QSR 2023 further writing guidance

(Supplementing the "Writing style guide for assessments" accessible below on page 3)

Writing guidance on topics relevant to specific types of assessment.

Guidance on confidence categories and language is included in Annex 1 of the QSR2023 Guidance Document.

Guidance for common indicator assessments	
Methodology section and CEMP Guideline	The method section of the common indicator assessments should be kept short. Detailed methodological descriptions, including monitoring methodology to collect the data, and statistical protocols for calculating the indicator, should be described in a CEMP Guideline as an OSPAR Agreement. The method-section of the indicator should refer to the CEMP Guideline.
Updating text from previous versions	The sections 'key message', 'results' and 'conclusions' are anticipated to change with each indicator update. Maintain text unchanged in other sections if at all possible, such as on 'background' and 'methodology'. Once the indicator has matured, these sections are not foreseen to need regular updates, which will reduce the amount of content which will need to undergo scrutiny by Committees.
Knowledge gaps	Link knowledge gaps identified in the assessment with knowledge gaps listed in the OSPAR Science needs Agenda (OSA) table (accessible here), where possible. Knowledge gaps which are not listed in the OSA table should be highlighted to ease the update of the OSA table that will follow the QSR process. The OSA table is accessible on the QSR SharePoint and assessment leads are invited to modify/update the knowledge gaps and/or insert new rows with additional knowledge gaps and related metadata. Metadata such as policy deadline, relevant area, severity of the knowledge gap etc. (columns G – L) would inform the development of research projects and priority setting.
Terminology: threshold value	Describe a threshold value as 'achieved' / 'not achieved'. If no data or results are available for some assessment units, indicator status can also be described as 'not assessed'. If no threshold value has been approved for expressing the status of the indicator, the status can be described as 'unknown'. The indicator should only be described as achieving or not achieving its threshold. An indicator threshold does not represent achieving or failing to achieve good environmental status and such language should be avoided (unless describing an integrated assessment see guidance for thematic assessments).

Guidance for thematic assessments

Executive summary	Aim for concise language that is clear and action oriented. The 300 wordcount should be seen as indicative for the section before the five questions.
	The content and responses under the five questions will have different relevance between the various thematic assessments. For some thematic assessments a question may have a one sentence response while others would have a couple of paragraphs.
	In the section on question "Q5. What do we do next?" consider using a formulation like "OSPAR will" for actions which would support the implementation of Strategic Objectives and Operational Objectives from the NEAES 2030 and which can already be agreed by Contracting Parties; softer formulations such as "OSPAR should/could" would be more appropriate for actions which would go beyond the scope of the NEAES 2030 or raise new issues which could be considered by OSPAR in the future (for example in the NEAES mid-term 2025 review).
Integration rules	Integration rules should be described in a separate technical document which is referred to in the thematic assessment. The document can for example be a CEMP Guideline (OSPAR Agreement).
References	If the thematic assessment information and conclusion is based on an OSPAR assessment, such as a common indicator assessment, a pilot assessment, an 'other assessment' or even another thematic assessment, identify the most prominent location where this reference is made and indicate that a TILE will be added to the assessment in OAP. A TILE is a hyperlinked button for assessments in OAP. Aim to identify one location for a tile in the body of the thematic assessment text per indicator/other assessment. A tile will also be added to the bottom of the executive summary page.
	If the thematic assessment makes a reference to an OSPAR assessment but it is not a primary source of information, identify the assessment and indicate that a HYPERLINK only will be added when the assessment is published.
	Use regular citation technique and reference lists for sources other than OSPAR assessments.
Length	Thematic assessments should be around 30/40 pages long maximum using the thematic assessment template, excluding pictures, schemas and tables.
Knowledge gaps	If there is a particular knowledge gap to be described in the body of the text, use the words 'knowledge gap' and link it to the OSPAR Science needs Agenda (OSA) identified list of knowledge gaps (accessible here on SharePoint), where possible.
	Also, the OSA table is accessible on the QSR SharePoint and assessment leads are invited to modify/update the knowledge gaps and/or insert new rows with additional knowledge gaps and related metadata. Metadata such as policy deadline, relevant area, severity of the knowledge gap etc. (columns G – L) would inform the development of research projects and priority setting.
Terminology: good environmental status	The result of an integrated assessment can describe good environmental status as having been 'achieved' / 'not achieved'.
	Do not use capital letters or an abbreviation such as GES. Write good environmental status.

N.B: This "QSR2023 further writing guidance" was agreed by CoG(2)2021 during its session of the 16-17 November 2021.

Writing style guide for assessments

This style guide has been developed primarily to enable consistent drafting of common indicator assessments. The guide can also be applied for other assessments contributing to the QSR 2023.

No.	Rule
General comments / rules	
1.	In brief sections, language should be easily understandable for a non-scientific audience – no references and no scientific names. The brief sections must stand alone, and not reference the extended sections. All figure and table number for the brief will be in numerical form.
	The brief sections are like executive summaries.
2.	The extended sections are for all the technical content, the text must still be readable and scientific terms should still be explained where appropriate. There are no word limits for the extended sections.
3.	Abbreviations to be stated in full on first use in each assessment / chapter, e.g. 'Quality Status Report (QSR) 2023', followed by 'QSR 2023' thereafter.
	Each abbreviation in the extended sections must be written in full again first time.
4.	For brief sections – write abbreviations in full in the title, then in full on first mention in either background, results, conclusions, results or knowledge gaps.
	You <u>can</u> use abbreviations in the key message (provided they are also used in the title).
5.	Text should be impersonal, in the third person passive, i.e. never use 'we' studied this, always say 'it was studied'.
6.	Scientific names should be in italics but not in brackets after English name (the genus of the Latin name always begins with a capital letter).
	Common species names should be in lower case.
	E.g. little egret *Egretta garzetta*
	Avoid use of scientific names in the brief sections.
7.	Avoid citations in the brief sections; however, they can be used in the extended version and in underlying assessments.
	In the extended version all references will be placed at the end of the page, in a separate accordion section.
8.	All references should use the HARVARD system.
	Many free referencing tools are available online. A guide to Harvard referencing can be found here. https://www.citethisforme.com/harvard-referencing
9.	In the first instance, do not refer to OSPAR Regions (I, II, III, IV, V)
	Refer to names of seas, or sub-divisions, e.g.
	- Arctic Waters (Region I) - Greater North Sea (Region II) - Celtic Seas (Region III) - Bay of Biscay and Iberian Coast (Region IV) - Wider Atlantic (Region V)
	After that it is OK to refer to them as e.g., Region I etc.

No.	Rule
10.	Refer to sub-divisions by name, e.g. • Southern North Sea • Northern North Sea • Dogger Bank • English Channel • Kattegat
11.	In the brief results, if statements are made about increases or decreases, these should be qualified with actual numbers. E.g. *Average annual winter concentrations of dissolved nitrogen offshore in the southern North Sea (18 µM) were more than double the concentrations in the northern North Sea (7.5 µM).*
12.	Do not refer to next cycle of MSFD, instead refer to 'next assessment cycle'.
13.	Never use 'about' or 'roughly, 'always say 'approximately'.
14.	If the author wants to show that something within the text should be hyperlinked, the text should be written in blue and underlined (a link should also be provided if the source of the link is not an OSPAR document).
15.	In extended sections, reference EU directives with directive number (we can also hyperlink them), e.g. The Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC)
Style / terminology	
16.	Numbers One to Ten written as words, all numbers higher than ten written as numbers, e.g. five working days per week, 20 working days per month (unless with units, e.g. 5µg).
17.	No space between number and percentage e.g. 5%
18.	Leave a space between a number and unit, e.g. 32 km, -15,5 CD.
19.	For numbers larger than 999 insert a space to show thousands, e.g. 21 000
20.	Use a comma to show a decimal point
21.	Do not begin a sentence with a number
22.	Add a space before and after a '/ ', for example 'chemistry and / or biology' (except for when used in a ratio)
23.	Date format: 17 June 2008
24.	Between '1999 and 2010', not 'between 1999 - 2010'
25.	From '1999 to 2010', not ' from 1999 - 2010'
26.	1960s not 1960's
27.	Do not use 'etc.'
28.	Assessment Sheet with capitals
29.	Indicator Assessment with capital
30.	OSPAR Contracting Parties with capital to refer to something connected with actions taken in specific roles as OSPAR Contracting Parties - e.g. 'Contracting Parties should take measures' or 'Contracting Parties should promote pellet loss reduction standards'. Remember that OSPAR Contracting Parties include 15 countries AND the European Union.

