



Australian  
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# Literature reviews

# When do you write a literature review?

- As part of an Honours, Masters or PhD thesis
- As part of an Honours, Masters or PhD proposal
- As part of a peer reviewed journal article
- As a standalone assessment as part of a course

# Purpose and planning

What is the purpose of a literature review?

Draws out key issues essential to your research

Shows what is known

Analyses the strengths and weaknesses of the research

Highlights the gaps or problems to be solved

Draws together relevant themes and arguments

**Develops an argument in the process of reviewing the literature**

# What does a literature review do?

Justifies questions,  
framework and  
method

Demonstrates  
importance and  
situates study

Provides  
background

Shows that you're  
up to day



**Lit reviews map the debate!**

## Coverage

- What bodies of literature do I want to get into and why?

## Depth

- How much detail do I need to provide?

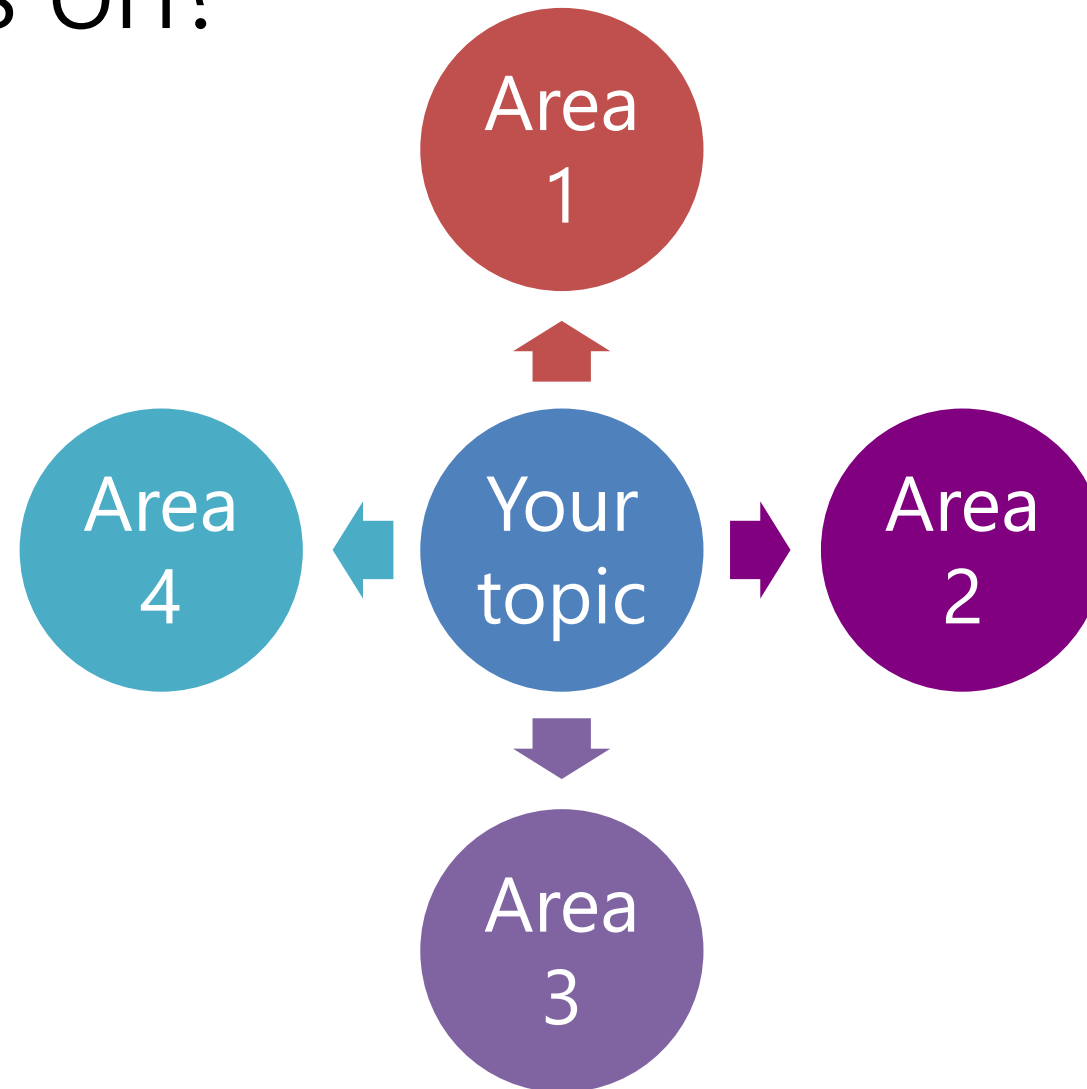
## Structure

- What is the relationship between the different topics and sources? How do I convey this?

