

## Searching Scopus: a basic guide/exercise

The purpose of this guide is to help you search Scopus effectively - many of the principles covered will also help you search other databases. Scopus provides details of articles from thousands of peer-reviewed journals covering a wide range of subjects (**social & policy sciences**, health, medicine, sport, management, biology, chemistry, physics, architecture, engineering). Many Scopus results include links to full documents.

### Contents

- |  |     |
|--|-----|
| 1. Accessing Scopus                            | p.1 |
| 2. <b>Thinking</b> about your search terms     | p.2 |
| 3. <b>Entering</b> your search terms           | p.3 |
| 4. <b>Re-sorting and refining</b> your results | p.5 |
| 5. Engaging with abstracts (summaries)         | p.6 |
| 6. Accessing the full article                  | p.7 |
| 7. Broadening your perspective on a topic      | p.7 |
| 8. Emailing and saving results                 | p.8 |

### 1. Accessing Scopus

a. You need to access Scopus via the Library website to get full access. Along with most other library resources, **it's best to use the browser, Google Chrome**, to access Scopus. Go the Library homepage: <https://library.bath.ac.uk/home> - then, click the link for your subject within the "Subject Resources" section. This will take you to your subject's library webpages where you will find a link to Scopus. Alternatively, search for Scopus via the Library Catalogue.

The screenshot shows the University of Bath Library website. At the top, there is a teal header with the University of Bath logo and the text 'The Library'. Below the header, there is a search bar with the text 'search the library webpages' and a 'Search' button. To the right of the search bar is an image of a stack of books. Below the search bar, there is a 'Catalogue Search' section with a search input field and a 'Search' button. To the right of the search bar is a 'Resources for your subject' section with a list of subjects: Architecture & Civil Engineering, Biology & Biochemistry, Chemical Engineering, Chemistry, Computer Science, Economics, Education, Electronic & Electrical Engineering, Health, Management, Mathematical Sciences, Mechanical Engineering, Natural Sciences, Pharmacy & Pharmacology, Physics, Politics, Languages & International Studies, Psychology, and Social & Policy Sciences. A purple arrow points to 'Social & Policy Sciences'. Below the search bar, there is a 'Using the Library' section with a list of services: Copying and printing, Information for visitors, Inter-library loan request, Loans, PIN, Library cards, Past exam papers, Referencing, Study areas, and Support for users with disabilities. To the right of the 'Using the Library' section is a 'Library A-Z' section with a 'Library A-Z' button and an 'Ask a Librarian' button. Below the 'Library A-Z' section is a large image with the text 'Consent and commercialisation: negotiating the open data agenda'. Below the 'Using the Library' section is a 'Research Services' section with a list of services: Archives and Research Collections, Open Access, Research Analytics, and Research Data Service.

**Search for journal articles (and other academic literature)**

**Search library databases** to discover articles from across a wide range of journals; along with working papers, books and conference documents. You can also search the [Library Catalogue](#).

Guide: [how to evaluate journal articles](#)  
 Guide: [how to save searches and set up email alerts](#)

**Library databases**

[Scopus](#) Multiple subjects

**2. Thinking about search terms:** read this section **before** searching Scopus

**2a Search terms**

When you conduct a basic Scopus search, the database looks for your search terms within the titles and abstracts of journal articles. **Think carefully** about your search terms before entering them. To help you do this, **look at your assignment title / research question** and write down the most important words or phrases that appear in it e.g. those that distinguish it from any *other* topic.

**For this exercise**, please either use your own title/research question or use the following:  
 “Investigate the extent to which rates of attendance impact upon academic achievement by undergraduates”

**2b. Sub-themes**

The following are the most important words/phrases that appear within the title above. Each represents a separate **sub-theme** that relates to the overall theme of the title:

attendance
achievement
undergraduates

### 2c. Identifying alternative words or phrases

- i. Think about the potential range of alternative words and phrases that could be used to describe each separate sub-theme. Consider terminology that you already know from **academic books, journal articles, lectures and tutorials**, and commonly-used language.

