



EVIDENCE SYNTHESIS
IRELAND



Cochrane
Ireland

Introduction to Realist Review Workshop

Aim

To provide an introduction to the realist approach and how to do a realist review.

Objectives

- Appreciate the key underpinning principles of a realist approach
- Understand 'how' to do a realist review
- Be able to identify a 'good' from a 'not so good' realist review to help build confidence in using a realist approach

Teaching Strategies

The workshop will consist of a mixture of short presentations on the underpinning philosophy of the realist approach, how to do a realist review, and what does a 'good' review look like. There will be plenty of practical sessions and time for questions and feedback from our local, national and international realist experts. The number of participants for the course is limited to 42.

Attendees will be required to bring their own laptops to the workshop for practical sessions.

Target Audience:

PhD students, Post-Doc Researchers and academics who would like to learn more about conducting realist reviews.

No. of attendees:

42 places available for individuals who are resident on the island of Ireland.

Date:

30th April 2026

Time:

9:30am – 4:00pm

Venue:

Riddle Hall, Queens University Belfast

Facilitators:

Dr Tracey McConnell

School of Nursing
Midwifery, Queen's University Belfast

Prof. Geoff Wong

Nuffield Department
of Primary Care Health
Sciences, University of Oxford

Dr Brynne Gilmore

Assistant Prof, Health
Systems, University
College Dublin

Alejandro Argüelles Bullón

Mental Health PhD
Student, Lancaster
University

Prerequisites:

None

Fee:

General €50; Student €30



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Course content/timetable

Time	Topic
9.30	Registration and refreshments
10.00 - 10.15	Introduction
10.15 - 11.00	What is a realist approach/underpinning philosophy?
11.00 - 11.15	Q&A
11.15 - 11.45	Groupwork and discussion
11.45 - 12.00	Break and refreshments
12.00 - 12.30	How to do a realist review/synthesis
12.30 - 12.45	Q&A
12.45 - 13.30	Lunch
13.30 - 14.15	What does a good review look like
14.15 - 14.30	Q&A
14.30 - 15.15	Practical – draft/or work on an existing realist review proposal
15.15 - 16.00	Wrap-up



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Facilitators:

Dr Tracey McConnell, School of Nursing Midwifery, Queen's University Belfast

Tracey is a Lecturer in Chronic Illness and Palliative Care in the School of Nursing and Midwifery, Queen's University Belfast. She is also an Honorary Marie Curie Senior Research Fellow. She has been using realist approaches for over 10 years across mental health, palliative care and music therapy research. She currently leads an NIHR funded multi-site UK wide realist evaluation and has successfully completed two NIHR funded realist syntheses supported by Prof Geoff Wong. Tracey has supervised MSc and PhD students using a realist approach and is keen to build a realist support network across the Island of Ireland.

Prof. Geoff Wong, Nuffield Department of Primary Care Health Sciences, University of Oxford

Geoff Professor of Primary Care in the Nuffield Department of Primary Care Health Sciences at the University of Oxford. He is an internationally and nationally recognised expert in realist review and evaluation. He has extensive expertise in conducting and providing methodological support for both approaches as well in their methodological development. He led the two UK National Institute of Health Research funded projects that developed quality and reporting standards, and training materials for realist reviews and realist evaluations (www.ramesesproject.org). He works part time as a GP in the NHS.

Dr. Brynne Gilmore, Assistant Prof, Health Systems, University College Dublin

Brynne is an applied global health researcher who uses theory driven methodologies to evaluate and improve health programmes. She has been using realist reviews and evaluations for over 10 years and across numerous contexts. She has conducted or contributed to over 10 realist reviews or rapid realist reviews and seven realist evaluations. Brynne has written several realist methodology papers and book chapters, including on data analysis and synthesis, advisory groups and article appraisal. She is currently part of a team developing quality reporting standards for realist reviews, and is an advisor on two large international realist projects. She is a frequent peer reviewer and grant reviewer for realist projects, has supervised PhD students using realist methodologies and has examined realist PhDs.



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Facilitators (continued):

Alejandro Argüelles Bullón, Mental Health PhD Student, Lancaster University

Alejandro, GMBPsS, MRSPH, EMCC, is a mental health researcher and Mental Health PhD student at Lancaster University (UK), where he received the Dean's Ben Booth Award for Outstanding Contribution. His work focuses on realist approaches to mental health, with a strong emphasis on accessibility, cultural inclusion, and the role of lived-experience researchers in academic organisations. He is currently affiliated with Lancaster University and the University of Victoria (Canada) and is involved in national and international collaborations.

Alejandro is the founder of RAÍCES, the first global Spanish-speaking realist research community, where he leads initiatives that promote inclusive, collaborative and linguistically accessible research across the Spanish-speaking world. He is also the host of The Realist Lens, a podcast dedicated to making realist approaches accessible and promoting interdisciplinary dialogue through open, community-driven conversations. Within just a few months, the podcast has gained over 600 subscribers and more than 9,000 views.



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