**Course content**

The course Literature Review is the start of the students' research preparation. Independently of whether students have already decided their research topic for their master's thesis, it is necessary to do a review of existing research in order to identify gaps in the literature, and to justify their own projects. The course topic the student selects must be in line with his/her research question. It must be agreed upon by the student and his/her main supervisor early in the literature review process.

**Learning outcome**

With this course, students will become familiar with and learn to identify the most relevant textbooks, reviews, papers and journals for their research topics. During the course the students will also learn how to critically read and assess research papers and reviews. The review should point to research gaps that can be opertionalised into feasible research questions.

**Learning objectives:**  
a) To learn to review and assess scientific literature critically.  
b) To write and present an overview of the relevant literature for a specific research topic.

**Guidelines For Research Project Review Writing**

1. **What is a literature review?**

The ability to review, and to report on relevant literature is a key academic skill. A literature review: situates your research focus within the context of the wider academic community in your field; reports your critical review of the relevant literature; and identifies a gap within that literature that your research will attempt to address.

1. **Why do I need a literature review?**

When readers come to your assignment, dissertation, or thesis, they will not just assume that your research or analysis is a good idea; they will want to be persuaded that it is relevant and that it was worth doing. They will ask questions such as: What research question(s) are you asking? Why are you asking it/them? Has anyone else done anything similar? Is your research relevant to research/practice/theory in your field? What is already known or understood about this topic? How might your research add to this understanding, or challenge existing theories and beliefs? These are questions that you will already probably be asking yourself.

1. **A critical review**

It is important that the literature review is more than just a list of references with a short description of each one.Merriam (1988:6) describes the literature review as:  
‘an interpretation and synthesis of published work’.

This very short statement contains some key concepts, which are examined in the table below.  
  
A] Published work ‘s Concepts Explanation and its Associated critique  
B]Interpretation.

C]Synthesis

1. **Getting started**

Reading anything on your research area is a good start.

According to Taylor and Procter (2008) of The University of Toronto have some useful suggested questions to ask yourself at the beginning of your reading:

1.What is the specific thesis, problem, or research question that my literature review helps to define?

2.What type of literature review am I conducting?

3.Am I looking at issues of theory? methodology? policy? quantitative research? qualitative research?

4.What is the scope of my literature review?

5.What types of publications am I using (e.g., journals, books, government documents, popular media)?

6.What discipline(s) am I working in (e.g., GIS,Biometrics ,Imageprocessing ,NLP)?

1. **Ways of finding relevant material**
2. Electronic sources.
3. References of references
4. Hand searching of journals
5. **Collecting material**
6. **Keeping a record**
7. **Plagiarism Detection**
8. **When to stop**

It is important to keep control of the reading process, and to keep your research focus in mind. Rudestam and Newton (1992:49) remind us that the aim is to ‘Build an argument, not a library’. It is also important to see the writing stage as part of the research process, not something that happens after you have finished reading the literature.

1. **Writing it up**

The task of shaping a logical and effective report of a literature review is undeniably challenging. Some useful guidance on how to approach the writing up is given by Wellington et al (2005:87): “It should be framed by your research questions. It must relate to your study. It must be clear to the reader where it is going: keep signposting along the way. Wherever possible, use original source material rather than summaries or reviews by others.

1. **Using tables**

As well as using tables to display numerical data, tables can be useful within a literature review when you are comparing other kinds of material**.**

1. **Reference list**

Almost all academic writing will need a reference list. This is a comprehensive list of the full references of sources that you have referred to in your writing.

**References**

1. Ask Oxford (2006). *Found at:* http://www.askoxford.com/  
**Useful reading**

1. Murray, R. 2003: *How to survive your viva*. Maidenhead:Open University Press.

2. Rugg, G. & Petre, M. 2004: *The unwritten rules of PhD research.* Maidenhead:Open University Press.

3. Tinkler, P. & Jackson, C. 2004: *The doctoral examination process: a handbook for*  
*students, examiners and supervisors.* The Society for Research into Higher Education. Maidenhead:Open University Press.

4. Wellington, J., Bathmaker, A., Hunt, C., McCulloch, G. & Sikes, P. 2005: *Succeeding*  
*with your doctorate.* London:Sage.