

AIRS

Advanced Information Research Skills

AIRS Module 3

Retrieving and evaluating information



airs.library.qut.edu.au

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Module 3: Retrieving and evaluating information

[Workshop presentation \(YouTube, 3m47s\)](#)

Learning objectives

This module describes access to information, including document delivery, key criteria in the critical evaluation of various literature types, the importance of referencing sources appropriately and an overview of academic integrity. By the end of this module you should be able to:

- apply evaluation criteria and use the tools available to assist in evaluating the quality and credibility of retrieved information
- be aware of document delivery processes
- be introduced to QUT cite|write and iThenticate.

Applying the content to your resource log

As you progress through this module, consider, and refer to the requirements of the resource log and apply your learning to each question.

Resource Log

Retrieving and evaluating information (2 marks)

The [Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research](#) lists eight principles of responsible research conduct (honesty, rigour, transparency, fairness, respect, recognition, accountability, promotion). Select one principle and briefly discuss its relevance to your research.

3.1 Retrieving online and hard copy documents

Introduction

Once you have found literature relevant to your research question and established its authority, you may need help locating, downloading and storing the documents. This section will consider how to find books, use ebooks, find the full-text of an article, and if QUT does not hold an item submit a request through document delivery (QUT students only) to obtain the item.

Books (print)

For physical items including books, a call number is used to locate the item on the library shelves.

See [Find an item on the shelf](#) for help locating physical books in QUT Library.

If you can't find an item on the shelf, ask staff at the HiQ service points. If the item you require is at another campus, on loan to someone else, or in Library Store then [Place a hold](#) to request the item. The item will be delivered to you at the campus of your choice. You will receive an email when the item is ready for collection.

eBooks

Many library eBooks can be "borrowed" or downloaded to your mobile device, tablet or computer for a specified period of time. Note:

- loan periods vary - please check the interface before downloading
- some eBooks have limited simultaneous downloads (e.g. only one person can download at a time)
- some eBook collections require you to register for an individual account before downloading (e.g. EBSCOhost eBooks), however in most cases you can still read the eBook online without registration

To enhance your eBook experiences download the necessary software onto your computer and mobile devices:

- [Adobe Digital Editions](#) enables the download of QUT eBooks onto your computer. These books are only 'borrowed', not yours to keep. So you will need to renew the download after a set number of days (usually 1-14 days). As well as downloading Adobe Digital Editions, you need to get an Adobe ID and Password to authorise your computer. This allows Adobe to recognise that you are a legitimate borrower at a registered organisation.

QUT Library has a [guide to help you get started with eBooks](#).

Activity – Successfully access an eBook

1. Go to [Advanced Search](#) in Library Search.
2. Enter your search terms (HINT: limit to 'subject or title' to get more relevant results).
3. Limit search by Format. Pick 'Books' from the drop-down menu.
4. Under 'filter your results' on the left side of the results page, select 'available online' under the 'show only' filter
5. Choose an eBook from the results to download.
6. Click the link under 'view it' to access the eBook.
7. Read or download according to the QUT Library eBook guide.

Article full text

Many library databases include a majority of articles in full text. Click on 'full text online' in the database entry and click 'Read Article'. You will have to authenticate using your QUT username and password to access full text journal articles. Now that you are linked to the publisher's website, look for 'full text' with a PDF icon to download the article from the website to your computer.

If full text is not available for a journal article, look for a link: 'find full text'. Clicking the QUT Fulltext Finder button  performs a quick search for this article across other QUT databases. Fulltext Finder suggests other articles that may be useful - look for the PDF and click to download.

Document delivery

QUT may not have a digital or physical copy of the item you require. As a QUT researcher, you have access to the QUT Library [Document Delivery Service](#), which sources articles, conference papers, book chapters, books, theses and other formats of documents currently unavailable in the QUT Library collection.

You may receive PDF versions via email within four days of a document delivery request. Document Delivery also supplies books, videos and other formats of literature to postgraduate students and researchers.

It is good practice to look at other theses, and Document Delivery can help you locate these, but here are a few things that can help:

- check ProQuest Dissertations first
- check Ethos (for British theses) - you can register for free if you wish to access any digitised thesis
- non digitised theses might take up to 6 weeks to obtain
- some theses have author embargoes and we cannot supply them.

