



Literature Reviews

What is a Literature Review?

A Literature Review is a critical review of existing knowledge on areas such as theories, critiques, methodologies, research findings, assessment and evaluations on a particular topic. It is not simply a summary to gather information from reports, journals and articles. A literature review involves a critical evaluation identifying similarities and differences between existing literatures and the work being undertaken. It reviews what have already been done in the context of a topic. Therefore, on the basis of the existing knowledge, people can build up innovative idea and concept for further research purpose.

Structure of a Literature Review

Generally, a literature review consists of the aim, body, conclusion and references. In some scenarios, a literature review may be integrated into a research proposal. If this is the case, the sections of hypotheses and methods will be included. The sections of aim, hypothesis, and method should be approximately 10% of the length of the literature review.

- **Aim:** The objective of the study; a short explanation of the study being undertaken
- **Body:** Provide a critical review of the context of the research or project topic; an evaluation and analysis on existing knowledge; the outline of theoretical framework; any areas of controversy; limitations of literatures; reasons and purpose of the study being undertaken
- **Hypothesis:** Assumptions or theories that are going to be tested (This section is for the case when a literature review is integrated into a research proposal)
- **Method:** Approaches for data collection and analysis (This section is for the case when a literature review is integrated into a research proposal)
- **Conclusion:** A short paragraph to conclude some key points and arguments
- **References:** The citation and referencing style in the text; the format of the referencing list

Y	Declarative	CHARACTERISTICS
	Functioning	
Y	Take Time to Set	
	Take Time to Answer	
	Take Time to Correct	
	Take Time to provide Feedback	
Y	Suitable for Large Class	
Y	Can substitute with Computers	
Y	Passive	
	Active	
Y	Process Oriented Method	
Y	Product Oriented Method	

P = Possibly Y =Yes



Advantages of Literature Reviews

- Literature Reviews encourage deep learning, and provide an efficient way to assess students on their knowledge and understanding of a particular topic.
- Literature Reviews assess different cognitive levels.
- With proper supervision and practices, some graduate attributes such as project management and life-long learning can be learnt and assessed.
- Literature Reviews give a conceptual framework for research or project planning because students can have a clear idea of what has already been done in the field. This helps students build up new research topics on the basis of existing literatures.
- Time and cost efficient to look for resources (e.g. through the online database)
- Enhance analytical skills through identifying differences in previous work and their work

Disadvantages of Literature Reviews

- Sometimes, students may not have access to certain information. They may spend unnecessary time and resources on searching for the reviews.
- It is time consuming for the teachers to correct and provide feedback.
- Literature reviews require good supervision from teachers particularly for students who are inexperienced in this type of assessment.

How to design a good Literature Review Assessment?

1. Ensure the students know the primary objective of literature review
2. Ensure the students understand that a literature review is not simply a summary
3. Ensure clear assessment criteria and marking scheme, including grammar, spellings and other issues are provided to the students
4. Decide the length of a literature review (e.g. 3, 000 words)
5. Ensure students understand the meaning of plagiarism and how to reference a piece of text (e.g. the format of citation and paraphrasing)
6. Teachers have to decide if they would assess the quality of the resources/literatures chosen by students for the literature review (e.g. Are the literatures chosen sharing a high recognition and authority in the field of study? The validity of the resources?)
7. Literature reviews require practice; it is recommended that teachers provide the opportunities. Students may begin with small literature reviews on a narrower topic and build from it. Providing examples will be helpful.



Marking Rubrics

Here is an example of the marking rubrics for Literature Review.

Marking Rubrics	Excellent	Proficient	Average	Poor
Aim	Aim was clearly outlined and comprehensively justified	Aim was outlined and justified	Aim was outlined but failed to justify	Aim was not outlined and justified
Background	Provided a very comprehensive and detailed background; a wide and deep coverage of the topic	Showed a detailed background but not comprehensive enough; sufficiently covered the work but a few areas not deep enough	A background with basic information; some key points missed; covered the topic at a general level	Lacked of significant details in the topic
Critical analysis	A comprehensive and critical analysis; applied the existing literatures to support the arguments/ the aim of study; identified the limitations of literatures	Some critical analysis; applied the existing literatures to support some arguments/ the aim of study; showed a few limitations of the literatures	A limited critical analysis; presented the existing literatures in a descriptive way; a limited analysis on the limitations of literatures	No critical analysis; only described some existing literatures; the limitations of literatures were not mentioned
Evaluation	Showed a comprehensive analysis of the similarities and differences between existing work and the student's work	Showed a basic analysis on the similarities and differences between existing work and the student's work	Very limited analysis on the similarities and differences between existing work and the student's work	Failed to analyze the similarities and differences between existing work and the student's work
References	Referencing and citation style was correct and consistent between the list and the text; reference list completely concise without errors	Referencing and citation style was consistent between the text and the list; reference list with only a few minor mistakes	Some references were inconsistent between the text and the list; reference list with some mistakes	Many references were inconsistent between the text and the list; a number of mistakes in the reference list

Web Reference and Resources

- The Literature Review: A few tips on conducting it, The University of Toronto.
<http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/specific-types-of-writing/literature-review>
- Write a Literature Review, University Library, University of UC Santa Cruz
<http://library.ucsc.edu/help/howto/write-a-literature-review>
- Literature Review, The University of Hong Kong Libraries
<https://libguides.lib.hku.hk/c.php?g=917467&p=6846481>



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