

# Research Background / Literature Review

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## References

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## Example from FRGS

### Detailed proposal of research project

**(a) Research background including Hypothesis /Research Questions and Literature Reviews**

**(b) Objective(s) of the Research**

**(c) Methodology**

*Description of Methodology*

*Flow Chart of Research Activities ( Please enclose in the Appendix)*

*Gantt Chart of Research Activities (Please enclose in the Appendix)*

*Milestones and Dates*

**(d) Expected Results/Benefit**

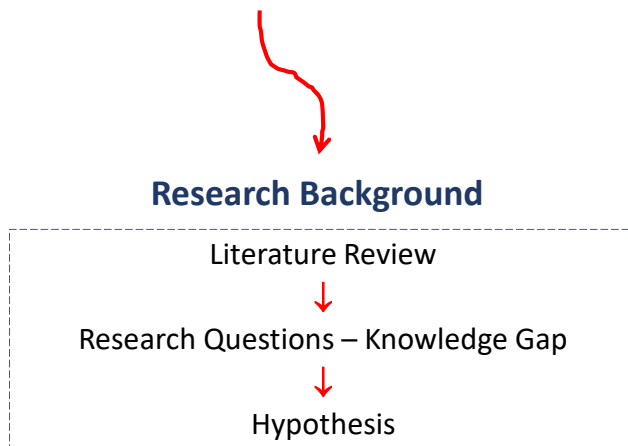
*Novel theories/New findings/Knowledge*

*Research Publications*

*Specific or Potential Applications*

*Number of PhD and Masters (by research) Students*

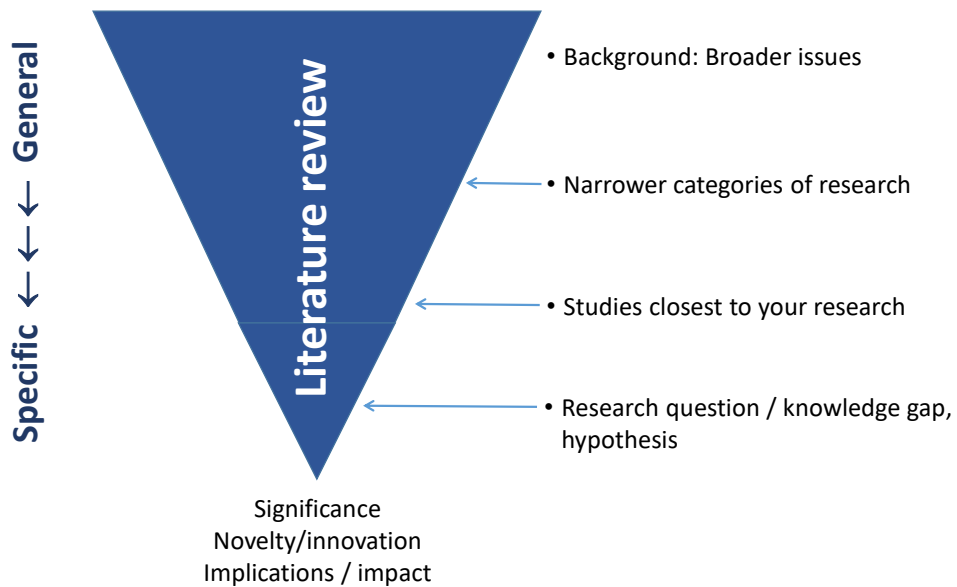
**(a) Research background including Hypothesis / Research Questions and Literature Reviews**



