

# Q&A – Literature searching, evaluation, and referencing

From discussion on 6 April 2022 with Nicola Atkinson, Engineering Subject Librarian

No.	Question	Vote	Answer
1	Why should I do a literature review?	2	See presentation Slide 3.
2	Where can I get help with referencing?	1	See presentation Slide 13.
3	How can I quickly work out if a document is relevant to my study?	1	<p>Quick assessment. Read the title, abstract, summary, or conclusions. Ask yourself, “what evidence is there in the document that supports my project work?” If there is none then move on to another document.</p> <p>Read to answer a question. Information sources need to provide evidence to support your project. What evidence are you looking for? Scan your search results and read full text with a question in mind and only select documents that help answer that question. If you have more than one question, you’re looking for more than one piece of evidence, you may need to search and read for each question. <a href="#">Academic reading</a> advice from Student Learning <a href="#">StudyHub</a>.</p>
4	Is doing a literature review mandatory for all 489 projects? (even if supervisor OK’ed your proposal without a literature review in the plan)	1	Summary of Course Coordinator answer given during lecture: Your proposals were written without much time for a literature review but your preliminary report is expected to include some reference to the “state of the art”. You will need to find literature to support this. Talk to your supervisor again to clarify what is required.

5	What is the best way to quickly identify if a paper online is empirical research compared to other papers (i.e. a literature review)	1	<p>“Review articles” are often a published literature review. These provide a good summary of a research topic at the time when the article was written. Alternatively, empirical research, or primary research, involves an original experiment with collection and analysis of data/outcomes.</p> <p>The only conclusive way to know if an article contains empirical research is to read the article. Often the abstract and summary or conclusion give a clear interpretation of any data analysis or outcomes, and often mention the experimental methodology used. If these are not mentioned then it’s probably not empirical research.</p> <p>Some library search tools include a filter to limit your results to, or exclude, review articles. These filters are useful but not completely reliable. Similarly, some library search tools have filters for empirical or primary research.</p> <p>You can include “empirical research” or “primary research” or “experimental” in your search terms but be aware that not all authors will explicitly include these terms in their paper.</p>
6	How complicated is it to ask the library to purchase something?	1	<p>The process is simple. Your purchase recommendations are automatically purchased if they are inexpensive and are reviewed by library staff if they are expensive. Include in the submission form that you need this for your final year project. <a href="#">Purchase recommendation form</a></p>
7	Where do textbooks fit in to our literature review?	1	<p>Textbooks often take several years to get published so they do not contain the most up-to-date information. Use conference papers and journal articles to find more recent information.</p> <p>Textbooks are very useful for learning the fundamental principles that underpin your project work but are unlikely to have the technical detail you need for your project report.</p> <p>Textbooks include reference lists and bibliographies. Use these lists to find publications that have more technical details that are specific to your project. Remember these publications will be older than the textbook. Some library databases allow you to follow the research forwards in time, finding recent research that has referenced the same publication you found in the textbook reference list – look for “Cited by” links in Google Scholar and library search tools. Ask your Subject Librarian for help with this.</p>