Watch the [video](#)

Purchasing research resources

If you need to use a resource that QUT Library doesn't hold for an extended period of time, rather than borrowing it from another library you can ask your Liaison Librarian to purchase a copy for the collection. To request a purchase send details of the item via email to your [Liaison Librarian](#).

3.2 Evaluating information

A vital step in the research process is to evaluate and filter the information you gather. There are important criteria to consider when selecting resources for their quality, reliability and relevance to your research. By the end of this section you will be able to critically analyse information resources and understand evaluation criteria.

Evaluation criteria: journal articles

There are five criteria to gauge the expertise and reliability of a source. Ask yourself these questions:

1. Has the information been peer-reviewed?
2. Are the references of high quality and sufficiently documented so that you can find the original sources?
3. Is the information accurate?
4. Has the author written their argument objectively and critically, minimising bias and misrepresentation?
5. Does the author and source have authority and high impact?

Evaluating Resources

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Identifying engaging features of schooling
psychometric soundness of student-generated
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(Received 27 May 2011; final version received 27 June 2012)

In this article we report on data analysed from a student project about attitudes to school and student perception of engagement and disengagement. The data were collected by students in an Australian study that employed the Young People as Researchers model. Middle year students devised and administered a questionnaire to students in grade 8, 9 and 10 at a secondary school in Australia. A total of 239 students completed the questionnaire. The students completed the initial analysis, which was followed by a more detailed analysis by the authors of this article. The findings support the work of American, British and Australian researchers about the factors that influence engagement and disengagement from schooling. The reported outcomes from the student work and the secondary analysis indicate that students do have the capacity to undertake valid and meaningful research and can make informed contributions to school improvement and student engagement.

Keywords: young people as researchers model; school engagement; disengagement; student voice

Introduction

In this article we report on our analysis of data collected by students in an Australian study that provided middle school students with the opportunity to voice their views about student engagement and attitudes towards school. The data reported in this article are from one school's participation in a project called 'STAR – Students and Teachers Achieving Re-engagement', which involved four secondary schools in low socio-economic communities. A previous article (see Carrington, Bland, & Lamb, 2010 for more detail) describes the processes that underpinned the project and details the students' findings. Here, we examine those findings through a more articulated lens by considering the psychometric soundness of the students' responses. We then examine gender- and year-level differences in attitudes towards school and their perceptions of their favourite and least-favourite teachers and subjects. Findings are considered in terms of the literature on student engagement.

Student engagement

There has been some focus on increasing student engagement, particularly in the middle years of schooling (Lamb et al. 2004). School engagement is influenced by both family

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Peer-reviewed

If an article has been peer-reviewed, it gives you some reassurance that it has been rigorously checked by experts. Go to the journal to check if it is peer-reviewed.

Author Authority

Does the author have credibility?
What are their credentials?
What is their impact factor?

Objective

Has the author avoided emotive or rhetorical language? Have they reported objectively, minimising bias and misinterpretation?

Accuracy

Is the information accurate? Are there errors?

Referencing

Has the author provided enough information for you to track down the article and check their interpretation?

Peer review

The quality of information may vary according to the source where the information is published. Information in magazines and newspapers may have less academic credibility than information in peer reviewed journals and research reports. Peer reviewed journals—also known as refereed or scholarly publications—require that the information is reviewed by several experts in the field. Other publications require that the information is reviewed only by an editor. Be wary of publications that undergo no review process at all.

How do you know if a journal is peer reviewed? Ulrichsweb is a global serial directory which lists over 300,000 periodicals. In this database you can easily find out whether a journal title is referred.

Activity – Ulrichsweb

1. At the [QUT Library Database page](#)

Filter by database name

2. Find and login to Ulrichsweb by searching for its name
3. Conduct a sample topic or title search in the database, e.g. “nursing research”
4. Note the results, some will have a referee’s jacket () alongside the title, indicating that these titles have some sort of peer review process.

Note that if the journal has a peer reviewed process this will be identified on the publisher’s website.

Referencing

When reading scholarly or peer-reviewed publications you can expect to see references and citations to verify the facts and perspectives presented. If references are not available, then the information may be questionable. Remember that you may need to go to the original publication cited to gain the full perspective and to verify that research conclusions have not been misquoted or misrepresented in the citing source. Access to the original sources through the references is particularly important.

Accuracy

Authors may not be thorough or accurate in their coverage of information sources or research. Check that facts are quoted and represented accurately. Be aware that information may be given out of context or selectively chosen to align with the author’s opinion or agenda.

