

SYNOPSIS of GUIDELINES FOR ABSTRACTING (ASFIS-4) using www-ISIS-ASFA software (for use with the full Guidelines ASFIS-4, Rev.3)

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1 Introduction

In your day-to-day abstracting of records for ASFA, this Synopsis may be easier to use and consult than the full Guidelines for Abstracting (ASFIS-4, Rev. 3). Each of the steps mentioned in this "Synopsis" is cross-referenced to the "full" Guidelines where you can find more detailed information. Note, this "Synopsis" is even more condensed than the previous edition which accompanied Revision 2 of the full Guidelines.

1.1 Definitions

ASFA Bibliographic Database - collection of bibliographic references or "records" (published in various formats: CD-ROM, Internet and printed abstracts journals).

Record - the basic unit of storage (and retrieval) of information in the ASFA Database. Each record or bibliographic reference contains information describing a documentary unit (e.g. journal article, book, etc.). For convenience, we say the record is comprised of 3 parts: 1) the bibliographic citation (i.e. the "descriptive cataloguing" information such as: author, title, publisher, etc.), 2) the abstract, and 3) the indexing terms (i.e. subject categories, descriptors and sometimes identifiers).

Abstract - the term "abstract" signifies an abbreviated, accurate representation of the contents of a document, without added interpretation or criticism and without distinction as to who wrote the abstract. (from: ISO 214-1976 (E))

Abstracting - consists of analysing or assessing the original document and then selecting significant information and presenting it in condensed form, with precision and brevity. The "**Abstractor**" is an individual who skilfully writes or edits abstracts.

2 Purpose of abstracts (see full Guidelines, section-4 for more detailed explanation)

The fundamental purpose or use of abstracts is to provide the reader (user) with a means for scanning the world-wide literature in his or her field (and related fields) without an exorbitant expenditure of time, and money. The abstract provides the reader with information necessary to determine whether the document would be of value to him or her. Abstracts promote current awareness, allow for retrospective searching, and prevent duplication of previous work thus saving time and money.

3 Kinds of abstracts

3.1 Informative abstract - presents as much as possible of the quantitative and/or qualitative information contained in the document (desirable for texts describing experimental work and documents devoted to a single theme). (see full Guidelines, section-3.1 and Annex-1, abstract-1: Annex-1a, examples 1, 5a,b)

3.2 Indicative abstract - describes the type of work, the principal subjects covered, and the way the facts are treated (often used for discursive or lengthy texts, such as broad overviews, review papers, entire monographs). (see full Guidelines, section-3.2 and Annex-1, abstract-2; Annex-1a, examples 3, 5c)

3.3 Informative-indicative abstract - confines informative statements to the primary elements of the document, and relegates other aspects to indicative statements. (see full Guidelines, section-3.3 and Annex-1, abstract-3; Annex-1a, example 2)

3.4 Author's abstract - may be used if its content and style is satisfactory. You should amend the author's abstract to conform to ASFA requirements. (see full Guidelines, section-3.4, 3.5)

3.5 No Abstract Text - there are exceptions to the rule that all records in ASFA must include an abstract (e.g. Annual Reports of Institutes containing only administrative details, and Statistical Reports in which the title sufficiently explains the contents). These records can be entered in ASFA with only the bibliographic citation and indexing terms. (see full Guidelines, sections 3.6, 7.8-7.9-7.10 and Annex-1, abstracts-12, 14, 16)

4 Treatment of Document Content (analysis of content) (see full Guidelines, section-5.1)

The writing of abstracts (and also the indexing process) is based on the **conceptual analysis** of the content of the document.

Identify the concepts contained in the document by reading the **important** or key sections of the document (e.g. Introduction, Purpose, Conclusions, Summary, Recommendations, etc.). Look for information on: **why** was the document written? **what** was investigated? **how** was it investigated? and **what** were the results and the conclusions of the investigation?

5 Documentary types (see full Guidelines, section-7)

The type of document (e.g. journal article, review article, bibliography, book, manual, etc.) will usually determine the type of abstract that you should prepare for a document.

