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An Ghníomhaireacht um Chaomhnú Comhshaoil



EPA Research Programme 2021-2030 Guidelines on the Preparation of Evidence Synthesis Reports

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EPA Research Programme 2021–2030

Guidelines on the Preparation of Evidence Synthesis Reports

Introduction

This document provides general guidance for authors on the preparation of the EPA Research Evidence Synthesis Reports that are required for projects funded under the EPA Research Programme 2021-2030.

Please read this document carefully prior to submitting your EPA Research Evidence Synthesis Report to the EPA. This document does not replace, but is complimentary to, the:

1. EPA Research Call Technical Description documents
2. EPA Research Call Guides and Terms and Conditions for Support of Grant Awards

The above documents are available to download from the [EPA's Online Grant Management and Application Portal](#) or from the [Call Documents page on the EPA Website](#).

More Information

For further information or assistance please contact research@epa.ie.

Disclaimer

Although every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the material contained in this publication, complete accuracy cannot be guaranteed. The Environmental Protection Agency, the authors and the steering committee members do not accept any responsibility whatsoever for loss or damage occasioned, or claimed to have been occasioned, in part or in full, as a consequence of any person acting, or refraining from acting, as a result of a matter contained in this publication. Any opinions, findings or recommendations expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not reflect a position or recommendation of the EPA. All or part of this publication may be reproduced without further permission, provided the source is acknowledged.

This report is based on research carried out/data from 2023 to April 2024. More recent data may have become available since the research was completed.

The EPA Research Programme addresses the need for research in Ireland to inform policymakers and other stakeholders on a range of questions in relation to environmental protection. These reports are intended as contributions to the necessary debate on the protection of the environment.

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Final Reporting Requirements

The EPA requires the lead applicant to submit a draft EPA Research Evidence Synthesis Report (20-30 pages). The report should be concise, accessible and non-technical.

The report should include:

- An executive summary (maximum 700 words)
- An introduction
- An overview of the research or issue
- An examination of the findings, and
- A concluding section that explains the policy recommendations and implications of the research.

All reports should be submitted before the end date of the project, in accordance with the guidelines outlined in this document.

Reports must be submitted in MS Word format using the [EPA Research Evidence Synthesis Report Layout Template](#) which is available to download from the EPA website.

IMPORTANT: An EPA Research Evidence Synthesis Report will not be considered to have been submitted to the EPA if it has not been submitted via the [EPA's Grant Management and Application Portal](#).

Authors will also need to prepare summary text for the back cover of the report, under the heading "Informing Policy" (maximum 180 words).

Review and Publication

EPA Research Evidence Synthesis Report will be reviewed and should be revised by the project team in order to address any comments/recommendations. The EPA will sign-off on the report(s), once satisfied with the contents.

If suitable for publication, the EPA Research Evidence Synthesis Report will be sent for proofing, formatting and publishing by the EPA. All comments/queries from the proofreaders must be responded to by the report author(s) within 28 days.

The authors are responsible for the proofing and formatting of any Technical Reports as these will not to be published by the EPA.

Open Data

The EPA Research Programme funds not-for-profit research intended to generate knowledge for public good purposes and as such the EPA expects that outputs and/or findings should be widely disseminated and made publicly available.

[Click here to view our Open Access Policy on the EPA website.](#)

It is a requirement that Lead Applicant to make the final report (whether published on the EPA website or not) and any significant datasets available on the [EPA's SAFER-data Archive](#) or another data repository as agreed by the EPA.

NB: The authors are responsible for the proofing and formatting of reports, datasets and other project outputs uploaded to all data repositories.

Formatting Guidelines

All reports must be submitted in MS Word format using the [EPA Research Evidence Synthesis Report Layout Template](#) which is available to download from the EPA website. The following formatting should be observed when preparing the report:

Page Layout

- The paper size (found on the Layout tab) should be set to A4.
- All figures and tables inserted in the document should fit on an A4 page.
- The margins (found on the Layout tab) should be set to Normal.
- Pages should be numbered.

