PRACTISING RESEARCH CARDS

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Te Whare Wānanga o Waitaha
CHRISTCHURCH NEW ZEALAND

AKO AOTEAROA
NATIONAL CENTRE FOR TERTIARY TEACHING EXCELLENCE

These cards were developed through a joint research project between Christchurch Polytechnic Institute of Technology and the University of Canterbury which was supported by funding from Ako Aotearoa. They are designed to enhance practice research teaching and learning, both in the classroom and in the field. We would appreciate your feedback about how you have used the cards and how they might be improved and developed.

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PRACTISING RESEARCH

RESEARCH PROCESS

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QUESTION SELECTION

The research process begins with defining the central question the project will attempt to answer. It is important the research question is focused and achievable, remembering that it is not possible to answer all the questions related to your area of interest in one project. Defining the research question is similar to identifying the overall objective of a project.

What is the central question that your research project will attempt to answer?

Why is your research question important to answer?

How could your research question be refined to make it more manageable to answer?

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RESEARCH PROCESS

2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Undertaking a review of the literature related to your topic will locate the enquiry in a research tradition by identifying the gaps in current knowledge. The literature review will help demonstrate why your research question is important and may lead to refining your objectives. The literature review is similar to undertaking an assessment to gather relevant information before deciding how to intervene.

What is already known about your research topic?

What are the gaps in current knowledge or contradictions you have identified in the literature?

What critique can you offer about previous research related to your topic?

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RESEARCH PROCESS

3

RESEARCH PROPOSAL

Developing a research proposal is similar to writing a care plan to respond to the needs identified in a social work assessment. The research proposal is an argument for why the research is required, a description of how it will be undertaken and an explanation of the ethical considerations. You will need to identify the underpinning theories that influence your project and describe the methods that you will adopt.

What is the epistemology or the theories that underpin your research project?

What methods are most appropriate to address your research question?

What are the limitations of the research strategy and specific methods that you plan to use?

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RESEARCH PROCESS

4

ETHICAL APPROVAL

Just as with professional practice, there are ethical questions to be considered when undertaking research. You will need to decide how to ensure participants are not harmed in any way, protect their confidentiality, or address cultural dimensions. In some situations an academic ethics committee will need to approve the research but in others this may be handled by the governing body of an agency.

What are the ethical questions that need to be addressed for your research project?

How will you address the ethical considerations that you have identified?

Who will need to provide ethical approval for your research project?

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RESEARCH PROCESS

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DATA GATHERING

The process of collecting the data for your research is an active and often enjoyable process. The first challenge will be recruiting research participants who meet the criteria you have set. You will then use one or more of a range of methods to engage with your participants about the research topic.

What approach will you use to recruit enough participants into the project?

What challenges might you face in using the selected research methods?

What aspects of data gathering will you enjoy and which will challenge you?

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RESEARCH PROCESS

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DATA ANALYSIS

Depending on the data collection methods you have adopted you will need to identify the analytical tools that will be most appropriate. Some analysis methods, such as statistical analysis, will require specialist skills or the use of computer software.

What methods of data analysis do you intend to use in your research?

What specialist analysis skills are required in your project and who can assist you with these?

What specialist computer software will you need and how will you develop the expertise to use it?

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RESEARCH PROCESS

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WRITTEN RECORD

Record keeping is extremely important in professional practice and in the same way research relies on careful recording. This begins with your notes for the literature review, the research proposal document, and applications for ethical approval. Careful records of your data gathering and analysis are also critical to enable you to write up the whole project. You will need to think carefully about your final audience and write up your project accordingly.

What challenges will you face in maintaining a written record of the stages of your project?

Who is the audience for your final report containing your research findings?

What is the prescribed format for the final research report?

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RESEARCH PROCESS

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DISSEMINATION

It is critical that findings are disseminated as this will enable the profession to use the information to inform practice and further research. Dissemination may take the form of journal articles, conference presentations or discussions in other professional forums. You will need to identify the most appropriate reporting methods to ensure that your findings reach the right audiences.

Who would benefit from hearing about the findings from your research?

What forums are available for disseminating your findings to the right people?

How will you overcome the challenges that might prevent your findings being publicised?

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EPISTEMOLOGY

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CRITICAL THEORIES

Critical theories are concerned with how power and knowledge are produced and used in different locations and points in time. Research begins from the critique of the status quo and is intended to effect social, economic and political emancipation. The researcher places ideas in their historical context and situates them in the complexity of a larger sociopolitical environment.

What is the social, economic, and political context within which the research is taking place?

Describe the power relations between stakeholders involved in your research.

How would your research project change if you adopted a critical theory perspective?

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EPISTEMOLOGY

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STANDPOINT THEORY

Standpoint Theory proposes that research should begin from the standpoint of those who are marginalised. The research process includes the clear identification of who the research will benefit, active involvement of research participants in every stage of research, and a transformative agenda. Researchers are considered change agents and acknowledge their own standpoint. Research, professional practice and action are seen as unified.

In terms of the research question – who sees this issue as a problem?

Who will benefit from the research being undertaken?

What influence does your standpoint (in terms of age, gender, ethnicity etc) have on the research?

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EPISTEMOLOGY

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FEMINIST THEORY

A variety of research methods are informed by feminist values. Characteristics of research informed by feminist theory include: a focus on women's experience of gender and inequality while seeking to make women's voices heard. Feminist researchers adopt a reflexive approach, rejecting distinctions between themselves and research participants. The aim of the research is women's political emancipation.

How would your research project change if you adopted a feminist perspective?

How are gender relations expressed in the research tasks?

How might feminist researchers collect data in relation to your project?

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SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONISM

Social Constructionism proposes that how we understand the world is influenced by history and culture, and that the same phenomenon can be described in different ways. Common meaning is created through daily interactions with each other. Analysis of language is at the heart of constructionism - through conversation, writing, and reading. Social constructionists are more concerned with social processes than social structures.

How is the research topic 'constructed' in the agency?

What influence does your own cultural and historical context have on the construction of your research problem?

How would your research project change if you adopted a social constructionism perspective?

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KAUPAPA MĀORI

Kaupapa Māori is a research epistemology unique to Aotearoa New Zealand. This approach is embedded within Māori cultural values, beliefs and worldview. The foundation of Kaupapa Maori research iī that it is defined and conducted by Maori and for Maori. Thīs research can includē both qualitative and quantitative methods.

Name three ways in which Kaupapa Māori research will differ from traditional Western approaches to inquiry?

How would your research process be influenced by using a Kaupapa Maori approōach?

Name three benefits of using a Kaupapa Maori epīstemology in research?

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POSITIVISM

EPISTEMOLOGY

A research paradigm referring to the idea that all true knowledge is scientific. Positivist research is used to explain, predict, and control phenomena. In this context the researcher is deemed to be objective and detached from the objects under study. Problems are reduced to explainable, measurable units. Quantitative methods are examples of positivist research.

How might positivist researchers gather data?

What are the benefits for practice research of using a positivist approach?

What are the criticisms of a positivist approach?

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INTERPRETIVISIM

EPISTEMOLOGY

Interpretivism is a research paradigm that seeks to understand the deeper meanings of people's everyday experiences. Reality is thought to be socially constructed and described in multiple ways. Research is interpretive, and the researcher is not neutral or objective. Your research process will be influenced by your perception of the world and how it should be studied. Qualitative approaches are informed by the interpretive paradigm.

What are some examples of interpretive research?

What are the benefits of an interpretive approach?

What are the criticisms of an interpretive approach?

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PRAGMATISM

EPISTEMOLOGY

Pragmatism is a school of thought that challenges the dualism of mind and matter and views knowledge acquisition as an exchange between people and their environments. Pragmatism is focused on identifying what works in addressing the research question and is therefore problem centred and interested in connecting theory with practice. Pragmatists identify the method that is best suited to the research problem and often use a mix of methods from both qualitative and quantitative traditions.

How would your research project change if you adopted a pragmatic perspective?

What would be the benefits and limitations of adopting a mixed methods approach to your research?

How might your research impact and influence future practice?

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RESEARCH METHODS

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INTERVIEWS

Interviews are a flexible research method that may involve individuals or groups and be conducted in person or by phone. Consider your objectives and the degree of standardisation required when selecting a specific interview approach. Structured interviews aim to ensure participants receive identical cues so that responses can be aggregated. Semi structured interviews and unstructured interviews allow researchers greater freedom to respond to the answers given.

What would be the benefits and limitations of using structured interviews in your research?

What would be the benefits and limitations of using unstructured interviews in your research?

Why might using more than one interviewer prove problematic?

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FOCUS GROUPS

Focus groups are a form of group interview that explore questions in a specific topic area. Interaction between members of the group is encouraged enabling the examination of the way people understand or respond to a topic together. Focus groups are useful for understanding why participants think in certain ways because other group members may challenge their answers or argue for other view points.

What would be the benefits and limitations of using focus groups in your research?

How would you decide on the size and membership of focus groups for your research?

What would be the ethical considerations of using focus groups in your research?

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RESEARCH METHODS

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QUESTIONNAIRES

Self completion questionnaires are a similar research method to structured interviews but are cheaper and easier to administer. Questions may be quantitative, requiring single word or tick box answers using predetermined scales, or qualitative allowing open ended responses. Although convenient, questionnaires do not allow for clarification of participant's responses and must be carefully designed so that they are easy for participant's to complete alone.

What would be the benefits and limitations of using a questionnaire in your research?

How would you increase the likelihood that participants complete and return their questionnaires?

What factors would you need to bear in mind when considering using a questionnaire?

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DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

Written or photographic documentation, which is not specifically produced for the purposes of research, can still be a rich source of data for social research. Newspapers, letters, diaries or archive material are all examples. Careful consideration should be given to the authenticity and credibility of the documents as well as whether it is representative.

What existing documents related to your research topic could be analysed?

How might you establish the authenticity and credibility of any documents you analyse?

What would be the benefits and limitations of using document analysis in your research?

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OBSERVATION RESEARCH

Directly observing the behaviour of people is a useful research strategy because it relies less on inference when studying behaviour. Observation research varies in the degree to which researchers participate in the social setting and the amount of predetermined rules for the observation.

Participant observation, often used in ethnography, involves in-depth immersion in a culture over a lengthy period to develop an understanding of people's behaviour in that context.

What aspects of the behaviour related to your research topic could be directly observed?

What would be the benefits and limitations of using direct observation in your research?

What would be the ethical considerations of using direct observation in your research?

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FIELD EXPERIMENT

Some may argue that experimental designs are the most robust and trustworthy forms of research. However, experiments are not commonly used in social research due to the difficulty of manipulating the kinds of variables that are of interest.

Experimental designs allocate participants to one or more groups that receive an intervention that the control group does not receive. Any change in outcome can therefore be attributed to the intervention.

What would be the benefits and limitations of using an experimental design for your research?

What type of field experiment could you use in your research project?

What would be the ethical considerations in using an experiment in your research?

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RESEARCH METHODS

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LIFE HISTORY

Life histories and oral histories are used to gain a detailed description of the lived experience of one or more individuals. Life histories can be used to study an issue or a period of time. These methods emphasise the point of view of the individuals concerned and document how they understand and interpret their experience. Oral histories give life to marginalised groups that other research may not have explored.

What would be the benefits and limitations of taking life histories related to your research topic?

How might you address the problem of bias related to memories when listening to oral histories related to your research topic?

What would be the ethical considerations of examining life histories in your research?

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CASE STUDY

Case studies involve intensive analysis of a single case which might be an individual, a family, a community, an organisation or an event. The focus of this method is on identifying the unique features of the case. A feature of case study research is that the researcher is not attempting to generate findings that can be generalised to other similar contexts.

What would be the benefits and limitations of using a case study approach in your research?

What 'case' might you select if you were to adopt this method in your research?

What would be the ethical considerations in using a case study approach in your research?

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LITERATURE REVIEW

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MILESTONE PUBLICATIONS

Milestone publications are key pieces of influential research that have been published in the field of inquiry. These reports may have been published some time ago but are still important because of the degree of influence they have had on knowledge building or subsequent research. Milestone publications would normally be cited in most articles you read that are related to your topic.

Why do you think it is important to read the original milestone publication, rather than a description of this work written by another author?

What milestone publications have you identified related to your research topic?

How can the milestone publication in your field of inquiry inform your research topic?

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LITERATURE REVIEW

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THEMES AND GAPS

When reviewing the literature on your research topic you will notice that some of the same ideas, or themes keep appearing. Make a note of what these themes are and which authors have identified them. Conversely, you will find that some questions in relation to your topic remain unanswered. These areas are referred to as a 'gap' in the literature.

Identify the themes you have found in the literature on your research topic.

Identify the gaps you think there are in the literature on your research topic.

How might the themes and gaps in the literature inform the development of your research question and project methodology?

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LITERATURE REVIEW

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CONTRADICTIONS AND DEBATES

When writing a literature review it is important to identify any contradictions you discover in the research findings and conclusions offered from different authors. Note also any debates on aspects related to your research topic. The contradictions and debates you find will provide rich areas for you to test out, explore and later comment on in your own research.

Name three ways in which the contradictions and debates from earlier literature might add value to your own research?

If either the contradictions or debates from earlier work are not obvious to you, what might you do?

How can contradictions and debates inform knowledge building in your research area?

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LITERATURE REVIEW

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KEEPING TRACK

You will read numerous journal articles, book chapters, reports, whole books and website material to complete your review. It is imperative that before you start you have a system for keeping track of the author, title, publishing date, source, research method and main content of each item. Endnote, an electronic referencing application, can be used to record these details. Some people prefer to keep a list on a word or handwritten document.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of using a program like Endnote?

Why is it helpful to record the research method used in earlier research?

How might you efficiently file the literature that you have read for your research?

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LITERATURE REVIEW

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MAKING DISTINCTIONS

When writing the literature review it is important that you make the distinction between literature you have sourced that is anecdotal, theoretical and/or empirical. Each of these types of information offer different perspectives. It is not accurate to write "previous research has noted..." if the material you are citing is a discussion article that does not report results from primary research.

List three reasons it is important to make distinctions between the different types of literature in a review.

How can making these distinctions inform the design of your own research?

How will making the distinction between the different types of literature inform your readers?

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LITERATURE REVIEW

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ANALYSIS AND CRITIQUE

When you write a literature review it is not sufficient to simply report the content of the material in an organised, neutral way. You need to provide a critique of the earlier literature and offer an analysis of the patterns, contradictions, and gaps you have discovered. This process requires you to examine the methodological rigor, and locate potential limitations of the conclusions offered in the literature you review.

What strategies might you use to strengthen your critique of the literature?

When reading the literature how can you quickly code different key points for reference at a later date?

How will developing a critique of earlier literature strengthen your own research?

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STRUCTURE

LITERATURE REVIEW

Most reviews start with a background section that argues the need to investigate the research question, using earlier literature to strengthen the rationale. The review is then divided into sections of relevant topics where key literature is compared and contrasted highlighting milestone studies, gaps, differences in opinions and methodologies. It is important within the review to comment on how your research will relate to this earlier work. Conclude the review with some key observations.

Identify at least four reasons for writing a literature review.

Why might you place chronological or topic limitations on what you review?

What citation information do you need to keep for each item reviewed?

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LITERATURE REVIEW

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LOCAL, NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL

It is important to try to source material for your review that is local, national and international. Sometimes significant local literature and research can be overlooked when academic databases are used that may not cite agency reports. Search in relevant agency websites. Note in your review where the research and literature has been written as cultural context can influence research outcomes and viewpoints.

What are some of the key organisational websites you might search for relevant information?

How might you go about locating potential local material when initial website and academic database searches have failed?

What are some of the key websites available to access national data sets of information?

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OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

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NETWORKING

OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

Sometimes people can feel isolated undertaking research, especially if they are not part of a group working on the project. Purposeful use of networking can help an individual researcher overcome isolation while gleaning ideas to complete the project. Be proactive about making contact with key people associated with your research topic. Such people might include others who have researched in the same area, or people who have expertise in research process such as librarians, other researchers and practitioners. Join a research interest group.

What types of resources can you access using networking?

How might networking influence the future of your project?

In what ways can you be strategic with your networking?

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OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

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TIME MANAGEMENT

From the outset of your research you must utilise strict time management. Develop a realistic timeline showing anticipated completion dates for each step in the research process. Have your time line somewhere visible where you can refer to it frequently. Unexpected events can impact upon the smooth running of a research project. Schedule your finishing date a little early so that you have the room, if necessary, to accommodate unexpected delays mid project.

How do you currently manage your time?

What time management strategies could you use to plan and execute the research?

If you go over time in one step how might you make this time up without sacrificing the quality of the project?

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OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

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KEEPING MOTIVATED

If you are working on a research project over a long period of time, or are allocated a research topic you are not particularly interested in, keeping motivated might become an issue. Researchers become motivated by immersing themselves in the topics, literature and the people associated with their investigation. Researchers stay motivated by setting and achieving short term goals, connecting with others enthusiastic about knowledge building, and nurturing optimistic self talk in relation to research activity.

How have you motivated yourself to complete tasks in the past?

What are the intrinsic and extrinsic rewards associated with successfully completing research?

In what ways might research mentoring help you to become or stay motivated?

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OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

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MYTH BUSTING

Some believe research is difficult, using incomprehensible language and complex statistical functions, and is best done 'out there by other people' who are highly academic. In fact, most practice research can be completed in the agency setting using a simple set of steps (the research process). Where statistics are needed expert advice can be sought. There are many resources available to provide help in conducting social research including website and textbook information, local academics, researchers and librarians.

Why do you suppose research has been made out to be difficult?

How can some of the myths around research be challenged?

Has the discourse around conducting research influenced how you feel about completing practice research? If so, in what way?

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OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

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TRANSLATING LEARNING

OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

Students undertaking research placements sometimes find it hard to make the connection between research and practice skills, and become concerned about fulfilling placement assessment criteria. Many of the same skills are used in social research and professional practice. Undertaking research tasks can therefore demonstrate your competence in skills for professional practice.

Provide five examples where the skills and process used in conducting research equate to professional practice.

Explain to another student the role of research in professional practice.

How will the skills you use in research add value to your curriculum vitae?

PRACTISING RESEARCH

OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

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USING SUPERVISION

Be prepared for supervision with an agenda and list of discussion items. Bring new ideas and information (i.e. articles) to the table. Refer to your research timeline to plan the next stages of the work to be done. Think critically about how you conduct the research, and use supervision as a time to tease out debates and ethical issues you encounter. Record supervision process and plans in writing.

How can you make the most of your research supervision?

What do you think are the key roles of the research supervisor?

What do you think should be included in a research supervision contract?

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BEING OPEN

Having an attitude of 'openness' to new ideas, learning, and research itself helps people to overcome the inevitable challenges faced in undertaking research. Have a positive response focused on problem solving rather than allowing perceived obstacles to hinder your learning. From this position of openness you are likely to actually enjoy overcoming the challenges you encounter during research.

How would you describe your attitude to challenge and change?

How do you currently think about learning and doing research?

How can you make your research learning both enjoyable and productive?