## Research Gap/Argument

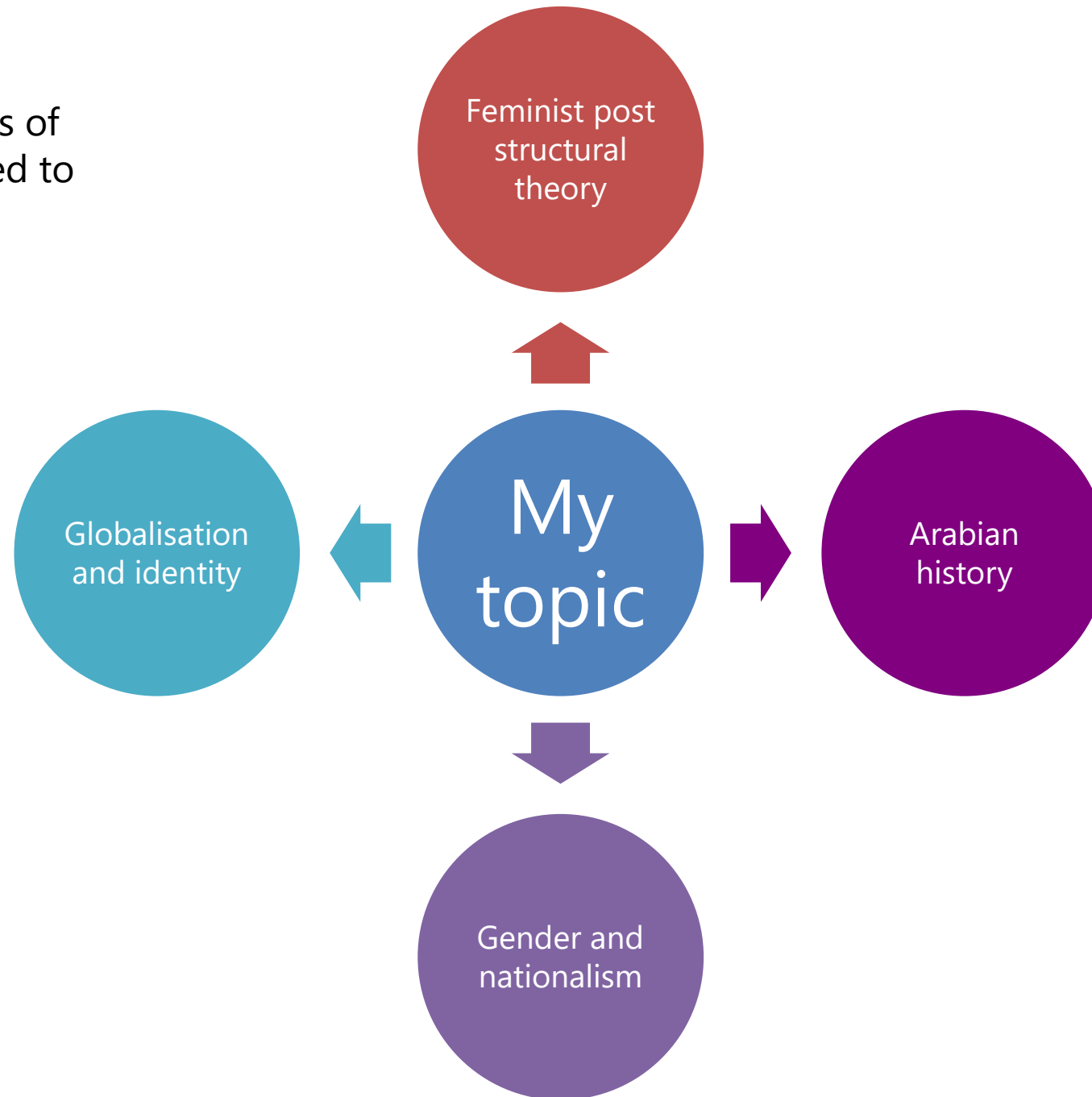
- Where does my project fit in relation to related sources?

# How many bodies of literature should you focus on?





Example bodies of literature related to PhD topic.



# Engaging critically

How do you critically engage with the literature?





What is the author's argument?