Font Styles

Headings should be formatted as follows:

- Level 1 headings – Calibri 18 pt bold.
- Level 2 headings – Calibri 12 pt bold.
- Level 3 headings – Calibri 11 pt bold italics.
- Level 4 headings – Calibri 11 pt italics.

The main body text within the report should be Calibri 11 pt regular and 1.5 line spacing should be used.

Use bold font for emphasis (do not use underlining, *italics* or inverted commas (‘ or “) for emphasis), and emphasise text only where necessary.

Alignment, Paragraphs and Line Spacing

- All text should be left-aligned (ragged right).
- Use 1.5 line spacing for the main body text.
- Leave one clear line space above and below headings and between paragraphs.
- Do not indent paragraphs.

Adding Equations

IMPORTANT – PLEASE NOTE:

The Equation Editor function can cause compatibility issues across different versions of Word. These issues can prevent users from being able to download or open Word documents which contain equations, or from being able to view equations within the document.

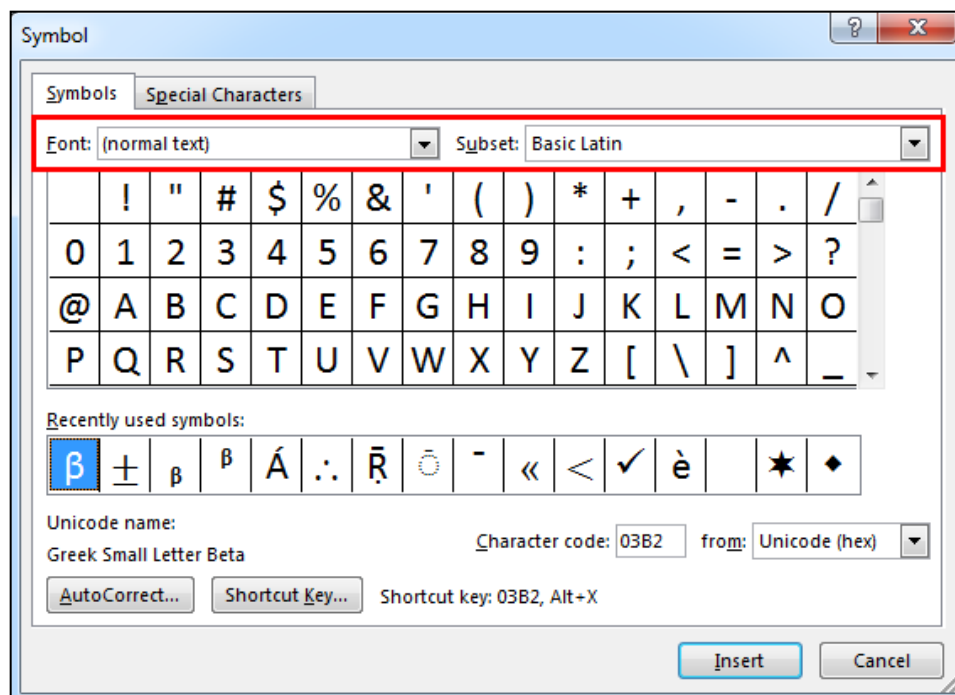
To prevent this:

1. When using the Equation Editor function you will need to take a screenshot of the equation, paste the image into the document, and then delete the original Equation Editor object.
2. If mathematical and/or scientific symbols are included within the document text or within tables, you must use the Insert Symbols option and embed fonts (see the sections in this document entitled Inserting Symbols and Embedding Fonts for guidance).

Inserting Symbols

When using mathematical and/or scientific symbols in your report you should use the Insert Symbols option. To add a symbol, click on the Insert tab, and select the Symbol option.

