Writing a Literature Review

Student & Library Services
Learning and Research Support
Session Outline

This workshop is not subject specific, and will cover:

• Pulling the literature together into a coherent whole
• Structure, style, linking ideas and synthesis
• What constitutes a good review
7 steps to producing a literature review

1. Identify your question
2. Review discipline styles
3. Search the literature
4. Manage your references
5. Critically analyse and evaluate
6. Synthesise
7. Write the review
Exercise 1

• Why do you need to do a literature review?
• What piece of work do you have to do it for?
• Talk to the person next to you about what concerns you about writing your literature review
What are the concerns?

• Getting started
• Word count
• How to relate the literature to research question
• How to be critical not descriptive
• Balance
• How to draw out themes
• Layout and structure of the review
• How much information to include about each study
What is a literature review?

• Provides a background for your research
• Gives an overview for the current context in which your research is situated
• Discusses relevant theories and concepts
• Introduces relevant terminology and how you will use those terms in your work
• Describes related research and how your work extends or challenges this, or where there is a gap
• Provides supporting evidence for your research, showing its significance

(Ridley, 2012, p. 107)
What to look for in a good literature review
Good Practice

• Always relate to your research question
• Two stages to writing: writing to understand and then writing to be understood
  • Keep records
• Don’t be fazed – you may find:
  • Themes and topics that overlap with your research
  • Gaps in the literature, and shortcomings of research
  • Agreement and disagreement on topics
• Introduction, main body, conclusion (like an essay!)
Tell the story: it’s not a list

• Evaluate what you find

• Be critical
  • what is the ‘argument’?
  • what evidence is used to support the ‘argument’?

• Appraise the methodology
  • Consider the validity of the research method
  • You may need more in-depth appraisal for papers closest to your topic

• Connect
  • Compare/contrast different ideas
When to do a literature review

• Before you start your own primary research - this can inform how you do your research
• Should be a continual process throughout as new literature may be published
• This will demonstrate your grasp of current debate
Possible Structure/Organisation

• Distant > Close
• Chronological
• Methodological
• Thematic

Can usually use headings
FIGURE 6.2  Organisational patterns for the literature review
Source: Wellington et al., 2005: 82
Literature Map

Paragraph structure

• Use WEED model (Godwin, 2014, p. 38)
  • What - topic sentence
  • Evidence/Example 1
  • Evidence/Example 2
  • Do - sum up – so what?
The attitudes of nurses and nursing students towards people living with HIV/AIDS have long been under scrutiny. Past studies showed that some nurses and nursing students were reluctant to provide care for people with HIV/AIDS because of fear of contagion (Goldenberg and Laschinger 1991; Tierney 1995; Robinson 1998). According to a United Nations AIDS taskforce report (UNAIDS 2006), negative attitudes and reluctance to provide care result in a poorer quality care. This review focuses on nursing students, as they become the practising nurses of the future. Nurse educators have an obligation to ensure that nursing curricula provide students with sufficient knowledge of HIV/AIDS to enable them to deliver safe, high quality and compassionate care to people with HIV/AIDS.
Exercise 2

• Read the paragraph in the worksheet and add ideas about how it could be improved
How could it be improved?

• Sexual harassment has many consequences: what are they? Don’t just say there is a list of them
• Give detail on results, not methodology
• Value judgements e.g. ‘excellent book’
• Do not need to give the title of book
• Less description of the literature, more analysis
Grouping studies together

However, the existing reviews of bullying literature using the ecological model (Hong and Espelage, 2012; Huang et al., 2013; Patton et al., 2013) tend to focus on the multiple levels that risk and protective factors might operate on, as they contribute to bullying involvement.

A bank of phrases appropriate for use in academic writing. It contains two pages which are particularly helpful for literature reviews:

1. Referring to Literature: [http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/referring-to-sources/](http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/referring-to-sources/)
2. Being Critical (of literature): [http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/being-critical/](http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/being-critical/)
Help: with searching for sources and writing

• Tutorial with an Academic Librarian
  • [http://libguides.tees.ac.uk/lrs/tutorials](http://libguides.tees.ac.uk/lrs/tutorials)
  • Librarians can help you plan your search for relevant sources of information

• Learning Hub one-to-one tutorials for writing
  • [http://libguides.tees.ac.uk/learning_hub/tutorials](http://libguides.tees.ac.uk/learning_hub/tutorials)
  • Advisors can look at style and structure but not content

• For help with subject content: see your tutor/supervisor
  • They may have examples they can show you
Resources

  • Available as an ebook and printed book shelved at 362.1072/AVE
  • Helpful for organising in-depth reviews, which include critical appraisal

  • Shelved at 610.730721/COU

  • Shelved at 808.02/GOD
Resources continued

  • Shelved at 808.066378/RID

• Sage Research Methods [Literature Review](#)
  • Online resource - books and video clips

  • Available as an ebook and printed book shelved at 378.2/WEL
Other Succeed@Tees workshops

• [http://libguides.tees.ac.uk/workshops](http://libguides.tees.ac.uk/workshops)
• Critical appraisal (for SoHSC students)
• Critical thinking
• How to use references
• Strategies for reading academic articles (Bitesize)
• Your dissertation: getting started
Questions?

Is there anything from your initial concerns that we have not covered?