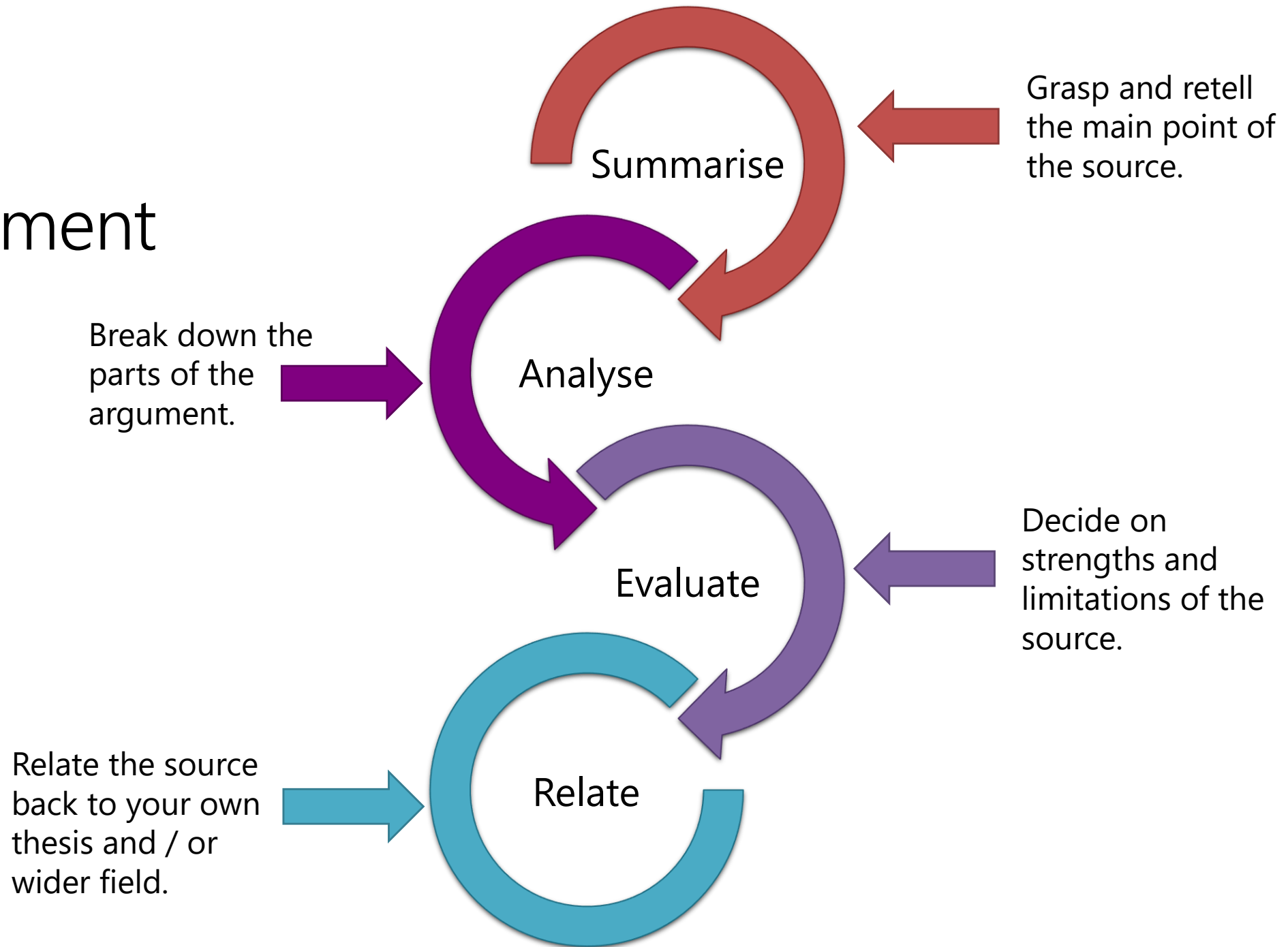
What are the links to other research in this area?

**How is this study relevant to your own?**

What do I need from this source?

What criticisms or reservations do you have about this source?

# Critical engagement





What is known and not known?

What is contradictory, contested or uncertain in the literature?

How can different findings be explained?

Which issues, gaps and ambiguities do you wish to draw attention to and why?

**How will your research build on the work of other scholars?**

# Writing your review

First, you must decide upon your argument or key message

- What is your argument / key message about the research areas you've investigated?
  - Why are these areas of research significant?
  - What are they lacking / neglecting? What is unknown?



# Basic literature review argument:

My work builds on that of others. A gap in knowledge exists and it is important to fill.

Fill in what works for your project.

**Example:** While significant work has been accomplished to understand the relationship between gender and nation within many Middle Eastern countries, there has been no significant work within the Arabian Gulf, particularly within the United Arab Emirates. The unique circumstances of this country means that a study examining the relationship between gender and nation within the UAE would make an important contribution to the literature in this field.

