

Executive summary

This portfolio consists of 3 sections.

The first section provides a general explanation of the purpose, contents, and the structure of a literature review. Based on previous studies main purposes of a literature review is explained as an opportunity to learn from previous research, provide a context and refine the research aim, and identify any gaps of research in the existing body of literature. This is followed by an explanation of what needs to be included in a literature review. In summary, this section explains that researchers should consider using an exhaustive search strategy to gather all publications related to the research question before gradually narrowing it down. Finally, the “funnel structure” of the literature review has been explained.

The second section of the portfolio consist of an annotated bibliography containing a selection of sources which will be considered in the attempt to meet the research aim of *“critically exploring the factors causing withdrawal of non-traditional students in UK Higher Education”*. The bibliography contains key information pertaining to the sources such as a summary, the research aims of each study, methods used, and key contributions.

The final section of the portfolio presents a preliminary review of literature. This review has identified some of the key factors causing non-traditional students to withdraw. Such factors include social and cultural barriers, academic preparedness, personal factors, and institutional policies and practices. Finally, the review identified some gaps based on the body of literature which has been considered for future research. These gaps suggest three main areas for future research. Firstly, studies on intersections of multiple barriers affecting retention of mature students. Secondly, cross-sectional studies and retrospective analysis of the factors causing withdrawal of non-traditional students. Finally, empirical studies on the effectiveness of intervention mechanisms and policies used by various institutes.

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