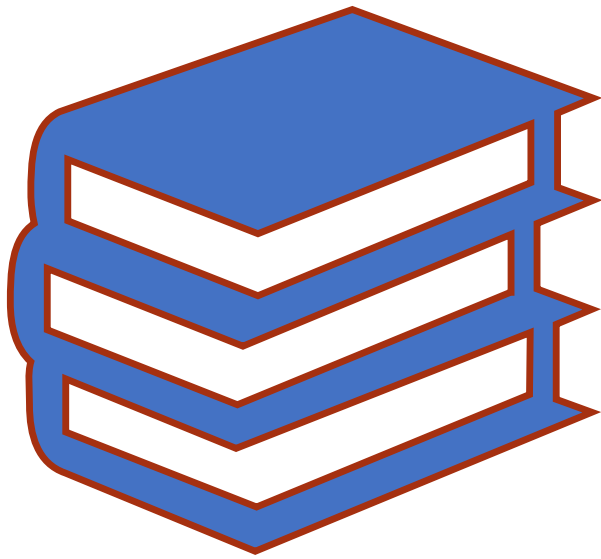


Thesis Proposal guidelines

Dr Jessica Clapham



Reviewing the Literature

Reviewing the
Literature

FAQs

- How to find literature to review
- How to be sure that you have found the most relevant articles
- How to decide what to include and what to omit
- How to provide a coherent account of the literature
- How to distinguish what to include in the proposal and what to include in the thesis itself

How to find literature to review

- What if I can't find any literature!

Finding the literature

Starting with what you know

- Look for keywords
- Note the journals from which the articles come
- Follow up their reference lists
- Look for articles which have cited these
- Look for more recent articles by the same authors

Pitfalls of this approach

- What is the role of the supervisor?

Searching electronic databases

The **Key** is to be systematic

- Write down your search terms AND how you have combined them
- Decide in what order you will look at the list of articles generated (Default is relevance)
- Be on the look out for articles you know about that don't appear
 - ask yourself: why not?
- Several smaller, more specific, searches may be better than one big one

Conducting searches of electronic databases

- Deciding on search terms:
- Keywords and Pearl Harvesting
- Combining keywords to get an effective search
- Remember! Searching is a skill which may take time to learn

Next steps

- Save your search!
- Look at the titles of the articles you have found and reject any that are clearly irrelevant
- Read the abstracts of the remainder
- Ask yourself- Does this article definitely address my research question? (Yes/ No/ can't be sure)
- Keep notes
- Skim the articles you have left

The thesis proposal literature review

- Identify what areas contribute to your thesis topic
- Find and discuss recent relevant articles in each area
- You need to analyse and synthesise
- Identify the research question – showing how it relates to the literature you have reviewed

Evaluating the quality of studies

- Rigour
- Independence/ lack of bias
- Ruling out other possible explanations for any changes

Possible Structure for the Thesis Proposal

- Introduction (500-1000 words)
- Succinct review of the most relevant literature (up to 2,000 words)
 - Useful to conclude this section with the main research question- which should leap out as addressing a gap in research/ knowledge
- Research Design and Methodology (2000 words)
 - Will include sub-questions, etc.
- Ethics and Practicalities (up to 1000 words)

References

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