



EVIDENCE SYNTHESIS
IRELAND



Using a GRADE-CERQual Approach in Qualitative Evidence Synthesis

Background

Systematic reviews of qualitative studies (qualitative evidence syntheses) are increasingly used to bring together findings from qualitative studies. In order to use synthesised findings to inform decisions we need methods to assess how much confidence to place in these findings. The GRADE-CERQual approach addresses this need.

Objectives

To introduce the GRADE-CERQual (Confidence in the Evidence from Reviews of Qualitative research) approach to assess confidence in evidence from reviews of qualitative research.

Learning Outcomes

- Learn how to apply the GRADE-CERQual approach when assessing confidence in findings from qualitative evidence synthesis

Teaching Strategies

Using interactive group exercises and illustrative case study examples, participants will work through each component of the GRADE-CERQual approach. With dedicated time for troubleshooting and discussions, this workshop is designed for those new to GRADE-CERQual as well as those with some prior knowledge who are looking to strengthen their skills through practical application.

Target Audience

Healthcare professionals, academics, researchers, decision makers, librarians, information specialists, and Evidence Synthesis Ireland fellows and teaching faculty who would like to learn more about using a GRADE-CERQual approach in qualitative evidence synthesis.

Date:

5th October 2026

Time:

9:30am – 3:30pm

Venue:

The Pavilion, University of Limerick

Facilitators:

Dr Linda Biesty

School of Nursing and Midwifery,
University of Galway

Prof Pauline Meskell

School of Nursing & Midwifery, EHS
Faculty, University of Limerick

Skill Level:

Introductory

Prerequisites:

A basic knowledge of qualitative evidence synthesis

Fee:

General €160; Student €60



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Schedule and Course Content

Time	Session
09:30 - 09:45	Registration, welcome and introductions; overview of the day
09:45 - 10:15	Session 1: Using Qualitative Evidence Syntheses in evidence-informed decision making and an introduction to Qualitative Evidence Synthesis
10:15 - 11:00	Session 2: An introduction to GRADE-CERQual – overview of the CERQual components and the overall assessment
11:00 - 11:15	Tea / coffee break
11:15 - 11:55	Session 3: Assessing the relevance component of GRADE-CERQual (input and group exercise)
11:55 - 12:35	Session 4: Assessing the methodological limitations component of GRADE-CERQual (input and group exercise)
12:35 - 13:20	Lunch
13:20 - 14:00	Session 5: Assessing the coherence component of GRADE-CERQual (input and group exercise)
14:00 - 14:40	Session 6: Assessing the adequacy component of GRADE-CERQual (input and group exercise)
14:40 - 14:50	Comfort break
14:50 - 15:20	Session 7: Making an overall assessment in GRADE-CERQual and creating a Summary of Qualitative Findings table
15:20 - 15:30	Where to find guidance and how to get involved; questions and answers; close





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Sessions and Learning Objectives

Session 1: Using Qualitative Evidence Syntheses in evidence-informed decision making and an introduction to Qualitative Evidence Synthesis

Learning objectives:

- To understand the contribution qualitative evidence synthesis makes to evidence-informed decision making
- To recognise the stages of a qualitative evidence synthesis

Session 2: An introduction to GRADE-CERQual

Learning objectives:

- To understand the GRADE-CERQual approach and how its four components build towards an overall assessment of confidence

Sessions 3–6 each introduce one CERQual component and apply it to a finding from a qualitative evidence synthesis.

Session 3: Assessing the relevance component of GRADE-CERQual

Learning objectives:

- To apply the relevance component, judging how well the body of evidence fits the review question and context

Session 4: Assessing the methodological limitations component of GRADE-CERQual

Learning objectives:

- To apply the methodological limitations component, appraising the conduct of the contributing studies

Session 5: Assessing the coherence component of GRADE-CERQual

Learning objectives:

- To apply the coherence component, examining how well a finding fits the underlying data

Session 6: Assessing the adequacy component of GRADE-CERQual

Learning objectives:

- To apply the adequacy component, weighing the richness and quantity of supporting data

Session 7: Making an overall assessment in GRADE-CERQual

Learning objectives:

- To make and justify an overall assessment of confidence in a finding
- To create a GRADE-CERQual Summary of Qualitative Findings table
- To know where to find further guidance and how to get involved





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Facilitators:

Dr Linda Biesty, School of Nursing and Midwifery, University of Galway

Linda is the Deputy Director of Evidence Synthesis Ireland, co-lead of the QES strand within ESI, teaching faculty and a member of the steering committee. Linda is an Associate Professor in Midwifery at the University of Galway. She has over 20 years of experience embedding research into clinical practice, particularly in using qualitative research to explore various health and social issues. A midwife and qualitative researcher by training, Linda's research focuses largely in the fields of maternity care; her methodological expertise extends to Qualitative Evidence Synthesis (QES), the application of qualitative methodologies to inform trials & trial methodology and core outcome set development. Linda is a senior author on the first Cochrane Rapid QES and is currently leading and collaborating on a wide range of Cochrane and non-Cochrane systematic reviews, qualitative evidence syntheses and scoping reviews.

Prof Pauline Meskell, School of Nursing & Midwifery, EHS Faculty, University of Limerick

Pauline is a senior lecturer in Nursing & Health Research in the School of Nursing & Midwifery, EHS Faculty at the University of Limerick. Pauline's research interests lie in the areas of self-management of chronic diseases including renal disease, Ageing, Dementia, outcome measurement, and Evidence Synthesis. She has particular methodological expertise around quantitative and qualitative evidence synthesis, conventional and policy Delphi, instrument development, and outcome measurement, and is currently involved in a number of both Cochrane and non-Cochrane systematic reviews and qualitative evidence syntheses. She has collaborated on projects funded by the Health Research Board (Ireland), Department of Health and Children (Ireland), National Council for the Professional Development of Nursing and Midwifery (Ireland), and Institute of Public Health. Pauline is the lead of the Supportive & Palliative Care research cluster and the Early Career Researchers Forum in the School of Nursing & Midwifery in the University of Limerick.