**Why do this?** This will help you decide which words to enter into Scopus' search boxes.

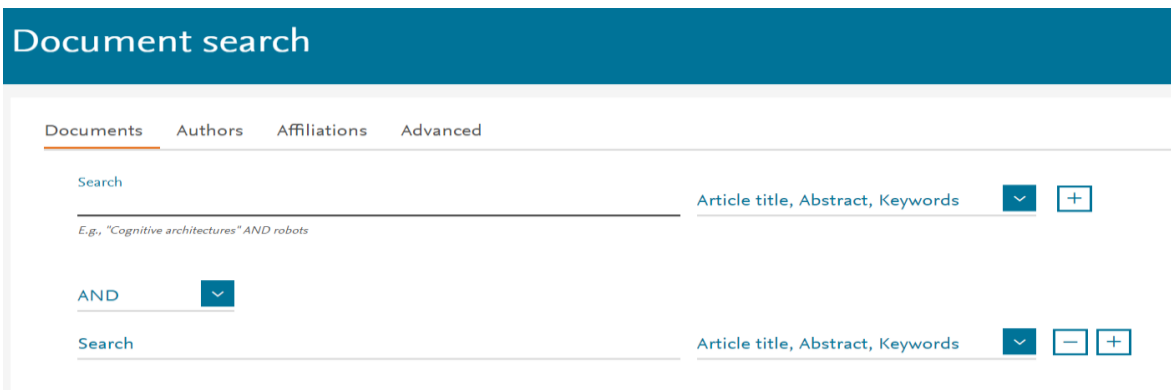
- ii. Also, if you enter a large range of relevant search terms, you are more likely to **increase the number of useful search results**. **Useful tip:** You might find it helpful to write down your alternative words/phrases in separately themed rows as follows:

Sub-theme	Alternative words/phrases	Any others? If so: add below
Attendance	absteentism	
Achievement	attainment, grades	
Undergraduate		

## 3. Entering your search terms

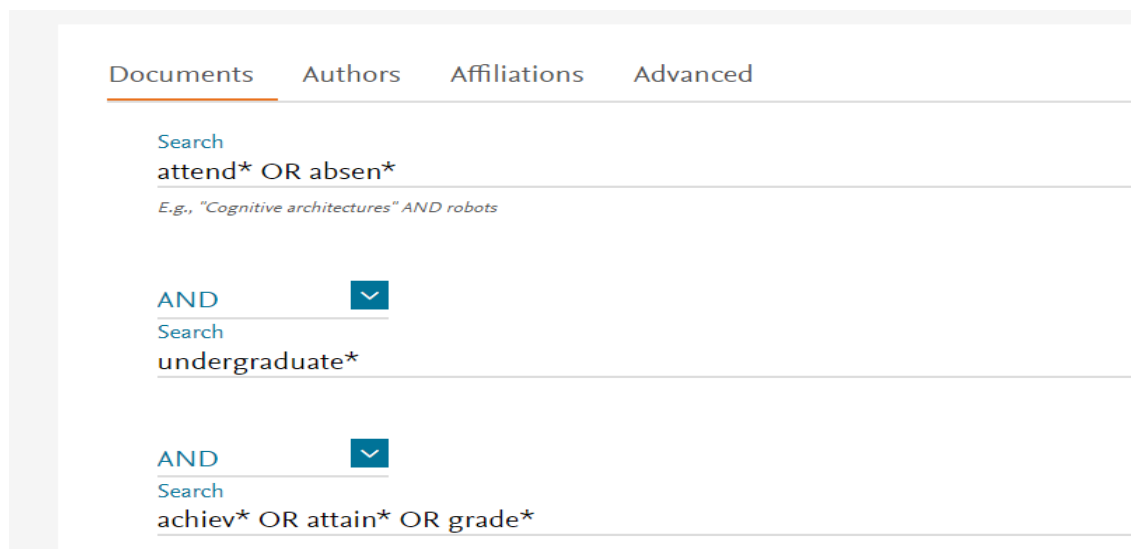
- 3a. Creating multiple search boxes: click '+ add search Field' underneath the search box. in order to create multiple search boxes - you need one box for each of your sub-themes.

The screenshot shows a 'Document search' interface. At the top, there are tabs for 'Documents', 'Authors', 'Affiliations', and 'Advanced'. Below these is a search bar with the text 'Search' and a placeholder example: 'E.g., "Cognitive architectures" AND robots'. To the right of the search bar, there is a dropdown menu currently set to 'Article title, Abstract, Keywords' and a purple arrow pointing to an orange '+' button labeled 'Add additional'.



### 3b. Organising & entering your search terms

Enter each set of search terms (i.e. each sub-theme) into its own separate search box. Enter the word **OR** between each alternative word/phrase. For an explanation of the asterisk\*, refer to section 3c of this guide. Here's an example of a set of organised search terms in Scopus.



