although some of the quality indicators are categorized according to Breadth, Depth, and Application sections, it is recommended that each KAM be considered as a unified, integrated project during both its...
development and evaluation. There is also an opportunity to reflect on the student’s work in the light of the university’s goals and mission.

**Rating Scale**

Two types of scoring are used to reflect the purposes and developmental nature of the KAMs:

1. **Quality Indicators:** A five-level rating scale is used for scoring each of the quality indicators in the rubric. In general, ratings of 3 or above are considered satisfactory (although further revision may be needed), and ratings of 1 or 2 do not achieve minimal standards for passing. An *NA* (*Not Applicable*) category is used when an indicator on the rubric is not relevant to the KAM. Definitions of each level of the rating scale are provided below.

2. **Overall KAM Evaluation:** To reflect the design of each KAM as a unit of study in a specific subject area, a unified evaluation of satisfactory or unsatisfactory is assigned. Criteria for these evaluations are provided below.

*Note:* No ratings are used for the reflective section at the end of the rubric, but comments are encouraged.

**Constructive Feedback**

Providing constructive feedback plays a major role in a student’s ability to develop a KAM, master a unit of study, and use the KAM process to make progress toward satisfactory completion of the Ph.D. program at Walden University. A space for comments is provided for each quality indicator. Commenting on each quality indicator is optional and is not expected. Primarily, this space can be used to provide a summary of specific guidance for revision and to provide positive feedback for high-quality efforts and noteworthy improvements. More extensive comments can be submitted as a separate attachment or embedded within the KAM copy.
DEFINITIONS OF RATINGS FOR QUALITY INDICATORS

5 = Approved with commendation: the level of scholarship is exceptional in this section of the KAM

4 = Acceptable as written: all crucial elements are included and adequately described

3 = Approved, although revisions are strongly suggested in one or more important component(s) that are of markedly lesser quality than the rest of the quality indicators in this section (Comments on how to enhance quality are provided for revision.)

2 = Must be revised and resubmitted because one or more essential component(s) are not satisfactorily described (Comments related to revision are provided.)

1 = Does not meet the required level

NA = Not applicable: this quality indicator does not apply to the document

CRITERIA FOR FINAL OVERALL EVALUATION OF THE KAM

S = Satisfactory: A grade of S is equivalent to a cumulative grade of B or better. Students receiving a grade of S are awarded 14 quarter credits.

U = Unsatisfactory: Student did not meet the criteria for a cumulative grade of B or better. Students who receive a grade of U are not awarded any credits. With permission from their associate dean, or designee, these students may repeat the KAM demonstration once.

I. OVERALL ORGANIZATION OF KAM

1. Title Page:
Identifying information is correct (i.e., the title page for the entire KAM contains the KAM number and title; student’s name and identification number; program name and specialization/concentration; assessor’s name; faculty mentor’s name and e-mail addresses; and date).

Comment:

2. KAM Layout (in this order):
Abstracts for each component appear on separate pages after the title page. Each abstract is no more than 120 words, in a one double-spaced paragraph, with no paragraph indentation. No pagination on abstract pages.

Begin page numbering with the Table of Contents, numbered i at bottom center of the page. Pagination begins again at the beginning of the Breadth section, which is labeled as page 1, in the upper right-hand corner of the page.
Each component of the KAM (Breadth, Depth, Application) begins on a new page. Page numbers are counted continuously from the beginning of the Breadth.

Identifying information is accurately provided in the heading for each component of the KAM including:

- KAM component: Breadth, Depth, Application in title case, centered.
- Walden course prefix, number, and title, centered.

Headings are correctly displayed according to the writing template for KAMs.

Combined reference list for each component appears at the end of the document.

Comment:

3. Evidence of Integrated KAM:
In the abstracts, the integration of the KAM components is identified and reflects the interconnections across the following:

- Theoretical perspectives discussed in the Breadth component.
- The in-depth focus and knowledge of current research reflected in the Depth component.
- Application of theories and research to practice.

Comment:

4. Social Change:
The Walden mission of positive social change (i.e., improvement of human or social conditions by promoting the worth, dignity, and development of individuals, communities, organizations, institutions, cultures, and/or societies) is reflected in the abstracts.

Comment:

II. BREADTH COMPONENT
Focus: Acquisition, Integration, and Critical Analysis of Theory-Based Knowledge
5. **Grasp of the Domain of Knowledge:**
An introductory section defines the topic and outlines its boundaries, major components, limits, and scope.

*Comment:*

6. **Mastery of Knowledge Base:**
Demonstrates an understanding of major theoretical perspectives, specifically the theoretical and conceptual underpinnings of the knowledge area focused on in this KAM.

