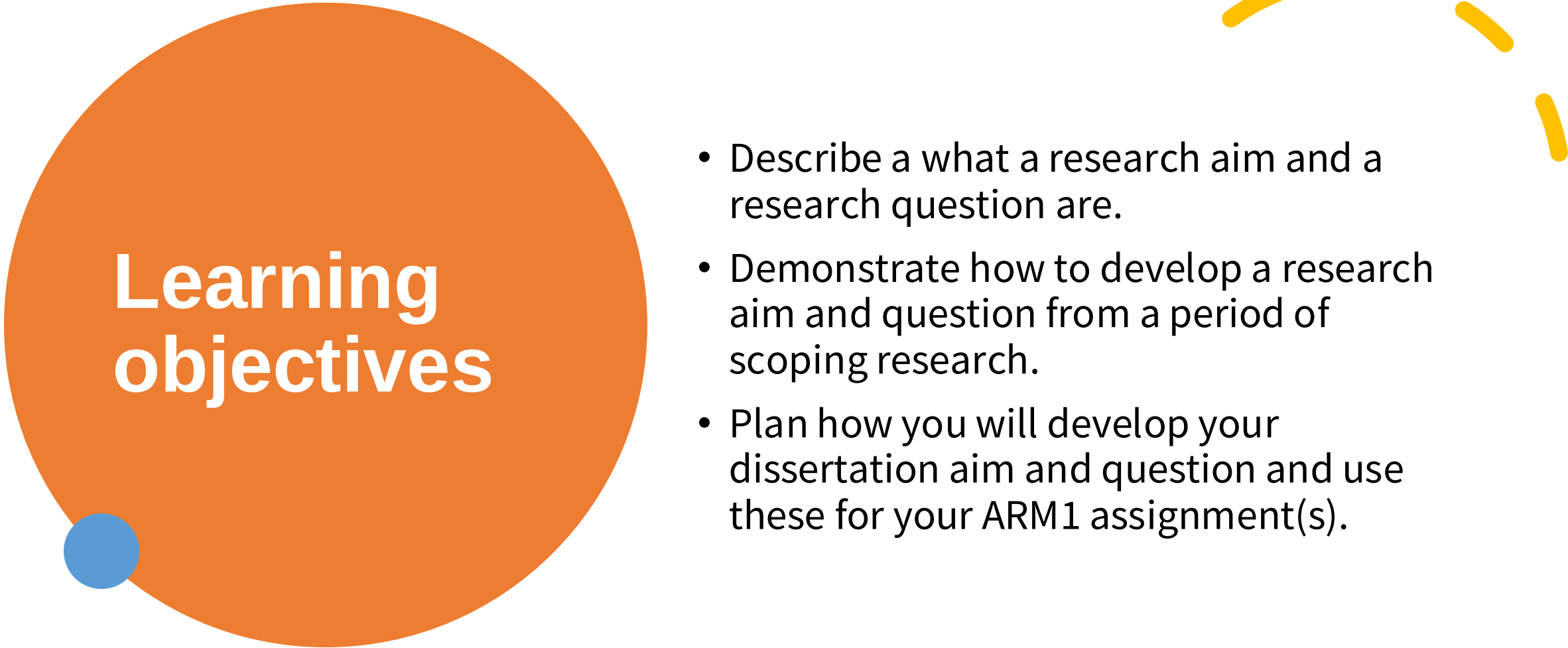




Dissertation Workshop 2

Turning a topic idea into a research aim and question



Learning objectives

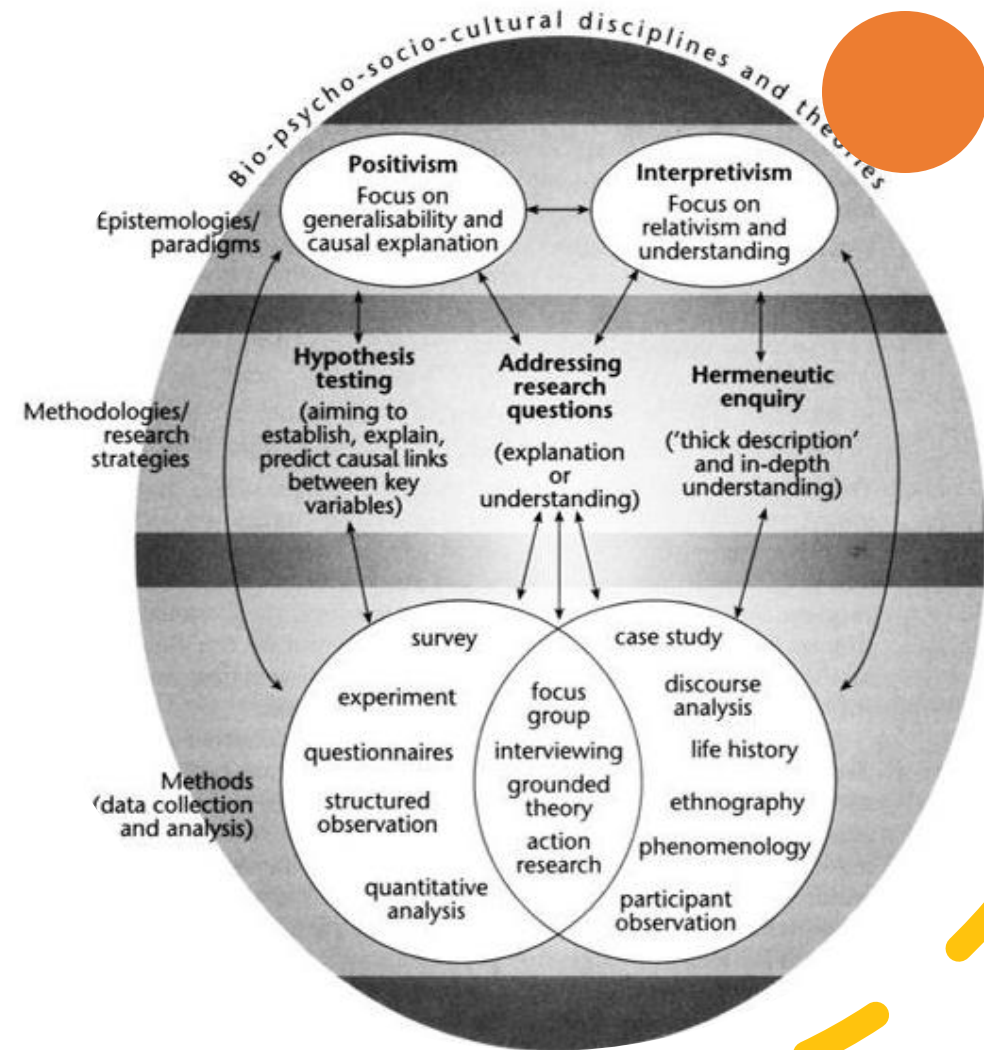
- Describe a what a research aim and a research question are.
