

## Literature Review, 10 hp

A literature review is an excellent way to get started with your PhD project. A literature review is not a *summary* but rather a *critical assessment* of your research field and where your work fits into this. Below is a general overview but this is not an exhaustive description, rather a starting point for your work. In your literature review you should:

- Demonstrate an understanding of your research field
- Identify key authors and their works and main theories and hypotheses
- Analyse and evaluate the current literature
- Place your PhD project within the context of these works
- Begin to identify gaps in knowledge where your PhD work can contribute.

### General Steps

Start by *searching* for relevant literature. If there is a particular topic within your field which is challenging for you, start off with a textbook and then work your way from there to scientific article databases. Have a look at the references in important papers for other articles that may be relevant. It is important to be making good notes of the content of the articles and start with a reference managing software early (e.g., Zotero, Endnote, Papers). *Evaluate* what you are reading: who is making a statement and why, what is the foundation for the statement they make, and its strengths or weaknesses, and what have others said about that statement/work? Finally, how does this relate to your research question/hypotheses? This will help you *identify* themes, controversial points and knowledge gaps. It is critical that you make an *outline* for your literature review. This is best done with your supervisor(s) so that you do not miss any important components – you are likely entering a unfamiliar field or looking at a new aspect and you might not know what you are missing. Finally, *write* your literature review and be sure to connect the themes you have identified, all the while being sure to relate these to your PhD project and in a way, justify your project.

### Tips from Fellow PhD Students

A few tips from IGV PhD students who have completed their literature reviews:

- Make sure your topic is specific and defined – you don't want to end up with an endless review consuming all your time.
- Before starting to write, make sure you have a good framework for what you will review and discuss. Make a rough outline of subjects you want to discuss and then come up with a logical order. Use subtitles and bullet points to help you organize your ideas.
- Include subjects you can later reuse for your Half-Term Assessment or PhD thesis.
- Start looking for relevant literature right away from the beginning of your PhD and organize this in a reference manager. This will help you be more efficient, as finding and working through the literature is time consuming.
- Once you have a good framework, just start to write. It does not have to be perfect right away. It really helps to have words on paper and you can always revise later.
- Start on time, especially because your supervisors and later, your reviewer, also need time to evaluate your text (particularly earlier versions as you are learning). As a suggestion, start with writing about 6 months into your PhD, then you can just assign a few hours per week to your literature review which makes the process more sustainable.
- Explore how and when you are most productive when it comes to writing. Some people prefer being alone, others prefer the social pressure of people working in the same space. Some people peak during night hours, others in the morning.

## Review of Your Text

The essay must be approved by your supervisor(s) and an external researcher to the project. It is a good idea that you go through several iterations and rounds of feedback with your supervisor(s) before it is turned over to the external reviewer. The external reviewer should also give you feedback and you should be updating your text until both your supervisor(s) and the external reviewer are happy. The external reviewer should have a good overview of your field and can identify any missing critical arguments or information in your text. This person does not have to be at IGV and can have published with any of your supervisors previously. For reviewers they should be looking for the following aspects:

- Classic works and key references are cited
- There is a critical analysis of the field and the knowledge gap addressed by the project is described
- References are correctly cited in the text and given in the reference list
- The text is written in a style comparable to a thesis kappa or the introduction of the scientific article with a view to using this text in later parts of the thesis.

## Upon Completion

Once the supervisor(s) and the external review are satisfied, your main supervisor should email a copy of your literature review to the Director of Studies confirming that the task is completed.