

# TOOL



## TEMPLATE STRATEGY FOR DEALING WITH THE LITERATURE

Reviewing the literature is something that students should be doing virtually until they submit their thesis for examination. The following 4-step literature review template process is very useful for students unfamiliar with literature review as a concept or practice. Students using this tool employ standard categories across the literature they review and so can more easily compare, contrast and note the shared or different approaches taken by authors to the kinds of issues they discuss, or to the methodologies and theories they use. In this way, students can group articles into main approaches or schools of thought, demonstrating how they are providing critical commentary on the literature they're reviewing, rather than simply reporting on what's been written.

Using this template approach enables supervisors to:

- gauge what sense their students are making of what it is they're reading, and
- engage in discussions focusing on the relationship of particular texts to students' own research area

Supervisors can implement this template approach by encouraging students to:

- begin using Step 1 from the start of their project, as they attempt to become familiar with what constitutes the literature for their field,
- continue using Step 1 throughout their research project,
- begin making template entries according to Steps 2 and 3 as they become more familiar with the literature, and
- add information to the templates at any time.

### Step 1: What's in the text?

Ask your student to set-up an Excel worksheet. For each text, ask the student to fill in the following:

Title	Issue	Scope	Methodology	Theory	Findings	Gaps
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Student summarises key points of the publication in terms of chosen categories, such as:

- research question/issue being investigated,
- scope of investigation/research (e.g. group(s) being investigated, size of sample, country or locality in which research was undertaken, etc.),
- methodology,
- theoretical framework, and
- major findings.





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## Step 4: What is the significance of my new knowledge, in terms of issue, scope, methodology, theory or findings?

As simply saying something is different from what's already in the literature is not sufficient, students and supervisors can together explore further questions, such as:

- Why do we need this new information?
- How will it be significant? ,
- How might this new knowledge change the way we think about what we can read in the existing literature?
- Will the project provide new theoretical or methodological insights?
- Will it have practical as well as intellectual outcomes?
- Will it cause people to think about the issue in a new way?

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**Original Source:** <http://researchsupervisiontoolkit.com/page/rst-ebook> (C3.2 Template strategy for dealing with the literature)

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**Modified Version Source:** <http://www.dissertationsupervision.org/>

