

[Headline] A framework to teach library research skills

[Standfirst] Embedding library skills within disciplines allows teachers and students to link them to learning outcomes and research requirements. Here, a team of engagement librarians explain how to put a map in place

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Teaching library skills may be [ill placed during induction weeks](#). Rather, evidence suggests that [embedding library research and other transferable skills within disciplines](#) supports students' learning and retention of skills. Using a framework to support embedded library skills teaching in this way is in line with [evidence-based practice](#).

[Library inductions at the start of a new academic year are](#) also time and staff intensive. As library educators we want to be consistent with the content we cover with students at all levels, providing our teaching at a point of need. We want to link the library skills students are developing to their subject, learning outcomes and assessment that need library research skills (such as finding and citing literature).

A library research skills framework provides values, standards and skills for students at all levels (and educators) to work towards; it establishes learner expectations and allows for year-on-year development. A framework can offer a structure for up-to-date and consistent skills training for students. It also gives library and academic staff a clear reference for curriculum mapping to highlight priorities and actions across qualifications, and to identify and open conversations around gaps in students' library skills.

How we created our library research skills framework

Our [library research skills framework](#) describes six areas:

- transition skills
- online study
- finding information
- evaluating information
- citing and referencing
- digital literacy.

Learners should be supported to develop these skills during their undergraduate or taught postgraduate degree programme. Our framework describes their expected progression, from being a new undergraduate to final-year student and into employment.

Our framework was created after benchmarking other national and international skills frameworks. We asked academic and library colleagues to comment on an initial draft, then incorporated their feedback and piloted the framework with two academic schools. We gathered more feedback, from the teaching staff, librarians and students, and incorporated

their input into the next iteration. We now have a process to continuously review and develop our framework.

### How do we use our library research skills framework?

Our library research skills framework has been instrumental in helping our librarians to create curriculum maps. Librarians have identified the core or compulsory modules within each programme and mapped the learning outcomes to the skill areas of the framework. This allows our librarians to align their teaching, and learners can understand the link between library research skills and their subject. As a result, librarians' teaching is, as a whole, more sustainable and provides better quality support for our students.

Ultimately, we want to map out the best path for our learners to acquire library research skills throughout their degree and into their lives post-qualification. The framework helps us to have conversations with our academics about creating relevant learning outcomes and touchpoints in their programmes and modules. It includes content, resources and activities pitched at the appropriate level for the learners and which librarians can use in their teaching or academic staff can use independently with their students.

### What academics, students and librarians say about our framework

The University of Southampton's education and student experience committee has endorsed our new approach to embedded teaching of library research skills. Feedback from academics in our pilots indicates that they fully support our approach.

"The library research skills framework is a welcome approach to improving students' information literacy and awareness of library resources and support...We are keen to move away from overloading students with information during induction and move towards support at the point of need throughout the academic journey," said a principal teaching fellow for education development in the Southampton Business School.

Our librarians have found the framework a helpful tool in combination with curriculum mapping the programmes they teach on.

"Curriculum mapping has ensured that I teach the library session at the appropriate time and align it with the learning outcomes of the course. Using the framework enabled me to pitch my training session at the right level, and its flexibility means that I can choose the relevant elements according to the experience of the students," said an engagement librarian to the School of Psychology.

### How to create a library research skills framework

To create a library research skills framework at your university, first decide what skills your learners will need as they progress through their courses and once they go on to employment. Benchmark against other comparable frameworks and find out if you can use any in their entirety or adapt one that is appropriately licensed under Creative Commons as your starting point. Get feedback on your framework from your academics, librarians and students to make sure it meets the needs of your learners and allow it to evolve.

Our framework is a living, evolving document which incorporates developments that our learners encounter in their studies, such as generative artificial intelligence. We review and update it twice a year. We are developing our equity, diversity and inclusivity content, for example, working in collaboration with academics to embed teaching on diversifying sources. We are in the early stages of planning a piece of research to evaluate the impact of our framework.

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