

## **Roll-out of Workflows to all CRGs**

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on Behalf of the Workflows Task Force**

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### **I. Background**

#### **Purposes of the workflow system**

The workflow system in Archie was designed primarily to help Managing Editors (MEs) and others working in Cochrane Review Group (CRG) editorial offices manage their work more efficiently and effectively. At its most basic level, the workflow system helps CRGs track the progress of individual reviews through the editorial process and notifies authors, editors, and others involved in writing and editing reviews when they need to take action.

Beyond this, the expectation from the start has been that workflows should become increasingly useful to MEs, CRGs, and the Collaboration as a whole as larger numbers of reviews are incorporated, and as users gain experience and confidence in using the system. Thus we hope that MEs and CRGs will progress reasonably quickly from using workflows as a basic tracking tool to being able to use the reports that can be generated by the system to analyse, reflect on, and improve their own internal processes.

Finally, looking still further ahead and beyond the level of the individual CRG, we expect that MEs and CRGs will become increasingly comfortable, over time, with sharing information gained from the workflow system both to improve practice across the Collaboration (e.g., by sharing insights gained from the sort of internal reflection and analysis described immediately above with other CRGs) and for central monitoring purposes. These longer term aims are discussed more fully below (*see* Section VI, 'Looking Ahead').

#### **A short history of events up to now**

The current workflow system was extensively tested in a three-stage pilot involving more than 30 CRGs, which began in September 2008 and ended in September 2010. Shortly thereafter (October 2010), in light of the overwhelmingly positive response from pilot CRGs (who continue to use the system today), the Collaboration Steering Group (CCSG) reaffirmed their previous decision that the use of the workflow system in Archie should become mandatory for all CRGs at an appropriate time. The Cochrane Editorial Unit (CEU) agreed to work with the Information Management System (IMS) team and other relevant groups to take this initiative forward.

Since then, a 'Workflows Task Force' convened by the CEU has worked closely with members of the Archie Development Advisory Committee (ADAC) and the IMS team to evaluate user feedback, and

to agree on and implement changes to the existing workflow templates and other features, with the goal of rolling out an improved system to all CRGs at the Madrid Colloquium (19-22 October 2011).

This document describes plans for this Collaboration-wide roll-out. Specifically, it explains what ‘mandatory use’ of the workflow system means in practical terms, provides an overall timeline for the transition to the use of workflows by all CRGs, recommends processes for making this transition, describes training plans, and concludes with a brief section on possible longer term use of data from the workflow system for practice improvement and monitoring purposes. Because the roll-out will introduce revised workflow templates and other improvements to functionality, it will affect both CRGs that are already using workflows and those that are not. These two groups are considered separately, where appropriate, in what follows.

## II. Mandatory Use

### Overview

When the CCSG reaffirmed that the use of the workflow system in Archie should be made mandatory for all CRGs, they did not define ‘mandatory use’ in practical terms. Consequently, one of the objectives that the Workflows Task Force set for itself was to “agree on mandatory versus optional components of the workflow system”.

We expect that decisions about this may change somewhat over time as collective experience with the system grows. For now, however, while workflows are being rolled out to all CRGs, ‘mandatory use’ will be defined in fairly general terms. MEs will be strongly encouraged to use the system as designed to record what they and others involved in the editorial processing of their CRG’s reviews actually do, with accurate timelines, both for their own and for their CRG’s benefit, and in the expectation that data from the workflow system may eventually be shared within the Collaboration for practice improvement and monitoring purposes.

### What does this mean in practical terms?

We expect that all CRGs will develop significant experience in using workflows during the roll-out and transition period, from 24 October 2011 to 2 April 2012. More specifically:

- CRGs will be ***expected*** to use the **Protocol Development, Review Development, and Review Update** workflows in Archie, effective Monday, 24 October 2011. These workflows should be used to manage, and keep an accurate record of, the editorial processing of all reviews in the Group. We anticipate that this will involve CRGs using the workflows as much as possible in a regular, real-time way (rather than in an administrative, after-the-fact fashion), so that they reflect what really happens on a day-to-day basis as accurately as possible.
- CRGs are ***strongly encouraged*** to use the **Title Registration** workflow in any way they find helpful, but use of this workflow is optional at this time.

