

UNEP Publications Reference Series

Plagiarism and Citation Fact Sheet

This reference document is part of a series aimed at highlighting key policies, procedures, best practices and common oversights encountered during the UNEP publication creation process. These process-specific guides are drawn from the more comprehensive *UNEP Publications Guidelines* and *UNEP Publications Policy*. View the entire series:

[AUTHOR GUIDELINES](#) | [PEER REVIEWER GUIDELINES](#)
[PLAGIARISM AND CITATION FACT SHEET](#) | [EDITOR GUIDELINES](#) | [LAYOUT MANUAL](#)

UNEP has a zero-tolerance policy when it comes to intentional or unintentional plagiarism. Plagiarism is the incorporation of previously published work or ideas into a manuscript without full acknowledgement—regardless of whether consent has been given to reproduce the work or if it is the author’s own previously published work. Plagiarism includes using the same words, thoughts and ideas from another publication without appropriate acknowledgement, including one’s own work. For example, if you use some sentences from one of your publications and place it in a UNEP publication without acknowledging the source; this is plagiarism. If it is used and a reference is used without quotation marks - this is still plagiarism.

The following bullet points should help clarify UNEP’s policies, procedures and expectations with regard to plagiarism and correct citation.

- **ALL WORK MUST BE CITED** – Accurate, timely and properly cited references help ensure the integrity and credibility of UNEP information products. Authors must ensure that all primary and secondary research—including work previously published by the Author or organization—is clearly acknowledged.
- **IN TEXT AND END TEXT REFERENCING SHOULD FOLLOW UNEP STYLE** – UNEP publications must credit the sources of information they give and provide accurate and consistent links to these sources. UNEP publications use the Harvard Referencing system; in some cases, the Keyed Reference system may be used. This means:
 - using in-text parenthetical citation (Surname, 2022) or numbered^{1,2} whenever reference is made to previously published work or ideas, and
 - providing a “Reference list” at the end of the document giving full details of the work cited in the document.
- **ONLY CITATIONS FROM CURRENT PEER-REVIEWED PUBLICATIONS** – Data and other cited findings must be current and from objective, peer-reviewed publications. If an author is using data that are more than 10 years old, there should be a clear rationale. While reputable think-tanks and other advocacy organizations often publish high-quality work that is readily available, they are often not objective and not peer reviewed. While such publications may be helpful for illustrating a point or adding emphasis, they are not appropriate for citing facts and drawing conclusions.
- **A PLAGIARISM CHECK IS STANDARD FOR ALL MANUSCRIPTS** – UNEP performs a plagiarism check on all manuscripts using the iThenticate software. UNEP has pre-defined parameters and will work with coordinators to ensure any problematic passages are addressed.
- **PEER REVIEW FOR ORIGINALITY, SIGNIFICANCE AND RELEVANCE** – In addition to reviewing publications to ensure they present objective and factual scientific research and analysis, peer reviewers evaluate the originality, significance and relevance of the manuscript and review citations and references to verify they are from peer-reviewed publications. Peer reviewers perform a full review of a manuscript’s list of references to ensure it is complete, timely and adequately extensive.

Similarity check for UNEP Manuscripts

The similarity check is done by the Publications Focal Point in the iThenticate software.

- Bibliography may be excluded
- The standard UNEP disclaimer text may be removed before submitting the manuscript
- UNEP does not recommend excluding word strings up to a certain amount.
- There is no set percentage that a publications should achieve for it to pass. Even with low scores, the interpretation is what counts.
- The Publications Focal Point should submit the report along with a justification of the score.

How to interpret the iThenticate report?

- Go through the document and review each highlighted case of similarity. For each instance, decide if there is risk of plagiarism. Examples:
 - o The overlap could result from names of conventions and organizations. This is not problematic.
 - o The overlap could result from a previous edition of the same report, which with appropriate citations of the source, does not need to be problematic.
 - o If a paragraph is copied entirely from another source, even with appropriate citation, this is problematic. As a guideline, up to two sentences can be attributed and placed between parenthesis; more than that, the text needs to be rephrased in the author's own words.