Teaching and Learning Centre podcasts: the DISSERTATION SERIES

A literature review checklist

As you draft, re-work, and finalise your literature review, check whether you (and your reader!) can easily find the answers to these questions in your text.

* How is the literature review itself organised?
* What are the specific research questions you are asking? What exactly are you trying to find out through this research?
* Why are you asking these questions? Why is it important to address your specific questions?
* What is already well-known and well-established about your topic? What is less well- known, or perhaps controversial?
* Has anyone else done research along these same lines? How is theirs similar? How is it different?
* How is your research relevant to the existing research / theory / practice in your field?

As you check over your literature review, read the first sentences of each of your paragraphs. If you string each of these sentences together, do they give a rough idea of a narrative you create in the literature review? Or does it sound more like a catalogue of authors and their work? As in “Jones (2014) describes…”, “Smith’s 2004 review highlights…”, “In Black (2010), we see that…”.

Remember that the literature review should not be a list of ideas. Instead, it should be a narrative that you craft using the existing ideas and debates around your research area, to frame your own project,