



Writing the method section of a systematic literature review in a dissertation

Introduction

Some dissertation students will write a systematic literature review. This will involve collecting published articles related to a topic and analysing what can be learned through considering these collectively. If you undertake this type of research it is important that you are rigorous in terms of your methodology. This resource outlines areas to consider when planning and writing the method section of a systematic literature review.

Method section overview

A key aspect of the systematic literature review is the 'systematic' part. This means there must be an order and structure to how your research has been undertaken. This needs to be illustrated in the method section.

Subsection 1) Where you searched

Initially specify where you searched for articles that were included in your systematic review. The following are examples of resources that are commonly used:

- Journal databases
- Library catalogue
- Subject specific professional websites
- Newspaper database

Subsection 2) How you searched

Specify the terms that you used when searching for articles (you should use the search terms consistently when searching all resources). When searching for

resources it is important that you do not just rely on one or two search terms – use suitable synonyms. The following table indicates how a range of search terms could be used when trying to research a dissertation about teaching study skills to students at university:

Teaching	Study skills	Students
Lecture Online Workshop Seminar	Writing Note taking Reading	Undergraduates Learners

Subsection 3) Article inclusion criteria

When undertaking a systematic literature review you will need to specify the criteria that were used to select articles that were included. Inclusion criteria will be specific to your project. However, the following highlights some common inclusion criteria and how these could be applied in a dissertation:

Inclusion criteria	Examples of application
Relevant to the topic	Articles must be directly related to the topic
Peer reviewed	Articles must be peer reviewed
Age of material	Articles must be less than five years old
Design of studies	Qualitative and quantitative studies can be included
Geography	Articles must be based on work that was undertaken in the UK

Subsection 4) Ethical issues

As with any piece of research it is important that you address ethical issues. The following are some areas that are likely to be relevant to a systematic literature review dissertation:

How information was obtained	Information must be obtained lawfully
Accurate reporting of information	All information must be reported accurately
Confidentiality	It may be necessary to protect the identity of people / organisations that you discuss

Your faculty will have a list of ethical considerations related to dissertation writing. Make sure that you read these and address **all** issues in your ethics subsection.

Please note

This resource provides a very basic overview of what should be included in the method section of dissertation which adopts a systematic literature review methodology. It is therefore very important that you treat this information as a guide and discuss what you will include in your method section with your dissertation supervisor.

Further information

The Learning Resources Study Hub provides a range of opportunities (such as workshops and drop-ins) for you to enhance your academic skills. For more information visit:

lrweb.beds.ac.uk/studyhub

