

GUIDELINES FOR WRITING A CRITICAL LITERATURE REVIEW

OVERVIEW

- Produce a comprehensive review of literature which offers an informed and up-to-date understanding of your subject area and its significance to practice.
- In this context, a literature review is an account of what has been published on a topic by accredited scholars and researchers and must be defined by a guiding concept (e.g., your research objectives, the problem or issue you are discussing). It is not just a descriptive list of the material available, or a set of summaries.
- Accordingly, a literature review is not a chronological catalogue of sources, but a piece of discursive prose which includes critique and evaluation, integrates previous research and clearly explains all sides of an argument, with areas of agreement and disagreement acknowledged.
- Furthermore, a literature review is not merely a collection of quotes and paraphrasing from other sources, it should evaluate the quality and findings of the research you cite.
- After reading your literature review, it should be clear to the reader that you have an awareness of the current and pertinent work of others, and that the research question you are asking is relevant. You therefore need to ensure that your literature review:
 1. Is organised around, and relates directly to, the research question you are developing
 2. Synthesizes a summary of what is, and what is not, known (The gap in knowledge)
 3. Identifies areas of controversy within the literature
 4. Formulates a question[s] that need[s] further research
- The ability to review and critique relevant literature is a key academic skill. You therefore need to approach this project as an important showcase of your ability to: understand; interpret; analyse, engage clarity of thought, synthesize, and develop an argument.
- Conventional academic standards – a. referencing b. grammar c. structure.

PROJECT GUIDANCE:

SUGGESTED FORMAT FOR DISSERTATION

1. ABSTRACT [LEAVE THIS UNTIL LAST]
2. CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND
3. CHAPTER 2 CRITIQUE OF LITERATURE
4. CHAPTER 3 GENERAL DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION
5. CHAPTER 4 RESEARCHER'S REFLECTIONS [MAYBE, IF TIME, WORD COUNT, ALLOWS]

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- Purpose statement, the rationale for your dissertation e.g. The purpose of this critical literature review is to [*explore, understand, describe, discover*] #####. At this stage of research ##### will be generally described as..... and I subscribe to a view of qualitative research, where the researcher.....
- Set the scene: What you are going to do, why, how [Any methodological comments] and when [brief timescale]
- Chapter Introduction – e.g. This introductory chapter will....
- Short introduction
- Why this question? Personal and professional reasons for your choice
- What is the background from which this exploration arises?
- Aims and objectives
- End with a clear identification of the gap in knowledge which leads to your research question. [end with your research question]
- Close of chapter – e.g. This chapter has.....The next chapter will.....

CHAPTER 2 CRITIQUE OF LITERATURE

- Chapter Introduction – e.g. This chapter will.....
- The timing of the literature review [Now more specific]

- The Literature review search strategy
- Critique of literature [THIS IS THE MAIN PART OF YOUR DISSERTATION]
- Content – You will need to critically reflect upon the work of others by thinking about *what the implications are for your question*. Critique their participants, their methodology, their limitations, etc.
 - range of sources
 - use of argument and critique
 - originality of thought and conception
 - what are the implications of this for your question?
- Break your aims and objectives down into small sections and apply each in turn
- Close of chapter – e.g. This chapter has..... The next chapter will.....

CHAPTER 3 GENERAL DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

- Chapter Introduction – e.g. This chapter will.....
- Your findings - What have you found in researching this topic?
- ANSWER YOUR RESEARCH QUESTION
- You need to identify some areas or themes and then discuss them. To do this you need to make reference to authoritative texts
- Your conclusion will make an evaluation of the work by summing your research up in a concise way, and confirming the 'result' of your investigation. Pull all the loose ends together.
- Relate your findings to previous research e.g. This supports research by.... This is contrary to findings by.....who researched..... and found.....
- Limitations of your research
- Implications for practice e.g. impact on wider profession
- Suggestions for future research
- So what????? – What is the impact of your research?
- Check the 'red thread' make sure that there is continuity between your introduction, critique and conclusion. It should be possible to follow your idea or concept throughout each chapter to a viable conclusion

- This research has.....

N.B. You do not introduce any new material into the conclusion. Please also note that there are no sub-headings in the completed text, the above headings are merely guidance for you to help structure the work.

CHAPTER 4 REFLECTIVE PIECE [IF TIME/WORD COUNT ALLOWS]

A reflection of your own process and learning

REFERENCES

TIMESCALE [To be agreed in finer detail with your supervisor]

Chapter	Content	Submission Date
Chapter One	Introduction	TBA with your supervisor
Chapter Two	Critical Review	TBA with your supervisor
Chapter Three	General Discussion and Conclusion	TBA with your supervisor
Complete Draft of Dissertation	All chapters	TBA with your supervisor
Final Dissertation	All chapters amended following supervisor feedback	TBA with your supervisor