- CRGs are *encouraged* to use the **Protocol Amendment** and **Review Amendment** workflows, particularly in cases where it is important to keep a record of the editorial processing of significant amendments, such as the correction of a serious error which results in changes to the conclusions of a review, but use of these workflows is optional at this time.

### III. Timeline

#### Overview

The roll-out of workflows to all CRGs will officially begin on Monday, 24 October 2011, following the Madrid Colloquium. ***The transition period will end on Monday, 2 April 2012, by which time CRGs should aim, as a minimum, to have set up Protocol Development, Review Development, and Review Update workflows for all their 'Active' reviews*** (i.e., all reviews whose status in Archie is 'Active' versus 'Withdrawn' or 'Inactive'). As described immediately above, CRGs are strongly encouraged to use the Title Registration workflow, and encouraged to use the Protocol Amendment and Review Amendment workflows, but use of these workflows is optional at the present time.

#### Important dates

- **On 1 October 2011:**
  - The new workflow templates will be deployed to Archie, along with functionality improvements and an updated Help file. Use of the new templates will be *optional* for existing users from 1 October 2011 to 31 January 2012—that is, CRGs that are already using workflows will be able to choose between the new templates and their current (customized or standard) templates for any new workflows started during this period. (New users will be advised to use the new templates from the start.) The decision to deploy the new templates at this relatively early date, before formal training and full documentation are available, is based on feedback received from MEs in late July 2011 which indicated that many MEs would like a chance to try the new templates in advance of the Madrid Colloquium.
  - Existing workflows will not automatically be updated to the new templates, and do not have to be updated, but there will be new Archie functionality to allow users to update individual existing workflows as desired.
  - New default Entity Role permissions will also be deployed on 1 October. This will ensure that people with various CRG Entity Roles have the permissions they need to use workflows. MEs will be able to view the new default permissions and edit them on the Roles tab of their CRG's Properties if they wish. **Note** that this new deployment will override any edits that MEs may have made to their current Entity Role permissions, so MEs will need to check that the updated permissions match the level of permissions they had previously set and, if appropriate, edit them. Separate guidance on how to prepare for this deployment will be provided by the IMS team in the run-up to 1 October.

- **At the Madrid Colloquium (19-22 October 2011; see section V, ‘Training Plans’, below, for details):**
  - Plans for roll-out and training will be reviewed, and questions answered, at the MEs’ meeting.
  - Initial training for MEs will be provided in two workshops, one aimed at beginners and another aimed at experienced users.
  - General Archie training for TSCs will also be provided in a separate workshop.
  - Individuals can ask questions and receive assistance at the IMS booth at the ‘Cochrane Exchange’.
  
- **On Monday, 24 October 2011:**
  - Roll-out and transition period begins for all CRGs.
  - Various workflow training and support materials will be available (see section V, ‘Training Plans’, below).
  - Members of the IMS Support team begin actively training and supporting their CRGs in the use of the new system.
  
- **By Tuesday, 31 January 2012:**
  - Optional use of old workflow templates ends—that is, it will no longer be possible, after this date, for CRGs already using workflows to create new workflows using the old templates.
  - MEs should notify their IMS Support person if they think they may need central assistance in setting up Protocol Development, Review Development, and Review Update workflows for all their Active reviews by the 2 April 2012 target date.
  
- **By Monday, 2 April 2012:**
  - All Groups should aim to have started Protocol Development, Review Development, and Review Update workflows for all their Active reviews.

#### **IV. Recommended Transition Processes**

The transition to full use of the workflow system will affect CRGs that are already using workflows and those that are not in slightly different ways. We thus describe recommended transition processes for both groups in what follows.

##### **For CRGs that are currently using workflows**

We recommend the following process during the transition period (24 October 2011 to 2 April 2012) for CRGs that are currently using workflows:

1. Integrate workflows as much as possible into your daily routines. Whenever working with a review or discussing a review with, for example, an author, start or update the associated workflow so that it accurately reflects the status of the review in the editorial process.

2. Consider updating some or all of your existing workflows to the new templates to take advantage of the new features. A tool to facilitate this task will be available from the context (right-click) menu for a workflow.
3. If you have customized your CRG's workflow templates, you will need to reproduce any edits you made to the 'old' templates in the new templates when they are deployed in order to produce an updated version of your CRG-specific templates. Please discuss this with your IMS Support person if you have any questions.
4. If you have created and saved customized task emails for use in your CRG, these will continue to be available, unchanged, for use with the new workflow templates. Please note, however, that if you have customized your CRG's workflow templates to link specific task emails to individual tasks, these links will need to be reproduced when you customize the new templates (*see preceding point*). Again, please contact your IMS Support person if you have questions about this.