For example, **journal articles**, which usually deal with only a single topic of research, can be described using an **informative** abstract (include information on: the purpose of the research, the methodology and equipment used, the results and conclusions).

For **books**, an **indicative** or **informative-indicative** abstract is necessary.

6 Presentation and Style (see full Guidelines, section-6)

The abstract should be concise, lucid, accurate and as informative (i.e. complete) as possible.

- **Format** - Abstracts should follow the recommendations contained in this “Synopsis” and the “full Guidelines”, and be submitted in machine readable format using the www-ISIS-ASFA Software.
- **Language** - The abstract may be English or non-English (but using only the Latin alphabet). (see full Guidelines, section-6.2)
- **Scientific names** - Always include scientific names, when relevant, in the abstract. The name of a species is a two-word (binary) combination consisting of the generic name followed by the specific name. The first letter of the generic name is capitalized and that of the specific name is written in lower case, both are italicized (see further on in this document on how to represent Italics).
- **Number of Abstracts per Record** - All ASFA records should include at least **one** abstract, but there are occasions when you can include **two or more** abstracts in the same record. In some rare cases, you may omit completely the abstract. (see full Guidelines section 7.8, 7.9, 7.10 for discussion on records requiring no abstract)
 - ❖ The **first** abstract field is called: **English Abstract**. This is a **non-repeatable** field, therefore it can contain only 1 abstract. **Always enter the English abstract in this field.**
 - ❖ The **second** abstract field is called: **Non-English abstract**. This is a **repeatable** field, therefore it can contain more than one abstract. **Always enter the non-English abstract(s) in this field.**

Length - The "Abstract Length" is **4800 characters** which *equals approximately 800 words when using the formula 6 characters = 1 word*. In other words, the characters entered in the English abstract field **and/or** in the non-English abstract field, **when added together**, should **not** exceed 4800 characters (or 800 words).

An explanation on "why 4800 characters were allocated for the writing of the abstract(s)", and why you may sometimes exceed this limit is contained in Annex-2 of this document and **in the full Guidelines, section-6.1.4, and Annex-4**. **Total Record length** and its relation to "Abstract Length" is discussed in Annex-2 of this document and also in the **full Guidelines, Annex-4**.

Considering that the total allowed abstract length is 4800 characters (approx. 800 words), you could, in theory, divide up the 4800 characters in any number of ways while writing the abstract(s).

For example in one record, you could include:

- 1) **one English abstract** of up to **4800** characters (approx. 800 words)¹, and **no non-English abstract(s)**, or
- 2) **one non-English abstract** of up to **4800** characters (approx. 800 words), and **no English abstract**², or
- 3) **one English abstract** of 1500 characters (approx. 250 words), and **one non-English abstract** of up to 3300 characters (approx. 550 words) (i.e. 1500 + 3300 = **4800**), or
- 4) **one English abstract** of 1600 characters (approx. 266 words), and **two non-English abstracts** of 1600 characters each (i.e. 1600 + 1600 + 1600 = **4800**) and so on ...

NOTE - The above 4 examples are **not** intended to be recommended abstract lengths. They are only meant to clarify further the point: that in using the 4800 characters at your disposition, you may divide them up between the English and non-English abstract fields, as you like. However, please take note of the ASFA Publisher's two "suggestions" regarding abstracts which are contained in the footnotes below.

Codes for special characters and typesetting

Italics, Subscript, Superscript

Note, this coding is different from that used in the DOS-ASFISIS software.
(see full Guidelines, sections 6.5.3.1 and 6.5.3.2 for more detailed explanation)

The HTML coding to represent "italics", "subscript", and "superscript" is as follows:

Italics	Use	<i>... </i>
Subscript	Use	_{...}
superscript	Use	^{...}

FOR EXAMPLE:

Italics to represent *Salmo salar*: use <i>Salmo salar</i>

Subscripted Character to represent the subscript 2 in the formula (H₂O): use H₂O
(in some cases it may be quicker to just write the chemical name (e.g. water) instead of the formula)

