

## Literature Review Paper: Guidelines for DN Students

The purpose of the literature review paper is to:

1. promote advanced knowledge of the literature related to the chosen thesis topic
2. promote focused engagement in thesis proposal development
3. provide the foundations to focus thinking about potential research questions and methods
4. engage the student, supervisor, and thesis committee members in the process of dissertation development.

The literature review paper is not intended to replace the introduction/background chapters in the traditional thesis format but will likely serve as a component of those chapters in the final thesis.

- The literature review paper topic and type should be discussed and approved by the student and supervisor **by November 30<sup>th</sup> of Year 1**.
- The literature review paper should have clear relevance to the anticipated substantive topic of the student's doctoral project and must demonstrate evidence of critical analysis and synthesis of the available evidence related to the topic. Students may elect to undertake a structured (e.g., systematic review, scoping review) or unstructured (e.g., narrative review) literature review. Students should consult with their supervisor for the most relevant format for the student's field of study (normally 5,000 words in length). An abstract for the paper is not required.
- As with all thesis work, the student should submit drafts to their supervisor (and supervisory committee as deemed appropriate by supervisor), allowing sufficient time for review and provision of feedback.
- The literature review paper is submitted to the thesis supervisor **by April 30<sup>th</sup> of Year 1**. Students and supervisors are advised to ensure the lit review questions and search strategies are sufficiently focused to facilitate meeting the April 30<sup>th</sup> deadline.
- The thesis supervisor and at least one additional thesis committee member provide written and verbal feedback on the submitted literature review paper to the student at a supervisory committee meeting, usually within 3 weeks of submission.
- Successful completion of the literature review paper is documented on the '**Record of Supervisory Committee Meetings**' and comments should reflect the committee members' appraisal of the paper. If the literature review paper is not approved at the April submission, the student will have an additional opportunity to **revise and re-submit by June 30<sup>th</sup> of Year 1**, taking into account the feedback provided by the thesis committee members.
- Procedures for submission, review, and delivery of feedback for the re-submission proceed as for the April submission, with documentation of completion of the literature review paper and a progress rating reflective of the committee's appraisal of the thesis on the '**Record of Supervisory Committee Meetings**'.

## Guidelines for appraisal of the literature review

Overall, to determine whether a literature review paper merits approval as completed, the appraisers will examine the literature review paper for: **coherence with the stated purpose and goals, evidence of critical analysis and synthesis, and clarity of communication.** Guidance on expected components are outlined below but should be adjusted as appropriate for the type of literature review being conducted. Format and expectations (e.g., word count) should be confirmed with the supervisor in advance.

Expected components:

1. **Introduction** that includes
  - clear explanation of the problem or topic of interest
  - description of the relevance/importance of the topic
  - clear statement of the purpose and objectives/questions of the literature review.
  
2. **Methods/Approach** section that includes, as applicable
  - succinct description of search strategies used, normally with assistance from the health sciences librarian (Only one reviewer is required when making a decision about inclusion or exclusion of a study.)
  - description of, including justification for, methods of appraisal for the review.
  
3. **Results/Synthesis** section that includes
  - synthesis of the state of the knowledge (including quality and scope) based on the review of the literature. (An ideal number of studies to review is approximately 25.)
  
4. **Discussion/ Conclusions** section that includes
  - discussion of the major findings of the literature review and synthesis
  - discussion of the major strengths and limitations of the current literature on the topic.
  - discussion of implications for the student's own doctoral research
  - discussion of implications of results for research, theory, policy, and practice, as appropriate.