Reviewer's report

**Title:** SMS-based smoking cessation intervention among university students: protocol for randomised controlled trial (NEXit trial).

**Version:** 3
**Date:** 15 January 2015

**Reviewer:** Peter Alan Coventry

**Reviewer's report:**

This is an excellent protocol: clearly written with sufficient detail to allow replication of the design and methods and with a strong section on rationale for the intervention and a comprehensive overview of the intervention contents.

I only have minor revisions to suggest to improve the structure and clarity of the paper:

1. In the randomisation and other study procedures section it is stated that only students who are willing to set a quit date within a month are eligible for the study. Can the authors explain why this is compared with allowing anyone who intends to quit to join the study.

2. Under blinding can the authors state whether the participants know which group they are in (it seems obvious that if they are in the SMS group that they will guess this anyway).

3. The authors currently state that the data collection procedures are automated limiting chances to bias results but will the research team be masked to treatment allocations throughout the data collection period?

4. Why is the allowance for attrition deliberately conservative? Do they anticipate a higher rate of drop outs in this trial to others that might normally go for 20% attrition?

5. I would suggest splitting up the section on intervention design and content from the section on earlier work to test feasibility of the intervention.

6. Were the focus groups referred to on page 7 undertaken with the same age group as that used in the trial i.e. were students recruited for this earlier work?

7. The data analysis plan says it will be ITT but the primary analysis will be undertaken on on complete cases only - can the authors explain this contradiction?

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**
'I declare that I have no competing interests'