Most symbols will be available within a subset of normal text, however selecting a different font and subset will provide further options:

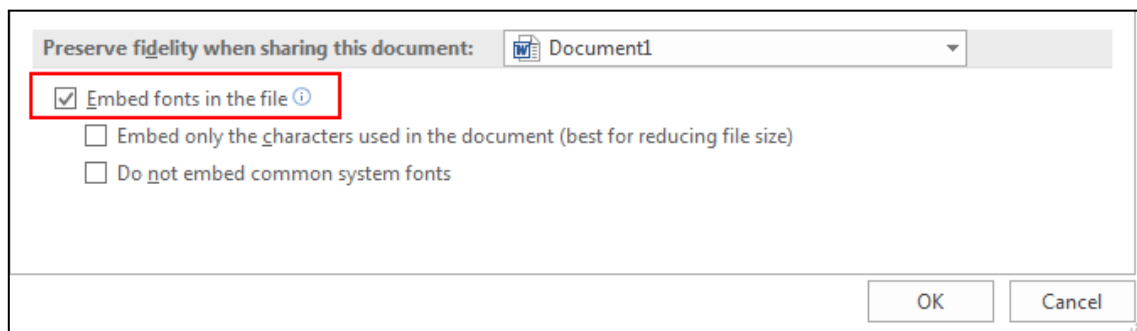


NB: When inserting symbols, you should always embed the fonts in your document to ensure they will be visible to other users.

Embedding Fonts

All fonts should be embedded in the report before it is submitted to the EPA for review to ensure they will be visible to readers. The following steps outline the process for embedding fonts into a Word document:

1. With the Word document open, click on the File tab in the top left-hand corner of the screen and select the Options button.
2. Click on the Save tab in the Word Options pop-up box.
3. Locate the heading Preserve fidelity when sharing this document, then select the Embed fonts in the file tick box.
4. Click on the OK button.
5. Save the document.



Style Guidelines

Prose

The writing style should be clear and concise, and the report should be written in plain English. Define any scientific or technical terms which may be unfamiliar and include a glossary if necessary.

English spellings and grammar styles should be used. For example, use:

- organisation, not organization
- have got, not have gotten

Do not use the first-person plural. Use 'The study found...' or 'The researchers found...' not 'We found...'.

Abbreviations

Standard abbreviations should be used, and where necessary abbreviations should be defined. Do not use punctuation in acronyms (e.g. use EPA, not E.P.A.).

Hyphens

Use hyphens in sentences only where necessary for clarity (e.g. six-monthly meetings has a different meaning to six monthly meetings).

Use hyphens in words only where appropriate (e.g. re-mark has a different meaning to remark).

Use hyphens to connect adjectival expressions (e.g. up-to-date information)

Measurements and Scientific Units

The Metric System should be used for all measurements.

Any scientific units used should, where possible, be those adopted in the *Système International* (SI) convention.

There should be a consistent way of referring to units i.e. mg/l or mg l⁻¹ throughout the report

Equations

Equations should be placed on a new line and should be numbered by chapter in parentheses to the right of the equation.

Example:

$$\sin \alpha \pm \sin \beta = 2 \sin \frac{1}{2} (\alpha \pm \beta) \cos \frac{1}{2} (\alpha \mp \beta) \quad (1.1)$$

IMPORTANT: The Equation Editor function can cause compatibility issues across different versions of Word. Please refer to the section in this document entitled Adding Equations for guidance.

Tables and Figures

Tables

All tables must be cited in the text and numbered consecutively in the order in which they are first mentioned. Tables should be numbered by chapter, e.g. the first table in chapter one should be numbered Table 1.1.

Table titles should contain the table number at the start followed by the description. Each table column must have a heading and units should be included where applicable. Footnotes can be used to indicate the source of data in table or to explain abbreviations.

Example:

Table 1.1 - Caption goes here

Title	Column 1 Heading	Column 2 Heading
First Row	1.234 L	2.345 ml
Second Row	9.876 L	8.745 ml

Figures

All figures must be cited in the text and numbered consecutively in the order in which they are first mentioned. Figures should be numbered by chapter, e.g. the first figure in chapter one should be numbered Figure 1.1.

