Step 4
How do I start my research?

Library Guides

Once ready to begin your research (using your identified topic and keywords from Step 2) you may be wondering where to find the information that will help you. A number of resources are available, both in the library and online via iFind. The best place to browse these resources is via Library Guides, which is the recommended starting point when looking for information.

What if I need help?
If you need help accessing any of the resources, it is available in various ways:

General help
You can ask for help at the Information Desk in the library. A member of staff will be happy to help you to find physical resources (such as books and journals) and online resources (such as online journal articles and e-books). They will also assist you with any subject specific queries and in logging on to any of the online resources.

You can find information about the opening times of the Information Desk at each library on the library website.

You can also ask for help by emailing library@swansea.ac.uk, telephoning 01792 295500 or using the Ask a Librarian chat service.

Subject Librarians help
Assistance is available via the online Library Guides. By selecting your own subject area from a list of subjects, you find useful resources for your area of study. Contact details and options to book an appointment with your Subject Librarian are also available should you require more assistance.

Can I use information from websites?
You may use information from internet websites, but beware! Anyone can write a web page. Therefore, you will need to assess its quality and integrity. Advice on web sources may be found in the Library Guide for your subject.
What to look for when evaluating a website … (a few examples)

**Scope** - What is the purpose of the site - education, advertising, entertainment? Read the "About us" or “Frequently Asked Questions” section.

**Breadth** - What aspects of the subject are covered? Is the resource focused on a narrow area or does it include related topics?

**Depth** - What is the level of detail provided about the subject? This may depend on the kind of audience for whom the resource was designed.

**Content** - Is the information fact or opinion? Does the site contain original information or simply links?

**Completeness** - How comprehensive is the website? Is it well researched, with bibliographies and references? Is there any archival information?

**Sources** - Are sources for factual information listed so they can be verified?

**Uniqueness** - What advantages does this particular resource have?

**Links** - Are the links kept up to date and made to appropriate resources? The proportion of links still working may help indicate how well a site is maintained.
**Writing** - Is the information free of grammatical, spelling and other errors?

**Purpose** - What is its purpose? Is it clearly stated? Is it objective or biased? Is the level of bias acceptable?

**Authority** - What is the authority, expertise or credentials of the author? Who is hosting the site? Check the web address for clues: e.g. .ac.uk is the code for a UK university which is likely to make this a trustworthy site. Government sites can be recognized by .gov - once again a reliable source. Charities, societies, pressure groups often have .org in their address. Although reliable, please remember these sites are likely to be biased towards their cause. Commercial sites are likely to be .co or .com and information on these sites may not be as reliable, so be careful. A ~ sign in a web address usually indicates that it is a personal website, so care may need to be taken in using this material.

**Currency** - When was it last revised? Good sites should display a creation and revision date. These give an indication of the site’s durability.

**Connectivity** - Do pages take a long time to load? Is the site stable over a period of time?