GUIDE TO INFORMATION SEEKING

Why use this guide?

This guide aims to help you structure and document your information seeking. In six steps you will find the knowledge and information required to answer your research question.

Before you begin, it is recommended that you have some knowledge of basic search techniques such as phrase searching, truncation, masking and Boolean operators. You can find tips and tutorials on this subject at: http://library.au.dk/en/searchtips/ and on our YouTube channel (in Danish): AU Library Campus Emdrup.

1. Research question

Your research question is a great starting point for your information seeking. It will most likely contain the keywords that are most relevant for your paper, and these will help you limit your search. If you have not got your final research question yet, then make a brief description of your research topic.

Write down your research question/description here:

2. Identify your keywords

Begin by finding the keywords in your research question. The keywords and your topic helps you determine how and where to search. The keywords will also be your search terms.
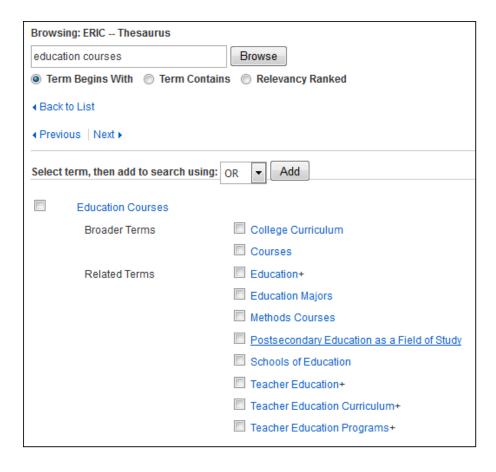
Write down your keywords here:	

3. Generate your search terms

The keywords/search terms extracted from your research question will not be sufficient. In order to cover your research area/topic, you need to also look for synonyms, abbreviations, broader and narrower terms.
Get inspiration from handbooks, dictionaries, subject lists, subject literature, Google Scholar, Wikipedia, and your supervisor, etc.

Many databases have a thesaurus. A thesaurus is a controlled vocabulary of subject terms and contains synonyms, but also related, broader and narrower terms. Here is an example of a thesaurus from the database ERIC →

Write down the search terms you want to use.

Search term	Synonym	Synonym
AU Library		

4. Find relevant information sources

At library.au.dk/en/subject-areas/ you will find subject guides that cover the degree programs that are taught at AU. Each subject guide consists of selected resources for the different subject areas.

If you are not able to find any relevant information sources on the chosen subject guide, you can contact AU Library or search the database list:
http://library.au.dk/en/resources/databases/

Information source	Reasons for choosing the information source

5. Search!

Now that you have written down your search terms and found your relevant information sources, it is time to begin your information search. Remember to set aside enough time for your information search.

For every chosen information source you should always check out the terminology, search techniques and limiters (e.g. research method, gender, age, etc.). Browse titles, abstracts and conclusions to quickly get an overview of your search result.

Fill out the form below for every information source used. (If you have used more than two, simply copy and paste the form as needed).

We recommend that you keep a log of your search history. This will help you maintain an overview of how you have found your information, and how you can adjust your search to get even better search results!

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Database/Information source		Date	
Search string/query		**No. of hits**	**Relevant hits**

Database/Information source		Date	
Search string/query		**No. of results**	**Relevant results**

6. Evaluate your search results

Examine the relevant results and, as you gain new knowledge and better insight into the problem, asses if it is necessary to adjust your search.

Remember to always be critical of your sources. Assess their credibility, quality and usefulness before using them in your paper.