A caption should be placed below each figure. The caption should include the figure number followed by the description. Where possible the figure should stand alone so that it can be understood without reference to the text.

Example:

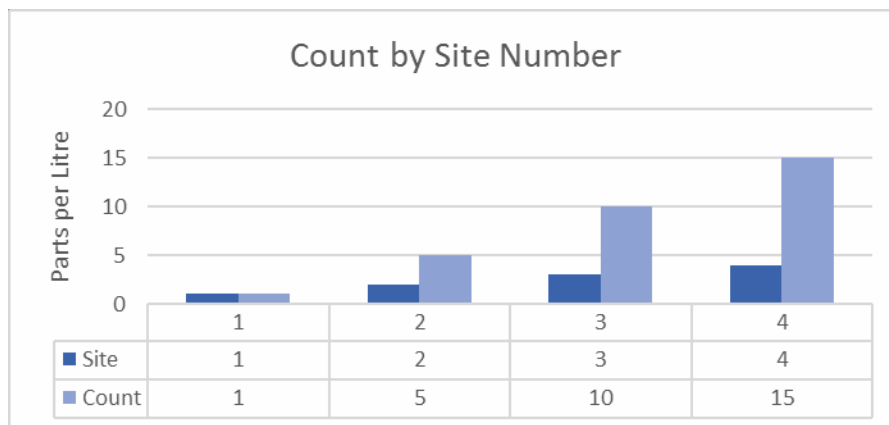


Figure 1.1 - Caption goes here

References

All references cited in the text must be listed in the References section and a bibliography should be used if it contains references that have not been cited in the text.

The Harvard style of referencing should be used. References should be listed alphabetically by the name(s) of the author(s), and then chronologically (where there is more than one reference by the same author(s)).

Journal titles should be written out in full and the title of articles (or chapters, where applicable) should be included. Page ranges for articles should include the start and end pages (e.g. 12 – 15).

Example (journal):

Beyer, K.M.M., Kaltenbach, A., Szabo, A., Bogar, S., Nieto, F.J. and Malecki, K.M., 2014. Exposure to neighbourhood green space and mental health: evidence from the Survey of the Health of Wisconsin. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 11: 3453–3472.

Example (book):

Butterfield, J., Bingham, S. and Savory, A. 2006. *Holistic Management Handbook*. Healthy Land, Healthy Profits. Island Press, Washington, DC.

Example (book chapter):

Caffrey, J.M., 1987, Macrophytes as biological indicators of organic pollution in Irish rivers. In: Richardson, D.H.S. (Ed.) *Biological Indicators of Pollution*. Royal Irish Academy, Dublin, Ireland, pp. 71–81.

Example (report):

Bruen, M., Rymszewicz, A., O’Sullivan, J., Turner, J., Lawler, D., Conroy, E. and Kelly-Quinn, M.,
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2017. Sediment Flux – Measurement, Impacts, Mitigation and Implications for River Management in Ireland. Environmental Protection Agency, Johnstown Castle, Ireland.

Example (Government and EU publications):

CEC, 1992. Directive 92/43/EEC, of 21st May, on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora. Commission of the European Communities. Official Journal of the European Union L206 22.7.1992.

Example (website):

References to websites should contain enough information to enable to reader to retrieve it.

EPA (Environmental Protection Agency), 2014. Secure Archive for Environmental Research Data. Available online: <http://erc.epa.ie/safer/index.jsp> (accessed 4 April 2018)

Permission to Reproduce Material

As the author you are responsible for obtaining permission to reproduce copyrighted material (e.g. figures, tables, maps and text) from the relevant copyright holder. You should submit copies of the copyright licences to the EPA along with your final report.

You should be aware that some publishers can charge a fee for the reproduction of copyrighted material.

Even if you are the author of the work being reproduced, you may not necessarily own the copyright for the published material. Please check with the publisher.

When applying for permission to reuse copyrighted material, please seek permission for the following:

- worldwide distribution;
- use in print and/or electronic delivery platforms in any and all media now known or hereafter developed; and
- use in all languages.

