

# Questions and Answers About Reviewing Studies for the What Works Clearinghouse

The purpose of this document is to provide answers to questions submitted before and during the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) webinar *Reviewing Studies for the What Works Clearinghouse*. The webinar was hosted on July 21, 2021.

This document is meant to serve as a companion to the webinar slide deck and webinar recording, both of which can be found **here on the WWC website**. We combined similar questions and rephrased others for clarity while preserving the meaning of the original questions. If additional questions arise, please [contact the WWC Help Desk](#).

- 1. I am using the Online Study Review Guide (OSRG) to review a study under version 3.0 or 4.0 of the WWC standards. Will the OSRG automatically apply those standards instead of version 4.1?**

The OSRG is programmed to automatically apply the WWC Standards and Procedures version (3.0, 4.0, or 4.1) that is selected. The Review Coordinator assigns the applicable version of the WWC standards when assigning reviews. As the reviewer answers the OSRG questions, the criteria for the assigned Standards and Procedures are applied. The Review Results page shows the results based on the assigned version of the standards.

- 2. Before adding a new study, how do I check to see if the study already exists in the OSRG?**

Before adding a new study to the OSRG, the review coordinator should check to see if it already exists in the OSRG. Remember, many studies are already in the OSRG because they have been reviewed under earlier standards or using a different protocol. In addition, the OSRG pulls in information from ERIC, so many studies that have not been reviewed are in the OSRG because they are in ERIC. When a review coordinator logs in to the OSRG and select the “Coordinator Dashboard” tab, you will have the option to select “Start a new process.” From there, you will be prompted to search for a study. Please only add a new study if you do not receive any results from searching for the study.

- 3. Does the OSRG automatically apply multiple comparison corrections (MCCs) and cluster correction when they are needed?**

**Answer for MCCs:** When there are multiple main findings within the same outcome domain, the WWC generally accepts the MCC method used by study authors (OSRG User Guide, Version 4.1, p. 23 – please see the [Resources page within the OSRG](#) to review the user guide). The most common option that authors may use is the

Bonferroni method (OSRG User Guide, Version 4.1, p.23), which is more conservative than the Benjamini-Hochberg method used by the WWC. When the statistical significance levels reported in the study do not correct for multiple comparisons where needed, the OSRG will automatically apply the Benjamini-Hochberg MCC to multiple main findings in the same outcome domain. When the MCC is applied, a note will be displayed under the last finding in the domain. The note says the following:

“MCC: A multiple comparisons correction is applied in all cases where there are multiple main findings within the same outcome domain.”

The MCC is not applied to supplemental findings. The rationale, formulas, and use of the Benjamini-Hochberg MCC are described in [WWC Procedures Handbook, Version 4.1](#) on pages F-3 through F-7.

**Answer for cluster correction:** The WWC generally accepts the statistical significance for a finding reported by the author(s) of the study (OSRG User Guide, Version 4.1, p.23). However, when the study-reported statistical significance levels reported do not account for clustering—because there is a mismatch between the unit of assignment and unit of analysis— the reviewer should have the OSRG use the WWC-calculated  $p$ -value instead. The WWC-calculated  $p$ -value will always account for the cluster design.

#### **4. According to the webinar, the OSRG has online help. Do I still need to use the OSRG User Guide?**

The online help is aligned with the OSRG User Guide and is designed to provide immediate, on-demand assistance. However, it is not a substitute for the OSRG User Guide. The OSRG User Guide was designed to streamline reviewer use of the OSRG and improve the accuracy, consistency, and transparency of review results. The User Guide covers additional topics beyond those covered by the online help, such as aggregating outcomes and conducting author queries.

#### **5. How often are reviewers asked to conduct WWC reviews?**

WWC reviews are currently completed through WWC contract organizations who review studies for WWC products. Each contractor is responsible for identifying and connecting with certified reviewers. Reviewer contact and certification information is provided to contract organizations on the WWC website. To be considered for future WWC reviews, please ensure that your contact information and certification status are accurate on the WWC website.

In addition, WWC reviewers need to be certified in the most recent version (4.1) of the standards and procedures for new reviews. The [group design certification](#) and [single case design certification](#) trainings are available online through the WWC website.

**6. When authors only report a range for the  $p$ -value, should reviewers always default to using the WWC calculated value?**

If the exact  $p$ -value is not reported, the largest possible  $p$ -value should instead be entered for the study-reported numeric  $p$ -value. For instance, " $p < .01$ " should be entered as .01. The authors'  $p$ -value can still be used to characterize the study's statistical significance as long as there are no other concerns.

The reviewer can also incorporate regression results through the regression coefficient standard error or test statistic, if reported. Doing so will generally make the WWC-calculated and author-reported  $p$ -values more aligned. The archived webinar [What Works Clearinghouse Version 4.1 Effect Size and Standard Error Formulas](#) discusses this in more detail.

**7. The OSRG User Guide does not provide guidance about cluster design studies with missing or imputed data. Will the user guide be updated with guidance on completing the additional fields that populate when selecting cluster design study with missing or imputed data?**

Yes, guidance about cluster design studies with missing or imputed data will be included in an updated OSRG User Guide in the coming months. In the meantime, the OSRG guidance for individual-level assignment studies can help answer questions about cluster design studies. Pages 36-38 of the [WWC Standards Handbook, Version 4.1](#) also provide further guidance. If anything remains unclear in these documents, you can also [contact the WWC Help Desk](#).

**8. Is it possible for people who have not conducted WWC reviews to access a copy of the OSRG with the Version 4.1 standards?**

The WWC provides a public version of the Version 3.0 and 4.0 OSRG at <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/Studyreviewguide>. This public OSRG does not currently support Version 4.1.

## RELATED RESOURCES

In addition to the webinar and this Questions and Answers document, the following resources provide guidance about using the OSRG:

- You can find the OSRG User Guide, Version 4.1, on the Resources page within the OSRG: <https://members.nces.ed.gov/OSRG/Resource>
- OSRG Resources Library: <https://members.nces.ed.gov/OSRG/>
- WWC Standards Handbook, Version 4.1:  
<https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/Docs/referenceresources/WWC-Standards-Handbook-v4-1-508.pdf>
- WWC Procedures Handbook, Version 4.1:  
<https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/Docs/referenceresources/WWC-Procedures-Handbook-v4-1-508.pdf>
- WWC Help Desk:  
<https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/Help>