

Scoping reviews: Criteria for acceptance as part of a dissertation in the PhD Program Care and Rehabilitation Science at the Medical Faculty UZH

Version 1.0 November 24, 2025

Publications

Scoping reviews are a type of evidence synthesis, as are systematic reviews, qualitative evidence synthesis, realist synthesis, and many more^{1,2}. Scoping reviews take the most important principles from traditional systematic reviews but have their own characteristics.

1. A scoping review can be included as a publication in the dissertation provided it satisfies the methodological criteria listed below.
2. A dissertation consisting solely of scoping reviews is not permitted.
3. If a dissertation meets only the minimal requirements outlined below, a scoping review may count as one of the two required publications. If the scoping review serves as the required first-author publication (accepted or published), the second publication must be an empirical study on which the student is either the sole first author or a shared first author.

Minimal requirements for publications (from the “Doktoratsordnung”): Completion of the research project and preparation of a dissertation. The dissertation is a cumulative dissertation that compiles several original articles, with at least one first-author publication that must be published in, or accepted for publication by, an internationally recognized scientific journal relevant to the respective field. (translated valid is the German version).

Methodological criteria to admit a scoping review in a PhD dissertation

To admit a scoping review in a PhD dissertation, it should be planned and conducted “systematically”, which means to fulfil all the following criteria².

1. A protocol with pre-specified objectives, question(s), and inclusion/exclusion criteria. The protocol should meet the following criteria:
 - a. Pre-registered on an open repository (e.g. Zenodo or Open Science Framework) before starting the data extraction at the latest.
 - b. Adhere to established reporting standards, such as those proposed by Peters et al³
2. Conduct the review according to established methodological guidance^{4,5}.
3. Comprehensive search methods.
4. Protocol driven screening and selection of included sources. Relevant deviations from the protocol will be documented.

5. More than one reviewer (certain tasks must be implemented in duplicate to minimise errors)
6. Report the final review according to international reporting standards, that is, the *Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis extension for Scoping Reviews (PRISMA-ScR)* guidelines⁶.

Bibliography

1. Munn Z, Stern C, Aromataris E, et al. What kind of systematic review should I conduct? A proposed typology and guidance for systematic reviewers in the medical and health sciences. *BMC Med Res Methodol* 2018; 18: 5. 20180110. DOI: 10.1186/s12874-017-0468-4. PMC5761190.
2. Munn Z, Pollock D, Khalil H, et al. What are scoping reviews? Providing a formal definition of scoping reviews as a type of evidence synthesis. *JBI Evid Synth* 2022; 20: 950-952. 2022/03/08. DOI: 10.11124/jbies-21-00483.
3. Peters MDJ, Godfrey C, McInerney P, et al. Best practice guidance and reporting items for the development of scoping review protocols. *JBI Evid Synth* 2022; 20: 953-968. 2022/02/02. DOI: 10.11124/jbies-21-00242.
4. Peters MDJ, Marnie C, Tricco AC, et al. Updated methodological guidance for the conduct of scoping reviews. *JBI Evid Synth* 2020; 18: 2119-2126. 2020/10/11. DOI: 10.11124/jbies-20-00167.
5. Peters MDJ GC, McInerney P, Munn Z, Tricco AC, Khalil H. Chapter 10. Scoping Reviews (2020). Aromataris E, Lockwood C, Porritt K, Pilla B, Jordan Z, editors. *JBI Manual for Evidence Synthesis*, 2024. Available from <https://doi.org/10.46658/JBIMES-24-09> (accessed 15 March 2025).
6. Tricco AC, Lillie E, Zarin W, et al. PRISMA Extension for Scoping Reviews (PRISMA-ScR): Checklist and Explanation. *Ann Intern Med* 2018; 169: 467-473. 2018/09/05. DOI: 10.7326/m18-0850.