In addition, note that the following limitations in copyright licences are not acceptable:

- restricting electronic/digital use of the EPA report;
- the time that the EPA may use the copyrighted material; and
- the countries in which the EPA report may be distributed.

Material requiring permission

The following list details the usual material that you will need to obtain permission to use in your EPA report (please note that this is not an exhaustive list and, if in doubt about whether or not you should seek permission, it is always best to err on the side of caution and contact the publisher you wish to use material from):

- a single quotation or several short quotes from a full-length book of over 300 words;
- a single quotation of over 50 words from another a journal, newspaper or magazine article;
- a quotation of any length from a website;
- charts, tables or graphs or other representations where the author is using the entire piece of work or has used a substantial amount of material from another piece of work;
- Ordnance Survey maps, map extracts and redrawn maps;
- photographs;
- reproduction of web pages or screenshots;
- logos and trademarks;
- certain photographs containing recognizable people;
- reproduction of advertisements;
- any third-party software used in a CD, DVD or website supporting an author's work;
- film stills and film grabs;
- video clips;
- audio files;
- quotations from informal writings, such as speeches, interviews, mission statements, questionnaires, classroom discussions or student works.

If the data are presented in a different way in charts, tables, graphs and figures, permission is not needed, but the source should be credited. If a table or figure has been adapted, you will need to use your judgement as to how different your adaptation is from the original. If in doubt contact the original publisher.

Using material published by a scientific, technical and medical (STM) publisher

Science, technical and medical (STM) publishers, participating in the STM Permissions Guidelines (see www.stm-assoc.org/intellectual-property/permissions/permissions-guidelines/), will grant permission to another STM publisher (or its author) without charge for the following material:

- up to three figures (including tables) from a journal article or book chapter;
- up to five figures (including tables) from a whole book or journal issue;
- up to 30 figures from a single publisher; or
- a single quotation less than 400 words/or several shorter quotations from the same the same book or journal less than 800 words.

Note that the use of maps is not covered by the STM agreement.

The majority of STM publisher signatories continue to require that a permissions request is made in order to monitor how their material is being used. Please do this in all cases where needed.

Orphan works

Orphan works are published material that are still in copyright, but the copyright owners cannot be found – even after a diligent good faith search – in order to grant permission to reproduce substantial parts of the material.

In the case of orphan works, it is essential to demonstrate that serious effort has been made in good faith to locate and contact the rights owner before any use of the material be made. There should be a clear and adequate attribution to the orphan work in the text of the report and the use can only ever be on a ‘non-exclusive’ basis. If the copyright owner appears in due course, they will be entitled to demand the removal of their material or demand an appropriate fee for the use of their work.

If the rightsholder is a small publisher, then the following sources may be helpful for identifying rightsholder contacts:

- in the UK, the Publishers’ Licensing Services (www.pls.org.uk/);
- in the UK, the Authors' Licensing and Collecting Society (ALCS) (<http://www.alcs.co.uk>);
- in the USA, the Copyright Clearance Center (www.copyright.com/); or
- for other international publishers, the International Federation of Reproduction Rights Organisation (www.ifrro.org/rro).

Credit your source

To avoid any accusations of plagiarism (specifically self, paraphrasing, verbatim and mosaic) you should always provide a source and credit for any copyright material used. In most cases, the original publisher's rights department or the journal's editorial office will advise you of the exact form of words required. This usually includes a full bibliographic reference to the original publication and an acknowledgement that the material is reproduced with permission from the rights owner.

Graphs, Charts and Images

To ensure high-quality print reproduction, all graphs, charts, and images embedded in the Word document should also be supplied separately with clearly labelled filenames, to the specification below:

Exporting VECTOR File Formats - Suitable files:

- Adobe Illustrator - EPS/PDF/AI
- Corel Draw - EMF/EPS/PDF
- Visio - EPS
- Excel /PowerPoint /Word – PDF

Exporting BITMAP File Formats - File formats accepted:

- TIFF
- JPEG
- PSD
- BMP

NB: All Bitmap images must be at a minimum of 300 dpi at A5 size (or 2000 pixels on the shortest side).

