Writing the literature review

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Content of this session

- What is a literature review?
- What does writing a literature review entail?
- Planning and writing the review
- Resources

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A literature review IS NOT:

- a descriptive list of all the work published in your field
- a chronological account of existing research

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So what is a literature review?

- A survey of existing research relevant to the topic of your research project. The survey provides
    - a review of previous work related to your topic – not just a list of references
    - an overview of the current context in which your research is situated by referring to contemporary debates, issues and questions in the field
- A discussion of the concepts and theories that will underpin your research
- A coherent argument providing a justification for your research project

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What does writing the review entail?

- Literature review = a critical evaluation of the research on a specific topic

- This entails
  - Reading widely but selectively
  - Making decisions as to which sources to include
  - Evaluating the sources
  - Summarising and synthesising existing research
  - Structuring the review clearly and logically
  - Giving some background information about the technology or process (history; overview)
  - Tracing progression in the field, including trends or major debates
  - Exploring difficulties/barriers to progress and how they can be overcome
  - Drawing conclusions (evaluative summary)

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Title

- The title should reflect the main theme of the paper.
- Avoid titles that are too broad or vague
- How could this title be improved?

Distributed generation in power systems

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Improved title

Impact of distributed generation
on distribution network protection

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Getting started: Planning the review

- Draw a mind map or use Outline in Word
- Decide how to organise the information:
  - Chronologically?
  - Thematically?
  - By trends/approaches?
  - Major debates/controversies?
  - Probably a combination of these?
- Identify topics and subtopics

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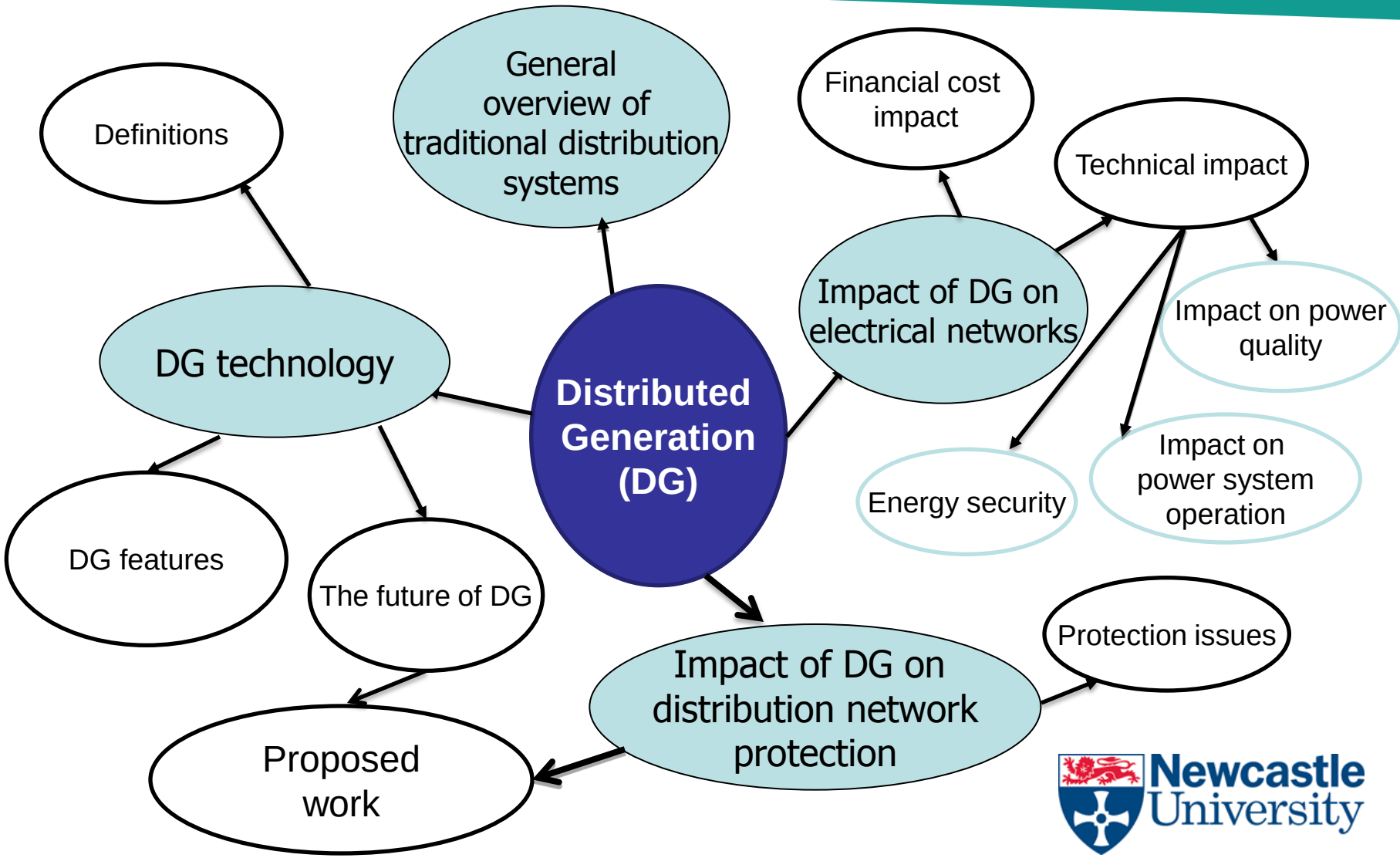
Mind map: example



