

GUIDE TO WRITING A LITERATURE REVIEW FOR DOCTORAL STUDENTS

The **PhD literature review** represents an overview of the state of the art in the student's field based on the current literature available including a critical analysis and synthesis of this information. The student is to select a **theme and topic** for the literature review in agreement with his/her supervisor (and consultants) during the preparation of their Study plan – i.e., within two months of the beginning of their doctoral studies. A well processed literature review may serve as a draft for the introductory part of a PhD thesis or a useful basis for the introduction to a manuscript, an excellent one might even be published as a review in a scientific journal.

The recommended length of the review without references is **max. 5 000 words in English (font Times New Roman, font size 12, line spacing 1.5)**.

No later than in the second semester of study, the student is to enrol in the subject **Literature review (KBE 806)**. The review processing is to follow this chronology (i.e., usually lasting several weeks):

1. Approval of the review by the student's supervisor.
2. The student submits a text file (MS Word compatible) to the head of the specialist board no later than during the tenth month of study (to avoid a reduced stipend).
3. The literature review is evaluated by an appointed reviewer.
4. The student revises his/her review according to the reviewer's remarks/suggestions.
5. Approval of the revised review (by letter) by the specialist board, which may ask for additional revisions.
6. Final approval by the head of the specialist board.
7. The student submits the final pdf version to the Department of Study Affairs.

What is a PhD literature review?

Let us make one thing very clear. A PhD literature review **is not just a summary of existing literature**. A PhD literature review is a **critical assessment of the literature** in your field and related to your specific research topic. When discussing each relevant piece of literature, the review must highlight where the gaps are and what the strengths and weaknesses of the particular studies, papers, books, etc. are. Also, different pieces of literature are compared and contrasted with one another so that themes and relationships are highlighted.

Follow the recommendations below:

- Explore what has been written on your topic, who the key authors are, and what the key works are.
- Check some recently published reviews on related topics to ascertain what you like and dislike about them.
- Structure the review thematically.
- Be critical.
- Present the main theories and hypotheses that exist in the literature.
- Identify gaps and weaknesses that your study should help to fill.
- The literature review may contain a description of methods which are critical for answering your hypotheses.
- Clearly present the main objectives and hypotheses that you will test.
- Know when to stop – the review is not judged on the number of words written (max. 5000 words).
- Don't repeat yourself, write relevantly. The paragraphs must be logically interlinked.
- Get feedback – the more peers that read drafts of your review the better.
- Do not leave writing to the last minute!