# Structure options:

Chronological

History

Development of  
Ideas

**Thematic (most  
typical)**

Issues

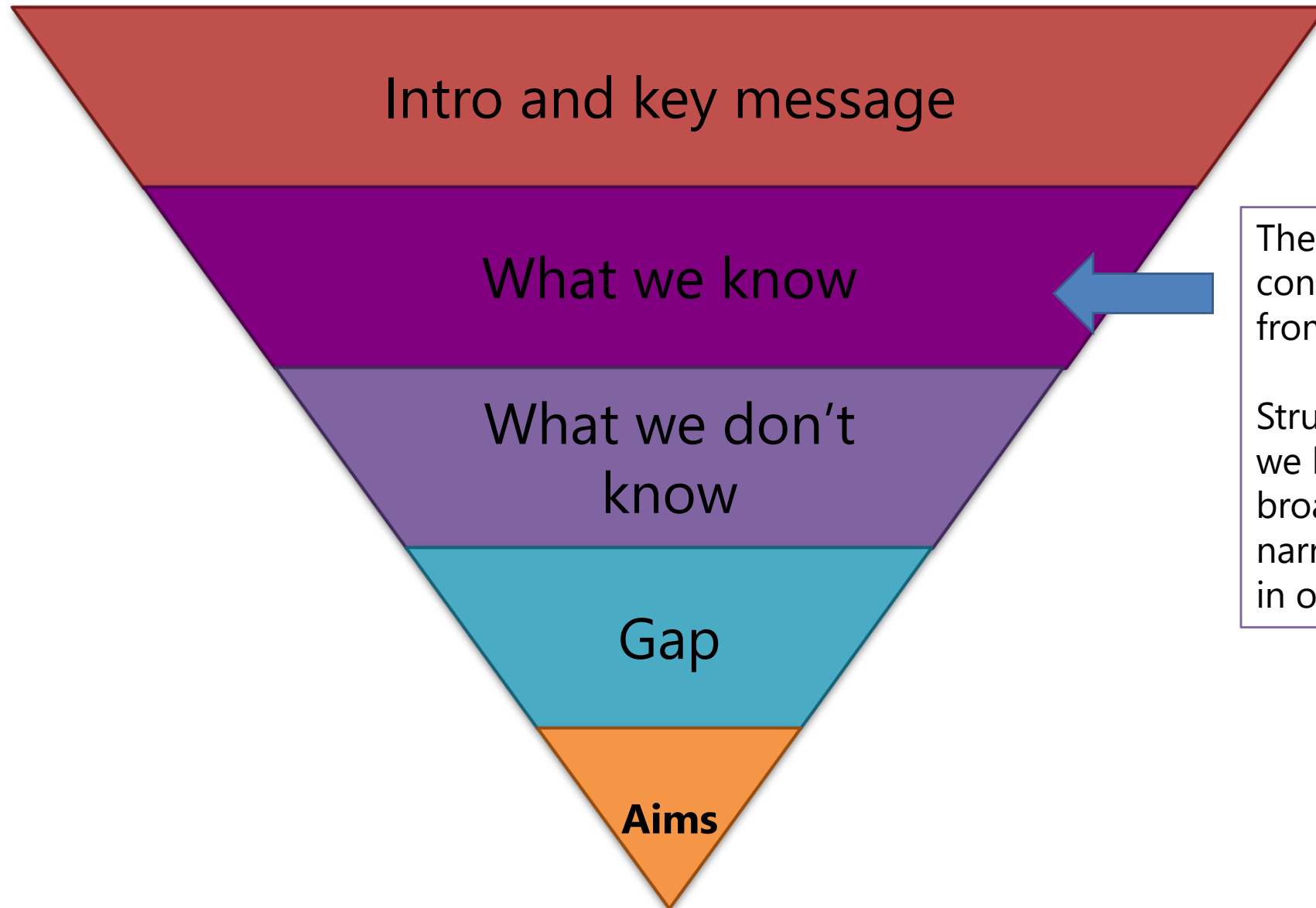
Concepts

Methodological