#### **For CRGs that have not been using workflows**

We recommend the following process during the transition period (24 October 2011 to 2 April 2012) for CRGs that are not currently using Archie workflows:

1. To get started, consider adopting the practice of starting a new workflow whenever a review crosses your desk. In other words, whenever you or another member of the editorial team works on a review or is in contact with the authors about it, check to see whether a workflow has been set up for that review. If not, set up the appropriate workflow and start it at a point that accurately reflects the current status of the review in the editorial process.
2. Once a workflow has been set up, keep it up to date. Integrate workflows as much as possible into your daily routines.
3. ***Consider the workflow templates in relation to your editorial process but do not customize them without discussing your plans first with your IMS Support person.*** The IMS team is preparing a training video on customizing workflow templates which will help you understand the consequences of making certain edits to your templates. We also recommend that you run some 'pilot' workflows using the standard templates before you start to customize them. Finally, a document will be made available on the IMS website that you can use to record the edits you plan to make to your templates; once completed, this document can serve as the basis for discussions with your IMS Support person before you proceed with customization.

#### **Notes relevant to all CRGs:**

1. Everyone involved in the editorial processing of a review must have a record in Archie, including referees. However, you do not have to create records for everyone, such as referees, before setting up workflows. Instead, you can create the relevant record(s) at a time convenient to you when using a workflow. Finally, you do not have to retrospectively create records for people whose tasks have already been completed or retrospectively enter details about completed tasks, unless you wish to.

2. The 1 October 2011 Archie deployment will include new functionality to help you (a) identify all reviews that should, but do not yet, have a Protocol Development, Review Development, or Review Update workflow set up; and (b) identify all 'In Progress' workflows that are based on an old template (for CRGs that are currently using workflows). Over time, this information can help you plan a strategy to ensure that you have workflows set up for all your Active reviews by the end of the transition period (2 April 2012). Based on this information, you may, for example, decide to set aside time before this date to set up the needed workflows yourself. If, however, you do not think it will be possible to set up workflows for all your Active reviews—for example, because your CRG has a large number of reviews that still need workflows—please contact your IMS Support person **before 31 January 2012** to discuss your requirements.
3. Although we understand that some CRGs may wish to retain their current tracking systems for some time during the transition period to confirm that the new system gives them all the information their old system provided, we do not advise that you continue to maintain two systems after the end of the transition period because this will be duplication of effort. If you are maintaining your old system because you are unsure about how to get the information you need from Archie, contact your IMS Support person, who will be able to help you.

## V. Training Plans

The training plans described below were developed based on feedback received from MEs (both current users and non-users of workflows) in July 2011 about their perceived training needs.

Training will include:

- **At the Madrid Colloquium:**
  - Plans for roll-out and training will be reviewed, and questions answered, at the MEs' meeting (Wednesday, 19 October, from 08:00 to 15:00).
  - Initial training for CRG staff (primarily MEs) will be provided in two workshops, one aimed at beginners ('Basics of using the workflow system in Archie', Friday, 21 October, from 17:45 to 19:15) and the other designed for advanced users ('Taking workflows to new heights: an advanced workshop for Managing Editors', Thursday, 20 October, from 14:00 to 15:30).
  - General Archie training for TSCs will also be provided in a separate workshop ('Information Management System training for Cochrane Trial Search Co-ordinators', Saturday, 22 October, from 07:30 to 08:55)
  - Individuals can ask questions and receive assistance at the IMS booth at the 'Cochrane Exchange' (open during most break times).

- **Immediately after Madrid (24 October), a variety of training and support materials will be available on the IMS website (<http://ims.cochrane.org>); these include:**
  - A detailed, updated 'User Guide to Workflows in Archie' (to be released before 24 October, if possible);
  - Flow chart diagrams of all the new workflow templates;
  - A training video on customizing workflow templates;
  - A PowerPoint presentation outlining new features and functionality for experienced users;
  - Material, including exercises, from the two workflows workshops to be held at the Madrid Colloquium.
  
