

The DSW Preliminary Examination

For the DSW preliminary examination, students will prepare a 10-page literature review on their dissertation question or topic. The literature review will be submitted to the student's dissertation Chair by the end of October of the second year of coursework. The literature review should be submitted as part of the student's dissertation proposal, or, if the student has not finished the proposal, the literature review may be submitted separately for the Chair to read and evaluate.

Guidelines

A literature review does much more than to describe and summarize. It describes, summarizes and synthesizes relevant scholarly articles, books and other sources related to the dissertation question or topic. The purpose of the literature review is to offer a critical analysis of the literature that integrates research, theory and other forms of practice knowledge to produce a conceptual framework. The conceptual framework contextualizes, explains and justifies the research or practice question that you are trying to answer.

Depending on the nature of the project, the literature review:

- compares and contrasts different perspectives;
- exposes conflicting or competing views, interprets such conflicts and offers suggestions for resolution;
- identifies and interprets gaps in the literature;
- locates your study in the existing literature;
- builds an argument for why the topic is important and worthy of study; and
- provides a coherent and well organized synthesis that becomes your conceptual framework.

Ultimately you are using the literature to develop a conceptual framework, which involves defining key concepts, justifying the relationship between variables or concepts, and presenting existing research and theory in a new light. This is what raises the dissertation from purely descriptive to the production of new ways of understanding or new knowledge.

The literature review should follow APA format.