

PEER REVIEW HISTORY

BMJ Open publishes all reviews undertaken for accepted manuscripts. Reviewers are asked to complete a checklist review form (<http://bmjopen.bmj.com/site/about/resources/checklist.pdf>) and are provided with free text boxes to elaborate on their assessment. These free text comments are reproduced below.

ARTICLE DETAILS

TITLE (PROVISIONAL)	Protocol – The RAMESES II study: Developing guidance and reporting standards for realist evaluation
AUTHORS	Greenhalgh, Trish; Wong, Geoff ; Jagosh, Justin; Greenhalgh, Joanne; Santaella, Ana Manzano; Westhorp, Gill; Pawson, Ray

VERSION 1 - REVIEW

REVIEWER	Jo Rycroft-Malone Bangor University United Kingdom
REVIEW RETURNED	30-May-2015

GENERAL COMMENTS	<p>This is a well written protocol paper based on an NIHR funded project proposal about a study that will have high impact when completed.</p> <p>A few observations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -the online Delphi method section (p11) would be better placed in the methods section -it would be useful to pull out the sampling criteria of the 'wide range of experts' participating in the Delphi (currently ?embedded objective 2) (p14) -given the debate about the use and 'abuse' of publication standards (standardisation, stifling creativity etc.) I wonder whether a little more could be made of this in the discussion/conclusion (particularly in the context of your plans to the plans to negotiate with COREC and INVOLVE to publish templates) - ideally, how would you see the standards used so that there is still the potential to develop and innovate in an emerging field of inquiry? (maybe there is some evidence from how RAMESES I standards are being used to draw on re this argument?)
-------------------------	---

VERSION 1 – AUTHOR RESPONSE

Peer reviewer comment 1:

“-the online Delphi method section (p11) would be better placed in the methods section.”

We have moved the aforementioned section to the methods section (page 12 lines 265 to 283).

Peer reviewer comment 2:

“-it would be useful to pull out the sampling criteria of the 'wide range of experts' participating in the Delphi (currently ?embedded objective 2) (p14)”

We have taken out our sampling criteria from the heading Objective 2 (page 14 line 326) and moved

them into the main text of the manuscript and this may be found on page 14 lines 333 to 335.

Peer reviewer comment 3:

“-given the debate about the use and 'abuse' of publication standards (standardisation, stifling creativity etc.) I wonder whether a little more could be made of this in the discussion/conclusion (particularly in the context of your plans to the plans to negotiate with COREC and INVOLVE to publish templates) - ideally, how would you see the standards used so that there is still the potential to develop and innovate in an emerging field of inquiry? (maybe there is some evidence from how RAMESES I standards are being used to draw on re this argument?)”

We have provided additional discussion that we feel covers the important issue raised by this feedback. These may be found on pages 25 to 26, lines 608 to 622.

We hope that these changes will meet with your approval.

Finally we have also amended the protocol to indicate that the project has been granted ethics clearance by the University of Oxford (page 28 line 670).