- Demonstrate how to develop a research aim and question from a period of scoping research.
- Plan how you will develop your dissertation aim and question and use these for your ARM1 assignment(s).



**What do you know
already about
research
questions?**

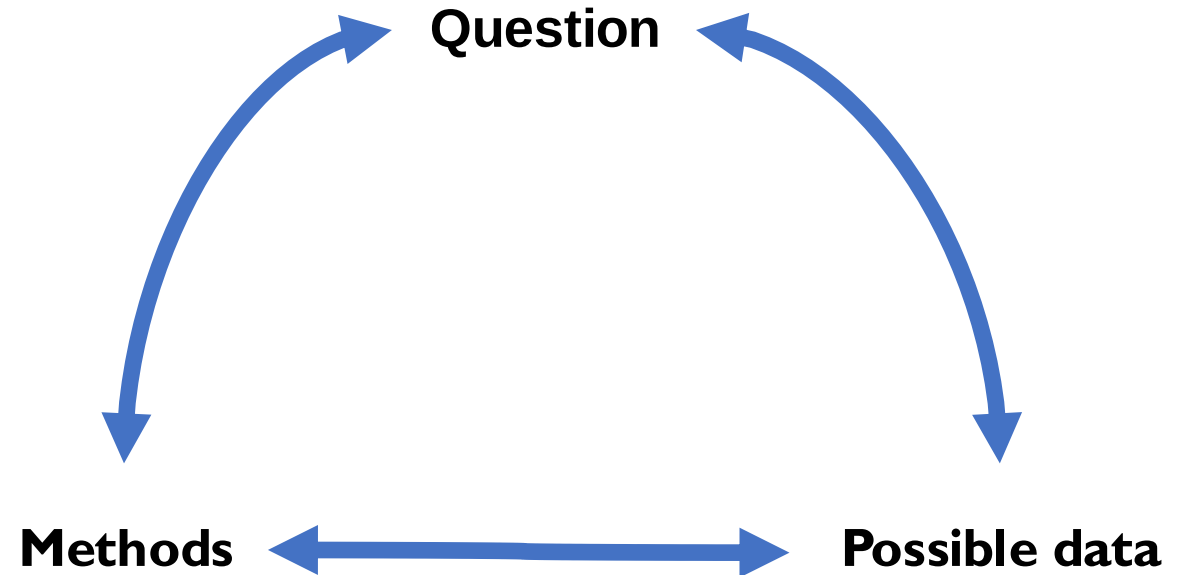
You already know...