Checking for Compatibility Issues

Before you submit your report to the EPA for review it is recommended that you check for potential compatibility issues with other versions of Word.

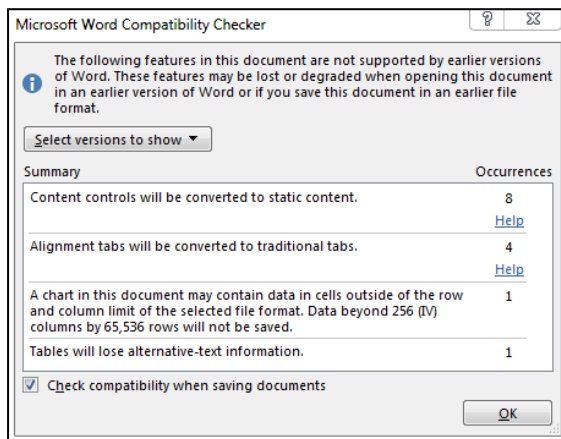
To do this:

1. Select the File tab
2. Click on the Check for Issues button in the Inspect Document section
3. Select the Check Compatibility option – this will open the Compatibility Checker pop-up

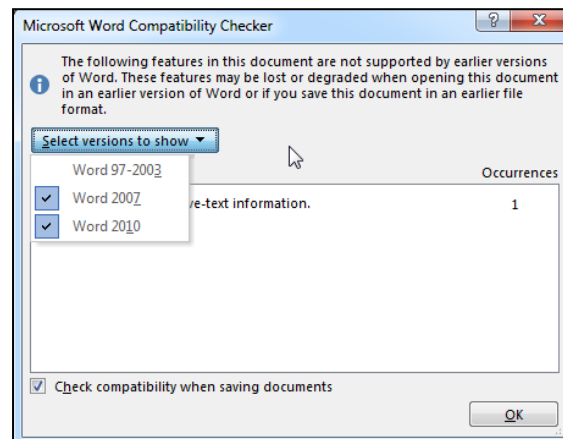
Potential compatibility issues will be displayed in the Summary section. By clicking on the Select versions to show button you can choose which version of Word to compare – narrowing the selection to the most recent versions may reduce the number of issues found.

In the following examples a reduction in the number of potential issues is noted when the oldest version of Word is excluded from the compatibility check:

All Versions Compared – 14 issues



Two Versions Compared – 1 issue



NB: It is strongly recommended that as a minimum you check for compatibility issues in Word 2007 and Word 2010.

Pre-Submission Checklist

Pre-Submission Checklist	
Text	
✓	Has been spellchecked, including scientific or technical words which may not be recognised by the Word spellchecker
✓	Capitalisation and abbreviations have been used consistently throughout the document
✓	Page numbering has been used throughout the document
✓	Fonts used to add symbols have been embedded in the document
Headings	
✓	Capitalisation is consistent and correct
✓	Full-stops have not been used at the end of headings
Measurements and Scientific Units	
✓	The Metric system has been used
✓	Have been referred to consistently throughout the document
Equations	
✓	Have been numbered
✓	Have been created using symbols, or been added as an image
✓	Have been embedded in the document
Tables and Figures	
✓	Are cited in the text
✓	Are numbered sequentially and labelled/captioned correctly
✓	Are sufficiently high resolution for print quality
✓	Axes have been correctly labelled
References	
✓	Have been cited in the text
✓	Harvard referencing system has been used
Reproduced Material	
✓	Permissions to the use the material have been obtained
✓	Licences/copyright numbers are included in the Acknowledgements section
Graphs, Charts and Images	
✓	Where required, have been supplied separately in appropriate formats/resolutions
Compatibility	
✓	The document has been checked for compatibility with other versions of Word