



HARLEY ACADEMY

Literature Review Assignment

Guidance for Literature Review Assignment

You are required to demonstrate understanding of clinical research approaches within the discipline of aesthetic practice, whilst maintaining academic standards when writing a literature review report based on a subject within the field of aesthetic practice.

Task

Produce a literature review report.

For this assignment you are required to critically evaluate scientific literature on a clinically related topic relevant to aesthetic practice.

To achieve this assignment you will:

- Select a minimum of two research articles or conference paper publications on which to focus your evaluation
- Consider the design methodologies utilised within the clinical and scientific research
- Consider the extent to which the research methodologies contribute to the reliability of the findings in the clinical and scientific literature

General guidance on presentation

Project Length:

The report should contain between 1,500 and 2,000 words. We strongly recommend keeping your word count within 80 - 120% of the suggested limit. The words which form part of the count include all words in the text of the assignment including headings, quotes and references. The following are excluded from the word count; tables, diagrams, reference list and appendices. You must state the actual word count on the title page of the submission.

Presentation:

The report must be presented electronically in typewritten form. VTCT Skills recommends that the report should be double line spaced, except for block quotations, notes, captions or long headings. A uniform font should be used throughout. Your submission should be a single PDF file that includes your essay and a list of references at the end.

Layout of the report:

- Title
- Introduction (including a brief background/aims)
- Methodology
- Literature review/Discussion
- Limitations
- Conclusions/Recommendations
- List of references
- Appendices (if relevant)

References:

Harvard Style referencing should be used throughout for in-text referencing and the reference list.

Guidance on content

Overall requirements:

- Ensure your topic is appropriate—it should be a clinically related topic relevant to aesthetic medicine practice. You must provide a critical analysis of two or more articles related to your chosen topic. Your literature review should be between 1500–2000 words.
- Check that your structure is appropriate, ensuring it includes the following sections: Title, Introduction, Methodology, Literature Review/Discussion, Limitations, Conclusions/Recommendations, and a List of References. All of these sections are required to pass. Additionally, make sure your paragraphs are well-constructed and of suitable length.

- Make sure your information is effectively presented, critically analysed, and sufficiently concluded. Use a clear, logical structure to communicate your points, show the connections between them, and use transitional phrases to link ideas and maintain a smooth progression of thought.
- Include appropriate and sufficient in-text references in Harvard Style. You're expected to reference sources beyond just the articles you chose to review.
- Ensure your writing is coherent and appropriate for an academic essay. Avoid grammatical errors that could affect the clarity of your writing.

Overview of how to approach the assignment

Conducting a research review of medical publications involves a few key steps. Through the completion of this assignment you will demonstrate you can:

- **Clearly Define a Research Question:** Demonstrate the ability to articulate a focused and well-defined research question or topic for investigation.
- **Conduct a Comprehensive Literature Search:** Show proficiency in using medical databases (e.g., PubMed, MEDLINE) to locate relevant studies and articles related to the research question.
- **Critically Select Studies:** Exhibit discernment in selecting appropriate studies based on relevance, providing justification for inclusion and exclusion criteria.
- **Analyse Research Findings:** Demonstrate the capability to analyse selected studies by identifying key findings, assessing methodologies, and recognising limitations.
- **Synthesise Findings into a Coherent Summary:** Organise the main findings from reviewed studies into a clear and cohesive summary, emphasising key results and trends.
- **Critically Discuss Results:** Showcase analytical skills by comparing and contrasting the findings across different studies, explaining agreements, discrepancies, and their potential reasons.
- **Identify Research Gaps and Implications:** Demonstrate insight by highlighting gaps in existing research and discussing the broader significance of the review's findings within the field.
- **Develop a Well-Organised Review Paper:** Display effective writing skills by synthesising the analysis, discussions, and conclusions into a structured and comprehensive review.
- **Adhere to Academic Integrity:** Exhibit attention to detail and ethical scholarship by accurately citing all referenced studies and articles.

Things to consider when structuring your report

1. Constructing an appropriate question

To start a great literature review, first define the problem with a clear and structured question or hypothesis. For Level 7, this will relate to aesthetic injectables. Here are example titles from successful student submissions:

- Common Complications Associated with Tear Trough Filler Treatment in Non-Surgical Aesthetic Practice
- Clinical Efficacy of Botulinum Toxin Type A in Treatment of Rhytids in the Glabellar Complex
- Delayed Onset Nodules following Hyaluronic Acid Dermal Fillers
- Prevention of Infection Associated with Soft Tissue Filler Use in Non-Surgical Aesthetic Practice
- Clinical Evaluation of Aspiration as a Preventative Technique in Dermal Filler Injections

The following are examples of literature review titles that were not successful:

- Botulinum Toxin in the Management of Chronic Migraine
- The Psychological Effects of Botox on Depression and Mood Disorders
- The Use of Dermal Fillers for Facial Paralysis and Reconstructive Purposes
- Facial Asymmetry Caused by Neurological Disorders: A Review of Treatment Options

2. Searching for relevant articles:

When searching for relevant articles, prioritise high-level evidence such as randomised controlled trials (RCTs). However, if the research available in your area is limited, including lower-level studies is appropriate.

PubMed or MEDLINE is the most suitable starting point for biomedical literature searches. MEDLINE contains millions of citations and is freely accessible through PubMed, which offers advanced search features useful for refining results.

While Google Scholar also indexes many of the same articles and includes literature from other disciplines, it lacks some of the advanced search capabilities available in PubMed, making PubMed the preferred tool for skilled, targeted searches.