- There are different research paradigms/theories of research
- Different paradigms explore different kinds of research questions
- Different kinds of questions should be explored through the application of different methods.



You already know...

- RQs cannot materialise out of thin air! You need to **read** and engage with **the literature**.
- Must be **feasible** and **answerable** using the methods you intend to use.
- Developing the research question is an **iterative process** where you need to take account of methods and possible data.
- If you can't get the data, or the methods can't answer your question, **tweak your RQ** or **change your methods**





What is a research aim?

- Statement about the overarching goal or purpose of the research
- An aim will help with decisions about:
 - Your research question
 - Methods of data collection
 - Approaches to data analysis

“Good questions do not necessarily produce good research, but poorly conceived or constructed questions will likely create problems that affect all subsequent stages of a study”

Agee, J. (2009) Developing qualitative research questions: a reflective process, *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 22:4, 431-447



Why are research questions so important?

- Help you maintain a clear vision of what you want to know/summarise the key issue you want to investigate
- Enable you to make a specific and meaningful contribution to a pre-existing or new field of research
- Help you to identify the methods and approach you will use in your dissertation
- Help you analyse and interrogate the data and evidence you gather through your research



What is a good research question?

A good research question (Blaxter et al., 2002; Laws, 2003):

- Derives from a (practical or intellectual) problem
- Provides direction (in terms of topic, theoretical approach and methodology)
- Sets boundaries (e.g. sub-population).
- Is expressed in specific, rather than vague and woolly terms
- Can be addressed with evidence which you will (and can!) collect.

Thus, research questions help to:

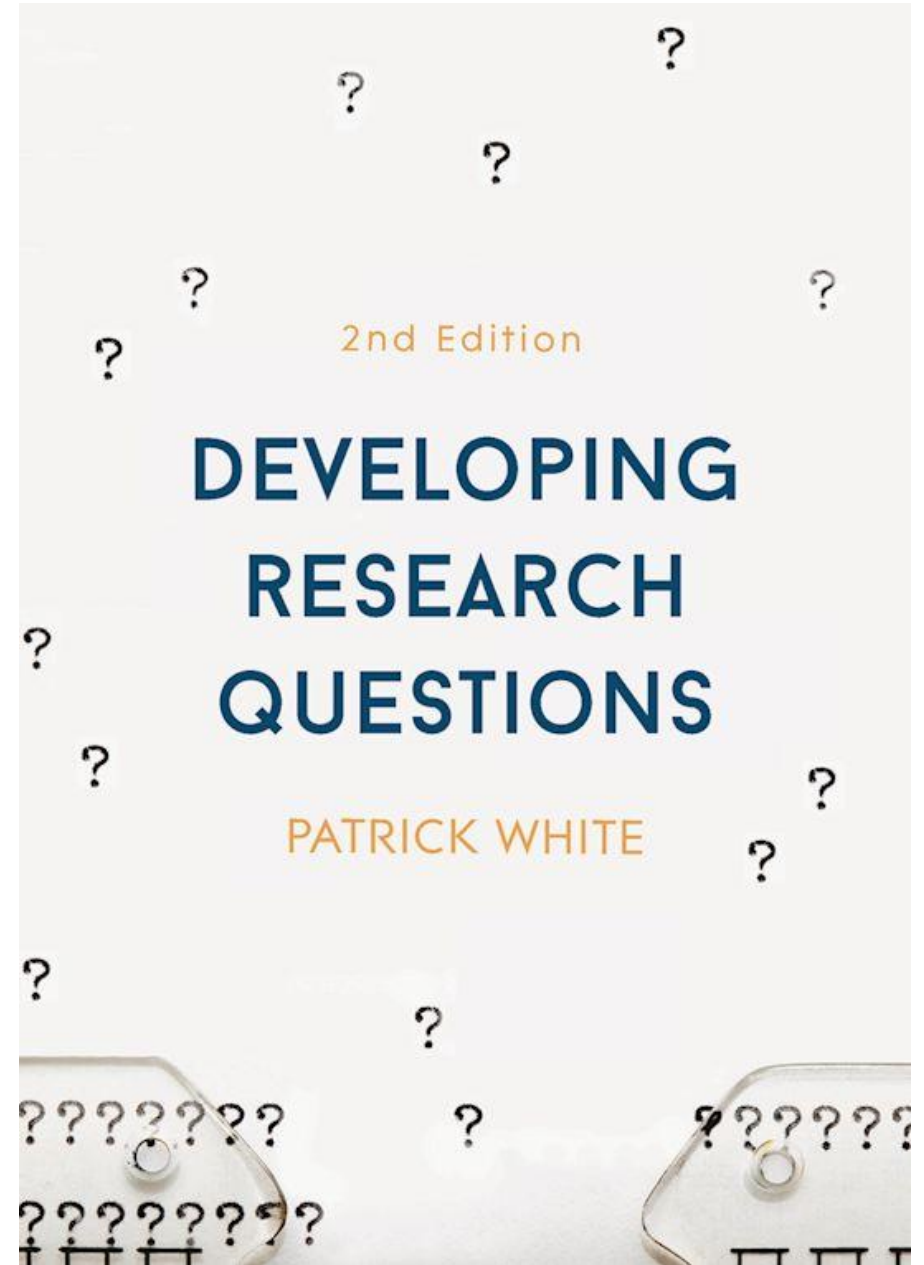
- Focus your field of study (topic) (Blaxter et al., 2002; Laws, 2003)
- Link your research topic to a research strategy (Laws, 2003)