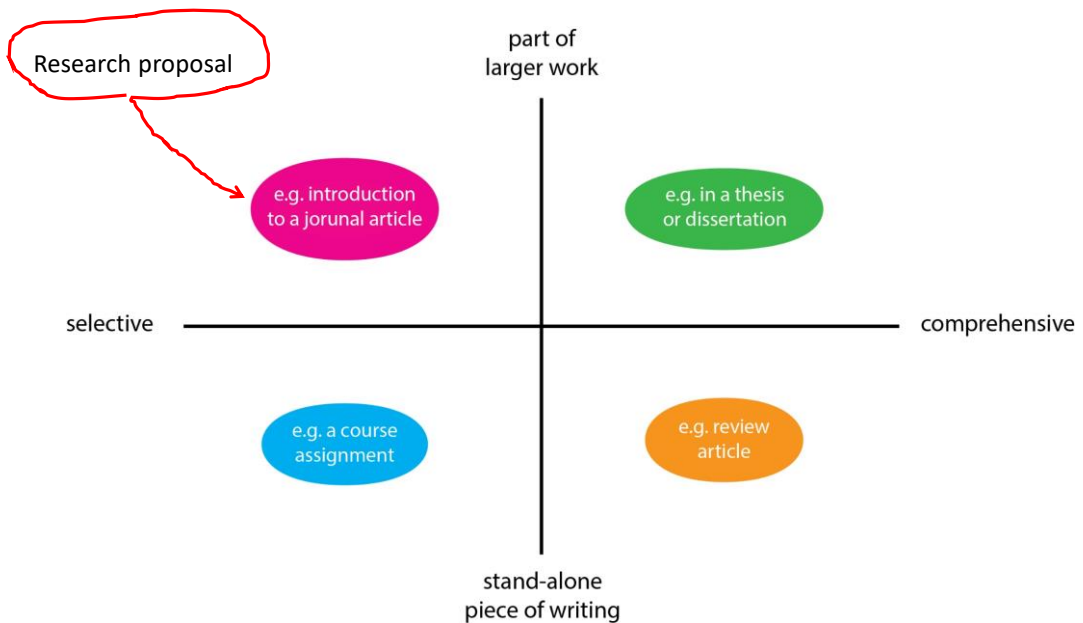
## Purpose

- What has been done
- What has not been done
- What is needed to be done and why
- Indicate your part or contribution

## Structure



# Literature Review



## Literature review helps to:

- Place your work in **context** → Describe **relationship** of each **work** to others under consideration
- Identify **research gap**
- **Define** and **limit** the **problem** you are working on
- **Sharpen, reformulate** the problem in a clear-cut way
- Help us formulate a satisfactory structure of the **research proposal**
- Resolve conflicts amongst seemingly **contradictory previous studies**

<http://library.bcu.ac.uk/learner/writingguides/1.04.htm>

***Do not just describe what authors X, Y, Z... did →  
Interpret what has been done***

## How to Review Literature ?

- **Summarise**: restate overall literature findings with your own words in a concise way
- **Compare**: find **similarities among literature**, explain how each article similar to others
- **Contrast**: find **differences**, explain how each article differ from others
- **Criticize** strength and weakness, aspects of **methodology**
- **Synthesize**: combine several literatures **into an idea**
- **Highlight gaps** in research
- Show how **your study** relates to **previous** studies

[Caulley (1992), La Trobe University]

## After careful reading of pertinent literature:

- Break literature into → "**conceptual categories**" /themes rather than describing groups of materials one at a time
- Conceptual categories reveal themselves → after you have read most of pertinent literature

<http://libguides.usc.edu/writingguide/researchproposal>

**If you are comparing, contrasting and evaluating the previous literature, you are on the right track**

Descriptive	Analytical
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Summarises what other people have found without saying what these findings mean for your investigation.</li> <li>Usually a chronological list of who discovered what, and when.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Synthesises the work and succinctly passes judgement on the relative merits of research conducted in your field.</li> <li>Reveals limitations or recognises the possibility of taking research further, allowing you to formulate and justify your aims for your investigation.</li> </ul>

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<p>For example: <b>?/X</b></p> <p>"Green (1975) discovered ....";            "In 1978, Black conducted experiments and discovered that ....";            "Later Brown (1980) illustrated this in ....."</p>	<p>For example: <b>✓</b></p> <p>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 ...."</p>

## Points to Consider When Reviewing a Literature

- **Provenance** — Author's **credentials**? Author's arguments **supported by evidence** (e.g. primary historical material, case studies, narratives, statistics, recent scientific findings)?
- **Objectivity** — Author's perspective **even-handed or prejudicial**? Is **contrary data** considered or is certain pertinent information **ignored** to prove the author's point?
- **Persuasiveness** — Which of the author's theses are **most/least convincing**?
- **Value** — Author's arguments and conclusions convincing? Does the work ultimately **contribute in any significant way** to an understanding of the subject?

*(Source: University Library, University of California)*

## A good literature review is characterized by:

- **Logical** flow of ideas
- **Unbiased** and **comprehensive** view of previous research on the topic
- **Current** and **relevant** references with consistent, appropriate referencing style



## Critical Evaluation of the Literature

- Have you **organised** your material **according to issues**?
- Is there a **logic** to the way you **organised** the material?
- Does the **amount of detail** included on an issue **relate to its importance**?
- Have you indicated when results were **conflicting** or inconclusive and **discussed** possible **reasons**?
- Have you indicated the **relevance** of each reference to your research?

*Courtesy of the University of Melbourne*

## What a good literature review does:

- **Critically evaluate** relevant literature information.
- **Integrate and synthesize** existing literature.
- **Provides new theoretical insights** or develops a new model as the conceptual framework for your research.
- Convinces your reader that your proposed research will make a **significant and substantial contribution**

- Enough discussion on previous research for readers to understand **bigger picture**
- Not meant to be comprehensive → be highly **selective** and highly **relevant**
- Critical review of **gaps/problems**
- **Do not** say another's work is "inadequate" → identify **issues not addressed**
- Establish what is **original** in your approach (innovative) → how your work differs from others
- State where your **own previous contributions** (if any) fit in

***Interpretation of literature should lead to → research question, hypothesis and objectives***

## Common Errors Made in Literature Reviews

- **Confusing structure** → Not logically organized
- **Not focused** on most important facets
- Reads like a series of **disjointed summaries**
- Not written in author's own words
- Too few references or outdated references cited
- Recent references are omitted
- Too Much Information
- Not Enough Information: do not explain concepts, do not provide enough background, or do not discuss enough
- Readers struggle to understand

*To avoid these  
Revise, revise, revise...*