

# Template for a Mapping Study Protocol

## 1. Change Record

This should be a list or table summarizing the main updates and changes embodied in each version of the protocol and (where appropriate), the reasons for these.

## 2. Background

- a) explain why there is a need for a study on this topic
- b) identify the topic that is to be 'scoped' in the study
- c) specify any research questions that will be addressed
- d) if extending previous research on the topic, explain why a new study is needed

## 3. Search Strategy

- a) specify and justify basic strategy: manual search, automated keyword-based search, automated citation-based search, or mixed
- b) for automated keyword searches, specify search terms and compounds of these (and record results of any prototyping of the search strings)
- c) for automated citation-based searches, specify how the seed set of papers will be identified
- d) for both types of automated searches, identify resources to be used (digital libraries and search engines)
- e) for manual searches, identify the journals and conferences to be searched
- f) specify the time period to be covered by the review and any reasons for your choice
- g) identify any ancillary search procedures, e.g. asking leading researchers or research groups, or accessing their web sites; or checking reference lists of primary studies
- h) specify how the search process is to be evaluated (e.g. against a known subset of papers; or against the results from a previous systematic review or mapping study)
- i) report the results of all initial trials of the search process

## 4. Selection Criteria and Selection Process

- a) identify the inclusion criteria for primary studies
- b) identify the exclusion criteria
- c) define how selection will be undertaken (whether the selection process will be split into stages, how many reviewers will assess each candidate paper, how the process will be managed)
- d) define how agreement among reviewers will be evaluated
- e) define how any differences between reviewers will be resolved
- f) report the results of any initial evaluations of the eligibility criteria and selection process

## 5. Data Extraction

- a) design data extraction form (and check via a dry run)
- b) specify the strategy for extracting the data and the form (paper, on-line etc.)
- c) identify how the data extraction process is to be undertaken and validated, particularly any data that require numerical calculations, or are subjective
- d) define how many reviewers will extract data from each paper
- e) if two or more reviewers will extract data for each paper, define how disagreements will be resolved
- d) report the results of any trials of the data extraction process

## 6. Synthesis

- a) specify the categorization schemes to be used
- b) assess the threats to validity (construct, internal, external), particularly constraints on the search process and deviations from standard practice
- c) report the results of any trials of the synthesis process

## 7. Study Limitations

Specify residual validity issues including potential conflicts of interest (i.e. that are inherent in the context of the study, rather than arising from the plan).

## 8. Reporting

Identify target audience, relationship to other studies, planned publications, authors of the publications.

9. Protocol Evaluation

a) Report the process to be used to evaluate the protocol

b) Report the results of the evaluation

10. Schedule

Provide time estimates for all of the major steps.