Theories

Frameworks

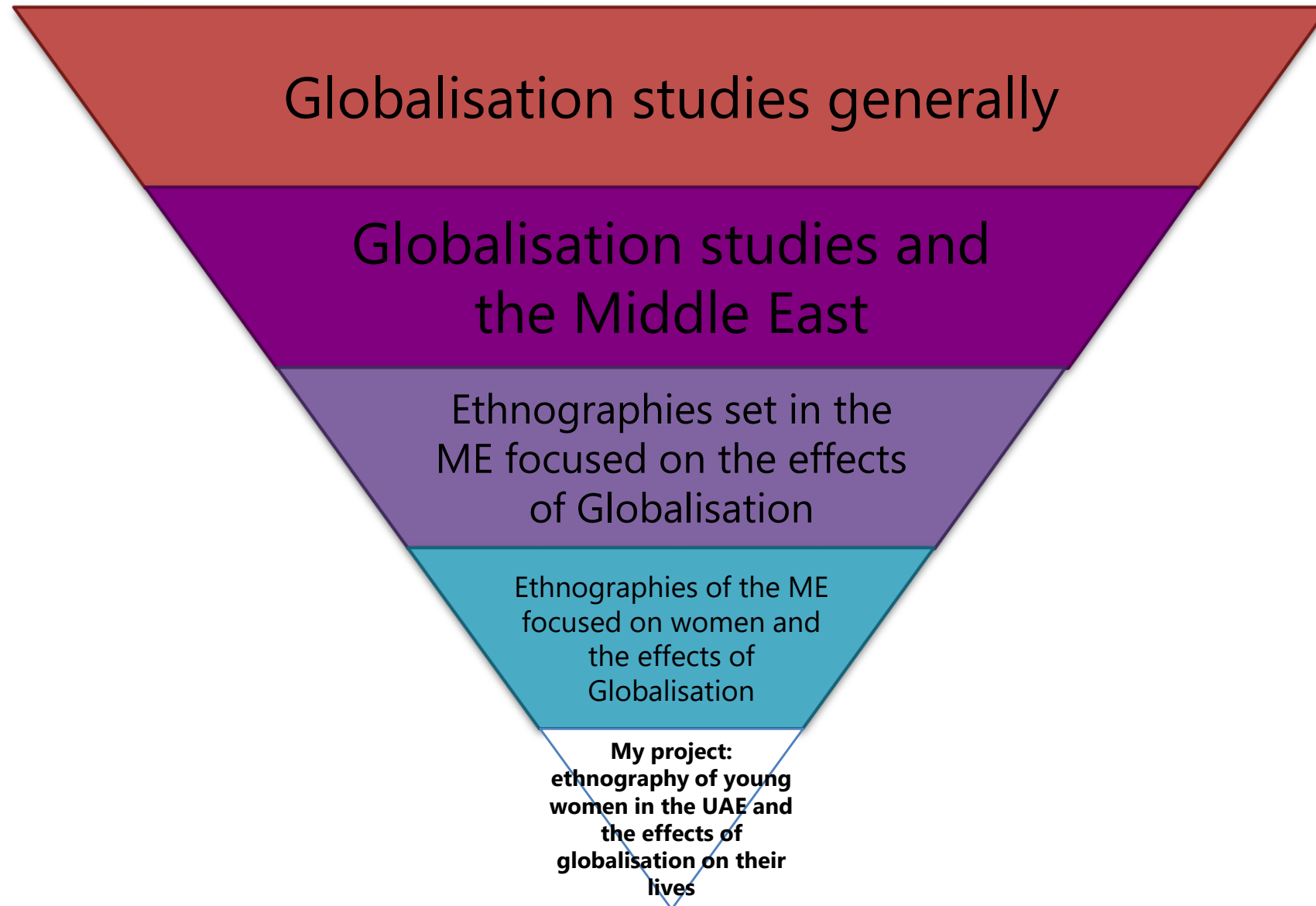
# Basic structure:



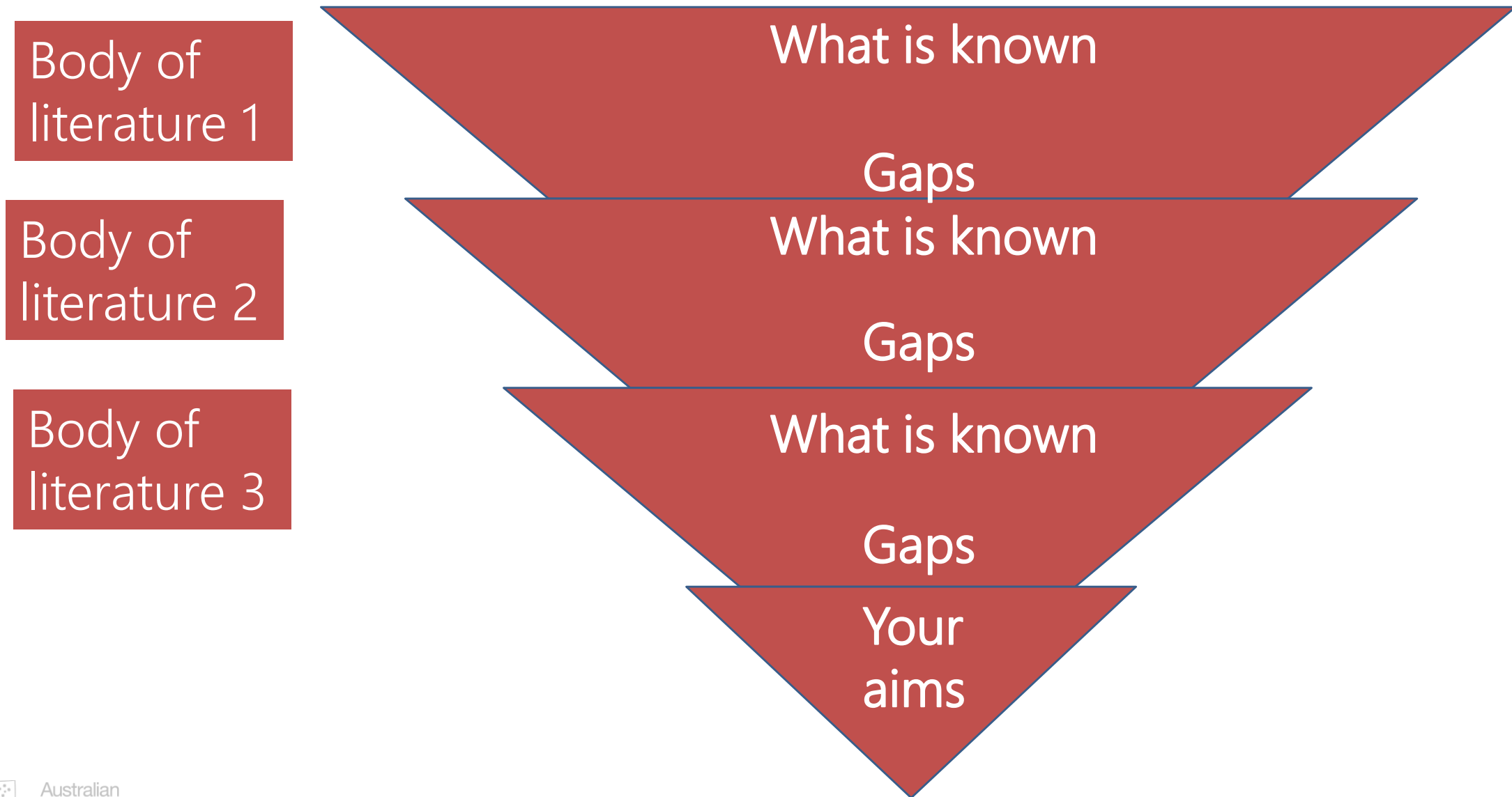
The bulk of your content will come from here.