**In the above example, note the following:**

- The default “**AND**” appears between search boxes. This means that at least one word/phrase from each search box will appear in each of your results.
- You have the option of limiting your results to a **specific date range**. This is not appropriate for all searches (some older papers may still be relevant or frequently cited).

### 3c. Useful search tips!

#### ***Truncating words using an asterisk \****

As in the examples above, try using an asterisk where relevant – this might help increase your number of search results. You can add this at the end of the stem of a word to find variations e.g.

**attend\*** searches for **attend, attends, attending, attended, attendance** etc.

**absen\*** searches for **absence, absences, absent, absentee, absentees, absenteeism**

### Searching for a specific phrase

You can enter “**speech marks**” around a phrase so that Scopus searches for only those words in exactly the same order e.g. “**university student\***”, “**student at university**”

### 3d. Click the search button (the magnifying glass icon).

Question: how many search results appear?

Now scroll down to the “subject area” options in the left-hand column (left of the results). Select “social sciences” and then click the “limit to” button (located further up the screen).

Question: how many search results now appear?

## 4. Re-sorting and refining your results

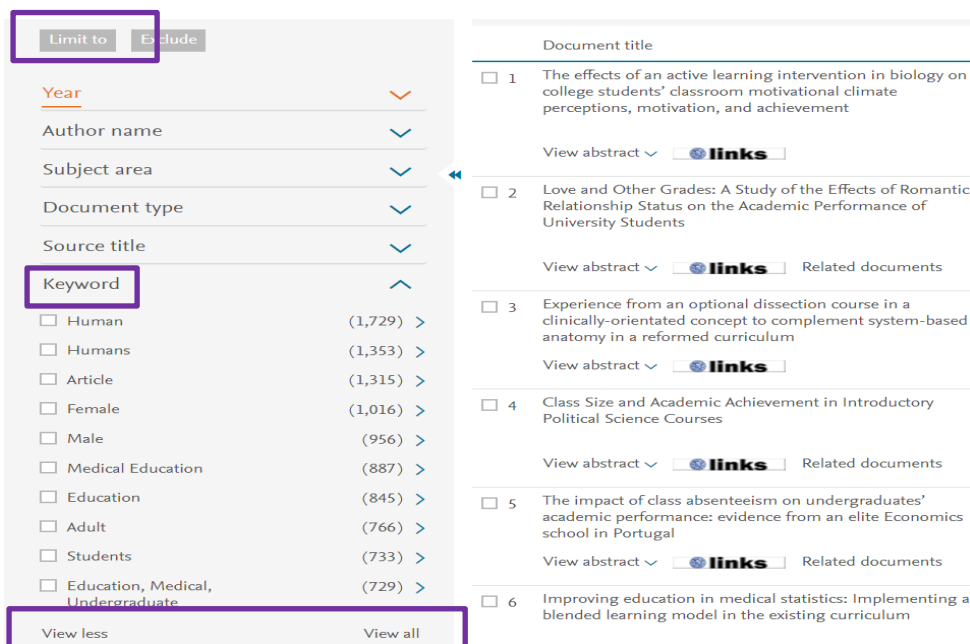
### 4a. Re-sorting your results

If your results appear in date order, re-sort them so that they appear starting with the most **relevant**. You can also re-sort them in order of those that are most highly cited. The “sort on” options appear just above your search results and to the right.



### 4b. Using “limit” options

Experiment with ticking/selecting some options in the left-hand column to refine your results – for example, you could limit your results by selecting/ticking keyword(s) and clicking the ‘limit to’ button - this appears at both the top and bottom of the column. **Note both the ‘view less/more’ and ‘view all’ links** in the keywords menu.

