Scholarship in adult education requires a dual focus: adult education is both a field of study and a field of practice. The study of adult education requires an interdisciplinary approach, pulling foundational knowledge from history, philosophy, political science, economics, sociology, psychology and human development, and leadership. As a field of practice, adult education historically has relied heavily upon community-based education that provides for community development through a variety of basic education, continuing education, and post-secondary initiatives.

To begin advanced study in adult education leadership, you are first asked to consider the question, “Who is the adult learner?” Are there common characteristics for all adult learners, and if so, how do we come to understand the unique needs of adult learners? What are the historical and philosophical foundations of adult education, both in the United States and internationally and what are the political, social, and economic factors that define the adult education “movement”? How do class, race, and gender help to define adult learners? What motivates adults to continue to learn over a lifetime?

Many adult education practitioners are aware of “andragogy” and the principles of adult education embedded in the term. KAM 5 asks you to move beyond that brief and basic understanding of adult learners toward a more comprehensive understanding of the adult learner and the organizations that take responsibility for educating adults.

Adult learners and the institutions that serve them provide a rich tapestry. Adults are served by community organizations—often grassroots groups—with foci on rural and
economic development, healthcare, or community service organizations. Military and other state-sponsored groups provide adult education, including prison education. The private sector and non-profits serve a defined group of adults through adult continuing education, employer-sponsored training, and professional licensure. Educational institutions provide adult remedial education, adult vocational education, as well as a full complement of degree programs. What are the historical foundations for these institutions? How are adult learners defined in these various settings? What is the relationship between the learner and the organization? What do we know of adult education internationally and how can international perspectives inform our understanding of the adult learner?

KAM 5 asks that you consider a holistic view of the adult learner, moving beyond individual behaviors considered in KAM 2 to a greater understanding of adult education as both an educational and a social movement. The following specialization outcomes should guide your work with KAM 5:

“Evaluate the general roles and interconnections among the roles of the adult learner, adult educator, the administration, the organizational system, and the local-to-global context in which the organization operates.”

and

“Analyze, within an historical and global perspective, the local practice of adult education in order to engage learners in promoting social justice and social change.”

Overall Objectives for This KAM

Your scholarship in KAM 5 should allow you to meet the following objectives:
1. Examine social, political, and economic forces that contribute to a historical and philosophical understanding of the adult learner and the purposes of adult education enterprises in the United States and internationally.

2. Provide an analysis of current research on adult learner characteristics and how cultural and/or organizational contexts impact adult learners.

3. Apply your knowledge of the adult learner to an examination of a particular practice setting or context, such as community-based adult education, schools, non-profit, religious, government, business and industry, or virtual environment.

Plan to accomplish objective #1 in the Breadth component of the KAM, objective #2 in the Depth component, and objective #3 in the Application component. These objectives are further explained with examples in the discussion of each component that follows.

Challenges and Opportunities in This KAM

In 1997, adult educators from across the nation met in Washington, D.C. at a national conference, “Creating a Nation of Lifelong Learners”. Former Governor Ann Richards from Texas provided a keynote address in which she highlighted the broad nature of adult education in the United States and around the world. “Is adult education what I think it is?” she asked the audience. Their unanimous reply was, “Yes!” One of the challenges that you face as a scholar of adult education is to uncover the connections that exist in adult education enterprises and the ways in which those connections link to an overall philosophy of what it means to serve the adult learner.
The Breadth component of this KAM should focus on a rich understanding of the “adult learner” (or groups of learners) who accesses formal education programs. How do philosophies of adult education define our understanding of the learner and influence how we characterize adult education? What are the social, political, and economic forces that have influenced the history of adult education and/or provided rationale for the development of adult education enterprises?

Demonstrating understanding is more than simply reporting what the writers say. You need to demonstrate your understanding by using higher levels of thinking such as comparing and contrasting, analyzing, synthesizing, or evaluating them. In the other sections of the KAM, you will be able to relate your knowledge of this foundational understanding to research on some aspect of learner identity and understanding in your own professional setting. In the Breadth, your task is to be able to integrate foundational knowledge of adult education so that you have a clear idea of both the adult learner and the organizations that, historically and philosophically, have stepped forward to serve adults.

