



Trinity College Dublin
Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath
The University of Dublin



Student Learning Development

Literature Review 1: Process

20th Postgraduate Skills Development Summer School

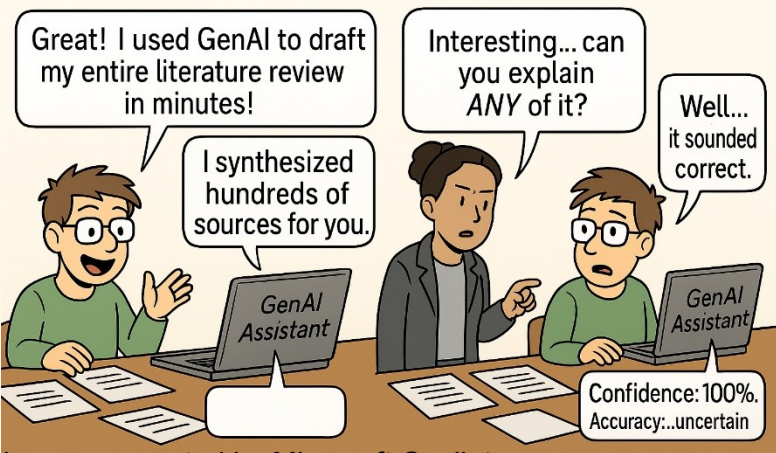


Image generated by Microsoft Copilot

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www.tcd.ie/sld



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Overview

Formulating your research question
Organising your literature
Structuring your review
Critically evaluating the literature



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Question slide

What is a literature review?





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What is a literature review?

RESULTS SLIDE



What is a literature review?

A descriptive, analytic summary of the existing material relating to a particular topic or area of study.

A process that involves an examination of prior scholarly works.



Why is it important?

Shows a grasp of broader area

Key ideas/debates/schools of thought

How main theories have been applied

Avoids replication of research

Evaluate previous research

Mind the gap!

Justifies the need for your research

Justifies your approach/methods

Helps to define parameters/focus of your research

Synthesising

Synthesise the literature of your area in a logical, coherent manner.



What does it look like?

It depends on your subject/discipline

Dispersed or a chapter?

Traditional (narrative) literature review

Identifies and evaluates published literature on a topic

Usually employs a narrative approach

Systematic review

Reviews results and data relevant to a research question
in a standardized, systematic way.

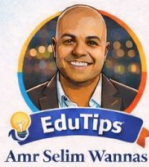
Aim for an objective overview of evidence

Scoping review

Precursive, initial scope to determine gaps.

Types of Literature Reviews

Understanding the Right Approach for Your Research



Narrative Review

Provides a broad overview of a topic.
Flexible and descriptive without a strict methodology.



Systematic Review

Answers a focused research question using a transparent, replicable process.
Includes clear criteria and comprehensive database searching.



Meta-Analysis

Statistically combines findings from quantitative studies.
Produces overall effect size and measurable trends.



Scoping Review

Maps the breadth of literature in an emerging field.
Identifies gaps and clarifies key concepts.



Integrative Review

Synthesizes theoretical and empirical studies.
Useful for interdisciplinary and framework development.



Critical Review

Evaluates strengths, weaknesses, and inconsistencies.
Builds a strong argument for new perspectives.



Theoretical Review

Examines and compares theories.
Refines constructs and develops conceptual models.



Chronological Review

Traces the development of research over time.
Identifies trends, milestones, and evolutions in a field.



For a literature review you need:

1. A clearly formulated question
2. System for identifying relevant literature
3. Critical appraisal of relevant research



Formulating your research question

A research question should be:

Specific

Focused

Well defined

You should:

Speak to your supervisor

Interrogate your question

Think about your 'Why?'