How to structure a Literature Review

Title

A clearly articulated statement focusing on a specific clinical topic in aesthetic medicine.

Introduction

Structurally, the introduction should be succinct and specific. A competent introduction should include at least the following key concepts:

Significance of the Topic

Briefly state why the topic is important, aiming to capture the reader's interest.

Rationale for the Review

Explain why the review is being conducted, highlighting the information gap in the available literature associated with the topic. Identifying what is known, specifically to make evident what is not known.

Aims and Hypotheses

Clearly state the aims and objectives of the review. If applicable, include hypotheses. The main objective should be to address the identified gap in the literature.

Methodology

The methodology section should focus on the process used to conduct the review, rather than on the methods employed in the studies being reviewed. It should clearly describe how the literature was identified,

selected, and analysed. This includes outlining the search strategy, specifying any limitations, and ensuring the process is transparent and replicable.

Key details include the databases searched (e.g., PubMed, MEDLINE), the search terms used—along with how they were connected using appropriate Boolean operators—and the range of publication years considered. You should also define the inclusion and exclusion criteria used to determine which studies were relevant for review. This section ensures the rigour and reproducibility of your literature review.

Literature Review/Discussion

In this section, summarise and critically compare and analyse the papers you have selected. Identify the methodologies used in the original research to contextualise their findings. Highlight the key outcomes, note any gaps in the research, and address conflicting evidence within the existing literature. Discuss the limitations of the studies under review, considering factors such as sample size, study design, or potential biases. Explain the significance of the findings within the broader field and evaluate whether your own observations support or contradict those of earlier research. Where discrepancies arise, clearly distinguish your work and offer reasoned explanations for these differences.

Limitations

This section is intended to discuss the limitations specific to your own literature review, not those of the individual studies included—those should be addressed within the main body of the review (Literature Review/Discussion). Limitations reflect potential weaknesses in study design, data collection, analysis, and interpretation that may influence the conclusions drawn.

Begin by identifying any limitations in your review process that could affect how the results are interpreted. These might include constraints such as limited access to full-text articles, the exclusion of non-English studies, or restrictions in the time frame or databases searched. Explain how these limitations may have impacted your findings and describe any steps you took to minimise their effect. If nothing could be done to address a particular limitation, clarify why it was not expected to significantly affect the outcome.

Some authors also include a brief mention of the strengths of their review to provide balance and context.

Conclusions/Recommendations

The conclusion serves to summarise the key findings of your literature review and demonstrate how they address your research question or contribute to the wider field. Begin by briefly recapping your main points. Clearly state how your findings respond to your original research question or hypothesis. Discuss the significance of these findings, outlining their implications for the field. Acknowledge any limitations of your review and consider how these may have influenced the results. Consider adding your own personal insight into the topic you have discussed. Finally, suggest directions for future research, particularly in relation to any gaps or unresolved issues identified through your review.

Common essay fail areas for literature review:

You may fail this assignment for several reasons, including:

1. Poor Organisation or Inappropriate Structure:

- Failing to include all required sections, i.e. Title, Introduction, Methodology, Literature Review/Discussion, Limitations, Conclusions/Recommendations, and a List of References
- A lack of clear structure or organisation in presenting the findings which can impact the clarity of the argument
- The evaluation not being well-supported by evidence, or the paper lacking logical flow
- Failing to explicitly select at least 2 studies/papers to review - these should be named in the Methodology
- Using the Methodology just to explain the methodologies of the studies selected - instead, you must use the methodology to explain your own research strategy and approach in an academic manner
- Failing to explain your goals in the Introduction

2. Failure to Select Appropriate Sources or Focus:

- Failing to select relevant or credible sources. The research articles or conference papers chosen may not be related to aesthetic practice, or you might not meet the required academic standards, such as peer-reviewed journals or reputable conferences

3. Inadequate Analysis and Critical Evaluation:

- The assignment specifically asks for a critical evaluation, which requires you to go beyond summarising the articles. If you merely restate the research findings without analysing the methodology, validity, biases, and limitations of the studies, it would be insufficient
- If the evaluation does not consider how the methodologies affect reliability or does not challenge or question the research's conclusions, the assignment might not demonstrate critical thinking, again, making it insufficient
- You must evaluate the design methodologies you utilised within your own research in the Literature Review/Discussion section of the assignment. If you do not sufficiently explain how the methodology (e.g., sample size, control groups, statistical analysis) impacts the results or validity of the studies, then you might miss a significant aspect of the assignment. If the evaluation does not consider how the methodologies affect reliability or does not challenge or question the research's conclusions, the assignment might not demonstrate critical thinking
- You could also fail to connect the research design to the practical relevance of aesthetic practices

4. Inadequate Consideration of Reliability:

- You may overlook how reliable the findings are. If you do not explain how the study's design influences the generalisability of the findings or the degree to which the results can be trusted within the aesthetic practice context, this would be a critical gap

5. Superficial Conclusions/Recommendations

- You might fail to draw meaningful conclusions or fail to synthesise information effectively. The assignment isn't just about pointing out flaws or strengths but also about drawing connections between research findings, their practical implications in aesthetic practice, and their impact on future research

6. Failure to Stay on Topic:

- If you veer off-topic or provide irrelevant information that doesn't relate to the aesthetic practice or the scientific evaluation of the research, this could affect your grade negatively

7. Failure to Cite Properly:

- The assignment requires critical evaluation of literature, meaning proper citation and referencing are key. If you fail to cite your sources accurately or do not adhere to the prescribed referencing style (Harvard in this case), it could lead to accusations of plagiarism or academic dishonesty issues, which could result in overturning a pass mark at a later stage