Superscripted Character

Units of measure and Mathematical expressions

to represent the exponent 2 in 10 square meters (10m²): use 10m²

Subscript and Superscript Together

to represent the subscript 4 and the superscript + in the chemical formula for ammonium NH₄⁺ use NH₄⁺

¹ Notwithstanding what was stated above regarding "abstract length", ASFA Partners are reminded of the ASFA Publisher's long standing "suggestion" regarding abstract length (remember this is a suggestion, and not a rule). CSA would like Partners to keep abstracts "short" (between 600-1500 characters or 100-250 words). This suggestion is motivated by concerns over space and costs when publishing the ASFA printed journals - it is not a system requirement.

² CSA also strongly suggests that all efforts be made to include an English abstract in all records, even though it is not against the ASFA rules to include only a non-English abstract.

Greek letters and mathematical signs and other special characters

Note *these codes are the same that were used in the "old" DOS-ASFISIS software.*
(see Annex-1 of this document or full Guidelines, Annex-3 for more details regarding this coding)

To represent "Greek letters" and "mathematical signs" use the tilde ~ plus a letter or a sign.

Below are a few examples of how the codes are used.

<u>Greek Letters</u>	to represent the Greek letter delta δ use ~d
<u>Mathematical Signs</u>	to represent the infinity sign ∞ use ~!
<u>Degree Sign</u>	to represent the degree sign $^{\circ}$ use ~' (e.g. 6°C is represented by 6~'C)
<u>Slant Line (/)</u>	to represent the fraction $\frac{1}{4}$ use ~1/4 1.5-1.9 grams per litre is represented by 1.5-1.9g/L
<u>Multiplication sign</u>	to represent the symbols \cdot and $*$ (when used to express "multiplied by") use x
<u>Micro (10^{-6}) (μ)</u>	to represent 5.5 $\mu\text{g/L}$ use 5.5 ~kg/L

Note, the www-ISIS-ASFA software contains a small bug which only occurs in certain rare occasions (i.e. when the tilde (~) appears at the beginning of a field). (see Annex 1, Note 2 of this document for more details).

7 Writing the Abstract (see full Guidelines, section-8 for more detailed explanation)

The steps in actually writing the abstract are:

- 1) first browse through the entire document;
- 2) then examine the most important parts of the document in more detail;
- 3) while examining the document, write down or underline key phrases;
- 4) you can try to paraphrase what the original author has said, however, it is quicker (and more accurate) if you use brief excerpts taken from the original document itself;
- 5) if there is an author's abstract use it, however make any necessary changes to make it conform to the ASFA "Presentation and Style". (see full Guidelines, section-6 for more detailed explanation)

8 Input of the Abstract (using the www-ISIS-ASFA Software)

All of the data elements comprising the bibliographic description of a document (cataloguing information, **abstract** and indexing terms) are entered on specifically designed **worksheets** contained in the **www-ISIS-ASFA** software. Instructions on "How to start" the software and call up a worksheet are in Section 10.1, 10.2 and 10.3 of the "full" Guidelines.

ALL of the work sheets contain **two** fields for entering the text of the abstract(s).

- The **first** abstract field is called: **English Abstract** (always enter the *English* abstract in this field)
- The **second** abstract field is called: **Non English abstract** (always enter *non-English* abstract(s) in this field)
- The same Record may contain both: an English, and one or more non-English abstracts.

ENGLISH ABSTRACT field: Enter the English abstract in this field.

The abstract may be <typed> directly in the field, or it may be first typed into a Word processing software (and spell-checked) and then copied to the abstract field using the Window's "Cut and Paste" function.

If the document contains an Author abstract, it may be used - but it should be modified, if necessary, to conform to the ASFA "house" style (see sections 6.1 to 6.5 of the full Guidelines for details regarding presentation and style of an ASFA abstract).

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Note, try to keep the length of the abstract between 100-250 words. Please read Section 6.1.4 of the full Guidelines before exceeding this number.

NON-ENGLISH ABSTRACT field: Enter one or more non-English abstracts in this field. The diacritical marks* may be included or omitted, however all abstracts must be written in Latin characters.