General



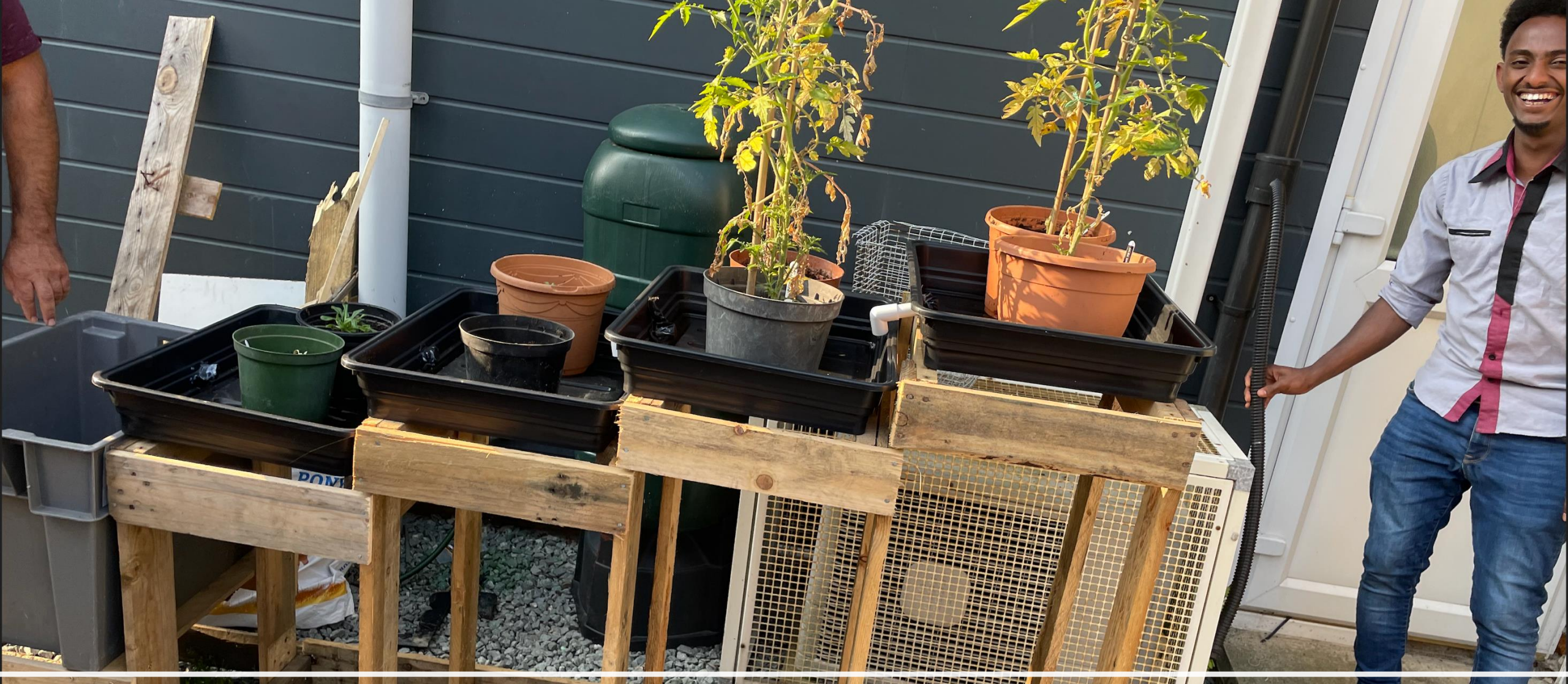
Specific





Example aim 1:

In collaboration with the residents of two deprived wards at risk of flooding in Hull, explore the fairness and feasibility community led climate and flood adaptation interventions and policies in the United Kingdom



Example question: How do inequalities shape people's engagement with community led flood and climate adaptation policies and interventions in Hull?

AIM: In collaboration with the residents of two deprived wards at risk of flooding in Hull, explore the fairness and feasibility of community led climate and flood adaptation interventions and policies in the United Kingdom



RESEARCH QUESTION: How do inequalities shape people's engagement with community led flood and climate adaptation policies and interventions in Hull?

Derives from a practical or intellectual problem: flooding, need to adapt to climate change and flooding, neighborhood inequalities, climate justice, localist policy agendas

Provides direction in terms of topic, theoretical approach and methodology: climate/environmental justice, co-production, qualitative

Sets boundaries: Hull, neighborhoods in Hull that have a high flood risk and high rates of deprivation



Example aim 2:

To explore the transnational dimensions of access-to-medicines activism, particularly through the eyes of LGBTQ+ activists in relation to the 2022 mpox outbreak.



Example question: How did access to medicines activists conceptualise the transnational dimensions of their organising during the mpox outbreak in 2022, and what tensions and difficulties arose in transnational advocacy during the outbreak?

AIM: To explore the transnational dimensions of access-to-medicines activism, particularly through the eyes of LGBTQ+ activists in relation to the 2022 mpox outbreak.



RESEARCH QUESTION: How did access to medicines activists conceptualise the transnational dimensions of their organising during the mpox outbreak in 2022, and what tensions and difficulties arose in transnational advocacy during the outbreak?

Derives from a practical or intellectual problem: how activists organize across borders, what challenges they face, transnational health justice, LGBTQ+ health, re-engages with work on HIV/AIDS activism.

Provides direction in terms of topic, theoretical approach and methodology: qualitative (interviews with activists), health justice as framework, theories of activism.

Sets boundaries: mpox outbreak in 2022, LGBTQ+ activists, international dimension.



Exercise: paradigms, aims, questions and methods

Topic: Differences in access to the HPV vaccine globally

- **Positivist study:** aim, question, methods
- **Interpretivist study:** aim, question, methods