In the Depth component, you have the opportunity to bring your theoretical understanding to the examination of a particular adult learning context. Collectively, what do we know of adult motivation to learn? How do elements of class, race, and gender contribute to how we understand both the adult leaner and philosophies and purposes of adult education? How does context affect the relationship between the learner and the organization? In the Depth, you will build upon the knowledge of a particular theory or theories that you examined in the Breadth section and critically examine how they influence your professional context and are addressed in different
ways by researchers. You will write about these in a way that shows that you know and understand what current researchers have discovered and can apply them to what you want to learn. You will also write to demonstrate that you are able to identify how their research is, or is not, helpful, perceptive, and well grounded, and what gaps remain in our understanding of the adult learner.

In the Application component, you will have an opportunity to demonstrate the interdisciplinary nature of adult education as a field of practice. You will be able to pull foundational ideas from the Breadth, and your own research interests from the Depth, and apply them to a specific adult education context. Many organizations offer adult education services. Regardless of the context, adult education is distinctly community driven and linked to the culture specific to that community.

Breadth Component

EDUC 8514 Interdisciplinary Foundations and Theory in Adult Education and Learning (5 cr.)

The adult learner can be examined in terms history, philosophies of adult education, and learner characteristics (including economic class, race, gender coupled with life history). These elements are interconnected and all influence how we come to know the adult learner. Listed below are some suggestions for the kinds of issues you might want to pursue in the Breadth component of this KAM. They are intended to be suggestive only but will give you an idea of the kinds of topics your paper should address.

1. How do philosophies of adult education (liberal learning, progressive education, emancipatory learning, etc.) contribute to our understanding of the adult learner and the purpose(s) of adult education?
2. Historically, how have adult education movements (the American Lyceum, labor education, immigrant literacy, laws and legislation, etc.) influenced the definition of and services for the adult learner?

3. What do we know of adult motivation to learn? How is motivation distinctive in formal or informal settings?

4. How did a focus on adult learning contribute to significant social change movements, nationally or internationally?

5. What do we consider to be key characteristics of adult learners and how does that understanding contribute to adult education initiatives?

6. What are the forces that have influenced the history of adult education in the United States and how do those forces compare with adult education movements around the globe?

Demonstration of Competence

Using the knowledge resources covered, write a scholarly paper that demonstrates an understanding of the historical and philosophical aspects of the adult learner and the significant contributions that adult education enterprises have made. The emphasis of the paper is not on summarizing the content of various texts but on a critical assessment of the writings, including comparisons, contrasts, evaluations, and a synthesis of different assumptions, concepts, ideas, and elements encountered during the theoretical literature search and review. The expected length of the paper for the Breadth component is approximately 30 double-spaced pages, plus references.
Learning Resources

A bibliography of possible references for this KAM can be found at the Walden Library site accessed through the faculty or student personal start page/campuscruiser. Once in the Walden Library site, click on Get KAM Research Help and look for the appropriate program or KAM. The Resources links will take you to general references that will provide an overview of the field or key thinkers. The Bibliography link will take you to a list of possible writings. The books and authors listed here are meant only to provide examples of the kind of literature you should be accessing. You can compile your own bibliographic references using this list as a starting point. If you have difficulty compiling a bibliography or choosing relevant readings, consult with your faculty mentor or KAM assessor and the Walden librarians.

Depth Component

EDUC 8524 Current Research in Adult Education and Learning (5 cr.)