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Outline

- Introduction – background information; context
- Distributed generation technology
  - Definitions
  - DG features
  - The future of DG
- General overview of traditional distribution systems
- Impact of DG on electrical networks
  - Financial cost impact
  - Technical impact
    - Impact on power quality
    - Impact on power system operation
    - Energy security
- Impact of DG on distribution network protection
  - Protection issues with distribution generation
  - Proposed work

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Read the full review

http://www.ncl.ac.uk/eece/postgrad/taught/exlitrev/LitReview-Al-Shammriy.pdf

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Mind-mapping software: MindView

- You can:
  - Jot down ideas
  - Move them around
  - Create links
  - Make text notes
  - View as Mind Map, Top Down, Left Right, Timeline, Outline and Gantt Chart
  - Transfer to Word and PowerPoint

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MindView: Available on University PC clusters and RAS

- Computer cluster machines: Programs > EasyAccess > MindView
- RAS: Applications > Main > Accessories > MindView
- More information:

  http://www.ncl.ac.uk/iss/easyaccess/guides/mindview.php

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Format of the paper

- Abstract or summary
- List of figures
- Introduction
- Main body
- Conclusions
- List of references

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Writing the introduction

- Set the topic in its wider context
- Indicate its relevance or importance
- Introduce key theme or issue
- Define key concepts or theories
- State your aims

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Writing the main body of the text

- Provide a critical review of important publications – description is not enough.
- Develop a sustained line of argument
- Use the evidence to support the points you make
- Use headings and subheadings to organise your material
- Divide the material in each section or subsection into paragraphs
- Ensure each paragraph has a main idea (topic sentence)

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Writing the conclusion

- Briefly summarise key points, drawing different strands together
- Outline the implications of your findings
- Link to your own project/make recommendations for further research
- DO NOT introduce new information

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List of figures

- List the figures you used
- Identify each by number and label
- Check that the source of each figure has been acknowledged

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List of references

- Check the text to ensure that all your sources have been acknowledged
- List only the sources you have cited in the text
- Use a referencing system approved by your School

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Avoiding plagiarism

Using sources appropriately

- Acknowledge your sources
- Follow citation conventions
- Summarise or paraphrase
- Use quotations sporadically
- Include all sources cited in your list of references
- Acknowledge the source of all tables and figures

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Academic integrity and use of sources

Useful website:

The Right-Cite for Academic Practice

http://www.ncl.ac.uk/right-cite/

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Writing the abstract or summary

- Write it after you have completed the review
- Remember readers will see it before the review: make sure it is clear, it contains the key information in the paper, and it is concise
- State the aim or purpose of the paper
- Summarise the key points in no more than 200 words
- Briefly outline your conclusions

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Revising and proofreading your paper

- Writing a single draft is not enough
- Redraft your work to improve clarity, sharpen up your arguments, achieve conciseness
- Check your grammar and spelling:
  - Have you written complete sentences?
  - Have you avoided vague pronoun reference?
  - Have you used technical vocabulary accurately?
  - Have you spelled words correctly? (Check tricky ones, e.g. “affect” and “effect”; “complementary” and “complimentary”; “their” and “there”)
  - Have you used punctuation correctly?

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Online resources

Writing Development Centre Online Resources

http://www.ncl.ac.uk/students/wdc/learning/

Academic Phrasebank

http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk

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