*Comment:*

7. **Critical Analysis:**
Goes beyond descriptive discussion and critically compares and contrasts, analyzes, synthesizes, and/or evaluates the assumptions and contributions of major theories, models, and conceptual frameworks. Demonstrates higher order thinking.

*Comment:*

8. **Summary and Transition Statement:**
The Breadth ends with the following:

- A summary and/or conclusion of the major points discussed in the Breadth component.
- A brief transition statement connecting the Breadth and Depth components.
- Introduced no new material.

*Comment:*

9. **The Breadth objectives are achieved as outlined in the LA for this KAM.**

---

### III. DEPTH COMPONENT

**Focus: Acquisition, Integration, and Critical Analysis of Research-Based Knowledge**

**ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY**

10. **Annotations:**
Present annotations for a minimum of 15 scholarly articles (i.e., from the last 3–5 years, although classic articles may be included) from a variety of international peer-
reviewed/refereed scholarly/professional journals (no magazines or popular journals). Presents references in correct APA 6th edition format.

*Comment:*

**11. Analysis:**
Each annotation includes the following:

- A summary of the study—research question(s), theoretical framework, research method, major findings and implications (where appropriate).
- A critical analysis (at least one paragraph) assessing the merits of the article, citing strengths and limitations, and analyzing the article’s major thesis.
- A statement of the relevance of the article for the student’s profession or research interests, or the current KAM.

*Comment:*

**DEPTH NARRATIVE**

**12. Introduction:**
An introduction outlines the organization and rationale of the Depth narrative as a literature review.

*Comment:*

**13. Literature Review Essay:**
Categorizes, synthesizes, and analyzes themes in the current research literature around the topic of the Depth and a theoretical concept from the Breadth.

*Comment:*

**14. Evaluation of Research Contributions to Topic:**
Describes research methods employed in the reviewed studies and critically evaluates these methods in terms of purposes, utility, and validity of findings generated, and possible alternatives. When relevant to the focus of the KAM, the student provides an overview of varied ways to probe the subject. Describes contributions of research to the issues discussed and critically evaluates these contributions.

*Comment:*

**15. Summary:**
Summarizes points made in the Depth narrative with particular focus on suggestions for
further research.

Comment:

16. Transition Statement:
The Depth ends with a clear integrative transition statement for the next section of the KAM: the Application component.

Comment:

17. The Depth objectives are achieved as outlined in the LA for this KAM.

IV. APPLICATION COMPONENT

Focus: Practical Application of Theory-Based and Research-Based Knowledge to the Profession

18. Presentation of Project:
An introductory section indicates or describes the following:

- The context, scope, purpose, development, and potential impact of the project.
- The project and, where applicable, an analysis of the results of implementing the project.
- Where practical or feasible, the actual project is presented or is indicated as an addendum.

Comment:

19. Discussion of Project:
Reflections on the project integrate relevant theoretical perspectives and research findings.

Comments on the effectiveness, implications, or possible future developments of the project are included as appropriate (approximately 10 pages).

Comment:

20. Ethical Considerations:
Ethical considerations related to the professional context of the application project and to this specific application project are outlined. Steps taken to ensure ethical practice (e.g., IRB approval for research studies or district approval of a school-based project) are described (if applicable).
21. “Change in the Profession” and Social Change:
Potential or actual “change in the profession” related to the application project reflects the following:

- Walden University’s mission of positive social change (i.e., improvement of human or social conditions by promoting the worth, dignity, and development of individuals, communities, organizations, institutions, cultures, and/or societies).
- The focus of this specific KAM.

Comment:

22. The Application objectives are achieved as outlined in the LA for this KAM.

V. OVERALL STRUCTURE AND WRITING OF KAM

23. Organization:
The KAM is logically and comprehensively organized with connections established between ideas.

Comment:

24. Quality of Presentation:
Sources are accurately interpreted. Quoted and paraphrased material is discussed and interpreted rather than merely reproduced. Important points are developed, rather than merely asserted. Unsupported opinions are avoided.

Comment:

25. Form:
References are accurately cited, and the reference list is comprehensive and includes all and only sources found in the narratives (with an integrated reference list that appears at the end of the document). The KAM is free of grammatical, punctuation, and spelling errors; sentences are well-formed and have well-chosen words; statements are free of contradiction; and gender-inclusive language is reflective of global diversity.

Comment:

26. Doctoral-Level Work:
The KAM is of scholarly effort equivalent to that of doctoral-level seminars. The content of
the KAM is consistent with the body of knowledge of the KAM’s topic area and the approved LA. There is evidence of critical/scholarly thinking, careful research, and critical analysis of scholarly literature. Writing is original, clear, succinct, and academically persuasive.

Comment: