

Academic Work and AI

Welcome Week

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What is academic work exactly?

A formal definition:

A process of systematic inquiry that entails the collection of data, documentation of critical information, and analysis and interpretation of that data/information, in accordance with suitable methodologies set by specific professional fields and academic disciplines.

- A structured approach to formulating questions and identifying problems
- Based on evidence and drawing inferences
- Relies on methodologies of different academic fields and disciplines

Why is academic work relevant?

Analytical thinking

Breaking complex business problems into testable components. The same skill you need in business, management, and finance.

Critical thinking

Questioning assumptions and judging the quality of evidence. The skill that keeps you from acting on claims that only sound right.

Articulate communication

Putting complex ideas into words that land on the first read. The skill behind every successful pitch, proposal, and board memo.

These are not dusty “academic” skills that are unimportant for your next internship or first job. They are the core skills you will need for the rest of your career.

Still don't believe me? Here is some proof:

The study

- 116 Italian startups in a 4-month accelerator
- Randomly assigned to a *research approach* versus standard entrepreneurial heuristics
- Research group: formulate hypotheses, design tests, interpret evidence

The result

- The research group pivoted more and dropped bad ideas earlier
- Generated higher revenue after 1 year
- Made better decisions under uncertainty

A structured, research-based approach works in practice, even in startups.

But we observe that students' skills are deteriorating...

I asked my peers:

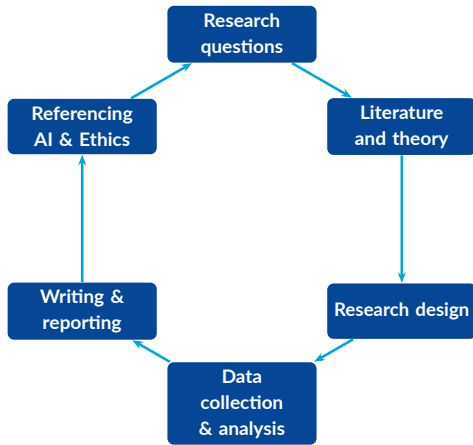
"What is the most important skill students lack?"

- 1 "Students cannot motivate the importance of their thesis"
- 2 "They underestimate the effort and time it takes"
- 3 "Students fail to use referencing, while it is a basic requirement"
- 4 "They don't understand research principles"
- 5 "Students struggle to find and evaluate academic literature"
- 6 "They copy excerpts from articles and delegate too much to AI"

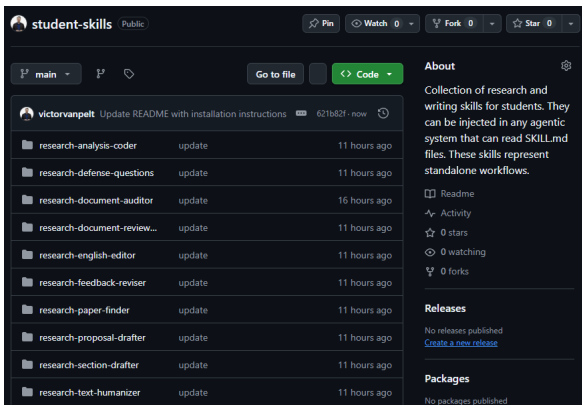
Today: A quick taste of academic work in the age of AI*

* Based on my optional elective in the Spring semester: Academic Research and Writing.

Let's get a taste of academic work using the research cycle:



Along the way, I will point to some “skills”



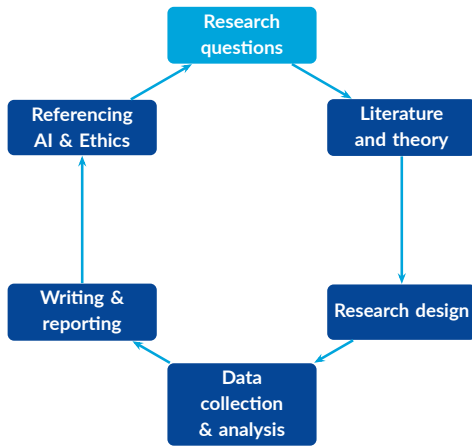
The screenshot shows the GitHub interface for the repository 'student-skills' by user 'victorvanpelt'. The repository is public and has 0 watches, 0 forks, and 0 stars. The main branch is 'main'. A recent commit by 'victorvanpelt' is shown, updating the README with installation instructions. Below the commit, a list of folders is displayed, each with an 'update' status and a timestamp. The folders are: research-analysis-coder, research-defense-questions, research-document-auditor, research-document-review..., research-english-editor, research-feedback-reviser, research-paper-finder, research-proposal-drafter, research-section-drafter, and research-text-humanizer. On the right side, the 'About' section describes the repository as a collection of research and writing skills for students, which can be injected into any agentic system that can read SKILL.md files. Below the 'About' section, there are links for 'Readme', 'Activity', 'Stars', 'Watching', and 'Forks'. The 'Releases' section shows no releases published, and the 'Packages' section shows no packages published.

Folder Name	Status	Time
research-analysis-coder	update	11 hours ago
research-defense-questions	update	11 hours ago
research-document-auditor	update	16 hours ago
research-document-review...	update	11 hours ago
research-english-editor	update	11 hours ago
research-feedback-reviser	update	11 hours ago
research-paper-finder	update	11 hours ago
research-proposal-drafter	update	11 hours ago
research-section-drafter	update	11 hours ago
research-text-humanizer	update	11 hours ago



<https://tinyurl.com/studentskillsrepo>

What is a good research question/problem?



A good research question is the foundation of every project

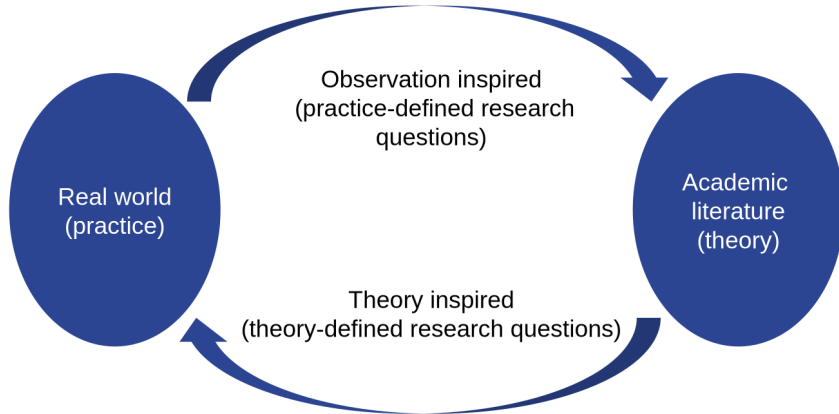
Good research questions balance scope:



Link to prior work: it must connect to what is already known.

Offer something new: your question must address a gap or challenge.

Inspiration can come from both theory and practice



Which question is practical/theoretical?



Question 1

Why do consumers say they dislike sweatshop labor but buy products produced by it?

Question 2

When does cognition enable moral reasoning vs. self-interested motivated reasoning?

Source: Paharia et al., 2013

Find a well-published paper and change one important thing

Tip: Find a strong paper and change one element: the research setting, a new variable, the main dependent variable, or the target population.

This ensures your question has a credible foundation while offering sufficient novelty.

The three questions you should know the answer to

What?

What are you trying to find out?

Define a clear, focused, and arguable research question and explain it for your target audience.

Why?

Why is an answer important and to whom?

Explain who will care about an answer and why. Establish relevance for theory and practice.

How?

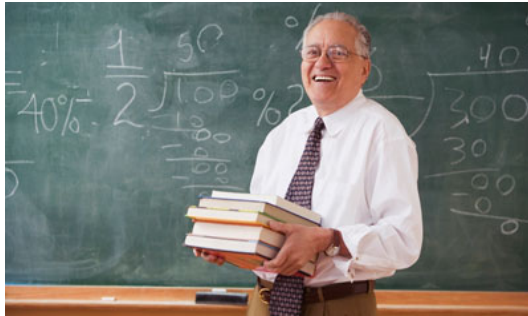
How will you find the answer?

What approach will you use to provide an answer? Describe your methodology, data, and analysis.

Work these questions HARD. They guide everything and should be kept up to date.

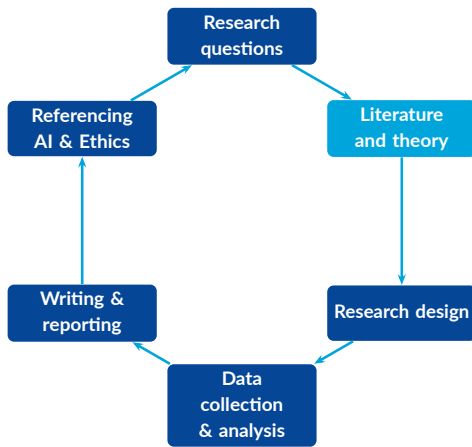
See the skill called: **“research-proposal-drafter”**

One last tip for your research question



WHU professors can help you steer and develop your research question.
Bring them these starting points, and they will help.

What do we already know (is in the literature)?



What is good literature?

Some criteria:

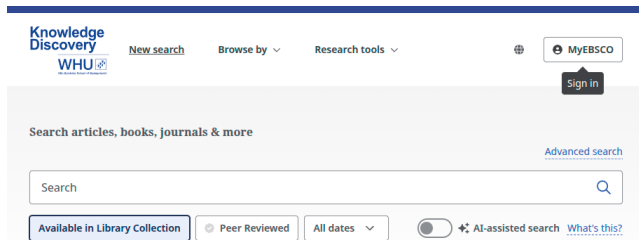
- 1 **Author reputation:** track record of rigorous, cited work, prizes, etc.
- 2 **Impact factor / SJR:** how often a journal's articles are cited
- 3 **Journal ranking:** ABS (4*, 4, and 3) + FT50 signal quality
- 4 **Citation count:** how often a paper has been cited by others

Rule of thumb: A “good” paper is (1) published in a highly ranked journal AND/OR (2) cited many times. Ensure the majority of your references come from “good” papers.

Classic approach to find good literature: WHU's Knowledge Discovery

The WHU Knowledge and Research Service Center (our library) runs its own search engine:

- One search across articles, books, and journals from all publishers.
- Filters for peer-reviewed work and dates; full text wherever WHU has a license.
- Go to kd.whu.edu; sign in for full-text access off campus.



The screenshot displays the WHU Knowledge Discovery search engine interface. At the top, the logo for 'Knowledge Discovery' and 'WHU' (Wirtschaftsuniversität Wien) is visible. Navigation links include 'New search', 'Browse by', and 'Research tools'. A 'MyEBSCO' button and a 'Sign in' button are also present. The main search area features a large text input field with the placeholder 'Search' and a magnifying glass icon. Above the input field, the text 'Search articles, books, journals & more' is displayed. To the right of the input field, there is a link for 'Advanced search'. Below the input field, there are several filter buttons: 'Available in Library Collection', 'Peer Reviewed', and 'All dates'. A toggle switch for 'AI-assisted search' is also visible, along with a link for 'What's this?'.

More modern approaches: AI tools

Useful prompt for AI chats/apps (ChatGPT, Claude, etc.):

Act as an academic research assistant in accounting and finance. I am writing a Master's thesis on corporate tax avoidance.

Find up to 10 seminal empirical papers published between 2010 and 2026 in top FT50 journals (e.g., TAR, JAR, JAE, CAR, RAS, JF, JFE, RFS). Search and verify against live academic records.

For each paper, provide:

1. Full APA 7th citation (exact authors, year, title, journal, volume, issue, pages)
2. Verified DOI URL (<https://doi.org/...>)
3. Empirical method and sample setting
4. Core empirical finding (1 to 2 sentences)

Guardrail: Never invent or guess citations. If fewer than 10 papers strictly meet all criteria, return only the verified ones and state the count. Omit rather than hallucinate.

AI tools in the CLI/IDE can query the article databases directly

- The AI agent gets a connector: an MCP server (a standard plug that lets the agent call an outside service) or a database's own API, and sends live queries while it works.
- [OpenAlex](#), [Crossref](#), and [Semantic Scholar](#) offer free APIs (OpenAlex has required a free API key since March 2026); [Consensus](#) runs an official MCP server over 220+ million papers, no account needed; [Scite](#) and [Elicit](#) run official MCP servers for paid plans only.
- You can also turn it into a skill: [research-paper-finder](#).
- Describe your topic and conditions in as much detail as possible; a good query returns title, authors, journal, year, and DOI (Consensus returns no DOI below its enterprise plan).

Check every source personally. Mistakes and hallucinated references are common.

Tip: Use a separate agent to audit references (simple skill: [research-document-auditor](#)).

Snowballing: Tracing a paper's roots and subsequent branches

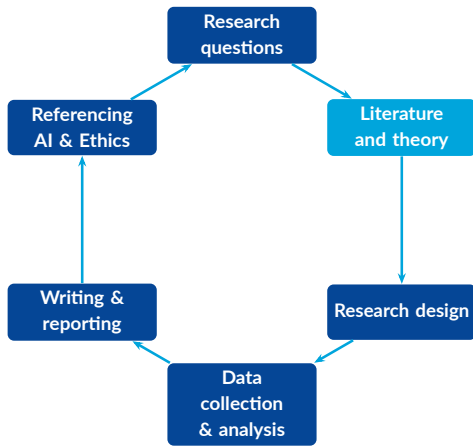
Backward snowballing

- 1 Pick a relevant paper as your seed.
- 2 Scrutinize its reference list.
- 3 Read the most relevant references you find.
- 4 Repeat until diminishing returns.

Forward snowballing

- 1 Find a relevant paper on Google Scholar or Scopus.
- 2 Click "Cited by" to see who built on this work.
- 3 Filter by relevance and recency.
- 4 Iterate until diminishing returns.

Academic work uses theories





Theories and How We Use Them

What is a theory?



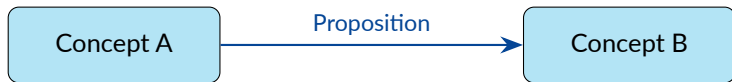
A theory is a window to look at the world

- Different theoretical “windows” show different views of reality.
- A theory is NOT just a guess or a hunch.
- It is a systematic explanation of how the world works and why.



The main objectives of research and academic work are to develop and test theories.

Theories connect abstract concepts through propositions



- Concepts are abstractions of reality.
- Propositions are statements about how concepts relate to each other.
- Together, concepts and propositions form the building blocks of theories.
- Hypotheses are **testable statements** derived from theoretical propositions (H_0 : relationship = 0 and H_a : relationship $\neq$ 0)

A note about hypotheses

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

7 March 2017

**“How Artificial Intelligence
Will Change Everything”**

The New York Times

31 March 2023

**“A.I. May Change Everything,
but Probably Not Too
Quickly”**

Bloomberg

12 May 2026

**“AI Will Change Almost
Everything, Jamie Dimon
Says”**

A hypothesis must be falsifiable

The Headline Example

“AI will change everything” is **unfalsifiable**.
The author can always say they were “kinda” right.

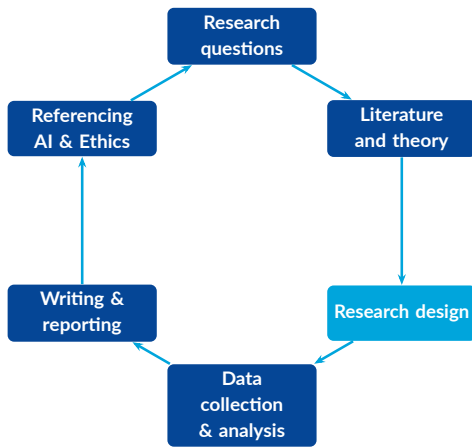
Karl Popper's Argument

If a hypothesis cannot be proven wrong by *any* possible observation, it is not useful. We learn by attempting to **refute** theories, not confirm them.

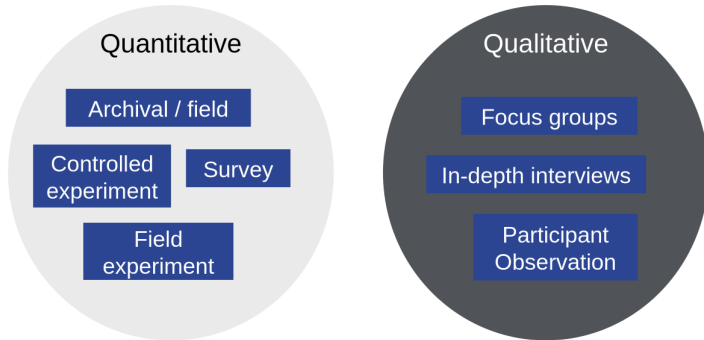
Better AI Hypotheses

- “At least half of firms report using AI.”
Falsifiable: It can be disproven using public and survey data.
- “Auditors who use AI to audit annual reports have higher audit quality.”
Falsifiable: It can be disproven using field and experimental data.

Academic work uses different research methods and designs



There are various methods within each category



Qualitative methods focus on developing theories

Example: a researcher interviews employees who work from home.

1. Listen & probe

"I can plan my own day."

"Nobody interrupts me."

"The coffee chats are gone."

"I feel cut off from my team."

2. Identify themes

More freedom

**Less contact
with colleagues**

3. Develop a theory

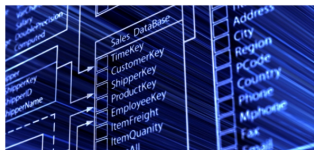
Working from home gives
more freedom but **less
contact** with colleagues.

Qualitative research tends to be inductive and combines methods.

Quantitative methods focus on testing theories

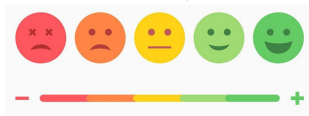
Quantitative methods often focus on **finding support for and testing theories**.

Archival/Field



The effect of peers on supermarket worker productivity
Mas and Moretti (2009)

Surveys



What executives say drives their earnings reporting
Graham et al. (2005)

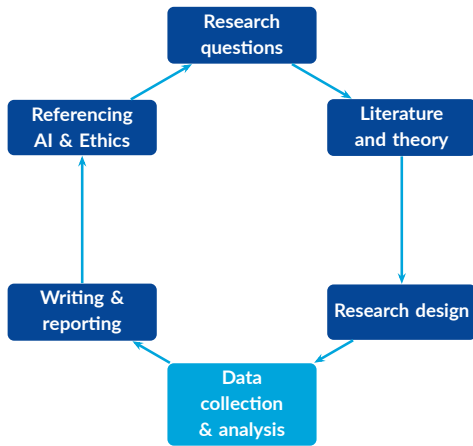
Controlled/Field Experiments



The effect of feedback frequency on performance
Casas-Arce et al. (2017)

Quantitative research tends to be deductive and focuses on one method.

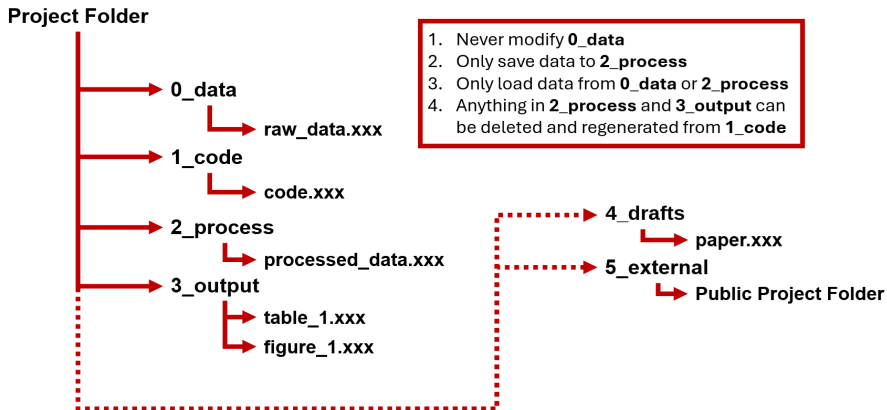
A few tips for data collection and analysis



Who has worked with data and has a folder like this?

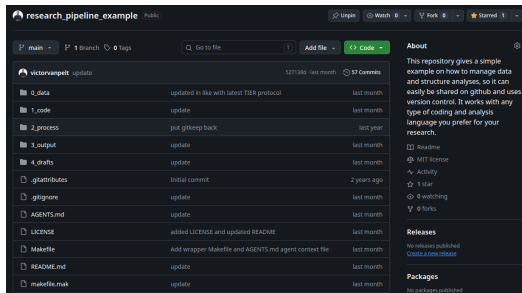
 descriptives	17/01/2021 16:18	Rich Text Format
 descriptives	29/04/2020 17:40	LaTeX Source File
 descriptivetime	17/01/2021 16:19	Rich Text Format
 descriptivetime	13/01/2021 12:01	LaTeX Source File
 do file	25/01/2021 23:56	Stata Do-file
 do_clean	06/07/2023 15:47	Stata Do-file
 dyndoc	12/12/2022 17:39	Brave HTML Docu...
 effort	27/02/2020 16:28	Adobe Acrobat D...
 epq	17/01/2021 16:22	Rich Text Format
 epq	28/07/2020 12:12	LaTeX Source File
 epq	07/02/2023 13:30	Microsoft Excel 97...
 frequencies	17/01/2021 16:19	Rich Text Format
 frequencies	29/04/2020 17:40	LaTeX Source File
 gee	09/03/2020 11:33	LaTeX Source File
 gee	09/03/2020 11:33	Text Document

A reproducible research pipeline: From raw data to first draft



Results that cannot be reproduced are not useful

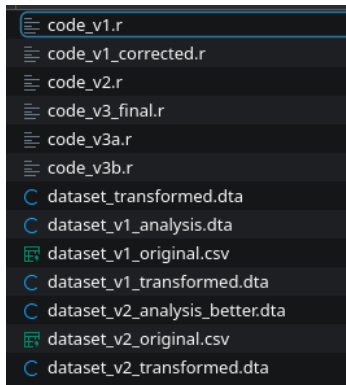
An example pipeline for you to try



github.com/victorvanpelt/research_pipeline_example

Version control

Is this also one of your habits?



```
code_v1.r  
code_v1_corrected.r  
code_v2.r  
code_v3_final.r  
code_v3a.r  
code_v3b.r  
dataset_transformed.dta  
dataset_v1_analysis.dta  
dataset_v1_original.csv  
dataset_v1_transformed.dta  
dataset_v2_analysis_better.dta  
dataset_v2_original.csv  
dataset_v2_transformed.dta
```

Version control keeps records over time



Researcher-in-the-loop: AI should “only” help you code

- Research that is not reproducible is not useful
- Only automate tasks through AI that can be forgotten and are not privacy sensitive
- AI should **never** take over the research. Avoid:
 - Editing the raw data
 - Cleaning and merging the data
 - Conducting analyses and producing tables/figures
 - Automatically committing and pushing to GitHub
- Let AI “**only**” help you improve your code under “1_code”

Tip: A shared rulebook for your research pipeline (e.g., AGENTS.md)

AGENTS.md — context for AI coding agents

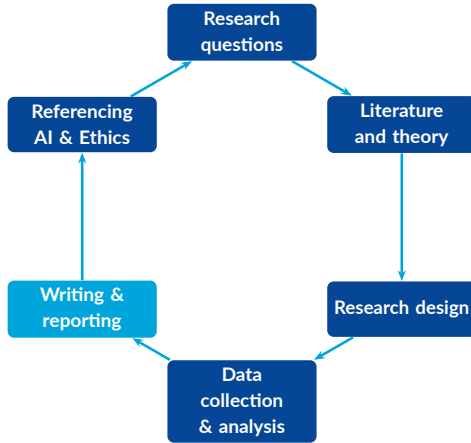
This repository is a template for a reproducible research pipeline. Data flows through numbered folders; everything downstream of the raw data is regenerated by code.

Rules

- Never modify the raw data in `@_data/`. It is read-only. The exception is `@_data/codebook.md`, which is hand-maintained documentation: update it whenever the data change.
- Never edit files in `2_process/` or `3_output/` by hand (including `3_output/data_appendix/`): they are build artifacts, regenerated by the pipeline.
- Help the user make changes in `1_code/` (analysis), `4_drafts/` (paper, slides, and data appendix sources), and `@_data/codebook.md` only.
- Before a change that touches more than one file, say which files you will edit and what will change in each. Then edit.
- Never run `git commit` or `git push`. Leave changes in the working tree for the maintainer to review and commit.
- Do not commit credentials; use environment variables.
- Remove any scratch or helper files you create in this repository after you're finished. The folder structure is fixed; do not add folders or top-level files.

You can also integrate certain rules in your AI tooling/harness

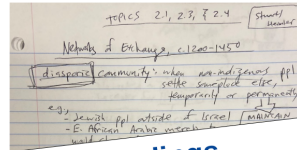
How do I report what I have learned? A few tips



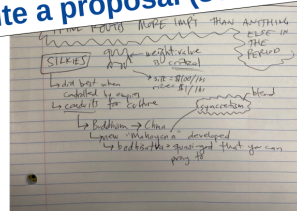
Think before you start writing.

Research proposal writing

Day	Activity
1	- Understanding what comprises a research proposal - Conceptualising the research - What do you want to research? - What is the problem? - Why is it a problem? - What has the literature told you about the problem? - Is there a gap in the literature?
2	Writing the...
3	- Gather literature to support the problem or identify the... - Writing the revised introductory statement - Writing the revised problem statement - Writing the rationale - Writing the aims and research questions
4	Writing a review of the literature



Create summaries, overviews, notes, findings.
Gather literature, create reference lists, write a proposal (see later slides)

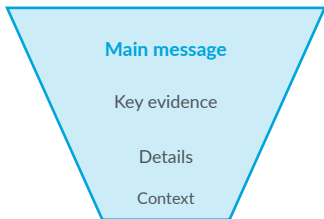


Use the structure and order we all know.

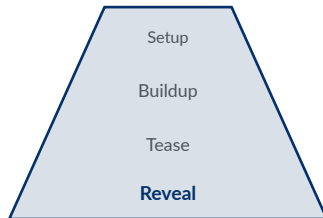


Report like a newspaper. Don't tell stories like a novel

Newspaper structure



Novel structure



Lead with your main message early. Don't waste time. If readers want more, they will seek it out.

Follow the golden rule of the paragraph

One paragraph communicates **ONLY** one sub-message!

Start with communicating this sub-message in the first sentence!

Afterward:

- Information piece A
- Information piece B
- Information piece C
- Information piece D
- Information piece ...

Evaluate carefully which information pieces you need to explain and substantiate the sub-message of the paragraph

Choosing which sub-messages and information pieces to include is difficult. Check with your target audience. Put your messages first and others' second.

Use the “from the familiar to the new” technique

By directing employee attention toward specific goals, performance measurement systems also shape the allocation of resources. The effects of those decisions emerge in subsequent operational outcomes and reported results. Once this cycle is in motion, isolating the causal influence of a single metric becomes challenging.

By directing employee attention toward specific goals, performance measurement systems also shape the **allocation of resources**. **The effects of those decisions** emerge in *subsequent operational outcomes and reported results*. Once this cycle is in motion, isolating the causal influence of a single metric becomes challenging.

Avoid being too formal



When I
normally
talk to people



When I
write my thesis

Avoid complex words, long sentences, passive language, impersonal constructions, and unnecessary distance. Write simply and concisely, using active language.

After your first draft, apply Chekhov's gun

"If in the first act you have hung a pistol on the wall, then in the following one it should be fired. Otherwise don't put it there." — Anton Chekhov



Ask people who proxy for your audience for feedback

✗ Ask your family

Some argue everyone should be able to understand your writing, e.g., ask your grandmother. However, your grandmother might not be your target audience.

✓ The Supervisor/Peers

You write for an explicit target audience. For the thesis: Your supervisor, peers in your program, and fellow researchers or people in this discipline.

Good feedback comes from proxies for your target audience. Don't try to write for everyone and don't ask everyone for feedback.

AI tools can “copy edit” your paper

You are a professional academic editor. Edit the text below for grammar, spelling, punctuation, and academic style in American English. Make the smallest changes needed and keep the original meaning, argument, and tone. Follow these rules strictly:

1. Keep all terminology, citations, footnotes, numbers, and equations exactly as written.
2. Keep the paragraph structure and formatting. Do not merge, split, reorder, or delete paragraphs.
3. Do not add, remove, or shorten content.
4. If a sentence is unclear, leave it unchanged rather than guessing its meaning.
5. Return only the edited text, with no comments or explanations.

Expanded into a skill: “[research-english-editor](#)”

AI can use your style and voice

A short writing-rules file, read by AI before every session

- First person: “I” alone, “we” with coauthors, never “the author”
- Reporting: “I expect” for predictions, “we find” for results, “this suggests” for inferences
- Active voice, plain American English, and no decorative adjectives
- No em-dashes, no exclamation points
- Every citation supports a claim or argument

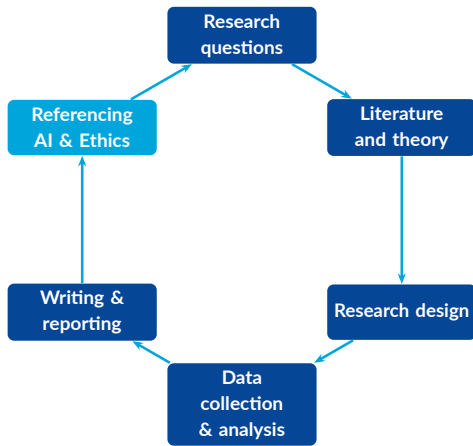
Add your own voice: Keep a folder of past writing you were happy with, and tell your AI app or tool to extract your voice from it.

AI text can carry a hidden watermark

- EU law now requires AI companies to mark their models' text (European Union, 2024). Gemini did so in 2024, before the law; Claude since August 2026.
- The mark is a hidden pattern in the model's word choices: invisible to you, checkable only by the company that made the model.
- Unlike AI detectors, it almost never flags text a person wrote alone.
- A hit means a model touched the text, not who wrote the ideas. A missing watermark proves nothing: the pattern is weak in short or factual passages and disappears in a full rewrite.

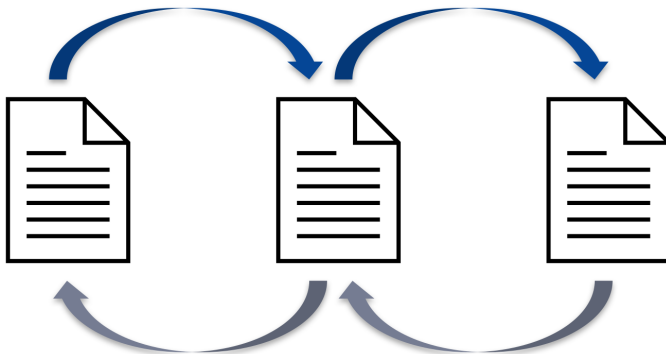
A watermark can show that a model touched a text, never who wrote it. Always declare your AI usage.

Referencing and Ethics



What does referencing achieve?

Referencing helps readers locate your sources



It helps to continue the scholarly conversation and avoid plagiarism

Referencing avoids plagiarism

**You have probably heard about deliberate plagiarism:
A classmate turning in an essay they did not write, without permission.**

However, most occurs by accident, and it happens more easily than you think:

- Forgetting to use quotation marks for a quote
- Paraphrasing too closely to the original text without a reference
- Mentioning an idea that you read somewhere without citing it
- Not including a complete reference list at the end of your paper

WHU has strict rules in place to discourage plagiarism (e.g., failing or suspension).

Referencing has two components: in-text citations and reference lists

- In-text citations are brief references in the body of your paper that direct readers to the full reference entry at the end.
- In your text, you can directly quote or paraphrase a source.
- Paraphrasing means referring to a source by including the author's last name and the year of publication in a sentence.
- A direct quote means you directly include an excerpt from a source between quotation marks.
- I recommend (mostly) paraphrasing, as it forces you to leverage a source for your own writing rather than let the source "take over."

There are two types of paraphrasing when referencing

Parenthetical

It puts a reference at the end of the sentence in parentheses.

“Horses are quite clever (Smith, 2020).”

The “message” is central; the source is in the background.

**In most cases, parenthetical is more effective.
You want to use it to substantiate and argue.**

Narrative

It integrates a reference into the sentence itself.

“Smith (2020) shows that horses are quite clever.”

The source comes first; use only when it is central.

Every reference will reappear in the reference list

The diagram shows a reference list titled "REFERENCES" with three entries. Annotations include: "0.5 in hanging indent" with an arrow pointing to the first entry; "Double-spacing" with an arrow pointing to the second entry; "Section after main body and before appendices" with an arrow pointing to the title; and "Alphabetical order (else year)" with a bracket on the right side of the list.

REFERENCES

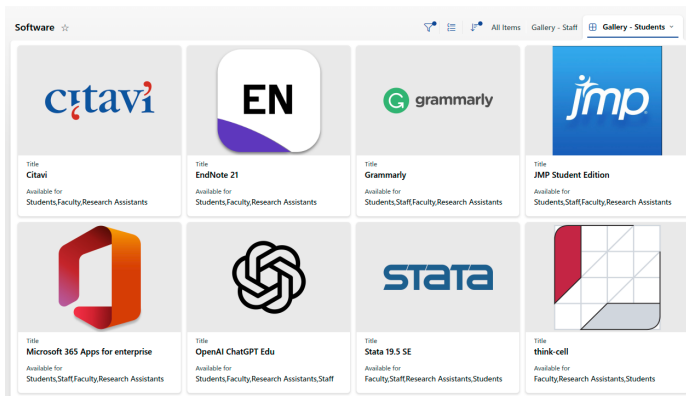
Barry, B., & Stewart, G. L. (1997). Composition, process, and performance in self-managed groups: The role of personality. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 82(1), 62-78.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.82.1.62>

Bunderson, J. S., & Boumgarden, P. (2009). Structure and learning in self-managed teams: why “bureaucratic” teams can be better learners. *Organization Science*, 21(3), 609-624. <https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.1090.0483>

Carton, A. M., & Cummings, J. N. (2013). The impact of subgroup type and subgroup configurational properties on work team performance. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 98(5), 732-758. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0033593>

If a source is cited in text, it must be in the reference list (and vice versa).

Reference managers for your document editor



EndNote Cite While You Write (Word plugin)

I investigate the effects of relative performance information (RPI) on self-managed teams (SMT). SMTs are autonomous groups of employees that have been granted large amounts of decision-making authority and autonomy (Cennamo & Santalo, 2013; Tversky, 1972). SMTs' are widely used in practice make greater use of local knowledge antecedents of effective self-managed teams (Barry, B., & Stewart, G. L. (1997), there is growing awareness of the importance of RPI as also an important factor (e.g., Bunderson, J. S., & Boumgarden, P. (2009). In this essay, I argue that one way to structure is to use RPI to help in competencies.

Technological advancements facilitate RPI, both formally and informally, to differentiate from each other with the benefits associated with using RPI. The clarity by more efficiently dividing tasks, allowing individual team members to focus on their assigned tasks. RPI is a key factor in the success of self-managed teams.

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Author	Year	Title
Asay	2005	Evolution of the adsorbed water layer structure on silicon oxide at room temperature
Asay	2016	Disclosure Readability and the Sensitivity of Investors' Valuation Judgment
Asay	2018	Consumer responses to corporate tax planning
Lin	2020	Effect of implementing an overwork-prevention act on working hours and job satisfaction
Asay	2021	Tax boycotts
Asay	2022	Theory testing and process evidence in accounting experiments

Reference Type Journal Article
Record Number 1498
Author Asay, H. S.
Guggenmos, R.
Kadous, K.
Koonce, Lisa
Libby, Robert
Year 2022
Title Theory testing and process evidence in accounting experiments
Journal The Accounting Review
Volume 97
Issue 6
Pages 23-43
URL <https://doi.org/10.2308/TAR-2019-1001>

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REFERENCES

Barry, B., & Stewart, G. L. (1997). Composition, process, and performance in self-managed groups: The role of personality. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 82(1), 62-78. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.82.1.62>

Bunderson, J. S., & Boumgarden, P. (2009). Structure and learning in self-managed teams: why "bureaucratic" teams can be better learners. *Organization Science*, 21(3), 609-624. <https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.1090.0483>

Carton, A. M., & Cummings, J. N. (2013). The impact of subgroup type and subgroup configurational properties on work team performance. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 98(5), 732-758. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0033593>

Cennamo, C., & Santalo, J. (2013). Platform competition: Strategic trade-offs in platform markets. *Strategic Management Journal*, 34(11), 1331-1350. <https://doi.org/10.1002/smj.2066>

Tversky, A. (1972). Elimination by aspects: A theory of choice. *Psychological Review*, 79(4), 281-299. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0032955>

Integrate references into EndNote directly



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[BOOK] Transformational leadership
BM Bass, RE Riggio - 2006 - books.google.com

Transformational Leadership, Second Edition is intended for both the students of leadership. It is a comprehensive review of theorizing that can serve as a reference and starting point for additional research.

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MLA Bass, Bernard M., and Ronald E. Riggio. *Transformational leadership*. Psychology press, 2006.

APA Bass, B. M., & Riggio, R. E. (2006). *Transformational leadership*. Psychology press.

Chicago Bass, Bernard M., and Ronald E. Riggio. *Transformational leadership*. Psychology press, 2006.

Harvard Bass, B.M. and Riggio, R.E., 2006. *Transformational leadership*. Psychology press.

Vancouver Bass BM, Riggio RE. Transformational leadership. Psychology press; 2006 Aug 15.

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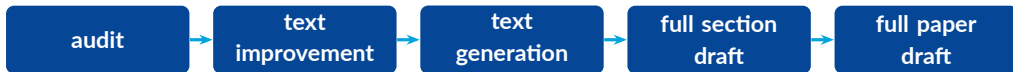
AI-assisted referencing

- You can instruct AI to fix the APA references you're using, including the reference list at the end.
- Tools connected to the article databases can fetch the exact reference data: authors, years, and journals.
- However, things can go wrong: incorrect DOIs, wrong references, and other errors.
- You always need to verify everything yourself (follow the DOI link).
- Tip: Use a separate audit agent to check every reference.

An audit skill: [“research-document-auditor”](#)

Where is the line between AI assistance and replacement?

Consider this spectrum:



Where does AI assistance end and replacement begin for you?

Recommendation 1: Disclose your AI use transparently

AI Declaration

Using artificial intelligence (AI) tools as support in writing your thesis or papers is not forbidden. While AI tools can help you in generating your texts and brainstorm on ideas, you must be aware of the following limitations:

- Unless you can find reliable sources, you must assume that the **output of the AI is wrong** since it is not based on academic research but on neuronal networks.
- Questions concerning copyright on texts produced with AI are not yet sufficiently answered. E.g., OpenAI claims that texts produced with ChatGPT are under the ownership of OpenAI and may not be used without permission. German copyright law postulates different assumptions, though, when the output is mostly based on human input into the chatbot. Additionally, texts produced with ChatGPT may be identical to copyrighted texts or include parts of them without referencing them and thus potentially leading to **copyright infringements**.
- Using texts prepared with ChatGPT or similar AI tools may lead to cases of **plagiarism**, e.g., when the produced texts are similar to original texts and not sufficiently referenced in academic work. Furthermore, our plagiarism detection software now includes a tool to increase the capability to detect texts written by AI and report on that.
- When plagiarism is detected, your thesis or paper will be graded with a 5.0, and you will have to write it again – keep in mind that you only have two attempts for your final thesis! When it is detected and confirmed that major parts of a thesis or a paper have been written by AI tools, this will be treated similarly to **ghost-writing cases** and may result in ultimately failing the studies due to fraudulent conduct.

Thus, be aware that – like with all other resources used – you need to indicate the usage of AI tools correctly. For this purpose, please include a (new) self-production declaration at the end of your thesis paper, which addresses the following questions:

Did you use AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT) to prepare your thesis?

NO

If you answer NO, please indicate shortly why (50-150 words).

YES

If you answer YES, please answer:

1. *Which tools did you use? (up to 200 words)*
2. *For which parts and purpose of your thesis did you use the AI tools (up to 400 words)*
[Answering this question is important. However, it is not an adequate substitute for a detailed indication of where in the manuscript AI-generated text was used.]
3. *How was your experience?*
Please write a brief personal reflection note (200–400 words) on your experience using the AI tools. Please tackle at least the following aspects:
 - *To which extent did the AI tools improve your productivity?*
 - *Did you experience any drawbacks and explicit mistakes in the output of the AI tools?*

Five Principles of Responsible AI Use at WHU

1. Use AI as a tool, not a substitute for independent and critical thinking.

ChatGPT can help you generate ideas and streamline tasks, but your own critical thinking remains essential. AI must not replace you in exams or academic work. Moreover, AI-generated content may contain errors. As such, you should always question and verify AI-generated output before use. Be transparent about when, where, and how you use AI.

2. Use AI responsibly and ethically.

Do not create or share discriminatory, offensive, or misleading content. Avoid spreading “fake news” or manipulating information. While ChatGPT Edu allows the processing of personal and confidential data, you should always carefully consider whether such data could fall into the wrong hands, for example, by sharing a custom GPT with the wrong audience. Always adhere to data protection regulations and respect copyright and intellectual property rights. If you choose to share content generated with ChatGPT, it is your responsibility to ensure that all personal and confidential data is adequately protected.

3. Always follow the law.

Never use AI for cybercrime, hacking, mass requests, or automated processes that violate school policy, as well as local, national, European, or international law. Even in legally gray areas, consider the ethical impact: If your actions could harm or deceive others, rethink your approach and maintain your integrity. ChatGPT Edu is available to WHU students, staff, and faculty for work purposes. While you may use the tool for personal projects, ensure that you always comply with these guidelines and the principles outlined in the usage agreement. Be aware that violations—especially those involving data protection, academic misconduct, or unauthorized use—may lead to serious consequences, including disciplinary or legal action.

4. Embrace AI with curiosity and enthusiasm!

Remember that AI is here to support you! Experiment, explore, and make the most of its potential for learning, research, and productivity. Have fun exploring new avenues and may AI help you achieve great success at WHU!

5. Use AI purposefully, but not excessively.

Considering AI’s high energy consumption, limit your usage to essential, valuable, and productive tasks that have a positive impact, rather than making casual or unnecessary queries.

Recommendation 2: Be aware of cognitive offloading.

AI overreliance goes hand in hand with weaker independent problem-solving:

$$r = -0.75$$

Negative association between cognitive offloading and critical thinking (Gerlich, 2025)

319

Knowledge workers surveyed: the more they trust AI, the less critically they evaluate its output (Lee et al., 2025)

Source: Gerlich, 2025; Lee et al., 2025

Recommendation 3: Retain ownership (AI supports, you own it)

Good: AI as copy editor

"You are a professional academic editor. Improve grammar and style while preserving meaning and terminology."

"Based on these notes, write me a plan to revise the first draft of my thesis."

Bad: AI as replacement author

"Write me a complete literature review on organizational identification."

"Generate my methodology section and ensure it is complete and ready for submission."

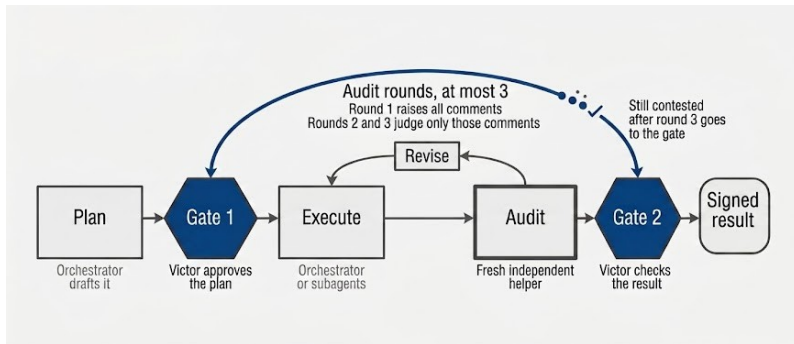
Automate the boring, tedious stuff that can be forgotten. That's plenty, and it will leverage what you know and want to do.

Recommendation 4: Assume all AI output needs to be verified

Even the best models fabricate references and content, hallucinate, and do things you don't want them to do. It does not matter how accurate AI models get. Even if they are 99.999999% accurate, you cannot naively delegate research to them in academic work. We need verifiable research, and you are (and should remain) responsible.

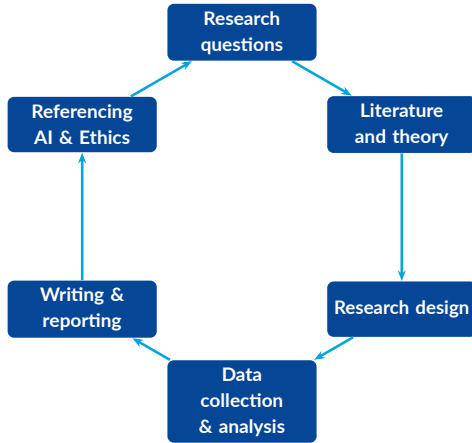
Always verify output, retain ownership, and use AI to explore, suggest, automate, and check.

Recommendation 5: Use skills as procedures with clear gates



<https://tinyurl.com/studentskillsrepo>

A few final thoughts



A key focus of the defense

To what extent do you understand the contents of your own thesis?

You are the author. If you stay in control and work hard, the defense should be no problem.

You will underestimate how long your thesis will take

Measure	Days
Students predicted	33.9
Best-case estimate	27.4
Worst-case estimate	48.6
Actual completion	55.5

64%

longer than predicted
(the planning fallacy)

Only 30% of students finished within their predicted time frame.
Even worst-case estimates were too optimistic.

Source: Buehler et al., 1994

A realistic timeline prevents last-week panic

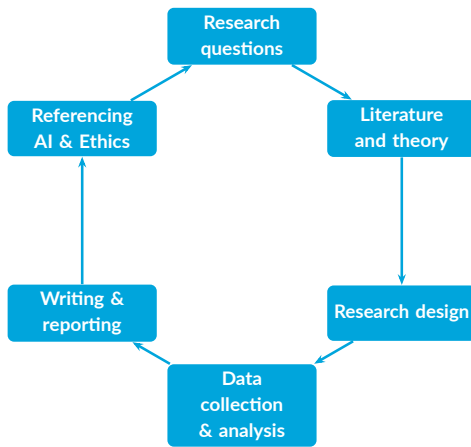
Week	Focus	Milestone
1	Planning, preliminary reading	Write your plan (the questions)
2	Literature research, outline	Preliminary positioning
3	Deep reading, theory section	Draft theory section
4	Methods, data collection, analysis	Execute the research
5	Main body	Theory, methods, and results draft
6	Discussion, introduction	First draft ready
7	Get feedback, revise	Revised draft
8	Proofread, format, submit	STOP changes, print/submit

Always share your progress a few days before your meeting with your supervisor

Make room for the thesis.

Don't think you can write your thesis at your internship job.

You have just gotten a taste of the basics



There is much more you could learn:

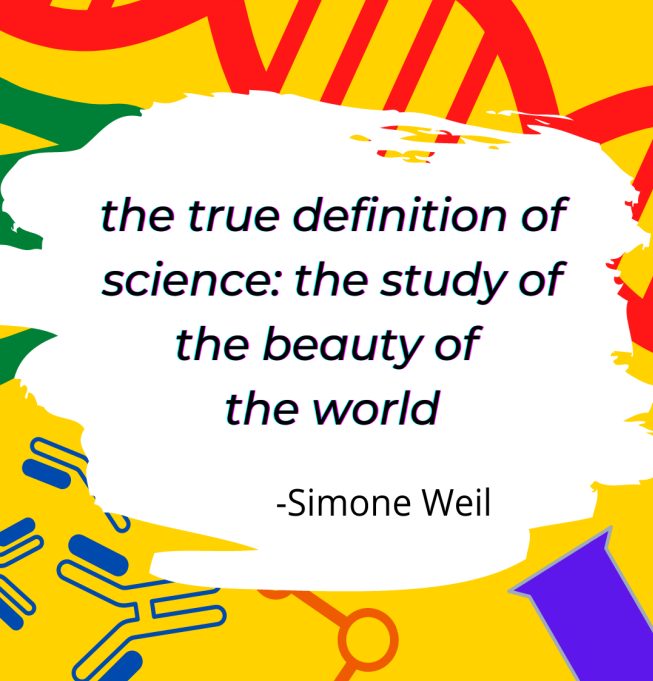


Academic Research and Writing



Spring 2027

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Tips on writing academic and professional documents come from [this manuscript](#).



*the true definition of
science: the study of
the beauty of
the world*

-Simone Weil

**All the best for your research
endeavors at WHU.**

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