**¿HOW TO CONDUCT LITERATURE REVIEW CRITIQUE?**

**INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE ASSIGNMENT.**

What sort of questions should I be asking when conducting a critique of a literature review?

When critiquing a literature review, you are assessing the review’s context, motivation, novelty and how well it reassures you, the reader. In other words, a literature review should:

- Contextualise the research within the wider literature.

- Motivate why the research is significant.

- Distinguish the research from other work.

- Reassure the reader that the author is competent.

In order to conduct a critique, you should be asking (and then answering) the kinds of questions that are suggested below. Comments have been included with each question as a guide. Note that these questions are not exhaustive and further questions should present themselves as you work from this starting point. It also goes without saying that you should read the paper in its entirety, skim read all the references, and explore the wider literature. A good starting point would be to take the paper’s keywords and search Google Scholar with those. A critique is a critical evaluation and therefore you will be making an argument. A critique is not a report or a derivation in the sense that there will be one correct answer or format. As with all academic arguments, you will need to back them up with references, quotations and other supporting material. Note that the document whose literature review you are critiquing is itself a document that you will need to include as a reference in your bibliography if you include the work in your own writing.

Determining whether a literature review contextualises the research within the wider literature

What is the gist of the literature review’s contextualisation? This is a description of what the author has done in a very condensed, brief form – essentially a summary of their literature review.

Has the literature review presented a predictable (orthodox) contextualisation? Is this appropriate? In other words, the literature review will likely emphasise certain topics to the exclusion of others – from your wider reading and consideration of the interests of the target journal, can you determine whether this was appropriate?

Given the previous point, can you “add in” the extra context into which this paper would fit? By extending the existing literature review to include a wider scope, you are demonstrating that you have read around and understand the “global” (in the mathematical sense) context. Typically, papers have to be concise and hence cannot contain every last link between the work and the literature. By answering this question you will probably be able to comment further on the above two points.

What was the impact factor of the journal at the time in which the paper was published? Do you think that the journal was an appropriate place to publish this work? These are two separate by intimately linked questions – do you think the importance of the results align with the impact factor / turnaround time of the target journal?

Determining whether a literature review motivates why the research is significant

Given the content of the entire paper, are the explicitly stated motivations appropriate? Note that although you are looking primarily at the literature review, the entire paper is part of its wider context, and hence will provide extra information regarding the motivation for the research.

Is the motivation logically sound and internally consistent? Most probably it will be, but can you see any areas which the motivation might have glossed over or aggressively reduced? This might be appropriate if the paper is a letter or short communication. If this is the case, can you expand on the motivation to make it clearer?

Does the work fit in with the aims and objectives of the author's group at the time? This may be difficult to determine for groups outside Cardiff, but bear in mind that many papers are published to raise the profile of the group (“here we are!”), rather than being “major results”. The paper may therefore not be part of a group’s explicitly-stated research strategy but rather perhaps a “spin-off” paper which was published for its impact alone. Alternatively, the paper might be seminal.

Determining whether a literature review distinguishes the research from other work

Is the work completely novel or is it a derivative work? This might not be easy to determine from the literature review alone. By reading the wider literature you should be able to make this distinction with a bit more precision and hence comment on whether the authors have themselves appropriately motivated their work in this sense.

If the work is completely novel or speculative, does the author adequately characterise the impact this work would have? By reading the wider literature this should be straightforward to determine. If it is a derivative work, can you comment on how the author’s contextualisation and motivation support the author's declaration of novelty? If the work is derivative, have the authors made sufficiently clear the element of their work which qualifies the publication of the whole as novel?

Are there any similar techniques /concepts / results not mentioned in the literature review which would cast a different light on the declared novelty of the work presented? Did the author miss anything? Would it have been reasonable to expect the author to know about these publications? For example, an author writing in the US in 1960 could not be reasonably be expected to know about classified Soviet research that may only have made it into the public domain following the collapse of the USSR.

Determining whether a literature review reassures the reader that the author is competent

Given all the above, are you reassured that the author is competent? Note that by “competent” we would generally mean it in the general sense, but here you can take the more restricted view of whether the author has generated their literature review competently.

If you had been acting as a reviewer for this paper, could you comment on any changes you might have wanted to see made to the text? You should refer to the target journal's submission criteria in order to answer this. Possible changes should suggest themselves if you have thoroughly answered the questions under “context”, “motivation” and “novelty”.