PRACTISING RESEARCH

OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

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SEEKING CLARITY

Being clear about the specific topic under investigation and developing a research question and set of objectives that address the topic, forms the foundation of most research. It is important that the focus of the research is not too broad so that the research question can be made specific. Sometimes it is necessary to narrow down the scope of the research in order to develop a question that can be addressed using the time and resources available.

What difficulties will you encounter if your research question is not specific enough?

What strategies can you use to narrow down the scope of an investigation?

What strategies can you use to check if your research topic and question are compatible?

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EXPLORING FEELINGS

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ANXIETY

EXPLORING FEELINGS

Anxiety is a normal human emotion characterised by psychological and physiological symptoms. Generally, anxiety is a feeling of apprehension or worry about doing research and can be triggered by real or imagined experiences. Constant anxiety is exhausting and can have a debilitating effect on our ability to carry out research tasks.

What aspects of doing research create anxiety for you?

What are the symptoms you experience when anxious?

What are some strategies you could use to manage research anxiety?

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EXPLORING FEELINGS

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OVERWHELMED

Some people may feel overwhelmed when there are a number of expectations to meet in terms of the research project. One response to feeling overwhelmed is to procrastinate or put off completing priority research tasks by undertaking those that are of lower priority, or finding other distractions. It can be helpful to discuss feeling overwhelmed with someone.

Identify a time when you have felt overwhelmed?

What was your response to being overwhelmed?

What steps might you take to manage feeling overwhelmed?

PRACTISING RESEARCH

EXPLORING FEELINGS

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FRUSTRATION

Frustration occurs when the results of an endeavour do not match the effort put in, creating a sense of dissatisfaction.

Sometimes frustration might occur because of unrealistic expectations about the research project. It may be helpful to step back from the task that is causing frustration and re-evaluate the situation by identifying the positive outcomes so far?

What can trigger frustration in your research?

What strategies have you used in the past to deal with frustration that might work in a research situation?

Are the expectations related to the research project realistic? If not, what is the next step?

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CONFUSION

Confusion may arise if you are unclear about the research topic, unsure about what to do next or uncertain about your role. Confusion creates an inability to think with your usual speed or accuracy. It is important to seek the right guidance to overcome confusion.

What are the areas of confusion you have experienced in the research project?

What are some strategies you can use to deal with the confusion?

What are the resources you can use to help guide your research?

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EXPLORING FEELINGS

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ACCOMPLISHMENT

A sense of accomplishment comes from the successful completion of a task.

Accomplishment is not something that happens by accident, but is usually the result of planning and perseverance. It is important to recognise the aspects of research that have been accomplished as this contributes to increased research confidence.

What have you accomplished in the research project to date?

What steps did you take to successfully complete a research task?

How might you celebrate your accomplishments so far?

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EXPLORING FEELINGS

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ISOLATION

EXPLORING FEELINGS

A sense of isolation may occur when you are the only person in an agency undertaking research. Other agency workers may have limited experience of conducting research, leaving you with the feeling that you alone are responsible for working out how to complete the project. Feeling isolated may result in a lack of motivation or a sense that undertaking research is less valuable than direct practice with clients.

While conducting research I feel isolated when…

How can you create connections when doing research to overcome a sense of isolation?

Why is research a critical professional activity?

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CHALLENGE

EXPLORING FEELINGS

We are challenged when we are unable to complete tasks well because of a belief that we lack the necessary skills or abilities or because the research context presents barriers to accomplishment. Challenges in research might arise as a result of agency politics, ethical dilemmas, or because of perceptions about the value of research. It is important to both anticipate and address challenges.

What challenges have you encountered on this research project?

How might the following challenges be managed:
- *Agency politics*
- *Ethical dilemmas*
- *Perceptions of research*

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EXPLORING FEELINGS

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INSPIRATION

EXPLORING FEELINGS

Research can be an inspiring experience and as a result, the researcher can feel stimulated and motivated. Research findings can also inspire changes by building knowledge and skills for practice. Findings may inform agencies about how to improve service delivery and act as a catalyst for developing new research topics.

