**Literature search strategy form**

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| **Write out your search question:** | |
| **Separate your question into separate topic areas** | |
| 1.  2.  3.  4. | |
| **Identifying Subject Headings, keywords and synonyms**  Ask yourself:   * Have I searched the database’s thesaurus to identify Subject Headings? * What additional keywords do I want to use? * Have I used snowballing techniques to identify further keywords/synonyms? | |
| Topic | Synonym/keywords |
| **Note any phrases, alternative spellings or regional variations :**  Ask yourself:   * Can I identify where there might be regional variations of terminology? e.g. GP (UK) vs “physician” (US) * Can I identify where there might be variations of spellings? e.g. organization/organisation * Can I identify where there might be differences in terminology? e.g. old versus new | |
| **Searching features: wildcards, truncation, advanced/adjacent searching.**  Ask yourself:   * Where can I used the wildcard function “?” to good effect? e.g. organi?ation * Can I use the truncation symbols ($ or \*) .e.g. social network$ * Can I use the adjacent search function at all? e.g. social media adj3 public health * Have I searched in the title/abstract fields for further keywords? | |
| **Search parameters:**  **Year of publication:**  Ask yourself:   * Should I place a limit on how far back I search? * If I need to limit my search, how far back should I go and how might this affect my search results? | |
| **Publication types:**  Ask yourself:   * Am I looking for specific publication types, e.g. systematic reviews, RCTs, meta-analyses or journal articles? * Should I be supplement my database searches with grey literature searching? * Can I identify any key authors in this field? * Do I know of any key papers on this topic? | |
| **Country of Origin:**  Ask yourself:   * Do I want everything from everywhere on this topic? * Am I only looking for UK (NHS) based information only? * Do I want to make an international comparison of the literature? * Do I only want to find articles published in English? | |
| **Databases**  Ask yourself:   * Have I identified the key databases that I want to search? * What grey literature sources might I want to search? e.g. key organizational websites | |
| **Referencing software:**  Ask yourself:   * Have I thought about using referencing software to manage my results? * Which referencing software package should I use? | |
| **Further help:**  Ask yourself:   * Do I know how to ask for further help and advice? * Have I checked Canvas, the HSMC website or the VC for further training resources? * Did I know that I can ask for a “virtual training session” from the HSMC library team? | |
| If you need help or advice with any aspect of literature searching please contact either **Emma Green** ([e.green@bham.ac.uk](mailto:e.green@bham.ac.uk)) or **Rachel Posaner** ([r.d.posaner@bham.ac.uk](mailto:r.d.posaner@bham.ac.uk)) | |