Structure 'what we know' from broadest to most narrow (focusing in on your topic).

Example structure—'what we know' from broadest to most narrow

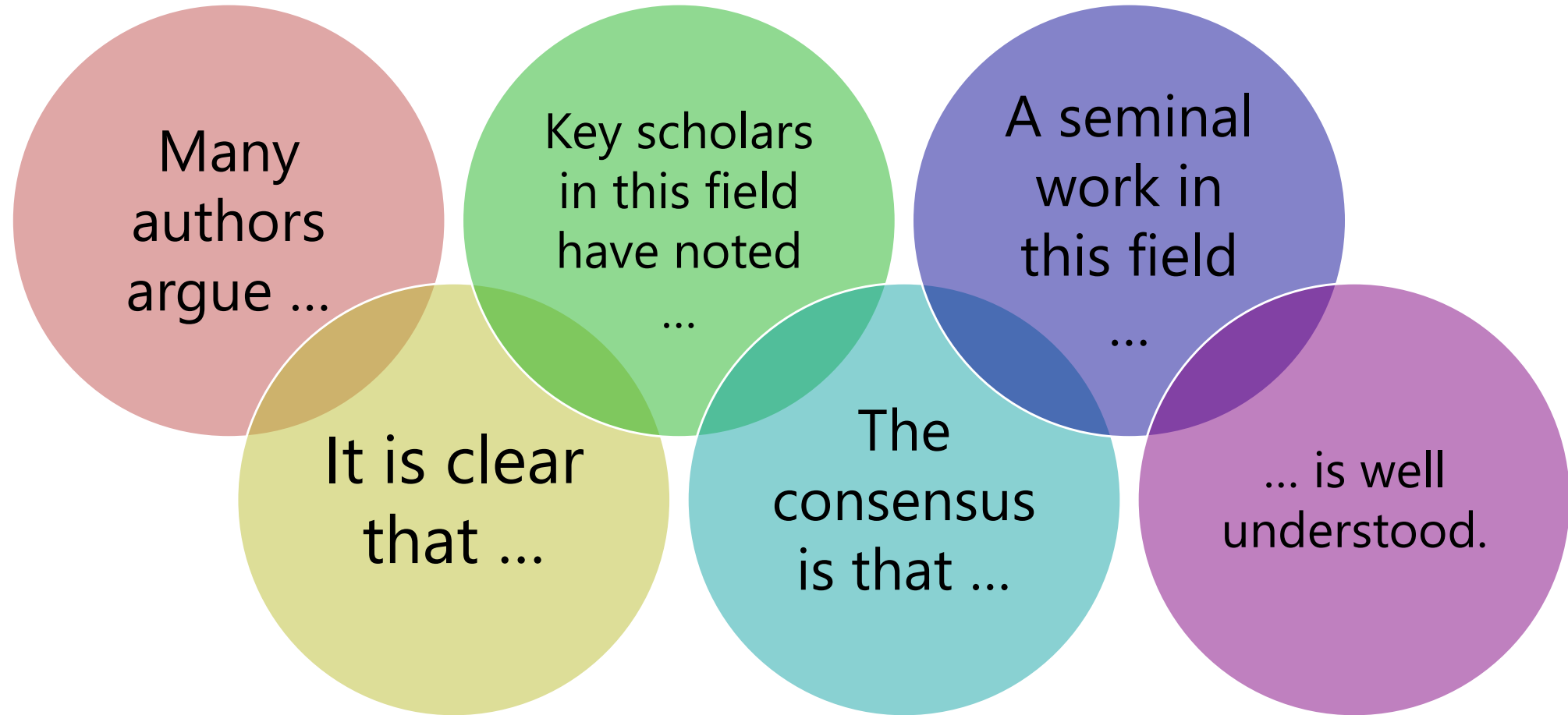


# Dealing with multiple bodies of literature

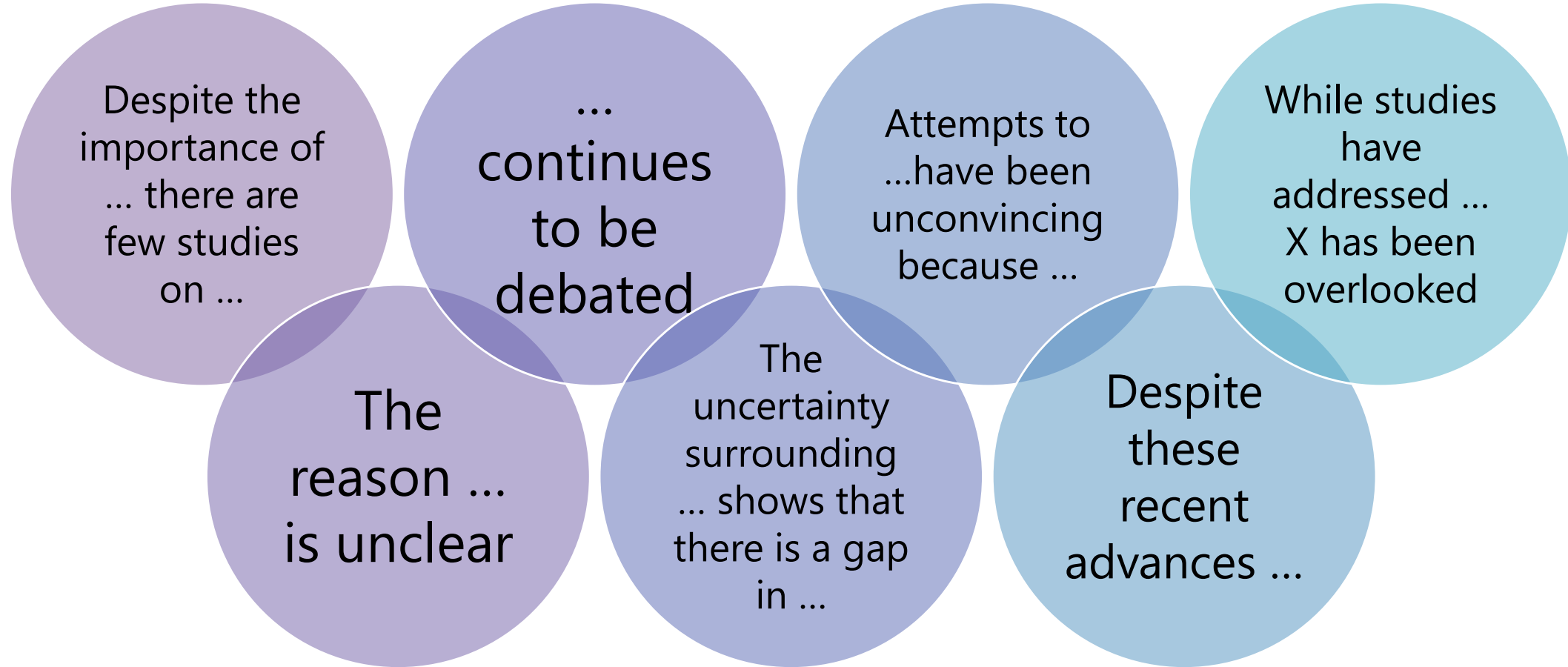


# Helpful literature review language

# Knowns

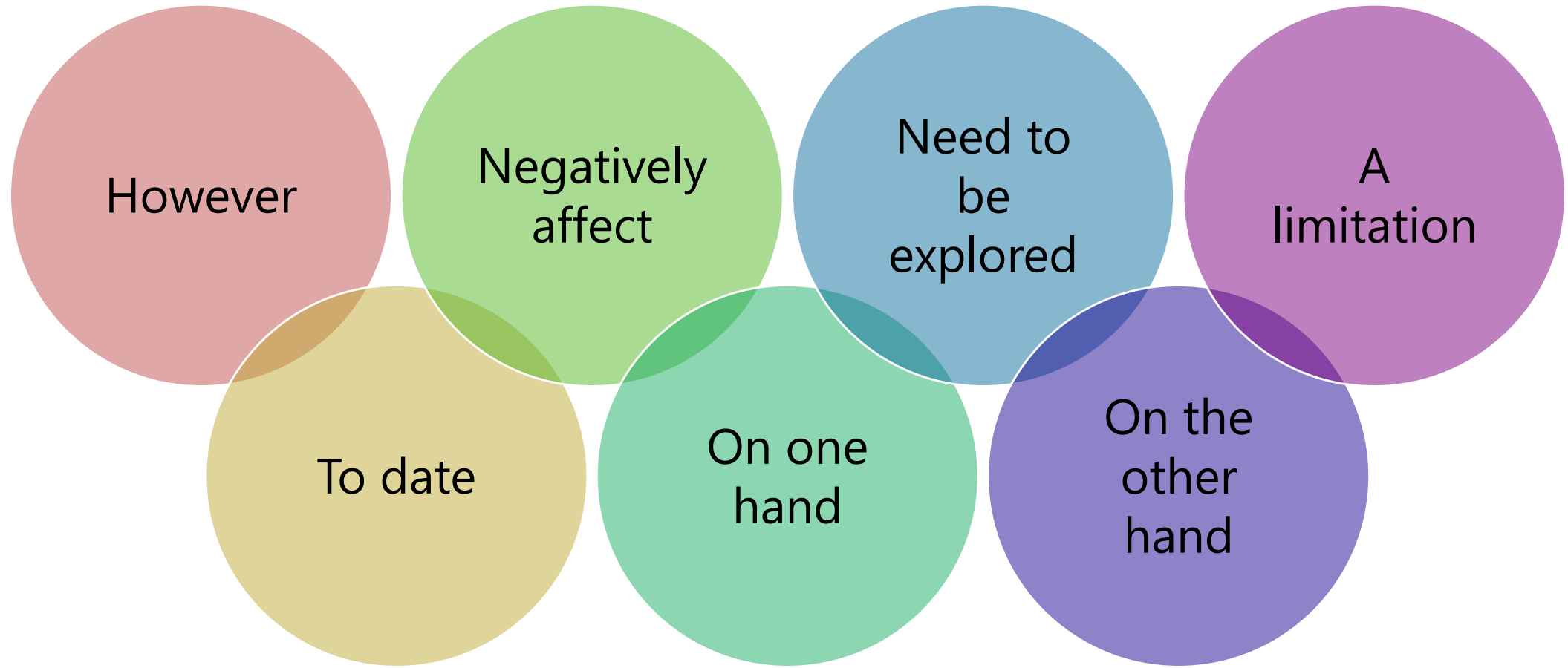


# Gaps, uncertainties, problems





# Implications, limitations, needs



# Cohesion: order and logic

First/second/third	Last/finally	Beyond X ...
After that	Next	Afterwards
Prior to ...	Now	Meanwhile
Previously	Currently	Earlier

So	Since this is so	Therefore
Consequently	Hence	As a result...
Due to	Because of this	If X is the case ...
It follows that	For	Thus

# Cohesion: contrast and clarify

In contrast

Conversely

But

Although

Even so

On the other  
hand

Alternatively

However

Nevertheless

Yet

While ...

Unlike

For example

