INTERNATIONAL HEALTH TERMINOLOGY
STANDARDS DEVELOPMENT ORGANISATION

IHTSDO Deprecation Policy

Date 20140819
Version 1.0

Amendment History

Version	Date	Editor	Comments
0.02	20120624	Julie Richards	
0.03	20120714	Julie Richards	Separated policy from procedure Many other changes
0.04	20120724	Julie Richards	Updates from 20120724 conference call
0.05	20120730	Julie Richards	Incorporated Jane Millar's comments
0.06	20120801	Julie Richards	Clean up and grammar corrections
0.07	20130214	Jane Millar	Update taking into account consultation with IHTSDO Standing Committees
0.08	20130404	Jane Millar	Comments incorporated from development group
0.09	20130916	Julie Richards	Editorial comments cleaned up and mark up of content comments
0.10	20130924	Julie Richards	Major updates after consultation review 1
0.11	20130928	Julie Richards	Minor updates incorporating Jeremy Thorp and Jane Millar's comments
0.12	20131009	Julie Richards	Updates incorporating feedback from Quality Assurance Committee.
0.13	20140421	Julie Richards	First version after Review 2 incorporating comments received.
0.14	20140429	Julie Richards	Version approved by QAC for recommendation to the Management Board.
1.0	20140819	Julie Richards	Final version after review by MB and approval by CEO.

Approvals

Version	Date	Approver	Comments
1.0	20140730	Don Sweete, CEO	

Review Timetable

Review date	Responsible owner	Comments
20160730	Head of Delivery	

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1 Overview

1.1 Introduction

The IHTSDO and its member National Release Centers (NRC) are responsible for the maintenance and publication of IHTSDO products, SNOMED CT being a major example.

In the creation, implementation and maintenance of health solutions, it is recognized that changes will occur over time and thus there is a need for formal deprecation processes. Changes will be driven by many factors, including changes in the business of health; enhancements in technology and others. The changes can occur across all types of artifacts, including SNOMED CT itself, SNOMED CT format type, mappings to other terminologies, reference sets as well as IHTSDO approved documentation and standards. It is common practice that the level of service support provided to releases of an artifact will decrease and/or stop once an artifact has been deprecated. In addition, the need for change and potential for deprecation may be prompted by developments within other Standards Development Organizations.

It is important that everyone involved in the development, implementation and maintenance of any IHTSDO product including one or more artifacts, understands the IHTSDO Policy related to deprecation.

This policy document is accompanied by two additional deprecation documents: one that describes the process to follow for deprecation; and one that facilitates the consultation and approval processes during deprecation:
   • IHTSDO Deprecation Process
   • IHTSDO Deprecation Consultation & Review Template

1.2 Purpose
This Policy has been developed to ensure that:
   - the term deprecation and how it applies to IHTSDO artifacts is understood;
   - a process is followed that consults with the community to minimize the adverse effects of deprecation and maximize the beneficial effects; and
   - the user community understands how they are involved in the process and has the opportunity to provide feedback on the deprecation being proposed.

1.3 Definitions of Deprecation and Related Terms

1.3.1 Deprecation
Deprecation in this context is defined as marking an artifact as obsolete to warn against use in the future so that an artifact may be phased out either entirely or for a specific use case. Deprecation indicates that future use should be avoided, typically because the artifact has been superseded.

1.3.2 Deprecated Artifact
An artifact, as defined in the scope of the IHTSDO Deprecation Policy, which has been deemed no longer suitable for new implementation or future use. The artifact may continue to exist to provide historical information and backward compatibility. An artifact may be deprecated for many reasons (see examples in 2.1 Reasons for Deprecation). The reason, appropriate use and any continued or

discontinued maintenance support of the Deprecated Artifact by IHTSDO will be declared with the Announcement of Deprecation. Artifacts can be deprecated with support or without support (see next definitions).

1.3.3 Artifact Deprecated With Support

A designation given to an IHTSDO Artifact that has been deprecated but continues to be supported by IHTSDO for a specified period of time. The detail of the support will be provided with each Deprecated Artifact.

1.3.4 Artifact Deprecated Without Support

A designation given to an IHTSDO Artifact that has been deprecated and is no longer supported by IHTSDO, i.e. IHTSDO no longer provides any maintenance or updates.

1.3.5 Inactive

Deprecation should not be confused with the term inactive. An Inactive Component, Inactive Concept and Inactive Description, terms used in the SNOMED CT file History Mechanism, are defined in the IHTSDO Glossary.

1.4 Audience

This policy document will be of interest to anyone who is using and implementing IHTSDO artifacts and all those who are interested in knowing how these Artifacts are deprecated. It also provides direction for those who produce, maintain and update Artifacts. This includes:
- IHTSDO members
- IHTSDO Organization
- National Release Centers
- Affiliate Members including vendors and systems integrators
- Other Users

1.5 Scope

IHTSDO and its predecessors have produced a wide range of documents and products over time to respond to the needs of SNOMED CT developers and users.

