### WRITING A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### Checklist for Students or Novice Authors

#### DETERMINE THE PURPOSE OF THE REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

- Course assignment to provide evidence of topic mastery (longer all-inclusive review).
- Research or other report for submission to a journal (brief review of most important current knowledge and possibly seminal knowledge).
- Introduce the topic and note the purpose of the review in your paper.

#### ACQUIRE THE LITERATURE

- Review assignment or journal guidelines for writing and submission.
- Search scholarly databases (e.g., MEDLINE, CINAHL) appropriate to the discipline and similar disciplines using various keywords until articles begin to repeat (saturation).
- Search for primary sources (published by authors who did the research).
- Track search dates, terms, databases, and number of results.
- Describe the search methods in your paper.

#### SUMMARIZE THE LITERATURE

- Review each research report individually:
  - Track important information and a full citation in an evidence table or spreadsheet.
  - Identify strengths and weaknesses for each study - a research critique guideline can be a helpful tool, such as the CASP Checklists (CASP, 2020).

#### SYNTHESIZE THE LITERATURE

- Critically appraise the list of studies as a whole:
  - Note similarities (e.g., topic, question(s), methods, findings).
  - Note differences.
- Group information about studies by similarities and differences, and by strengths and weaknesses.
- Search for gaps in the literature.
- Describe the state of the science by discussing the studies from this comprehensive perspective, avoiding discussion of each individual study unless it provides unique information.
- Conclude this section by noting any gaps.
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<tr>
<th>DISCUSS YOUR CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS</th>
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<tr>
<td>□ Include original ideas that contribute new information to the literature.</td>
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<td>□ Note any limitations of the review.</td>
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<td>□ Strengthen your paper by including specific implications for practice and/or research based on your review.</td>
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<td>□ Conclude your paper with a brief reiteration of the importance of the topic.</td>
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<th>FINAL CHECK</th>
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<td>□ Review the criteria in Checklist #1 for general scholarly papers.</td>
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