- **After Madrid, training and support by the IMS Support team will continue and will include the following:**
  - Centralized live webinar sessions for experienced users of workflows to highlight the new features and functionality. One or more of these sessions will be recorded and posted to the IMS website for later access.
  - Live individual remote training sessions for MEs and other staff at CRGs, to be arranged directly with the CRG's IMS Support person. Group remote training sessions, involving staff from more than one CRG in a given region, can also be arranged on request.
  - Individual face-to-face training can be provided by the CRG's IMS Support person at the editorial base, but the CRG will have to fund the IMS Support person's travel expenses.
  - In addition, the IMS team is currently assessing the potential value and feasibility of holding regional face-to-face training workshops focusing specifically on workflows.

Finally, please note that if it is appropriate for a CRG's Satellite staff to be given training in the use of workflows, the training must be organized through the Parent CRG so that the relationship between the Parent CRG and the Satellite, and their respective training needs, are clear to the IMS Support person.

***Your IMS Support person will contact you on return from the Madrid Colloquium to agree on a training plan for your CRG.***

## **VI. Looking Ahead**

Feedback from CRGs already using workflows indicates that they have found them valuable and wish to see their potential developed further. Rolling the system out to all CRGs and encouraging both relatively rapid uptake and relatively full use of the system, as described above, will help toward this end.

We expect that MEs and other users in CRGs will progress reasonably quickly from using workflows as a basic tracking tool to being able to use the reports that can be generated by the system to

analyse, reflect on, and improve their own internal processes. Beyond this, we very much hope that over time and with increasing experience, MEs and CRGs will begin to share some of the insights gained from this sort of internal reflection and analysis with other CRGs in order to improve practice across the Collaboration. Such sharing of information could become a vital part of more general strategic moves to increase transparency and co-operation across CRGs, and would contribute to the long-term sustainability of our Collaboration.

Finally, as usage and user confidence increase still further, and at a time to be agreed, we expect that MEs and CRGs will become increasingly comfortable with sharing information from the workflow system for central monitoring purposes. We recognize that there is some anxiety about this prospect at present. We wish to emphasize that any future such use must be formative, appropriate, and supportive, and that any progress toward such a situation will be made carefully, with appropriate consultations and using formal processes. Because the workflows offer so much that is positive, it is important to allay unfounded fears that they might be used for punitive or negative purposes.

Toward that end, we wish to emphasize that the use of data from the workflow system for monitoring purposes will be postponed until all CRGs have been using the system for some time, and until an updated policy on data use and monitoring has been developed and disseminated. To consider these issues briefly in turn:

- a) We recognize that all CRGs (both new and experienced) will need to use the new workflow templates for some time before the system will yield accurate data. Based on extensive experience to date, we know that there is both a learning curve for CRGs when they begin using the workflow system and a bolus of work that needs to be completed before a Group's workflows accurately reflect what is really happening 'on the ground'. We are also aware that workflow data from even the most experienced CRGs cannot be relied upon at present because of changes to the workflow templates and to guidance given during the pilot, as the system matured. These changes mean that the recording of data within CRGs and across CRGs has not been consistent over time. Finally, CRGs who already use the system will need time after roll-out to move their existing workflows to the new templates and to familiarize themselves with the new features and functionality. For all these reasons, data from the workflow system will not be used for monitoring purposes until all CRGs have been using the new templates for some time.
- b) Archie includes a formal 'Terms of use' statement ([http://www.cochrane-net.org/imshelp/appendices/terms\\_of\\_use.htm](http://www.cochrane-net.org/imshelp/appendices/terms_of_use.htm)), but this is very limited in scope. The Collaboration's more comprehensive policy on the use of data from the 'Parent Database' (now Archie; see [www.cochrane.org/policy-manual/2213-access-parent-database](http://www.cochrane.org/policy-manual/2213-access-parent-database)) is out of date in numerous respects and does not take the existence of the workflow system into account. An updated and comprehensive data use policy—that is, a policy describing who can use data from Archie, what data they can use, and for what purposes—will need to be

developed and disseminated before any data from the workflow system are used for monitoring purposes. The CEU and ADAC will work together to agree on a process for developing this policy which will ensure that input is actively solicited from all interested parties.

Workflows are a powerful tool for managing CRG workloads and resources more effectively, which, in turn, will benefit everyone in the Collaboration. We look forward to the adoption of workflows by all CRGs and expect that this will yield both immediate and long-term benefits to all involved.

## **VII. Questions?**

If you have questions about anything described in this document, please contact your IMS Support person.