Planning your literature review: Visual mapping

Keep the title to a few major words. This acts to remind you of the particular focus of your Literature Review.

A summary sentence from each section. Complete this last. Use appropriate format.

Include the importance and relevance of the topic, logical plan of the development of your argument/ideas/sections in order and the context. Include background and short definitions, scope or limitations. Include the aim or purpose of your Literature Review.

These boxes represent the specific areas under investigation, or the major themes/sections of your literature review. Use headings and subheadings to logically structure and organise your reasoned and integrated argument by locating, identifying and critically assessing knowledge of the discipline. Identify and clarify themes/ideas/concepts/issues.

Use paragraph structure (topic sentence, referenced evidence from the literature to support and evaluate your argument and concluding or linking sentence) to critically assess, evaluate and synthesise information from the literature. The dot points underneath the boxes could represent the major points for each new paragraph, in logical order.

The lines underneath can be used to list specific authors that you will reference for that issue and identify where further research is required. Numbers can be assigned to indicate the order of your sections once you decide what is most important to your argument. You can decide on approximate word counts for each section.

Finally, check back to the assessment task detail and the marking rubric to ensure all sections of the literature review have been included.

Summary of the major points made, to provide an overview of the literature. Recommendations and any identified gaps in the literature can be included.

Provide an alphabetically ordered list of references on a separate page using the appropriate style (e.g. APA 6th). Select current, relevant peer reviewed journals and books to show breadth and depth of your research.
Methods to incorporate citations:

To include another person’s ideas:
Brown (2003) claims that... argues that... points out that... reports that... proposes that... suggests that... states that... maintains that... implies that...

To make comments about individual studies:
The study comprised/consisted of ... focused on... has undertaken/attempted...
The findings were reported as... Brown's (2001) study has shown that/ found that...
Jones (1999) has indicated that... develops a theoretical perspective that...
... is part of a growing body of work that... redefines the traditional notion/idea of...
... elaborates on the theory that... has undertaken/attempted a...
Brown (2001) raises... proposes... defends... substantiates... justifies the idea notion/proposition...

To make comments about a number of studies:
Research (e.g. Brown, 2003; Smith, 2000) has shown that...
Studies (e.g. Brown, 2003; Smith, 2000) have indicated that...
Studies (e.g. Brown, 2003; Smith, 2000) generally agree/ confirm/disagree/refute...
There is a common view that... The general finding is that...
Traditional theories/ ideas are reworked as...

To give your opinion when you are making a suggestion:
Brown's (2003) claim seems to be that... suggests that... could be interpreted as... appears as though... It would seem that further investigations are needed to...

To make comparisons between studies/ideas:
Whereas previous studies... this study seeks to... While this study... other studies...
Unlike previous studies, this study/article... concludes that...
Similarly, in comparison, in contrast, likewise, conversely, on the other hand, as was evidenced in previous studies, the findings/idea put forward in this study/article...
The research has tended to focus on... rather than on...
Although considerable research effort has been given to... less attention has been paid to... These studies have emphasised... as opposed to...

To make critical comments (strengths, weaknesses, limitations):
The study was well presented and documented... assumes that... is predicated on the assumption that... Other differences were noted... however...
Even so, many questions were left unanswered.
The problem with these studies... The study does not... There is some contradictory evidence...
The... were questionable/debatable... It is unclear how...
The limitations of the... There are concerns with the...

Methods to introduce a new idea or topic (e.g. in an essay):
Recently there has been a strong interest in... The development of... is a problem...
The... has become a favoured topic because...
The central issue is...
The relationship between... and... has been investigated by...
Many studies have focussed on...