Do not assume that any single piece of research is complete. By compiling notes on multiple authors and perspectives on the same issue, you increase your capacity to generate a comprehensive analysis of the theory or research data you are researching.

Is the information complete or abridged? Information is published either in its entirety or in a modified version. This could be an issue, particularly when considering news sources. When reading a literature review within a research work, be aware that the author will be quoting and paraphrasing from other research and publications. That author’s perspective or coverage of those original sources may be incomplete or inaccurate. You may need to read original source documents to gain a true understanding of the content.

Objective

Scholarly writing is critical and presented in an objective style. Critical writing anticipates and responds to plausible arguments against the hypotheses of the author. Objective writing is clear and specific, avoiding emotionally charged language or vague and general language. Critical writing includes alternate theories or evidence on a topic and shows a comprehensive analysis of all influential views.

Author authority

An author may be an individual, a set of authors, a corporation, or a sponsoring agency such as an association or organisation. Any of these types of authors may have authority in different domains or to different degrees depending on the topic. Often within a group of authors, senior academics or researchers will be listed alongside student authors, highlighting the authority of the article. Look for bias in materials from corporations or organisations.

Some information sources, such as some news articles, blog posts, Wikipedia articles and magazine columns, do not indicate authorship or responsibility, or the credentials of the author are unclear. You can investigate an author's credentials by searching for their university or trusted organisation affiliation. You can also identify additional work by that author through database searching.

Evaluation criteria: web information

Information on the web may be published by anyone. There may be no editing or review of information by peers or publishers. Information from the web may be incomplete, inaccurate, or written by non-experts. It can be unstable and may disappear. It may be aimed to sell you a product or an idea. Consider author and authority, accuracy and completeness, stability, bias and misrepresentation, propaganda and commercial agendas when evaluating information on the web.

Author and authority

Some web sources clearly indicate who produced the information while others give no indication of authorship or responsibility. Without information about the author's credentials it is difficult to determine academic value.

You can search for information about an organisation in [QUT Library databases](#), for example, use [Factiva](#) to search worldwide for articles about a company in newspapers such as *The Wall Street Journal* and transcripts from leading news sources such as *BBC* and *CNN*.

As a general rule, web addresses with '.edu' (education) or '.gov' (government) are easier to use to locate authentic authorship information than web sources with '.com' (commercial) or '.org' (organisation).

Accuracy and completeness

Be cautious of websites that provide no means of verifying accuracy and completeness. Accuracy is

verified from references or citations for the information provided. Avoid websites that do not provide complete citation information. Remember you are creating an academic work.

Stability

Information published on the web changes frequently and may disappear altogether. However, the instability of web information may not be an indicator of its value to your research. If using web data, be sure to record your retrieval date and attempt to locate a version identifier from the metadata found in the source code. Some [bibliographic management tools](#) can automate the tracking of detailed information about a web page.

Bias, misrepresentation, propaganda and commercial agendas

Information on the web is frequently published by authors or organisations to advocate a particular point of view or sell a product or service. Web sites may be created for the purposes of community, discussion and political lobbying. These web sites may present only one specific point of view and may misrepresent or deliberately bias the information presented to further a particular agenda. Information from commercial sites may also be skewed or may omit content that is detrimental to the perception of the product or service. Publications from a lobby group or about a product or service should only be included if references are provided to data, other information sources or independent evaluation. If used, you should also include other sources to provide critical balance.

3.3 Academic integrity

At QUT, we are committed to creating and fostering an environment that encourages and rewards academic integrity, and ensuring that you have clear guidance and assistance so you can follow these principles.

What are the principles at QUT?

As a QUT student, you are committed to maintaining high academic standards to protect the value of QUT qualifications for all graduates. In practice, this means ensuring that all assessment items are approached and completed with the highest standards of academic integrity. Any actions or practice which defeats the purpose of assessment is regarded as a failure to maintain academic integrity. This involves representing another person's ideas or work as your own (plagiarism), including resubmitting your own work for another assessment item (self-plagiarism) or cheating in examinations.

Why is detecting and penalising plagiarism important at QUT?

If you plagiarise intentionally or otherwise in assessment items, you're not providing appropriate evidence of the learning undertaken in the degree. Members of an academic community who plagiarise

undermine the value of the knowledge generated by that community - it gives the university a bad name as well as the other students who attend. Allowing you to obtain a degree with plagiarised assessment lowers the overall quality of the University's graduates and undermines the value of the qualifications offered and the achievements of other students.