For instance

To illustrate

..., including

..., such as

One explanation  
for this is...

# Cohesion: add and conclude

Furthermore	In addition	As well
Moreover	Also	Similarly
Another reason/ factor/ point is	Besides	Additionally

In summary	To summarise	It can be concluded that
It can be inferred that	In conclusion	Overall
This suggests / indicates	Ultimately, ...	This demonstrates / establishes

# How will you write about the literature?

- Move the reader through your structure/narrative
- Group thinkers/concepts together
- Avoid getting stuck on unnecessary detail
- Make your position on the literature clear

# Two kinds of citations

An essential precondition for the assessment of geothermal systems is an accepted and consistent terminology (Muffler and Cataldi, 1978).

However, despite the erroneous claims of Angelis-Dimakis *et al.* (2011), ...

# Be a responsible writer

- Keep the reader in the picture
  - Contextualise your discussions where helpful
- Signal your intentions
- Let the reader know if you'll take up an idea later on
  - As explored in more detail in Chapter 3...



Have questions to guide you

Use literature as a resource for your argument

Don't be afraid of counterarguments

Know when it's time to *stop reading!*



# ANU Academic Skills

## Helping you to achieve academic success!



### Peer Writers

- Ask us a quick question
- 10-15 min drop-ins
- Face-to-face or via Zoom
- During semester, Mon-Fri  
11am to 1pm



### Writing Coaches

- Check you're on the right track
- 30 min booked appointments
- Face-to-face or via Zoom
- Written feedback also offered
- During semester, Mon - Fri  
10am to 4pm



### Learning Advisers

- Excel in your research writing
- 45 min booked appointments
- Face-to-face or via Zoom
- Written feedback also offered
- Throughout the year, Mon - Fri  
10am to 5pm