

April/May 2026



Centre for Reviews
and Dissemination

Introduction to Systematic Reviews

COURSE OUTLINE



Week 0				Thursday 16 th April	
UK time				Day 0	
9.30 to 10am					
10 to 10.30				<p style="text-align: center;">Live session: Module 0: Introduction and Orientation Recorded</p>	
10.30 to 11					
11 to 11.30					
11.30 to 12					

Please note that some live sessions are mainly exercises and will not be recorded
* discussions will be edited out of these recordings to leave only the presentation sections
** The OnlineMeta exercise is recommended if you do not have any prior experience with R. Please aim to complete the practical exercise ahead of the optional live session on Monday where any technical questions will be addressed.
*** The optional live session is a drop-in session to answer any technical questions you may have about the practical exercises.
NB All sections in blue can be completed at any time before the next live session

Week 1	Monday 20 th April	Tuesday 21 st April	Wednesday 22 nd April	Thursday 23 rd April	Friday 24 th April	
UK time	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Break or homework	
9.30 to 10am	Live session: Module 1: Review Question and Protocols Recorded*	Live session: Module 2: Literature searching Recorded*	Live session: Module 4: Data extraction Recorded*	Live session: Module 5: Critical appraisal		
10 to 10.30						
10.30 to 11						
11 to 11.30			Live session: Module 3: Study Selection Recorded*			
11.30 to 12					Live session: Module 6: Treatment effects	
12 to 12.30						
12.30 to 1pm						

Homework

30 minutes	Homework Module 2: Watch videos 1 to 5	Homework Module 4: Watch Videos 1 and 2 Read exercise instructions; Latkin (2009); Metsch (2012); and Tobin (2011)	Homework Module 5: Watch videos 1 to 5 Read exercise instructions; and Anotoni (2005)	Homework Module 7 Watch videos 1 to 4 Attempt the exercise**	
+30 minutes (1 hour total)					
+30 minutes (1.5 hours)	Homework Module 3: Watch videos 1 and 2 Read Lakin (2009) and Copenhaver (2011)				
+30 minutes (2 hours)			Homework Module 6: Watch the video		

Week 2	Monday 27 th April	Tuesday 28 th April	Wednesday 29 th April	Thursday 30 th April	Friday 1 st May
UK time	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7	Day 8	Day 9
9.30 to 10am		Live session: Module 7: Meta-analysis	Live session: Module 8: Appraising the evidence	Live session: Module 10: Critical appraisal of a systematic review	Live session: Module 11: Introduction to health economics Recorded*
10 to 10.30					
10.30 to 11					
11 to 11.30	Optional live session: Module 7: Meta-analysis drop-in technical clinic***				Live session: Module 12: Knowledge mobilisation
11.30 to 12					
12 to 12.30					
12.30 to 1pm					

Homework

30 minutes		Homework Module 8: Watch videos 1 and 2 Brainstorming exercise	Post Module 8: Watch videos 4 and 5	Homework Module 12: Watch videos 1 to 3	
+30 minutes (1 hour total)			Module 9: Reporting Watch videos 1 to 3		
+30 minutes (1.5 hours)			Homework Module 10: Read Chen (2020)		

Pre-module 0

Video: Introducing the course

Thursday 16th April, 2026

Module 0: Introduction and orientation

Live workshop

10.00 – 12.00 [UK time]

- Welcome and introduction
- Orientation to the platforms and technology we will be using
- Socialisation: meet your tutors and other learners
- Sharing exercises: what would you like to get out of the course
- Information about support
- Introduction to course homework

Discussion board:

- What are your research questions?
- Any questions, feedback or technical support?