See [QUT cite|write: Academic integrity](#) for more information.

3.4 Academic misconduct - plagiarism

In regards to plagiarism, what does QUT consider to be dishonest behaviour or academic misconduct?

Plagiarism

This involves representing another person's ideas or work as your own. It may also include resubmitting your own work for another assessment item. Common forms of plagiarism include:

- direct copying, summarising, or paraphrasing another person's work without appropriate acknowledgement of the sources
- using or developing an idea or hypothesis from another person's work without appropriate acknowledgement
- representing the work of another person as your own work
- copying non-word based material (such as diagrams, plans or audio-visual materials) and presenting them as your own work
- using another person's experimental results as your own or without appropriate acknowledgement.

Other forms

Other forms of failing to undertake your studies with academic integrity, including:

- giving or providing your work for sale to someone else
- misrepresenting, falsifying or fabricating data for an assessment
- using assessment materials from someone else (whether purchased or taken)
- colluding (working very closely) with other people to produce an assignment and then submitting it as your own individual work
- collaborating (working on an assignment) with others where it is not authorised in the assessment requirements

Information in the above section adapted with permission from University of Leeds (UK).

See [QUT cite|write: How can I avoid plagiarism?](#) for more information.

The QUT resource on the HiQ page for [Avoiding plagiarism](#) also provides critical information about plagiarism for QUT researchers.

QUT's [plagiarism detection software](#) for higher degree research (HDR) candidates is iThenticate.

All higher degree research candidates will be confirmed as having access to iThenticate within one month of commencing their course at QUT. You will be sent a welcome email to your QUT student email address (from iThenticate) with details of your username and temporary password.

All HDR candidates are required to submit their thesis through QUT's plagiarism detection software prior to lodgement for examination. The resultant report must be provided to the Principal Supervisor for review. Candidates are encouraged to take this opportunity to discuss the findings in the report with their supervisory team. On the Lodgement of Thesis for Examination form, the Principal Supervisor will be asked to certify that they have received and reviewed a copy of the report and that the thesis is now ready for examination.

Referencing

The two components to academic referencing are in-text citations and the reference list.

[QUT cite|write](#) is an introductory guide to citing and referencing. The booklet contains general information and tips about referencing and citing information regarding QUT Harvard and APA styles. However, at a postgraduate or research level you need to conform to discipline or faculty-specific referencing conventions. Check with your supervisor about which referencing style you are expected to use.

In-text citations

In-text citations offer the reader a link to the original author's work within the paragraph you are writing:

In-text numbered style: 'Nutrition during childhood and adolescence is essential for growth and development, health and well-being. [1,2] Further, eating behaviours established during childhood track into adulthood and contribute to long-term health and chronic disease risk. [3,4]' (from [this article](#)).

In-text APA style: 'These young people arrive with identifiable forms of cultural capital which have not been recognised in previous educational settings. Some have musical abilities, some are involved with Hip-hop culture (Morrell & Duncan-Andrade, 2002), or Goth culture (Hodkinson, 2002), some have computer gaming abilities; some are members of sub-cultural groups such as BMX, Skate and Surf cultures' (from this [article](#)).

References

The *Reference List* (or List of References) at the end of a written work should list every source cited in that work. Only references cited within the body of the text should appear in the reference list. Omit from the final thesis any reference material that you read but did not cite. Your bibliographic management

software will ensure that only in-text citations appear in your reference list.

A *bibliography* includes both cited works, and works read but not cited.

Activity – Establish a referencing style

Check with your supervisory team which referencing system you should use. For samples of in-text referencing and Reference Lists used in your faculty you may view theses from other students in QUT ePrints. Once you know which referencing style you will be using, make sure you record sufficient detail of each reference so that you avoid searching for them again.

QUT Library has books on referencing styles, such as:

- [QUT APA](#) is based on [APA](#)
- [QUT Harvard](#) is based on the [Chicago Manual of Style](#)
- [QUT Numbered](#) is based on [Vancouver style](#).

At this stage you should consider which bibliographic management tool you will use to keep track of your references (see Module 7.1 *Bibliographic management*). A HDR thesis commonly has hundreds of references, so some time spent at the beginning can save you many hours towards the end of your degree.