15 mins + 5 mins for feedback

5:00

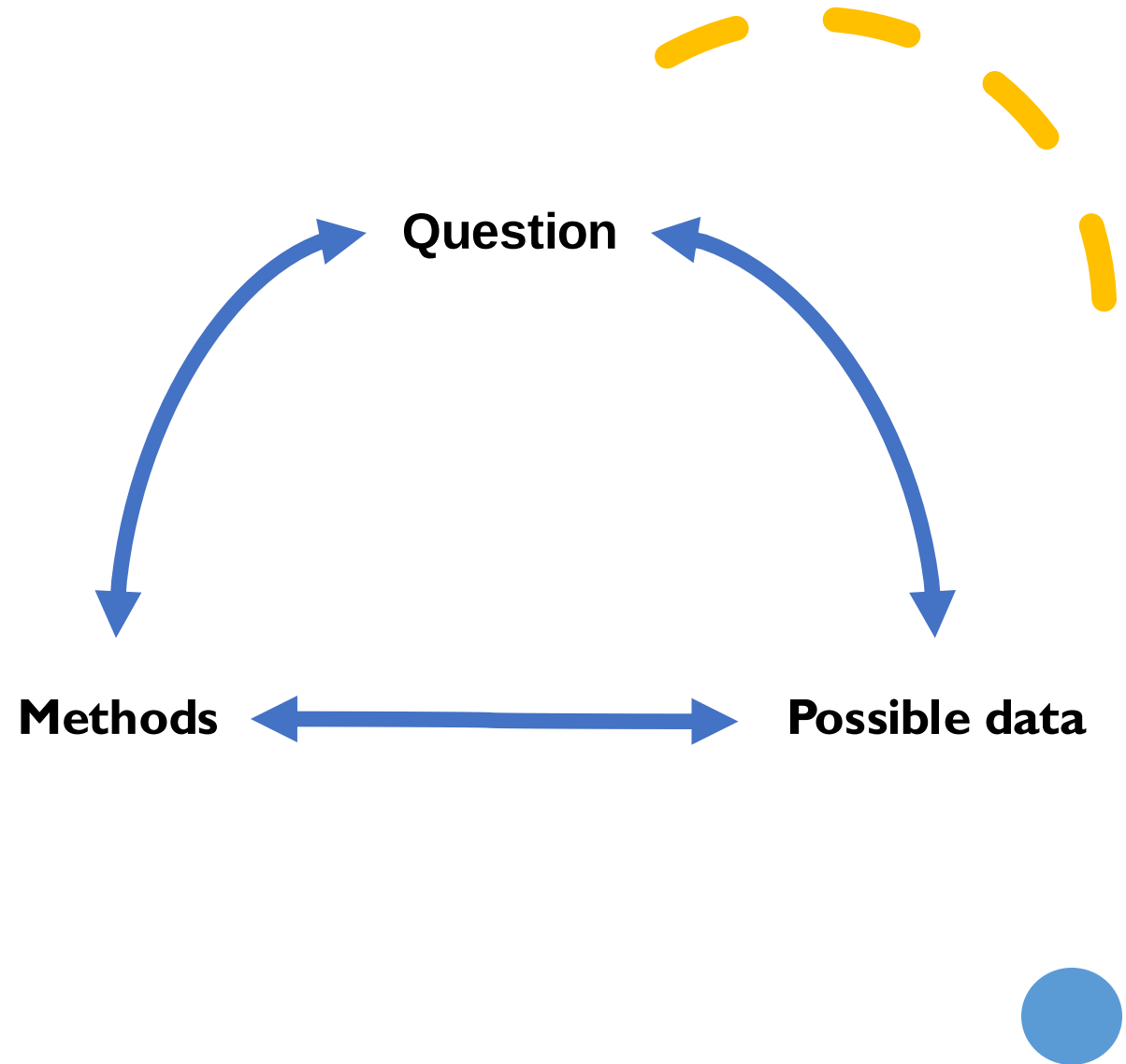


**Where does a
research question
come from?**



Where does a research question come from?

- RQs cannot materialise out of thin air! You need to **read** and engage with **the literature**.
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Step 1: Developing your research question

1. Get into pairs or threes
2. Set a timer for 3 mins
3. Talk your partner through the worksheet you completed in preparation for today
4. Your partner provides 5 mins of feedback/repeats back* on the following:
 - Clarity of broad topic area/problem
 - Main points from your description of current literature
 - Clarity of research gaps you might address
 - Clarity of your proposed research aim and question

*Please make notes on their feedback

Swap roles and repeat



**Was that difficult?
If so, why?**

Step 2: Developing your research question

Look at the notes you made on your partner's feedback

What tasks do you need to do to improve on your:

1. Short topic description
2. Summary of the literature
3. Description of research gaps
4. Research aim and question

Tip: make sure you make the most of the study skills resources provided by the library (e.g. literature searching, using endnote)

10 mins and then feedback



Step 3: Developing your research question



When are you going to conduct the tasks you need to undertake to complete:

1. Short topic description
2. Summary of the literature
3. Description of research gaps
4. Research aim and question

Linking today's workshop to ARM1 assessments

Today's activities

- Short topic description
- Summary of the literature
- Description of research gaps
- Research aim and question

Annotated bibliography (MSc)

