Literature Review

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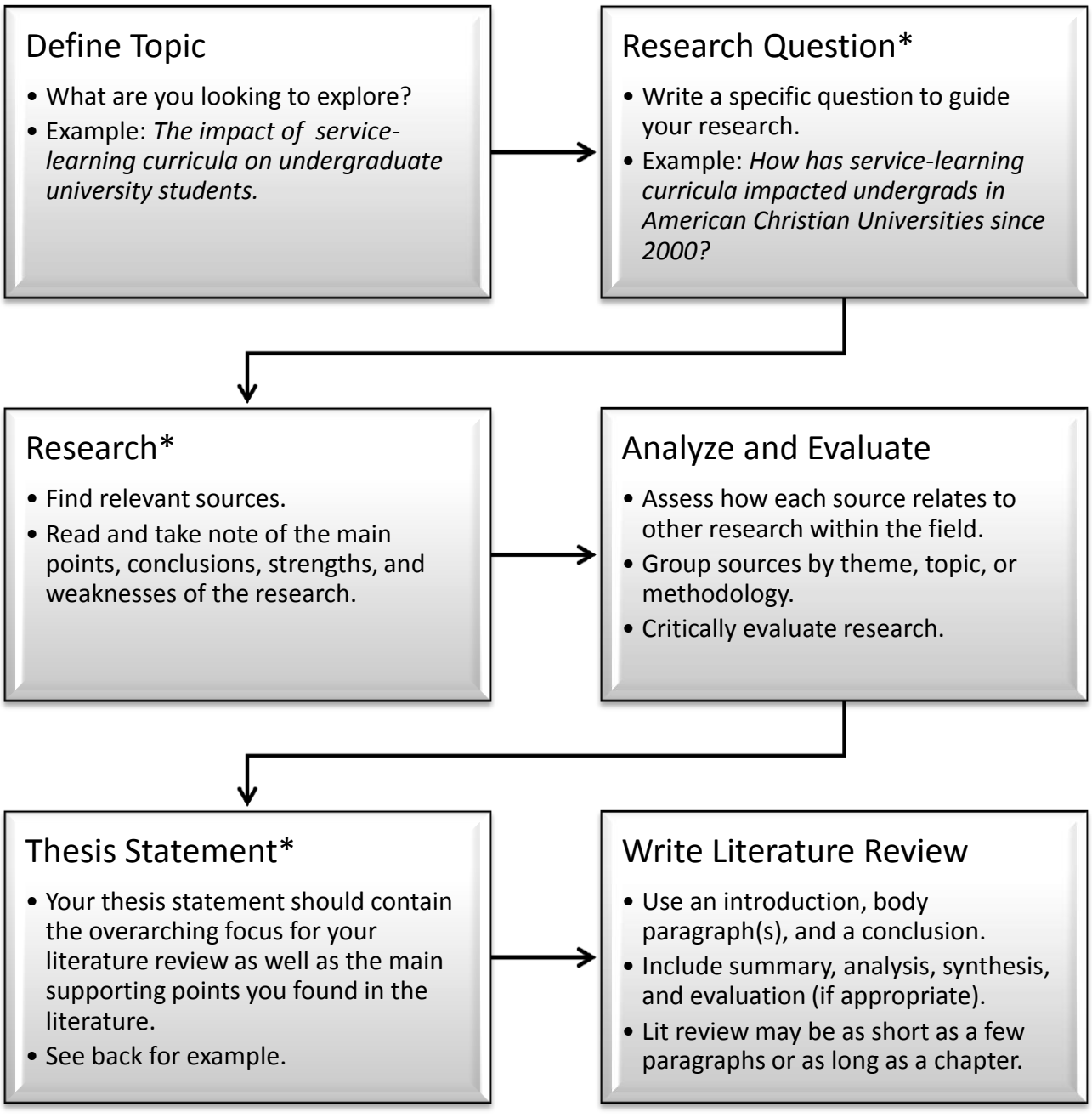
A literature review compiles and evaluates the research available on a certain topic or issue that you are researching and writing about. Because lit review formats vary greatly, be sure to read your professor's instructions *first* and defer to them. A typical writing process for a literature review follows these steps:

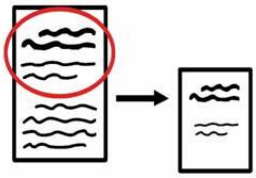


Use your research question as a guide for research. Once you have completed the bulk of your research, compile the topic and the research results into one coherent thesis statement.

*Refer to the Writing Center's Argument, Research Tips & Resources, and Thesis Statements handouts for more information on these topics.

Literature Review Strategies

The following are brief descriptions of techniques that you might use in your literature review. Choose the approaches that are the most pertinent to your rhetorical situation. Defer to your professor's instructions.

Summary  Briefly state the argument and main points of relevant research.	**Synthesis** Combine ideas in order to form an integrated theory or system through critical evaluation, compare/contrast, etc.
Analysis Closely examine the elements or structure of the research and interpret through the lens of the field.	**Evaluation** Assess the research based on criteria you choose, state, and explain. Support your evaluation with research.

Sample Literature Review (Short Version)

Thesis Statement*: Service-learning programs implemented in American undergraduate universities since 2000 have not only proven beneficial for the individuals or organizations being served but also for the participating students by offering opportunities for academic, emotional, and social growth.*

Prior studies have identified many benefits for educational institutions from service-learning programs. These benefits include positive perceptions of the university by the community (Miron & Moely, 2006), enhanced student retention rates (Eyler et al., 2001), positive teaching and learning outcomes such as greater student involvement and participation in class (Caruso et al., 2007), and increased opportunities for meaningful research and scholarly activities (Strand et al., 2003).

In this study and related research, the individuals serving are university students who are collaborating with the community partner. The studied benefits to individuals serving include cultural awareness sharing (Crabtree, 2008), as well as networking opportunities and application of classroom learning to real-world issues (Bowen et al., 2009). Ultimately, service-learning stimulates student learning and engages students in their surrounding communities. Service learning creates new goals for students such as personal development, career development, moral development, academic achievement, and "reflective civic participation" (Lamb et al., 1998). These types of projects allow students to utilize material learned in the classroom to improve societal conditions.

Integrating concepts and theories learned in the classroom with everyday life makes students more capable of highlighting the importance of each course. Additionally, material learned in business courses can be applied to benefit the community through a variety of tangible services, such as business planning or marketing new programs. Service learning is an excellent way for students to apply their course lessons to real-world situations and concurrently benefit the community.

Summary of key research

Evaluation and application to thesis/topic

Analysis and Synthesis