Introduction

KAM 5 addresses the experiences of students in higher education, with a focus on assuring their success in higher education. Over the past few decades, the post-secondary student population has become more diverse and their interactions with higher education institutions are changing. Fewer traditional undergraduates are full-time students living away from home in dormitories. Institutions of higher education are attracting a multicultural student population, many of whom are first-generation college students. Adult (non-traditional) students are now the new majority of enrolled learners.

Fortunately, the research on learning and development for the college student—many of whom can be characterized as "adult"—has grown accordingly.

Research in adult learning is moving from description to theory building and from a primarily psychological orientation toward a broader contextual view incorporating anthropology, sociology, critical social theory, and philosophy, as well as biological-physiological bases of learning. This KAM uses your study in KAM 2 as a foundation (pre-requisite), and then asks that you develop an in-depth knowledge on the processes of learning and development and the role of the higher educational environments in which these processes occur. This analysis includes identification and evaluation of techniques/methods that support student success. This knowledge is then applied to a selected area of practice in the academic community.

Overall Objectives for This KAM

Your scholarship in KAM 5 should allow you to meet the following objectives:
1. Synthesize a range of theoretical models that attempt to explain dimensions of learning and development.

2. Critically examine current research that provides implications of those theories for assuring student success in higher education.

3. Use your scholarship into theory and research to explain or guide a current issue or challenge to your own practice with college learners.

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

The individual learner can be examined in various ways: how life experience functions in learning, how psychological development is linked to learning, what motivates late adolescents and adults to learn and to participate in various learning settings and activities, how individuals process information (cognition and memory), and how the brain functions (the neurobiology of learning). While any of these strands can be examined independently, the most revealing understanding of individual learners comes from looking at relationships between and among these elements.

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 learning and development so that you have a clear idea of the college-level learner.

In the Depth component, you have the opportunity to bring your theoretical understanding to the examination of a particular learning context. Collectively, what do we know of individual motivation to learn? How do elements of class, race, and gender contribute to how we understand learners? How does context affect the relationship between the learner and the institution? 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 learning and development.

In the Application component, you will have an opportunity to pull foundational ideas from the Breadth and your own research interests from the Depth, and then apply them to a specific post-secondary context.

Breadth Component

EDUC 8516 Multiple Perspectives on Learning and Development in Higher Education (5 cr.)

Although the learning process may be relatively similar for adults and children, important differences for adults become apparent when a learning process is linked with the learner and with context. The learning process involves cognitive functioning and
memory process information. An interactive dimension attends to learning that results from individuals interacting with their environment. Theories concerning person-environment interaction, situated cognition, reflective practice, and cognitive development—largely constructivist-oriented theories—represent this dimension. A second dimension—structural—also considers how factors such as race, class, age, gender, cultural diversity, and social class shape an individual’s learning experience and outcomes.

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. What are the various definitions and related assumptions of "learning" and "development" as presented by different theorists? What are the salient themes among the theories?

2. How do theorists describe the relationship between development and learning, particularly for late adolescent and/or adult learners?

3. Revisit the Breadth section of KAM 2. Identify a construct on human learning and development that you explored in that module and examine its theoretical framework in-depth, moving beyond the foundational learning that you may have demonstrated earlier.

4. Some theorists conclude that learning is different in adulthood; others contend that the processes associated with learning are the same for children and adults. Examine the theoretical underpinnings of this debate and provide your own conclusion on the differences associated with andragogy and pedagogy.
Demonstration of Competence

Using the knowledge resources covered, write a scholarly paper that demonstrates an understanding of individual learning and development. 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 8526 Current Research on Learning and Development in Higher Education (5 cr.)

The purpose of the Depth component is to help you understand and analyze what is currently known about individual learning and development. 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. Cognitive learning and moral development in the young adult
2. Success issues for first-generation college students
3. Service learning experiences and student development
4. Technology and brain-based research
5. Educating the millennial student: brain development and the multi-tasking learner.
6. Research and emerging trends for implementing disability services on campus.
7. Gender and age considerations: adult women in colleges and universities.
8. Retention strategies for diverse populations.
9. Building learning communities with non-residential students
10. Learning in the online environment.
12. What do we know of individual motivation to learn? What is the connection between individual development and motivation?
13. Student engagement, student services, and implications for learning.
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 theme that you identified for this assignment. 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 learning and development of individuals in higher education. In this paper, be sure to include evidence of higher order thinking (comparison and contrast, analysis, and evaluation).

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 8536 Application to Improve Professional Practice Higher Education (4 cr.)

In the Application component of the KAM, your focus should now turn to your own professional context—your work with learners in colleges and universities. 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 learners 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. Identify an underserved student population group at your institution and design a non-credit program that could be used to support this student group. Use the literature from the Breadth and Depth to support the program design.

2. Describe a program that is intentionally dedicated to addressing the developmental needs of the college student. What is significant about the ways in which this program serves students? How do the program structure and activities link to what we know of learning and development?

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 learning and development 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.

4. Evaluate an existing program at your college or university in terms of its alignment with learning and development theory. Identify ways to improve the program (as necessary).

Demonstration of Competence

The Application component of the KAM gives you the opportunity to put the theories and research pertaining to learning and development into practice. 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.

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.