Monday 20th April, 2026

Module 1: Developing the review question and protocols

Live workshop

9.30 – 11.30 [UK time]

- Presentation: PICOS and review questions
- Group exercises: PICOS and analysing a review question
- Presentation: Review protocols; registering a review protocol
- Opportunity to discuss your review questions with our experts
- Question and answer session

Resource: Information on registering a review on PROSPERO

Pre-modules 2 and 3

Videos 1 to 5: Introduction to and importance of literature searching

Videos 1 and 2: Introducing study selection and group exercise

- Download and read the abstracts for two papers

Tuesday 21st April, 2026

Module 2: Literature searching

Live workshop

9.30 – 10.30 [UK time]

- Group exercise: search strategy quiz
- Presentation: Beyond MEDLINE – why search extensively?
- Presentation: Take home messages
- Question and answer session

Resource: MeSH terms, term harvesting; databases; search strategies

Module 3: Study selection

Live workshop

11.00 – 13.00 [UK time]

- Group exercises: screening based on titles and abstracts
- Presentation: common issues and tips
- Question and answer session

Pre-module 4

Videos: Introducing data extraction; and Designing and testing a data extraction form

- Download and read three papers to prepare for data extraction exercise
- Download and read example data extraction form

Wednesday 22nd April, 2026

Module 4: Data extraction

Live workshop

9.30 – 11.00 [UK time]

- Group exercise: data extraction
- Follow-up discussion and summary
- Presentation: Common issues
- Question and answer session

Pre-modules 5 and 6

Videos 1 to 6: Internal validity, external validity and critical appraisal issues

- Read instructions and paper for critical appraisal exercise

Video: Introducing treatment effects

Thursday 23rd April, 2026

Module 5: Critical appraisal

Live workshop

9.30 – 10.45 [UK time]

- Group exercise: appraise a set of provided vignettes and identify bias
- Follow-up discussion and feedback
- Question and answer session

Module 6: Calculating treatment effects

Live workshop

11.30 – 12.30 [UK time]

- Group exercise: calculating effects estimate
- Discussion and feedback
- Question and answer session

Pre-module 7

Videos:

- Introduction to meta-analysis
- Issues in meta-analysis – heterogeneity
- Problems for meta-analysis – missing studies, publication bias
- Why not always do a meta-analysis – narrative synthesis

Practical Exercise:

- Exercise: Conduct a meta-analysis

Monday 27th April, 2026

11.30 – 12.30 [UK time]

- Optional 'Ask the expert' clinic for questions about the exercise software

Tuesday 28th April, 2026

Module 7: Meta-analysis

Live workshop

9.30 – 11.30 [UK time]

- Group exercise: Interpreting meta-analysis results
- Question and answer session

Resource: Narrative synthesis

Pre-module 8

Videos:

- Estimate vs. uncertainty of an outcome
- About GRADE and summary-of-findings tables

Complete the brainstorming exercise

Wednesday 29th April, 2026

Module 8: Appraising the evidence

Live workshop

9.30 – 11.30 [UK time]

- Group exercise: GRADEing of a Zinc supplementation review
- Group exercise: Conclusions based on GRADE assessment
- Presentation: Completing GRADE assessment
- Follow-up questions from exercise
- Other questions about GRADE assessment

Post-module 8

Videos:

- Communicating findings
- Relative vs. absolute risk

Module 9: Reporting your review

No live session

In your own time learning

Videos:

- Reporting review findings
- Writing the discussion
- Checklists and guidance for reporting your review

Resources:

- Resources for reporting and writing the discussion
- Resources on reporting guidelines

Pre-module 10

Read the provided study: Chen (2020)

Thursday 30th April, 2026

Module 10: Critical appraisal of a systematic review

Live workshop

10.00 – 11.30 [UK time]

- Group exercise: What makes a good systematic review
- Group exercise: Using critical appraisal checklists

Pre-module 12

Videos:

- The what, why and who of knowledge mobilisation
- When knowledge mobilisation happens
- How knowledge mobilisation happens

Friday 1st May, 2026

Module 11: Introduction to health economics

Live workshop

9.30 – 10.30 [UK time]

- Live presentation: Key concepts, challenges and relevance to systematic reviews
- 'Ask the expert' Q&A and discussion

Module 12: Knowledge mobilisation

Live workshop

11.00 – 12.15 [UK time]

- Group exercise: stakeholder mapping
- Group exercise: Reviewing types of knowledge mobilisation outputs; what does it mean to 'use evidence'?

Course Close