Carrying out your Literature Review or Systematic Review
The Literature Review

During your studies you will need to review the literature available for your subject area, this is sometimes called the Literature Review and is particularly important when planning and developing your final Thesis or Dissertation.

You should consider a literature review…

• …when reviewing background literature for your general subject area - i.e. developing a knowledge of the subject by familiarising yourself with available sources and academic works.

• …when reviewing available literature and sources for particular assignments, group work, discussions etc.

• …when reviewing available literature and sources for your final written project, e.g. Dissertation or Thesis.
Examine sources

Your Literature Review will consist of examining many kinds of sources, including:

- **Major search** platforms (multi-source platforms) e.g. DISCOVER.
- **Article databases/full text collections** - e.g. Web of Science, Wiley.
- **E-Books** - you can search all our E-Books using DISCOVER or the Library Catalogue or search individual collections such as Springer.
- **Journals** - you may wish to identify specific journals for your subject area, then browse or search journals individually.
- **Other sources** - WWW sources, research portals, newspapers, theses and dissertations, reports and data, legal and official sources, international standards and patents etc.
The stages of a literature review include:

1. **Identify your topic**, research question or areas of interest in conjunction with your assignment or research plan/proposal.

2. **Identify suitable keywords/phrases** (for searching) In some cases terms may be drawn from terminology or acronyms in the surrounding literature (or industry).

3. **Identify search platforms**, collections, journals, WWW sites, book publications or other sources to consult.

4. **Search platforms/sources** using defined phrases or keywords (you may also need to use advanced options, e.g. to limit results within a specific date range).

5. **Identify suitable resources** – i.e. articles, books, theses, data etc. contributing to your own knowledge of topic(s) or the research question (if you are conducting a systematic review you may need to identify a number of case studies (see further note on Systematic Review).

6. **Annotate and (optionally) use referencing software** to manage your references - see our [citation software guides](#).
Identifying your Topic and Keywords

For any literature review you should try to identify **key topics** relevant to the study, including any geographical, historical or other contextual factors. In the example below, we consider how to identify topical coverage for researching a dissertation:

• Identify the **primary topic** of the dissertation, e.g. *Information Ethics*.
• Identify **sub-topics**, e.g. *ethics management, data protection, data confidentiality, Human Resource Management, HRM*.
• Identify the **context**, region, period/timescale or other circumstances, e.g. ‘South Africa’, ‘pharmaceutical industry’, mid-20th Century.
Constructing keywords

When constructing keywords or phrases for searching, you should combine topical and contextual terms.

• A possible keyword combination could be: ‘HRM information ethics’, you may need to search using a variety of keyword combinations based on your area of study.

• For additional advice on identifying, evaluating and selecting sources for your Literature Review, and for identifying suitable search phrases please see the guide Searching Tips.
Systematic Review

Some health and medicine programmes may require a more formal review process based around case studies, this is often called Systematic Review.

- Systematic Review usually consists of developing a detailed search strategy based on terms or criteria related to the research question.
- You may need to identify case studies or academic papers to evaluate.
- Your Systematic Review approach should be defined in your research proposal or methodology.
- There are a number of Systematic Review models (see following notes).
- You should follow any special instructions for conducting a Systematic Review provided by your programme of study.
Systematic Review models (mostly health related):

- Cochrane Handbook for Systematic Reviews of Interventions
- Evidence for Policy and Practice Information and Coordinating Centre
- PRISMA systematic review model
- Centre for Reviews and Dissemination
Support and Advice

• For training video, guides and tutorials on using the Library please see the Training page shown in the left menu of the Library for Online Programmes http://libguides.liverpool.ac.uk/online/training

• For general enquiries using Library resources or login help please see our 24/7 support services at http://libguides.liverpool.ac.uk/online/support

• If you have any further questions, to schedule a consultation or to report ongoing problems please contact the Librarian at the first opportunity http://libguides.liverpool.ac.uk/online/support