The abstract may be <typed> directly in the field, or first typed in a Word processing software (and spell-checked), and then copied to the abstract field using Window's "Cut and Paste" function.

If the document contains an Author abstract, it may be used - but it should be modified, if necessary, to conform to the ASFA "house" style (see sections 6.1 to 6.5 of the "full" Guidelines for details regarding presentation and style of an ASFA abstract).

More than one non-English abstract may be included in the same record. If you decide to include more than one non-English abstract, <click> the "REPEAT" button after you finish typing the first non-English abstract and the field will be re-displayed. Try to keep the length of the abstract(s) between 100-250 words. Please read Section 6.1.4 of the full Guidelines before exceeding this number.

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*Diacritical marks: it is your decision to include or not diacritical marks. In any case for the time being, when you submit a record containing diacritical marks to the ASFA publisher (CSA), CSA must remove them before publishing the record in the database or printed journals (for technical reasons). However, CSA is keeping an archive of all those "records" in which they removed the diacritical marks, so that when the system is capable of accepting them, they can replace the records (in which they removed diacritical marks) with the original records that contained them.

Note regarding records submitted to the ASFA Publisher containing both an English and non-English abstract: in the machine readable versions of the ASFA databases (e.g. CD-ROM, Internet) both the English and non-English abstract will be published, however unfortunately, in the printed ASFA journal only the English abstract will be published (this is for reasons linked to cost and size limitations in the printed journal).

CODING FOR SPECIAL CHARACTERS

During the preparation of ASFA records, you must represent the special characters and signs (e.g. Greek letters, mathematical signs, etc.) by using special type-setting/character codes.

When necessary, these codes are used only in the following six fields of the *www-ISIS-ASFA* data entry worksheet: Title, Original Title, Abstract, non-English Abstract(s), Identifiers, and Cross-reference Phrase. In the new *www-ISIS-ASFA* software, the coding to represent "italics", "superscript" and "subscript" is different than that used in the "old" DOS - ASFISIS (see section 6.5.3.1). However, the coding to represent all the other special characters (e.g. Greek characters and mathematical signs) remains the same as that used in the DOS ASFISIS software.

$\alpha = \sim a$	$\mu = \sim k$	$\Psi = \sim q$	$\infty = \sim 8$	$\copyright = \sim o$
$\beta = \sim b$	$\nu = \sim R$	$\omega = \sim w$	$\{ = \sim 9$	$\wedge = \sim \$$
$\gamma = \sim g$	$\xi = \sim y$	$\Omega = \sim W$	$\} = \sim 0$	$\vee = \sim \backslash$
$\Gamma = \sim G$	$\Xi = \sim Y$	$\pm = \sim c$	$\equiv = \sim =$	$\triangle = \sim n$
$\delta = \sim d$	$o = \sim O$	$\nabla = \sim v$	$\infty = \sim !$	$\parallel = \sim "$
$\Delta = \sim D$	$\pi = \sim p$	$\div = \sim X$	$^{\circ} = \sim '$	$\cap = \sim /$
$\varepsilon = \sim e$	$\Pi = \sim P$	$\oplus = \sim z$	$\neq = \sim C$	$\geq = \sim .$
$E = \sim I$	$\rho = \sim r$	$\otimes = \sim Z$	$\subset = \sim m$	$\leq = \sim ,$
$\zeta = \sim Q$	$\sigma = \sim s$	$\rightarrow = \sim 1$	$\supset = \sim M$	$\gtrless = \sim >$
$\eta = \sim E$	$\Sigma = \sim S$	$\leftarrow = \sim $	$\perp = \sim N$	$\lesseqgtr = \sim <$
$\theta = \sim f$	$\tau = \sim t$	$\uparrow = \sim 2$	$\partial = \sim V$	$\cong = \sim ?$
$\vartheta = \sim T$	$\upsilon = \sim u$	$\downarrow = \sim @$	$\int = \sim 7$	$\approx = \sim -$
$\Theta = \sim F$	$\Upsilon = \sim U$	$\leftrightarrow = \sim 3$	$\oint = \sim \&$	$\sqrt{} = \sim :$
$\iota = \sim i$	$\varphi = \sim h$	$\pounds = \sim 4$	$\angle = \sim *$	$\cdot = \sim ;$ (don't use for decimal point)
$\kappa = \sim K$	$\Phi = \sim H$	$\frac{1}{4} = \sim 5$	$" = \sim A$	
$\lambda = \sim l$	$\chi = \sim j$	$\frac{1}{2} = \sim \%$	$\square = \sim B$	
$\Lambda = \sim L$	$X = \sim x$	$\sim = \sim 6$	$\text{\textcircled{R}} = \sim +$	

