

Darwin Plus Projects – further metadata guidance

Writing abstracts

Whether documenting a dataset, publication or another product type, the abstract should be clear, punchy and concise. The abstract is intended to help readers decide whether they wish to consult the original report or to use a particular dataset.

The first paragraph of the abstract (approx 30 words/ 255 characters) should work as a standalone summary of the report or dataset. This is generally displayed under the product name when shown in a list on websites or catalogues. Try to use keywords relevant to the data / publication at the start of the first paragraph (i.e. keywords that an end user might use as search terms). Further information about the product may then be given in additional paragraphs.

A good entry for a **publication** will cover the purpose, technique, scale and coverage (where appropriate), for example:

‘The purpose of this report is to produce a series of Conceptual Ecological Models (CEMs) that represent the shallow sublittoral mud habitat in the UK. CEMs are diagrammatic representations of the influences and processes that occur within an ecosystem.’

A good entry for a **dataset** will detail; data type, coverage, time-period (if appropriate) and data status (raw/ processed). For example:

‘Statistical data covering type and frequency of pollution event based on a survey from the Environment Agency. This is the entire raw dataset’

An abstract for a publication should;

- State briefly the primary objectives and scope unless this is clear from the title.
- Indicate the application or wider context if this is not obvious.
- Describe the methodology if this is essential for understanding, or if it is unusual or novel. (If appropriate).
- Provide a general statement of the findings.
- If relevant, state the main implications of the findings.

An abstract for a dataset should;

- Describe the focus of the dataset.
- Indicate the application or wider context if this is not obvious.
- Note the type of data (i.e. statistical or spatial).
- Provide the spatial coverage and scale (where appropriate).
- Describe the most relevant fields.
- Refer to the organisations involved in collection of the data.

Notes on grammar

- Avoid writing in the first person i.e. “we”, “our” or “the author”.
- Expand acronyms in the first instance, e.g. format: Earth Observation (EO).
- Overall sense – does the text make sense; is it logical? Is it in clear English?
- Check spelling.
- Use of scientific terminology - is it very jargon-filled?
- Numbers one to nine should be spelt out. Use figures for 10 and over, and in conjunction with measurements. Do not start a sentence with a figure – write the numbers in words, e.g. Fifty-six.