



ECDE7016

Writing a Critical Literature
Review in Education

Module Handbook 2026-27

Welcome to the module

A warm welcome to ECDE7016 *Writing a Critical Literature Review in Education*. This module seeks to build on the foundations developed within module ECDE7002 and to further develop your skills at level 7, with a particular focus on the literature review as a key component of your research project.

Module tutor

Caroline Lewis

Email: caroline.lewis@uwtsd.ac.uk

Module Aims

- To develop the higher-level critical and analytical skills required to build argument within a literature review.
- To critically evaluate existing literature related to a research study and identify gap(s) in this literature.
- To compose a literature review which has argument, criticality and clarity focusing on a specific research area.

Module Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this module, the student should be able to demonstrate the ability to:

- Demonstrate and articulate clarity of argument and criticality appropriate to educational research.
- Critically evaluate literature from a variety of sources using higher order skills to develop argument and identify research gap(s) in support of specified research topics.
- Compose a literature review incorporating critical argument to support specified research topics.

Schedule of sessions

Date	Focus
03.10.26 [On campus] 09:30-15:30 IQ305	Introduction to the module • Aims and learning outcomes • Assessment requirements • Progression from ECDE7002 Literature review workshop • Research question health check • Mapping the literature • Identifying debates, tensions, and gaps • Positioning your study within the field Preparation for this session – Bring your ECDE7002 assignment and feedback – Bring your current research questions – Bring a short reflective note from the below task – Read Chapter 7 of Biggam, J. (2026). <i>Succeeding with your Master's dissertation : a step-by-step handbook</i> (Sixth edition.). Open University Press. https://ezproxy.uwtsd.ac.uk/login?url=https://www.vlebooks.com/product/openreader?id=TrinityStD&acclid=8886856&isbn=9780335253661&uid=^u and revisit the literature review section of your ECDE7002 assignment. As you read, reflect on the following: → To what extent did your literature review move beyond description to analysis? → How effectively did you synthesise ideas from different sources? → Did your review identify key themes, debates, and tensions in the literature? → Did you begin to establish a rationale for your proposed study? → What would you now do differently?
13.10.26 [Teams] 17:30-18.30	Moving from description to criticality • Critical writing at doctoral level • Synthesising the literature • Working with different types of literature Preparation for this session • Read Wallace & Wray (2021) <i>Critical Reading and Writing for Postgraduates: 4th Edition</i>. Chapter 4. • Select a recent journal article from your proposed field of study and read it critically. Drawing on Wallace and Wray's discussion of critical reading and writing, identify examples of: ○ Description ○ Analysis ○ Critique

	○ Synthesis ○ Consider which approach dominates the article and how effectively the author develops a critical argument. ○ Bring annotated notes to the session and be prepared to discuss: ▪ Which approach dominates the article? ▪ How does the author demonstrate criticality? ▪ What aspects of the writing might you adopt in your own literature review?
Week beginning 26.10.26 [Directed task]	Researching the literature • During this week, engage with the UWTSD library to produce an outline literature review for your study. You will be expected to present this in the seminar session on 17.11.26: • Locate between 10-15 sources that are relevant to your study • Outline why these are important for your study • What are the emerging themes/tensions/gaps? • How might your proposed study contribute to addressing any identified gaps? • What will be your next steps in furthering your research? • How has your understanding of the topic changed since ECDE7002?
03.11.26 [Teams] 17:30-18.30	Working with theory • Theories versus concepts • Conceptual and theoretical frameworks • How can these be used to support your study? <i>Preparation for this session</i> Read Maxwell, J.A. (2013) <i>Qualitative Research Design</i> Chapter 3: Conceptual Framework After reading the chapter: • Identify the key concepts emerging from your literature review. • Identify any theories, models or frameworks that appear regularly in your field. • Sketch a simple conceptual framework for your proposed study. • Write 200-300 words explaining: ○ Why these concepts matter. ○ How they relate to your research questions. ○ How they might influence your study design.
17.11.26 [Teams] 17:30-18.30	Literature review presentations • Presentation of 'Researching the Literature' task ○ Prepare a 5-10 minute overview of your findings, including your research focus, key literature, emerging themes, gaps and next steps. • Peer critique and feedback