The purpose of the Depth component is to help you understand and analyze what is currently known about the adult learner and the organizations that take responsibility for serving adults. Your task in this component is to select a particular influence that has current salience, is of interest to you, and that intersects in intriguing and important ways with your professional context. In the Depth section you might consider the impact of the issues you examined in the Breadth section on some aspects of your profession. For instance, depending on the focus of the Breadth component, topics that you might consider could include:

1. A review of international policy for adult education beginning with the UNESCO initiatives.
2. Moral development and adult religious education

3. An evaluation of the purpose and providers of business and industry training programs for adult learners


5. Adult learners as consumers of online education.

6. Gender and age considerations: adult women in colleges and universities.

7. Current trends and research in adult literacy

8. Professional continuing education and licensure requirements.

9. Informal learning projects and the adult learner: what do we know of adult learning that occurs beyond institutions?

10. Federal legislation and the impact on adult learners: the Morrell Act, the G.I. Bill, pending legislation, etc.

**Demonstration of Competence**

Compile an annotated bibliography that includes a minimum of 15 recent refereed or peer-reviewed research journal articles (or older articles if they are a particularly good fit) related to the adult learner theme that you identified for this assignment, including literature that places this issue within the historical development or contemporary context of your profession. For each source included on your list, prepare a critical analysis. Arrange the bibliography in alphabetical order. Suggested length is 1 to 1½ pages per annotation.
Write a 25-30 page double-spaced typed scholarly paper describing, analyzing, and explaining the selected theme and relating it to historical developments in adult education. Take the opportunity in the Depth essay to focus on the integration of the field of study with the practice of adult education. In this paper, be sure to include evidence of higher order thinking (comparison and contrast, analysis, and evaluation). The total Depth component assignment is equivalent to 5-quarter credit hours of graduate work.

**Learning Resources**

Because the Depth section is so individualized, it is difficult to offer reading recommendations. Both books and articles can be used, although current research is more likely to be found in journal articles. You are encouraged to review a wide range of sources for this assignment but focus particularly on dissertations and journal articles in selecting the sources that will ultimately comprise your bibliographic list.

Consult your faculty mentor or KAM assessor and the Walden library staff for further assistance in identifying sources in your literature search.

**Application Component**

**EDUC 8534  Professional Practice in Adult Learning (4 cr.)**

In the Application component of the KAM, your focus should now turn to your own professional context—your work with adult learners in community-based settings, schools and colleges, non-profits, business and industry, or other adult-focused institutions. In order for the Application component to be the most productive learning experience possible, it is useful for this component to draw on the themes and findings from the Breadth and Depth components of this KAM. You are encouraged to review the resources presented in previous components of this KAM as well as the annotated
bibliography compiled as part of the Depth component. In addition to these you are urged to reflect on your own professional practice and firsthand experiences with social change/societal development in your context.

Remember to secure Institutional Review Board approval to conduct research using human subjects.

Some suggestions of Application projects you might consider:

1. Conduct a “life history” of an older person who exhibits traits as a lifelong learner. What have been significant learning events during the person’s life? How does that person approach learning? What motivates the person to learn and how does the person access learning resources in the community? What have been barriers to the person’s quest for lifelong learning?

2. Describe a program that is intentionally dedicated to addressing the needs of adult learners. Who is the “adult learner” for this organization? What is significant about the ways in which this organization serves adults? What is the history of the program and its purpose? What trends in community life (political, social, economic) contributed to program development? What is the connection between the program and the larger community in which it is located?

3. A major work you have previously completed (e.g., a master’s thesis, curriculum design, or professional project) may demonstrate your ability to apply the theories, concepts, methods, and research findings that are the focus of this KAM. Such a demonstration of your
competence may be submitted along with an essay that explains how the project illustrated a particular facet of the adult learner and your mastery of this domain. In addition, provide a brief rationale for the project and comment on how the situation might have changed since the project was first undertaken and what you might do differently if you were to plan and implement something like this again.

Demonstration of Competence

The Application component of the KAM gives you the opportunity to put the theories and research pertaining to adult learning into practice. Adult education is about social change, so think in terms of developing a project that addresses change in your setting. Your final demonstration should include both the project and reflective commentary on it, where you show how it is informed by the theories and research studied in the earlier components of this KAM. The Application is considered equivalent to 4-quarter credit hours of graduate work in a traditional program.

Learning Resources

The resources you will use in this component are very specific to your particular project. If a theory or research paper is the foundation of the project, be sure to reference it. If you have difficulty compiling a bibliography or choosing relevant readings, consult with your faculty mentor or KAM assessor and the Walden librarians.