Compare the following theses titles

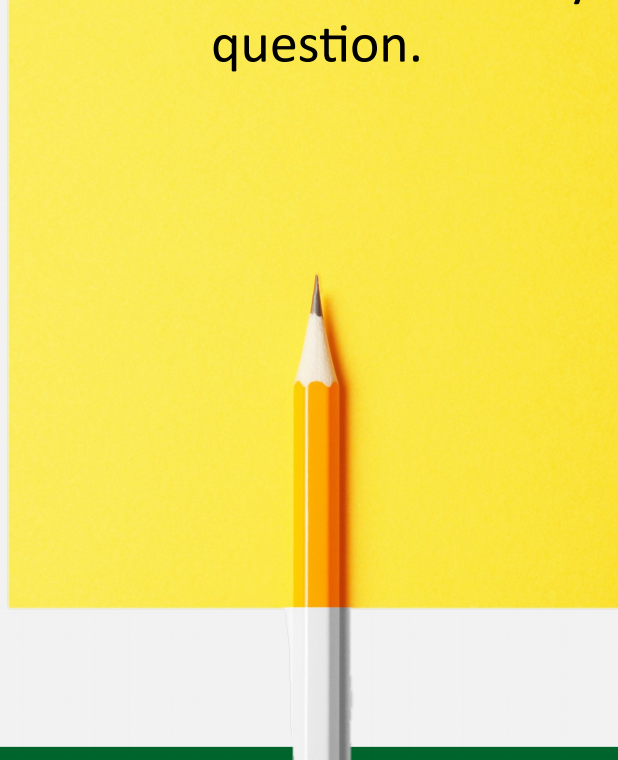
How has people's health been impacted by Covid?

What effect has Long Covid had on the mental health of 50-60 year old females working in acute hospital settings?



Your turn!

Take a few moments to write down your research question.



Refine it further...

Make large terms smaller/more specific

Groups of people

Geographical location

Language (research done in English/other?)

Timeframe

Genre

Setting



Group Exercise

Breakout rooms – 10 minutes

Each person has 1 minute to **explain their research question**

1 minute for other members to **ask questions about the question**



Reading & Notetaking

Active reading

Making connections

Summaries/headings - central argument, main points,
other academics that corroborate/disagree with
idea/methodology

Other bibliographies



Critical Evaluation of Literature

- Relevance to your topic
- Key terms and concepts
- Major relationships/trends/patterns
- Methodologies
- Structure of the argument
- How authoritative/credible?
- Differences/similarities
- Gaps



Organise your information

Spreadsheet - organise information from readings and compare different readings

Headings

Keywords (quick searches)

Citation spreadsheet- add quotes/paraphrases (page numbers!)

Title	Authors	Date Published	URL	Main ideas	Methodology	Theme 1	Theme 2	Theme 3



Organise your information – research management software

zotero



Structure

Introduction, Body, Conclusion - Headings and Subheadings

Different approaches to organisation

1. Chronologically

Is your research looking at how something has changed over time?
Review literature chronologically, tracking how ideas, attitudes, and theories have developed

2. Thematically

Group literature by thematic subject areas, making connections clear

3. Methodologically

Especially for experimental data/statistics – evaluate different methods used by previous academics



Introduction

- What is the review about?
- Why is it important?
- How did you identify the literature?
- How is the review organised?

https://writingcenter.ashford.edu/sites/default/files/inline-files/Sample%20Literature%20Review_0.pdf



Introduction

EA was reported as a problem in general anesthesia recovery before the development of the modern inhalational agents (sevoflurane and desflurane), and EA has been shown to occur with the use of all anesthetic gases. The increased use of sevoflurane and desflurane in recent years has been associated with a higher incidence of EA compared with isoflurane and halothane. It is suggested that substituting sevoflurane and isoflurane for maintenance of anesthesia significantly reduces the incidence of EA in preschool children (Bortone et al., 2006), and that the use of adjunctive agents such as propofol added to sevoflurane can reduce the incidence of EA compared with sevoflurane alone (Abu-Shahwan, 2008; Aouad et al., 2007; Uezono et al., 2000). **The goal of this literature review is to compare three categories of anesthesia techniques and their associated incidence of EA in children.**

Sevoflurane Inhalational General Anesthesia

The introduction wraps up with a clear purpose.



