

Developing and refining your literature review

You can use and adapt these prompt questions at different points in the process of researching and writing your review. These are suggestions to get you thinking and writing.

1) Demonstrating your knowledge and familiarity in your subject/topic:

What are the significant and established themes of your subject/topic? What are the relevant sources? Why? Are they reliable sources? Why?

What are the recent developments? Are they significant? Why?

What are the appropriate methods of research?

2) Your critical analysis:

What are the strengths of the themes of your chosen topic? What evidence have you found that supports this?

Where are the gaps or weak areas in the literature? What are they?

Are there areas of controversy? What are they?

3) Summarising your thoughts:

What do you think? Why do you think that? (Based on the evidence you have gathered.)

How does your project/research question link into this? Why does it need to be undertaken? (Try to give an explicit statement for your reader).

What are the most appropriate research methods to use and why?

4) Structuring your literature review:

What are the main themes of your project/dissertation? What order do you need to use to explain this to someone else?

What is the scope of your project/dissertation? (And what is not - important to consider in the planning stages.)