Note 1: for the symbol “%” a special character is not available, therefore use the abbreviation “ppt” .

Note 2: Regarding a bug in the www-ISIS-ASFA software.

The special type-setting/character code (the tilde ~ plus a letter) creates a problem **only when it appears as the first character in a field**, and **only** when that record is exported and subsequently imported (i.e. the record becomes illegible when you read it in the imported computer).

If you only export your records for sending directly to the ASFA Publisher (CSA), the bug does not create a problem and there is no action required on your part (see item-2.1b below).

2.1 Action on your part:

There are two situations:

- a) When Exporting-Importing ASFA records between computers in your own system or when you must (export) send your records to FAO for checking (i.e. we must import your records):

This situation requires ACTION on your part. When you must represent a special character at the beginning of a field, INSTEAD of using the special type-setting/character codes **write the character's name in full**. For example, to represent the Greek "delta" character δ do not use the code ~d, instead write the word in full (e.g. **delta**).

- b) When Exporting records from your computer to send directly to CSA:

This situation requires NO ACTION on your part. The ASFA Publisher (CSA) can process your records regardless if the first character in a field is a special character code (~d) or if it is the word (delta).

EXPLANATION REGARDING “TOTAL RECORD LENGTH” AND “ABSTRACT LENGTH”

1 "TOTAL RECORD LENGTH"

"Total Record Length" refers to the maximum number of characters that can be contained in one ASFA Record prepared with the www-ISIS-ASFA software. *For your information, when counting characters, one must also count all: spaces, punctuation, codes for special characters, and the “Directory” information (the few hundred characters) which always appears at the beginning of each record in the ISO file.*

The correct "Total Record Length" is 7800 Characters, which is equal to about 1300 words when using the formula (6 characters = 1 word). Note, in the previous edition of the “ Guidelines for Abstracting using www-ISIS-ASFA (rev.2)”, it was erroneously stated that the "total record length" was 8000 characters.

Why the 7800 character limit? - Neither the ASFA Secretariat, the www-ISIS-ASFA developer, nor the ASFA Publisher (CSA) are responsible for setting the limit on "total record length". The 7800 character limit is inherent to the ISIS based software, and this means that it cannot be modified and it cannot be exceeded.

True, the 7800 character limit can not be extended and should not be exceeded, BUT unfortunately (and here is where the potentially serious problem arises) during the data input stage while you are actually typing data into the www-ISIS-ASFA worksheet, you are NOT automatically warned by the software when you have entered more than 7800 characters into the worksheet.

When you submit (i.e. save) a record where you have ‘unknowingly’ exceeded the total character limit, **the software may or may not block you (the screen may go blank) but it does NOT notify you that there may be a problem.**

Note that the field which is most likely to be the cause of exceeding the total record length is the “Abstract field”. Therefore, if the system blocks you, i.e. the screen goes blank, you should go back to the worksheet (by clicking on the back button of the browser) and delete the whole abstract. Then, you should enter a shortened version before re-submitting the record.

However, if the system has not blocked you and you submit a record where you have unknowingly exceeded the total record length, when you export that record into an ISO file, it may be missing information or may become corrupted during the export phase. It is not always possible to update that record, i.e. call up the record, make the necessary modifications to reduce the record length and then re-submit it. Should this be the case, then it may be easier to copy the record, make the necessary “reduction” in the abstract field, and submit the record. You should then delete the ‘long’ record.