Main body

Could include:

- Background
- Methodologies
- Previous studies on the topic
- Various viewpoints
- Main questions being asked
- Main conclusions that are being drawn

<https://www.citewrite.qut.edu.au/write/writing-well/litreview.html>



Main body

Propofol Total Intravenous Anesthesia

In this paragraph, the authors have synthesized the literature, by discussing multiple findings and adding their own ideas.

(23.1% versus 3.7%). In a study by Picard, Dumont, and Pellegrini (2000) of the quality of recovery in children, a sevoflurane inhalational anesthetic and propofol TIVA techniques were compared, with a reduction in EA rates observed in the propofol TIVA group (46% versus 9%, respectively). A reduction in EA from 42% to 11% was seen in children 2 to 5 years of age with propofol TIVA compared with sevoflurane inhalational general anesthesia (Nakayama, Furukawa, & Yanai, 2007). In a small study of children presenting for eye surgery ($n = 16$), a



Conclusion

Summarise:

Main agreements and disagreements

Gaps or weaknesses

Your opinions on the topic

Relate to your own research question

https://writingcenter.ashford.edu/sites/default/files/inline-files/Sample%20Literature%20Review_0.pdf



Conclusion

use of sevoflurane inhalational anesthesia. The goal of this literature review was to compare three general anesthesia techniques in children and their associated incidence of EA. The three techniques were (a) sevoflurane inhalational general anesthetic, (b) propofol as an adjunct to sevoflurane inhalational general anesthetic, and (c) propofol TIVA techniques. The reviewed literature suggests that there are advantages to the use of propofol TIVA techniques and adjunctive propofol anesthetics when combined with a sevoflurane inhalational technique. This reduction in EA with propofol use in conjunction with or separately from sevoflurane has been widely documented throughout the literature (Abu-Shahwan, 2008; Aouad et al., 2005; Aouad et al., 2007). Current research supports the use of propofol, as discussed above; however, a continuation of current research with consistent and strengthened methodologies will help justify its use and application in clinical practice.

https://writingcenter.ashford.edu/sites/default/files/inline-files/Sample%20Literature%20Review_0.pdf



Critical Evaluation in your Writing - Description

Descriptive

- Summarises what other people have found without saying what these findings mean for your investigation.
- Usually a chronological list of who discovered what, and when.

Examples:

- *"Green (1975) discovered ..."*
- *"In 1978, Black conducted experiments and discovered that ..."*
- *"Later Brown (1980) illustrated this in ..."*



Critical Evaluation in your Writing - Analysis

Analytical

Synthesises the work

Succinctly **passes judgement** on the relative merits of research

Reveals limitations/need for further research – allows you to formulate and justify your investigation

Example:

“There seems to be general agreement on x, (see White 1987, Brown 1980, Black 1978, Green 1975). However, Green (1975) sees x as a consequence of y, while Black(1978) puts x and y as While Green's work has some limitations in that it, its main value lies in”

(Examples taken from <https://guides.library.uq.edu.au/research-techniques/literature-reviews>)



Write, Rewrite

Good structure/headings/subheadings can help you enter new papers as you find them

Keep research question in sight

Keep reminding yourself of how it relates to your 'Why?'

First draft is the starting point – don't worry about making the writing perfect

Keep redrafting and refining

Save different versions – V1, V2 etc

Don't get disheartened



Useful Literature Review Resources

[University of Otago's guide to writing a literature review](#)

[Literature Review - LibGuides
at University of Toledo Libraries](#)

[Literature review - Monash University](#)

Related resources

[Academic Phrasebank | The University of Manchester](#)

[Plymouth model to generate critical thinking](#)



Questions



Feedback, please!

**<https://eu.surveymonkey.com/r/SLDPG>
School**





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Student Learning Development

Thank you!

