

Reference Set Retirement Process

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Date: 2021-09-16

Brief

The process of retiring reference sets (refsets) has been a point of discussion for several years. This paper outlines the process of how reference sets should be handled within the RF2 format, and in turn, ensures consistency and predictability across future releases.

Reference set inactivation actions

There are 7 components to be considered when inactivating a reference set. The first 5 are the standard core components and should be handled as usual. Details are below;

Component	Action when reference set is deprecated
Concept	The component is made inactive.
Description	Components remain active (unless defective)
Language reference set	References will remain active (unless defective)
Stated Axiom	The component is made inactive.
Inferred Relationships	Component(s) will be inactivated upon classified (no active axiom)
Reference Set memberships	All activated memberships will be inactivated
Reference set Descriptor Entry	Reference Set Descriptor will remain as is.

Additionally, appropriate entries should be **created** for the

- Concept inactivation indicator reference set
- Historical Association reference set(s)

This includes if the responsibility of a reference set moves to another organisation (module).

Reference Set memberships

If a refset becomes inactive, it does not make sense for other components to have membership within. The inactive memberships should continue to be published within the RF2 release (indefinitely) to maintain the integrity of the RF2 history mechanisms. This will mean the:

- **“Full”** refset file continues to show the “Full history” from initial publication to retirement of the reference set.
- **“Snapshot”** refset file, will show a list of inactive memberships
- **“Delta”** will include the memberships that are inactivated for the release in which the refset is inactivated.

Reference Set Descriptor

The refset descriptor is somewhat like the Language refset. Entries can remain active because they still accurately describe what the refset structure was, and may be used by implementers who still wish to import the (now inactivated) reference set files - e.g. for historical analytic purposes. If the refset descriptor entries were retired, it would be unclear if they were wrong or the refset inactivated.

Entries should only be retired if they are wrong.

Moving Refsets

The specific process for moving content between editions is still being drafted. The following describes the expected process.

Promotion

If a refset is moving to a module upon which it has a dependency (e.g. National extension to Core), no action is required by the original module. When the refset is adopted by the destination module, new entries on the appropriate module will be created. These will supersede the original entries when the extension is updated.

If the original identifiers are not retained, additional processes are required.

Demotion

If a refset is moving to a module upon which it had no dependency (e.g. from Core to a national extension). The concept should be retired (as described here). New (active) entries will be created for all components by the destination module.

The refset will continue to “appear active” active within the destination edition. But will be inactive in the original edition, and all other dependent editions.

Whether the identifiers are retained is somewhat at the discretion of the destination module. However, if identifiers are not retained, the effect is simply creating a new refset that happens to have the same details as the original. If identifiers are retained, the (new) inactivation and association entries will need to be retired by the destination module also.

Useful Links:

- [\[ISRS-112\] RefsetDescriptor record requested to be inactivated - SNOMED International JIRA \(ihtsdotools.org\)](#)
- <https://confluence.ihtsdotools.org/pages/viewpage.action?pageId=129121034&preview=%2F129121034%2F129121042%2FRetirement+of+Refset+Final.docx>
- [Retirement of refsets - Terminology Release Advisory Group - SNOMED Confluence \(ihtsdotools.org\)](#)