The scope of the IHTSDO Deprecation Policy includes any artifact that has completed the formal process defined in the *Development, Approval, Maintenance and Review of IHTSDO Technical Reports, Guidelines and Standards.* Examples of artifacts include: the SNOMED CT Technical Implementation Guide; the SNOMED CT Editorial Guide; and the SNOMED CT User's Guide. Other types of assets or terminology products are Release format, antecedent versions, Hierarchies, Attributes, Reference set, maps, usage of attributes in particular hierarchies, values usable for particular attributes, release modules, quality assurance rules in the work bench and harmonization agreements.

The scope and description of the artifact being proposed for deprecation will be clearly stated.

This Policy is intended for deprecation of International Artifacts. Member countries are encouraged to use a similar policy and process to deprecate their country specific IHTSDO related artifacts. IHTSDO may, over time, agree with Member countries criteria for when the same processes should be followed by Member countries, particularly where safety is the cause of the deprecation.

Artifacts being changed or made inactive through the Content Development Process and the Request Submission Process are not required to go through the Deprecation Process in addition to these processes. Examples include SNOMED CT components, concepts, descriptions and relationships.

The scope of this policy does not include software tools to support editing, request for change, translation and mapping. It is recommended that policies on software version management and deprecation must be defined, adopting similar policies found in this Policy and managed alongside this policy over time.

The scope of the policy also does not include artifacts not approved or in final release versions e.g. beta release or technology preview status.

The scope of this Deprecation Policy will be revisited at the 2 year review based on experience and usage. This should lead to a more defined list of artifacts in and out of scope.

2 Deprecation Considerations

While the concept of deprecation of an Artifact can take many forms, the policy and the process for deprecation should focus on two aspects of deprecation:

- Reasons for deprecation of an artifact; and
- Determination and communication of the support of the deprecated artifact.

2.1 Reasons for Deprecation

The deprecation of an artifact specifies to users that it should no longer be used. It is important that developers, maintainers and users understand the reason why it should no longer be used (identified as part of impact assessment). Simply put, all deprecations must have a clear reason that is central to this policy.

Given the scope in Section 1.5, reasons for deprecation include:

- The artifact has been replaced by a more current and relevant artifact (e.g. moving from one SNOMED CT release format to a newer one; new methods for measuring conformance are found to be better than previous methods);
- The artifact contains an error (wrong, correction) (e.g. methodology error, content has been classified incorrectly)
- A safety issue has arisen and the artifact needs to be deprecated (e.g. deprecating a map file because a technical error causes a map to point to the wrong diagnosis)
- The artifact is extraneous (not used)
- The artifact is a duplicate (e.g. duplicate QA rules)
- The supplier of the artifact is no longer supporting or providing it.

It is clear that processes for Deprecation need to be in line with the size, impact, complexity and the specific reason for deprecation, for example, deprecation due to a safety issue will need to be dealt with much quicker than an artifact that is extraneous. Therefore the IHTSDO Deprecation Process document outlines both fast track and longer, more detailed processes.

2.2 Declaration of Level of Support for a Deprecated Artifact

When an Artifact is deprecated, the level of support provided for that Artifact is discontinued in a managed way. In many cases the support being provided cannot be changed on the same date that

the Artifact is being deprecated. A transition time period is necessary for those impacted to make their own support or system changes and to migrate away from the product.

 For the time period where support is provided following the deprecation, it will be considered to be "Artifact Deprecated With Support". Following this period of support, the Artifact will be considered to be "Artifact Deprecated Without Support". Not all artifacts will require support and may proceed directly to "Artifact Deprecated Without Support".

2.3 Deprecation Process

The IHTSDO Deprecation Process document describes both a fast track as well as a longer, more detailed process for deprecation of artifacts. It describes how consultation with users will take place; and who approves decisions along the Deprecation Process. Please refer to The IHTSDO Deprecation Process document for details.

3 IHTSDO Deprecation Policies

1. A proposal for the Deprecation of an Artifact must have a stated reason for deprecation.
2. Deprecation will result when publication of a new release of an Artifact supersedes the existing release.
3. Consultation on requests and proposals for deprecation of an Artifact will gather user feedback on: the proposed date of deprecation and level and duration of support that will be provided by IHTSDO during the deprecation period prior to withdrawal.
4. When an Artifact is declared to be Deprecated its status will be changed to "Deprecated Artifact" and designated with either Artifact Deprecated With Support or Artifact Deprecated Without Support. When documentation that refers to the Deprecated Artifact is updated, all references to the Artifact, should be updated. This includes noting that it has been deprecated along with the deprecation date and the level and duration of support.
5. The Deprecated Artifact, along with supporting documentation and deprecation documentation, will be archived by the IHTSDO once it is no longer published..

Details of communication and documentation of the deprecation can be found in the IHTSDO Deprecation Process document.

4 Process for Review of this Policy

The date for review of this policy will be identified clearly under history and agreed when the IHTSDO Management Board approves the Policy and related process guidance and templates. The review will be no later than 2 years after approval of the policy and related documentation but can be initiated at an earlier interval if warranted (e.g. based on feedback)

The Quality Assurance Committee will undertake a review that will cover 3 areas:

1. Identifying whether there have been any issues arising from any specific deprecations and whether these were the result of ineffective deprecation process

2. Contacting those who have used the deprecation for structured feedback
3. Issue an invitation to stakeholders about the effectiveness of the process from their perspective i.e. did the process meet the needs of those having to deal with deprecated artifacts
4. Communicating back to the community on the feedback received.