What is inspiring about your research project:
- *for you?*
- *for practice?*
- *for the agency?*

What further research might develop as a result of the current project?

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ACCESSING PARTICIPANTS

Participation in research is usually voluntary. Researchers may provide incentives (gifts, fees, reimbursement of travel costs) for people to take part. You need to take care that you do not coerce participants; coercion occurs when a person does not want to participate in the research but agrees because of the incentive they will receive. Make sure your participants have all the information they need to decide whether to be involved (informed consent); this means you will need to clearly explain the project and any risks associated with the research in a way the participant can understand.

How will you explain the research project to potential participants?

What people/participants may be unable to provide informed consent?

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Conflicts of interest can have an impact on all aspects of the research process. A conflict of interest occurs when personal, financial, or intellectual matters potentially compromise the researcher's judgement. One way of managing conflicts of interest is to disclose them, making sure that the conflict is discussed and documented. Potential conflicts of interest must be declared when making your application for Ethics Approval. In your application document include how potential conflicts' of interest will be ethically managed.

What are some examples of a conflict of interest in research?

Can you identify any potential conflicts of interest in your research?

How will you manage any conflicts of interest?

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DATA AND DISSEMINATION

Whatever method of data collection you have chosen, the data needs to be collected and disseminated in a way that is not harmful to participants and protects anonymity. Once collected the data must be stored in a place that is accessible only to you. When analysing you will have to make sure the analysis is 'grounded in the data'; this means that you should not analyse the data according to your own personal opinions or judgements.

What aspects of data collection could be harmful to participants?

How can you make sure the methods you use to collect the data are ethical?

How will you protect participant's identity?
How will the data be stored?

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CROSS CULTURAL RESEARCH

Ethical issues must be considered within the sociocultural context. When undertaking research with a marginalised cultural group it is important to think about how ethical behaviour is defined by that group. Cultural groups will have views about how research should be conducted and terms like informed consent, confidentiality, conflict of interest, and protection of data may have different meanings. Before beginning cross cultural research it is critical that you have the mandate of the group and are 'invited in' by way of a process that is appropriate to the group in question.

What types of research would you consider to be cross cultural?

What are some important first steps in conducting cross cultural research?

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INFORMING PARTICIPANTS

Participants need to be fully informed about what they will experience by being part of the research. Most often an Information Sheet is provided to read before agreeing to participate. Information includes: the aims, procedures, bounds of confidentiality, means of obtaining the results, avenues for further inquiry or complaint. If the research delves into sensitive areas, ways to obtain additional personal support are outlined. The Information Sheet must be presented in a way that participants can be fully informed about the research.

What would you do to develop an Information Sheet for young children; people with sight impairment; people with an intellectual disability?

What would you do to ensure confidentiality to participants?

PRACTISING
RESEARCH

ETHICS

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ADDRESSING RISK

Social research often includes investigation of sensitive issues. In case the research process causes participant distress it is important that factors relating to the physical and psychological safety of participants are addressed, including making additional supports (such as counselling) available. Researchers need to be prepared for disclosure of matters that may relate to criminal activity or intentions that impact on the safety of the participant or others. These potential risks, and how you will address them, must be outlined when you make the ethics application.

How will you discuss confidentiality with participants to cover the above possibilities?

As the researcher, what will you do to keep yourself safe during sensitive research?

PRACTISING
RESEARCH

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ETHICS APPROVAL

Different organisational settings have different arrangements for seeking ethical approval to conduct research. It is important to find out what the process is in your agency before taking any steps towards recruiting participants for your research. The process of applying for ethical approval involves documenting in detail the scope of your research, recruitment procedures, nature of participation, how results will be used and reported, and the safeguards you are taking to avoid potential stress or participant disadvantage. All potential risks must be disclosed in the application, noting how these will be addressed.

How will you address potential power differentials when conducting research with your agency clients?

What ethical issues might arise in the process of research participant recruitment?