

Minimum requirements for registration of a review with EPOC

Undertaking a [Cochrane Review](#) is often an exciting, challenging and ultimately rewarding experience. Before you take the first step and submit a review proposal, please consider the following to help guide you in deciding whether doing a review with EPOC is the right path for you. Important questions to consider include:

- Is my proposed topic within EPOC's [scope](#)?
- Does the review team have the [expertise](#) needed to complete a Cochrane Review?
- Does the review team have sufficient [time and capacity](#) to undertake a Cochrane Review?

Registering a review with EPOC may take 6 to 8 weeks and it is common for EPOC to request additional details from review authors during this process. This is because finalizing a review proposal often requires considerable discussion between the review author team and the EPOC editorial base to ensure that the review question is clear and that the review is feasible and does not overlap significantly with an existing Cochrane review, protocol or title. Please refer to [EPOC editorial process](#) for more information. While all review proposals are considered, not all review proposals are accepted. Due to limited editorial capacity, we can only consider review topics that are of sufficient priority for our stakeholders.

The following are the minimum requirements for registering a review with EPOC. For qualitative evidence syntheses, please see the additional guidance in the EPOC resource [Criteria for registering a qualitative evidence synthesis with EPOC](#):

- The intervention and any other concepts related to the proposed review need to be understandable to people outside of the specialist field of the review;
- The proposed review needs to be asking an answerable question about the effectiveness of an intervention and be within the scope of the Cochrane EPOC Group;
- The proposed review needs to be feasible and it should be possible to complete the review within a reasonable time period. EPOC reviews are often broad in scope and include complex interventions. This means they may take **several years to complete** (from title registration to review publication). Once a title is registered by an author team, it cannot be commenced as a Cochrane Review by anyone else. Therefore, author teams have an obligation to commit the necessary time and resources to ensure the review is completed without unnecessary delays. Each stage of the review process has a submission date, and authors are expected to adhere to these timelines. A draft protocol must be submitted within 6 months of title registration. We aim to publish reviews within 12 months of the last search date. Any changes to submission dates need to be negotiated with the Managing Editor.

Suggested citation: Cochrane Effective Practice and Organisation of Care (EPOC). Minimum requirements for registration of a review with EPOC. EPOC Resources for review authors, 2019. Available at: <http://epoc.cochrane.org/resources/epoc-resources-review-authors>

- The proposed review should not overlap significantly with an existing Cochrane review title, protocol or review, or be a subset of an existing protocol or review. The review team should outline how their proposed review relates to other reviews and protocols in the Cochrane Library (and non-Cochrane reviews where appropriate);
- The review team needs to include appropriate skills for conducting a review, or have a plan to access such skills (e.g. statistical support). This includes content area expertise in the area covered by the review.
 - someone who is an experienced Cochrane Review author;
 - someone with topic expertise in the title you are registering;
 - someone with statistical or relevant methodological expertise; and
 - either someone whose first language is English or someone with a very high standard of written English. Please note that unfortunately EPOC cannot provide written English language support for author teams.
- The review team should not have multiple uncompleted or out-of-date reviews in the Cochrane Library;
- The review team needs to have sufficient time and resources to complete the review
- The review team needs to complete all sections of the [EPOC Review Proposal Form](#). For qualitative evidence syntheses, please request the relevant Review Proposal Form from the Managing Editor, Elizabeth Paulsen (elizabethj.paulsen@fhi.no).

Please also note that the general policy of EPOC is to register reviews that assess the effectiveness of a category of interventions or alternative interventions on all outcomes that are important to decision makers or stakeholders. We discourage reviews that are restricted to:

- A specific population or setting. Please see EPOC resource on [When should EPOC reviews only include studies from low- and middle-income countries](#);
- A narrowly defined intervention;
- An intervention for a specific health issue or disease;
- A single outcome, except where a review is considering interventions focused on a specific health issue, such as immunization uptake.

There must be a compelling reason for restricting the focus of a review in these ways, beyond the personal interests of the review authors. We also discourage undertaking reviews for questions where it is known that there are no eligible studies unless there is a clear policy reason for conducting such reviews.

In preparing a review proposal, review authors should also consider the needs and perspectives of different user groups, including health service users, health care providers, health care managers, health decision makers and the public.

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All protocols and reviews need to comply with standards known as [MECIR](#) and with EPOC guidance as outlined in our [Resources for authors](#). These Cochrane-wide requirements aim to ensure all Cochrane Reviews are produced to a high standard and our resources are intended as a supplement to the [Cochrane Handbook for Systematic Reviews of Interventions](#). Despite best intentions, sometimes author teams do not make sufficient or timely progress, or submit drafts that do not meet methodological requirements. In these circumstances, EPOC may decide to reject the protocol or review.

Frequently asked questions:

What support and resources will Cochrane EPOC offer my review author team? In some respects, the EPOC editorial base operates in a similar way to a scientific journal. Due to the specific complexity of doing a Cochrane Review, however, additional support is also provided. This support is tailored based on the level of priority of the review topic. Generally, we help develop the search strategy for the review (done our in-house Information Specialist) and provide guidance about meeting Cochrane methodological expectations.

Is there training to help me do a Cochrane Review?

At a minimum, we expect first-time Cochrane review authors to be familiar with systematic review processes. If your review title is registered, we then strongly encourage you to undertake a Cochrane training course. Online training is **free** to review authors, and is available [here](#). The Cochrane Centre in your region may also offer face-to-face training. We also have useful resources designed specific for EPOC review authors on our [website](#).

I am currently undertaking a systematic review. Should I convert it to a Cochrane Review?

Some topics are more suitable for becoming Cochrane Reviews than others. If you are thinking about registering your systematic review as a Cochrane Review title, it is likely you will still need to go through the title registration and protocol phases. If you are unsure, please contact the [Managing Editor](#) for further advice.

I am a PhD student. Can I lead a review?

At EPOC, we welcome PhD students as part of a larger review author team. However, the specialist methodological expertise required when completing a Cochrane Review, and the time required, means we do not generally register reviews led by PhD students.

I want to apply for a Cochrane Fellowship. Will you support my application?

As EPOC review topics are often broad and complex, it may take considerable time to complete an EPOC review. In our experience, it is usually not feasible for review authors to complete their review within the time limits required by the Cochrane Fellowship. Therefore, unless there are exceptional circumstances, we do not accept Cochrane Fellowship applications.

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I would like to do a Cochrane Review, but I don't have a review author team. Can you help me find an author team?

We do not generally advertise for vacancies for review authors, although you may like to volunteer as a peer reviewer to get a sense of the EPOC review publication process. If you are interested in registering as a peer reviewer, please email our [Managing Editor](#) with a list of your field/s of expertise. You could also consider signing up for Cochrane's [Task Exchange](#), which allows experienced volunteers to contribute to discrete review tasks on other Cochrane authors' reviews.

If you have any further questions, please contact us our [Managing Editor](#).

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