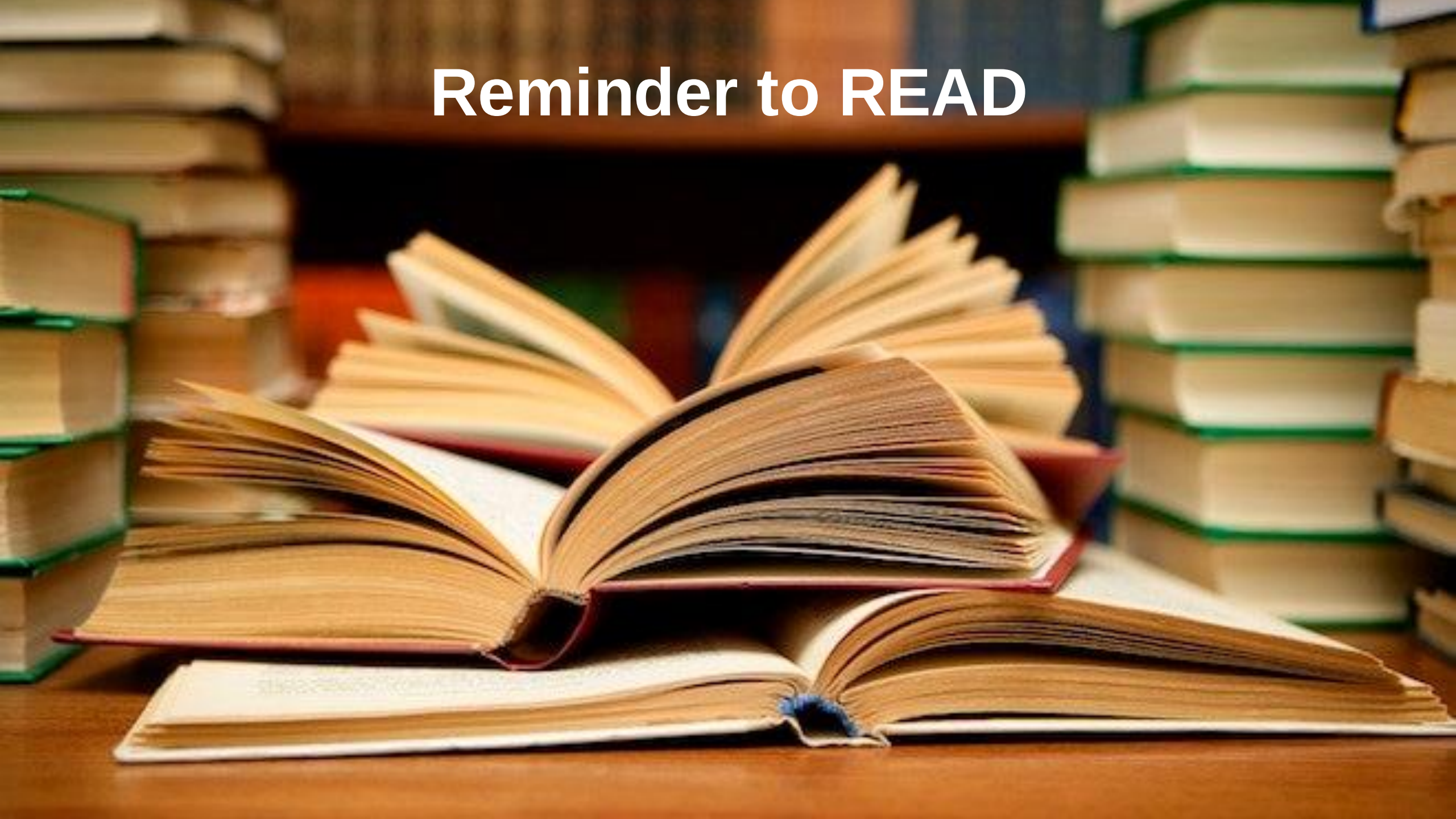
- Background, rationale, research question
- Summary of four sources
- Reference list

Research proposal (iBSc and MSc)

- Title of Study
- Abstract
- Introduction and background/rationale
- Research aims, questions and objectives
- Methods
- Approach to analysis
- Expected contribution
- Timeline
- Reference list

Tip: make sure you leave time to develop your methods, approach to analysis and contribution sections of the proposal

Reminder to READ





Do you have
any
Questions?