	Lessons learned and next steps
Week beginning 23.11.26 [Tutorials]	Please make an appointment with your tutor to discuss your work ahead of the submission of Assessment Component 1
05.12.26 [On campus] 09:30-15:30 IQ305	Assessment presentations - Student presentations for Assessment Component 1 Moving towards the critical literature review - Thinking ahead towards Assessment Component 2
08.12.26 [Teams] 17:30-18.30	Assessment component 2 workshop - Responding to presentation feedback - Structuring the full literature review - Common pitfalls - Action planning for January submission
Week beginning 04.01.27 [Tutorials]	Please make an appointment with your tutor to discuss your work ahead of the submission of Assessment Component 2

Assessments

Please ensure you review the GA36 forms for each assignment on Moodle in conjunction with the below.

Assessment component 1 – Presentation (20%)

15 minutes (with 5 further minutes for additional questions)

Presentation date: 05.12.26

Feedback date: 08.01.27

Task

Provide a short introduction (5 mins). Select an issue in education that you wish to explore. Justify why the issue is important to you as an educational practitioner and/or the educational community, what you aim to find out and establish the gap in the literature your research will try to fill, making a case for and outlining your specific research questions. Then outline the nature of the key reading you will be discussing in the main literature review (educational debates/ideas/concepts/theoretical frameworks in the area).

Focus on part of your final literature review (10 mins). Choose one (or two) sections of your literature review (e.g., a sub-section). Provide a title for the section(s) and a critical analysis of the background literature, relating this clearly to your project and your specific research question(s). You may wish to critically highlight the conceptual underpinnings of your research project; you may also wish to give attention to key definitions or debates in the literature for the section chosen. End with a brief summary and a reference list slide. Do remember to reference (Harvard) throughout and refer to the background literature as you proceed, as well as providing a reference list at the end.

Assessment component 2 – Written assignment (80%)

6500 words

Submission date: 18.01.27 (23:59 via Turnitin)

Feedback date: 22.02.27 (15:00)

Task

Write a critical literature review that critically analyses and evaluates the available/key literature in your chosen topic area.

Organize the work systematically using titles and sub-titles to guide the reader and reference systematically, using Harvard to ensure academic integrity. Synthesize the claims made by various authors and present your literature review in an organized way to build up your arguments and to demonstrate mastery of the topic. Begin by briefly explaining why this area is of interest to you, your context, the nature of the gap in the literature your research will fill. Your main critical analysis of the background literature should provide an evidence base and a critical discussion of the theoretical concept(s) underpinning your research. Your critical literature review will analyse what is claimed in the literature and its relevance to your research questions. It will also critically analyse any debates in the literature and identify themes in the claims from the background literature, drawing conclusions for your project/research questions.

Recommended Reading

Module Code	ECDE7016	
Module Title	Writing a Critical Literature Review in Education	
Classification	Reading List entry	Electronic*
Essential	Top Tips on Writing a Literature Review for Your Education Research Project (Mike Lambert (DOC) Top Tips on Writing a Literature Review for Your Education Research Project)	☒
Essential	Winchester, C.L. and Salji, M., 2016. Writing a literature review. <i>Journal of Clinical Urology</i> , 9(5), pp.308-312.	☐
Essential	Wallace, M. and Wray, A., 2021. <i>Critical reading and writing for postgraduates</i> . Sage Publications Limited.	☐
Essential	Oliver, P., 2012. <i>Succeeding with your literature review a handbook for students</i> , Berkshire, England: McGraw-Hill : Open University Press.	☐
Further	Further reading will be research topic specific and will depend on students focus of study	☐