

Cochrane Ireland 2-Day Training Course Application Guidance

Background

The bringing together of evidence from research in systematic reviews to help inform decision-making is increasingly common, not least because of the formation of the Cochrane Collaboration with its aim to prepare, maintain and promote the accessibility of reviews of the effects of interventions in all areas of health care. Systematic reviews are a vital part not only of the process of summarising existing research but also in the process of planning future studies. For example, ethics committees, research funders and healthcare policy makers require that systematic reviews be done in advance of new research.

Traditional narrative reviews, usually written by a recognised expert, are generally not systematic. Authors might simply not have the time to identify and bring together all the relevant research or they might actually seek to discuss and selectively combine studies that confirm their opinions and biases. A systematic review aims to circumvent this weakness by using a predefined, explicit methodology. The methods used include steps to minimise bias in the identification of relevant studies, the selection criteria for inclusion, and the collection and presentation of data. Systematic reviews also critically appraise studies, an important skill for all evidence users.

Since 1993, the Cochrane Collaboration, through the establishment of Cochrane Review Groups across healthcare topics, has been preparing systematic reviews (Cochrane reviews) of the effects of interventions. These are published in full, in electronic form, in *The Cochrane Library*. There are now more than 6800 full reviews, together with protocols for a further 2400 reviews to be conducted. Access to the Cochrane Library is available free of charge to anyone with internet access on the island of Ireland using <http://www.cochranelibrary.com/> because of sponsorship by the Health Research Board (HRB) in Dublin and the Health and Social Care Research & Development Division (HSC R&D Division), Public Health Agency, in Northern Ireland.

To build capacity in the conduct of systematic reviews on the island of Ireland, and to develop critical appraisal and systematic reviewing skills, the HRB and HSC R&D Division have run a series of annual training courses since 2002 in association with the Training Team of the UK Cochrane Centre. In 2014, Cochrane Ireland was created to further this work through the appointment of a Convenor. In 2016, the portfolio of training courses continues to offer a more intensive two-day course on systematic reviewing (see Appendix 1) and will be supplemented with one-day training courses and others as needed. Details on the one-day courses will be announced later in 2016. Applications are being taken now ONLY for the two-day systematic review courses.

These courses will be led by trainers from the Training Team in Cochrane Ireland.

Eligibility

These courses will be particularly suitable for health and social care professionals, researchers and policy makers who require an understanding of the importance of evidence-based practice and who wish to improve their practice and critical appraisal skills, or who wish to conduct a systematic review in the near future.

Before applying, applicants should carefully examine which course is more suited to their backgrounds, experience, and previous engagement with critical appraisal and systematic reviewing.

Please note that the courses are free but applicants will need to fund their own travel and accommodation if required.

Dates and venues for courses

An expanded series of six **two-day** training courses will be held throughout the island and every effort will be made to offer courses in locations that suit successful applicants. The proposed dates and venues for these two-day courses in 2016 are as follows:

- Belfast (25 & 26 May 2016)
- Cork (3 & 4 May 2016)
- Dublin1 (30 & 31 May 2016)
- Dublin2 (12 & 13 September 2016)
- Galway (20 & 21 October 2016)
- Waterford (9 & 10 May 2016)

The **new one-day** training courses will be announced later in 2016 and will be targeted towards those who are not yet ready to begin a Cochrane systematic review.

Application Process

Read Appendix 1 at the end of this guidance document **before** filling in the application form. The content of the two-day course and who it is aimed at are described there and will help you decide if the course is suited to your experience and needs. Complete the short application form on the Cochrane Ireland website (<http://ireland.cochrane.org/cochrane-training-courses-2016>) and return as an attachment to an email sent to Cochrane Ireland at Cochrane@dcu.ie no later than **Monday 11 April 2016 at 10 am**.

Applicants will be informed about their success in attaining a place on these courses within two weeks (with the earlier courses being processed first).

Applicants from any part of Ireland should submit their applications and address any enquiries to Cochrane Ireland, not HRB or HSC R&D. Please note that the Convenor of Cochrane Ireland is a two day per week part-time position. Please allow for this in expectations of response times.

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APPENDIX 1



Title of course **Cochrane Systematic Review Course**

Duration of Course Two days

Eligibility Participants should have an understanding of research processes and be familiar with the Cochrane Library and systematic reviews

Aim

The 2-day training course will continue to be offered as it has in recent years. This intensive two-day course will cover systematic review methodologies and critical appraisal skills. The course is suitable for individuals working in the health and social care area who are planning to conduct a systematic review themselves and require more detailed knowledge of systematic reviews. It is not intended for those who are seeking general information about Cochrane systematic reviews.

Expected Outcomes

Having completed the course, attendees should be able to:

- Outline the key components of a Cochrane review
- Explain the essential steps of planning, preparing and maintaining a systematic review, including formulating a review question, literature searching, data extraction, critical appraisal of studies, and the basics of meta-analysis.

Topics Covered

- An introduction to systematic reviews and the Cochrane Collaboration
- Research study designs
- Study identification
- Statistical analysis and forest plots
- Critical appraisal
- Assessing study eligibility
- Data extraction
- Introduction to meta-analysis
- Heterogeneity
- Resources and what next?