

Literature Reviews

PURPOSE

The purpose of a literature review is to enable you to collect, study, compare and evaluate current knowledge and research in a particular field of study. It is an opportunity to engage with the current literature in a specific subject area and to carry out critical research into contemporary scholarship and writings relevant to the subject being tackled. Literature reviews can be a very good starting point for a larger research project and, as such, are an opportunity to develop your independent study skills.

CONTENT

A literature review is more than a collection of commentaries on current literature in a specific field. By engaging critically with the literature it offers an evaluation of the field itself by means of a discussion of the differences and similarities, weaknesses and strengths, of the existing knowledge and research findings. This does mean that the focus and purpose of the literature review needs to be clearly defined. A typical structure for a literature review might look like this:

1. The aim and scope

This is the objective of the literature review and an explanation for why it is significant. The review should be set briefly in a wider context.

2. The body

This provides critical reviews of the current literature in relation to the purpose of the review. It is likely that the literature will be grouped in some way, and areas of controversy and disagreement will be highlighted and commented upon, as will any limitations and presuppositions.

3. The conclusion

This should contain the key points and arguments in relation to the purpose and scope of the review. It may allude to fruitful areas for research.

4. References

The usual academic conventions should be followed for citing the literature surveyed.

WHAT WE ARE LOOKING FOR

First and foremost, we are looking to see how your literature review demonstrates that you have met the learning outcomes of the Module Outline. In your literature review you need to:

1. Have a clear and focused aim and scope for the review.
2. Show a critical and comprehensive analysis of the literature in relation to the aim of the review, making sure you concentrate on those items that are directly relevant for the precise topic.
3. Evaluate the literature by demonstrating similarities and differences, weaknesses and strengths, and their implications for the aim of the review.
4. Draw some useful and credible conclusions about the aim of the review.

5. Produce a bibliography that shows good coverage of the significant work in the field.

TECHNICAL MATTERS

For the tutor:

- In order to be effective as a learning tool, such reviews should go beyond summary descriptions of literature to comparison and critical evaluation both in relation to each other and to the proposed focus of the review.
- Ensure that the topic of the review is sufficiently precise and focused.
- This method of assessment can be a useful precursor to a dissertation or research project.

For the student:

- Literature reviews should be written with the Assessment Criteria for Essays and Other Written Assignments in mind.
-

MARKING CRITERIA

The questions that your marker will be considering when assessing your work are as follows:

1. How does your literature review demonstrate that you have acquired the knowledge, understanding and skills of the module's learning outcomes?
2. To what standard have you fulfilled these? These standards – by which your work will be graded – are described in the **Assessment Criteria for Essays and Other Written Assignments** for the level of your module. The criteria against which your work will be marked fall into five categories:

Knowledge and understanding: Does your work demonstrate a thorough and accurate understanding of the relevant subject matter?

Use of sources and evidence: Have you used a good range of appropriate sources in your work?

Have you used your sources effectively as evidence in your argument and reasoning?

Critical thinking, reasoning and analysis: Does your work show your ability to identify issues and think critically about them?

Are you able to make relevant connections between different points or aspects of the question, including between the different books / articles you have read?

Argument and reasoning: Is your response to the question / task well argued and clearly reasoned?

Is the structure of your assignment clear and does it mirror the structure of your analysis and argument?

Presentation: Is your writing clear, using appropriate vocabulary,

correct grammar and spelling?

Is your work presented and referenced well, using the conventions stipulated by your TEI?