No.	Rule
31.	Or use 'countrie's if appropriate (lower case c) e.g., Agriculture in OSPAR countries covers x% of the land area' or 'OSPAR countries have plans for growth in aquaculture'.
32.	"sub-regions" with no capital when talking about sub-regions in general
33.	Sub-region X with a capital when talking about a specific sub-region
34.	OSPAR Regions
35.	OSPAR Maritime Area
36.	re-used
37.	Common Indicators
38.	Sub-divisions
39.	The North-East Atlantic Environment Strategy (The OSPAR Strategy) written in full first use, then thereafter known as 'The OSPAR Strategy' or 'NEAES'
40.	OSPAR's Joint Assessment & Monitoring Programme (JAMP), referred to as 'The JAMP' thereafter
41.	MSFD Descriptors always in numerical form, numbers not written in full
42.	Use UK spelling: e.g. metre, litre, programme, centre, colour, harbour, favourite, harmonise, analyse, organisation, centre
43.	North-East Atlantic (coast) use a hyphen
44.	north-west, south-west, north-western, e.g., south coast of Ireland, not South Coast of Ireland, or South coast of Ireland Only use capital letter if part of proper noun, e.g. Northern Ireland
45.	No &, always 'and'
46.	Socio-economic
47.	Long term not long-term
48.	English Channel – not The Channel
49.	In 'The Sound'
50.	'the Netherlands' not The Netherlands (unless starting a sentence).
51.	United Kingdom not U.K. (unless in a list of other abbreviated countries)
52.	Dataset not data set or data-set Datastream not data stream
53.	Incidental by-catch not Bycatch. By-catch or By catch
54.	haul-out not haul out
55.	cost-effective not cost effective
56.	baseline not base-line
57.	man-made (not manmade)
58.	time series (not time-series)

No.	Rule
59.	marine life (not sea life)
60.	food web (not foodweb)
61.	Make sure that *Phaeocystis* is always in italics as it is a genus
62.	Standard numbering should be used in the brief section e.g. **Figure 1, Figure 2** etc. Letters should be used in the extended sections e.g. **Figure a, Figure b** etc.
63.	All figures to be referred to as '**Figure 1**' not 'Fig. 1'. Table referencing language as for figures (e.g. **Table 1**). References to figures and tables to be in bold e.g. **Figure a**. If more than one is being referred to do not put 'and' in bold e.g. **Figure 1** and **Table 1** (i.e. not Figures). In caption / title use a colon (e.g. **Figure 1: Average concentrations of…….** or **Table a: Average concentrations of….**) and **bold**. Table caption / title above. Figure caption / title below.
64.	All data should be submitted in Excel files
65.	Graphs and charts in Excel should be submitted, to enable the Secretariat to re-graph into an aligned format.
66.	For graphs, please use the following colours for each Contracting Party's data

Contracting Party	R	G	B
BE	199	179	211
CH	248	175	49
DE	242	227	153
DK	122	63	145
ES	88	84	138
FI	96	95	91
FR	255	134	67
IE	116	143	30
IS	70	191	189
LU	15	116	175
NL	217	205	41
NO	0	189	142
PT	160	203	216
SE	0	132	140
UK	109	141	154

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| 67. | Shapefiles to be submitted with corresponding shx, and dbf files. |

OSPAR Commission