A screenshot of the Scopus search results page. On the left, there is a 'Limit to' sidebar with a purple box around the 'Limit to' button and another purple box around the 'Keyword' section. The 'Keyword' section lists various categories with checkboxes and counts: Human (1,729), Humans (1,353), Article (1,315), Female (1,016), Male (956), Medical Education (887), Education (845), Adult (766), Students (733), and Education, Medical, Undergraduate (729). At the bottom of the sidebar, there are 'View less' and 'View all' buttons, also highlighted with a purple box. On the right, the search results are displayed as a list of document titles with checkboxes, 'View abstract' links, and 'links' icons. The first result is 'The effects of an active learning intervention in biology on college students' classroom motivational climate perceptions, motivation, and achievement'. The second is 'Love and Other Grades: A Study of the Effects of Romantic Relationship Status on the Academic Performance of University Students'. The third is 'Experience from an optional dissection course in a clinically-orientated concept to complement system-based anatomy in a reformed curriculum'. The fourth is 'Class Size and Academic Achievement in Introductory Political Science Courses'. The fifth is 'The impact of class absenteeism on undergraduates' academic performance: evidence from an elite Economics school in Portugal'. The sixth is 'Improving education in medical statistics: Implementing a blended learning model in the existing curriculum'.

#### 4b. Retrieving too few results?

Take another look at the range of your search terms that you entered and consider whether or not any further terms exist on your topic – if so, add these and try another search. If you still retrieve few results, search more broadly on the topic e.g. remove one set of search terms and try again.

**To modify your search terms** - click the orange 'Scopus' logo in the top left-hand corner.

#### 4c. Retrieving too many irrelevant results?

Take another look at the range of your search terms and consider whether or not any of the terms were of only marginal relevance – if so, remove these and try another search. If you continue to retrieve lots of irrelevant results, consider whether your topic contains a further sub-theme and if so, enter the sub-theme's search terms into an additional search box.

**To modify your search terms:** click the orange 'Scopus' logo in the top left-hand corner.

#### 4d. Proximity searching

Proximity searching can be useful where multiple similar variations of a phrase might appear across different article titles and abstracts i.e. all using similar language as follows:

“social work training” “training of social workers” teaching social work”

By entering a search term followed by W/ and a number, you can search for two search terms to appear near each other e.g. within 5 words of each other. Place any **alternative terms in brackets**.

“social work\*” W/5 (train\* OR teach\*)

**If relevant to your topic, undertake a “proximity search”** by adapting your search terms (as in the above example) and note down the number of results retrieved.....

### 5. *Engaging with abstracts (summaries)*

**If you hover just to the right of the “links” button, you will see an option to “show abstract”** – click on this to view a summary/abstract of the relevant document i.e. findings and methodologies.

**Note the terminology used in abstracts.** By developing your awareness of relevant terminology, this may help you modify/expand your search terms. In turn, this will potentially help you retrieve a greater number of relevant results. If you click on an article title within your results, you may also find “**author key words**” and subject terms – these describe the content of the article and may inspire you to modify your own terms.

## 6. *Accessing the full article*

### 6a. Checking online availability

To find out whether or not the full text of an article is available for you to read, click the blue and white 'Links' button:



This button will take you to a "links" page which will provide a link to the full article (e.g. if the library subscribes to the relevant journal).

### 6b. If the full article is NOT available online:

Search the Library Catalogue via the Library homepage: <http://www.bath.ac.uk/library/>

Search for the journal title (not the article title) – you may find that we provide a printed copy. If we do, click the catalogue record's '**shelf locations**' tab to find out whether we hold the relevant year/volume/issue.

If we don't provide the article in any format, and it is potentially important for your work, please contact your Subject Librarian for advice.