Note: Caution must be exercised by those ASFA Partners submitting records which include one very long or 2 or 3 abstracts in the same record. However, we are considering for the future to incorporate into *www-ISIS-ASFA software* a “Warning” message when a record exceeds 7800 characters.

2 "ABSTRACT LENGTH"

"Abstract Length" refers to the maximum number of characters (including: spaces, punctuation and special character codes) that you can use in compiling **both** the English and/or non-English abstract(s).

The "Abstract Length" is **4800 characters** which *equals approximately 800 words (i.e. using the formula 6 characters = 1 word)*. In other words, the characters entered in the English abstract field **and/or** in the non-English abstract field, **when added together**, should **not** exceed 4800 characters (or 800 words).

2.1 Why **4800** Characters were Allocated to Writing the Abstract(s) (from the "total record length" of 7800 characters)

- As stated in section-1, the "total record length" is (and cannot exceed)..... 7800 characters
- We calculate the average ASFA record length (**without abstract**) to be between 1750 - **3000** characters (*here we use the "high end" of average to be safe*)*..... 3000 characters

*(in section 2.2, the possibility of using the "low end" of the average in this calculation is discussed)

7800 (total record length)
(minus) 3000 (high end of average record length without abstract)
(equals) **4800** (characters "left over" for writing the abstract(s))

Therefore when writing the abstract, you can, in theory, divide up the 4800 characters in any number of ways. For example, you could write:

- 1) one English abstract of up to **4800** characters (approx. 800 words)³, and no non-English abstract(s), or
- 2) one non-English abstract of up to **4800** characters (approx. 800 words), and **no** English abstract⁴, or
- 3) one English abstract of 1500 characters (approx. 250 words), and one non-English abstract of up to 3300 characters (approx. 550 words) (i.e. 1500 + 3300 = **4800**), or
- 4) one English abstract of 1600 characters (approx. 266 words), and two non-English abstracts of 1600 characters each (i.e. 1600 + 1600 + 1600 = **4800**) and so on

The above 4 examples are **not** intended to be recommended abstract lengths. The examples are only meant to emphasize the point that: in using the 4800 characters at your disposition, you may divide up the characters between the English and non-English abstract fields as you like (please take note of CSA's suggestion in the footnote 4, whenever possible).

2.2 The "Abstract Length" can exceed 4800 Characters (as long as the "total record length" does not exceed 7800 characters)

The reason we recommend you keep your abstract(s) within the above mentioned total of 4800 characters is that by doing so, you can be fairly safe that your records will not exceed the "total record length" of 7800 characters. **However**, you should realize that you can (if need be) exceed the 4800 character limit, as long as the "total record length" does not exceed 7800 characters.

How many "extra" characters (beyond 4800) could potentially be available for writing the abstract(s)? In the above section 2.1, it was stated that the total number of characters available for writing the abstract(s) was 4800. We arrived at that figure by subtracting the "high end" of the average ASFA record length (without abstract) from the "total record length". That is: 7800 - 3000 = 4800 characters.

Obviously, the same operation can be performed, using the "lower" rather than the "higher" estimate of average ASFA record length. That is, by subtracting the "low end" of the average ASFA record length (without abstract) from the "total record length". So you have 7800 - 1750 = 6050 characters (or 1008 words) available for writing the abstract(s).

In conclusion and as you can see, you **cannot** decide to exceed the recommended "safe" 4800 character limit **without first** counting exactly how many characters you have actually used in compiling the rest of the record.

³ Notwithstanding what was stated above regarding "abstract length", ASFA Partners are reminded of the ASFA Publisher's long standing "suggestion" regarding abstract length (remember this is a suggestion, and not a rule). CSA would like Partners to keep abstracts "short" (between 600-1500 characters or 100-250 words). This suggestion is motivated by concerns over space and costs when publishing the ASFA printed journals - it is not a system requirement.

⁴ CSA also strongly suggests that all efforts be made to include an English abstract in all records, even though it is not against the ASFA rules to include only a non-English abstract.