## 7. *Broadening your perspective on a topic*

### "Cited by" links and references

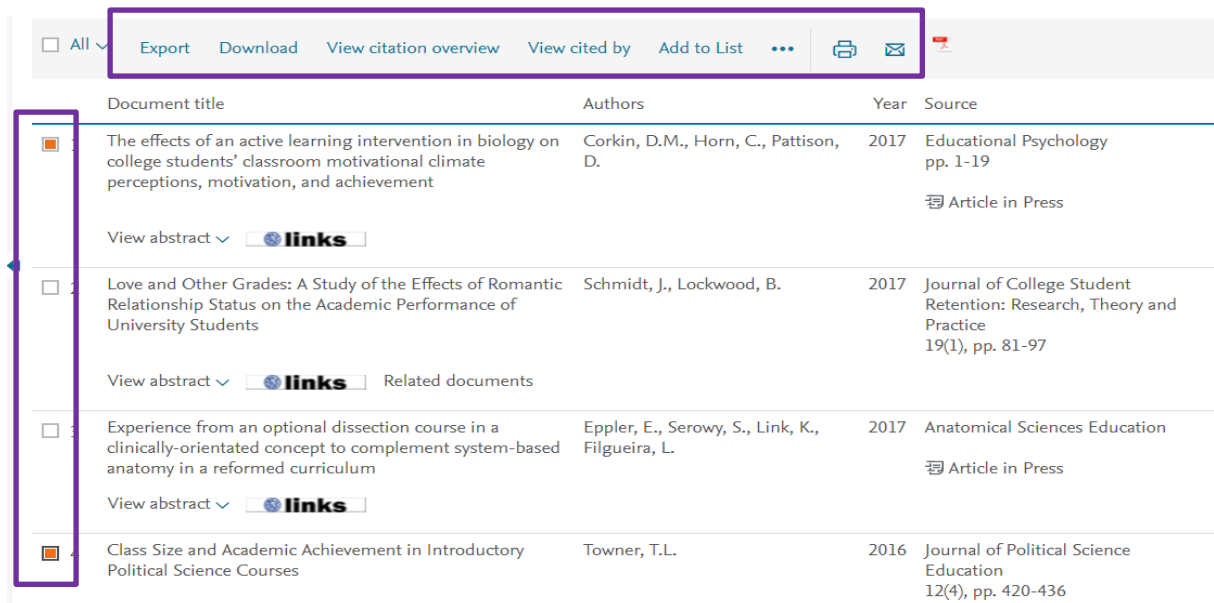
**Back to your search results:** Note the words **times cited to the right of each result**. This tells you the number of times an individual article has been cited/referenced by other articles (i.e. those that have been indexed by Scopus). You can click on this to find details of those other articles.

It is **good practice** to consider using such articles to support your argument. They may help you demonstrate a broader understanding of the topic, providing you with a more up-to-date perspective.

For similar reasons, it is also good practice, where relevant, to follow-up an individual article's own **references** i.e. use previous articles related to the same topic.

2011 Decision Sciences Journal of Innovative Education	11
2012 Decision Sciences Journal of Innovative Education	5

## 8. Saving and emailing results



The screenshot shows a search results interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with options: All (dropdown), Export, Download, View citation overview, View cited by, Add to List, a three-dot menu, a printer icon, and an envelope icon. Below this is a table with columns: Document title, Authors, Year, and Source. The table contains four rows of search results. Each row has a checkbox on the left and a 'View abstract' button with a 'links' icon. The first row is highlighted with a purple box around the checkbox and the 'View abstract' button. The second row has a purple box around the checkbox. The third row has a purple box around the checkbox. The fourth row has a purple box around the checkbox. The table data is as follows:

Document title	Authors	Year	Source
The effects of an active learning intervention in biology on college students' classroom motivational climate perceptions, motivation, and achievement	Corkin, D.M., Horn, C., Pattison, D.	2017	Educational Psychology pp. 1-19 Article in Press
Love and Other Grades: A Study of the Effects of Romantic Relationship Status on the Academic Performance of University Students	Schmidt, J., Lockwood, B.	2017	Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory and Practice 19(1), pp. 81-97
Experience from an optional dissection course in a clinically-orientated concept to complement system-based anatomy in a reformed curriculum	Eppler, E., Serowy, S., Link, K., Filgueira, L.	2017	Anatomical Sciences Education Article in Press
Class Size and Academic Achievement in Introductory Political Science Courses	Towner, T.L.	2016	Journal of Political Science Education 12(4), pp. 420-436

**a. It is good practice** to save multiple copies of selected results so that you have “back-ups” in the event of losing one set e.g. in your email accounts, memory sticks etc. **Click the box next to each individual result** of interest.

**b. Email the selected results** to yourself: click the “**more**” option just above your results and then select the “email” **envelope icon**. A short online form will appear. Complete the form (e.g. enter your email address and click **Send**).

**c. Export options:** click the arrow next to the **export** option just above the results:

**All users:** you can also select the **Text** option and click the blue **Export** button. You can then save a file the results to a location/drive of your choice. If the results open up in a separate window, you may need to copy and paste them into a Word document - then save the Word document.

**EndNote users:** select the **RIS format** and click the blue **Export** button. If you use EndNote Desktop, the results will be imported immediately into your EndNote library. If you use EndNote Online, save the results as a file and then import the file into EndNote Online. To find out how, please refer to <http://www.bath.ac.uk/library/infoskills/endnote/endnoteweb-download.html#scopus>

**Try also searching further library databases (e.g. IBSS). No single database provides details of all articles written on a topic. If you would like any further support in using this database, please contact your Subject Librarian.**

Peter Bradley, 31/01/2019