UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM STAFF COLLEGE

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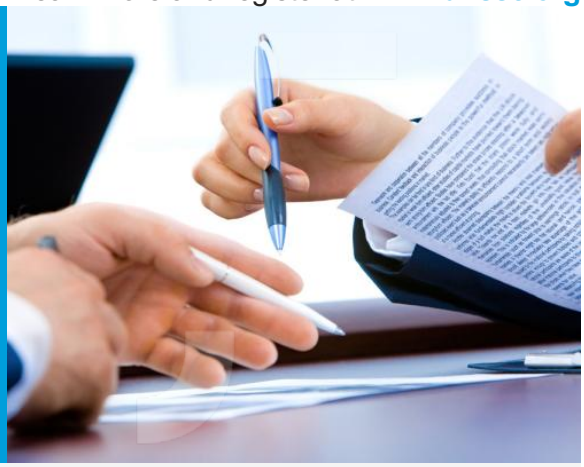
ONLINE

01 MAR 2027 - 29 MAR 2027

Effective Writing Skills

Administration and Operational ExcellenceCommunications



LANGUAGE	DURATION	ENROLL BY	PRICE	LOCATION	TARGET
English	5 weeks	22 Feb 2027	1,100 USD	ONLINE	UN Only

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Make your point! Learn practical techniques to improve your ability to influence and achieve results through clear and effective writing – whether you are drafting a technical report, a strategy paper, or a professional email.

Introduction

This five-week online course is designed to enhance the ability of staff to effectively draft a variety of documents through increased sensitivity to language, structure, and content.

Participants will be exposed to a variety of techniques for drafting documents that are adapted to the audience and have impact.

The course introduces an innovative learning approach. All participants will follow two webinars, during which effective document drafting skills applicable to any type of document will be explained.

After these initial two weeks, upon which participants will have a clearer vision of their learning priorities, they will have two options for the remaining three weeks:

- **"General writing skills" path**: mostly focusing on drafting, reviewing and managing daily communications, such as emails; or
- **"Report writing skills" path**: focusing on drafting clear and structured reports, avoiding overly dense language, using visuals wisely, and applying clear revision and proofreading techniques.

Participants can select only one path.

Objectives

Upon successful completion of this course, participants will be able to:

- Identify the purpose, reader and context of the draft, and prepare it accordingly by thoroughly organising and developing ideas and concepts.
- Recognise and avoid drafting, grammar, and linguistic mistakes, as well as unnecessary words.
- Reproduce techniques and apply skills for drafting a reader-friendly and incisive piece without compromising style and professionalism.
- Gain effective methodology, and accompanying techniques, for reviewing work in order to make documents sound, structurally coherent, linguistically concise, grammatically accurate, and visually appealing.
- Write more effective email texts and subject lines, as well as distinguish different key languages and tones or levels of formality for different types of emails.

Course methodology

This five-week course is delivered fully online and combines synchronous and asynchronous learning components.

The **synchronous** elements include weekly instructor-led webinars on Zoom, facilitated by a course instructor. These sessions take place **once per week from 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. (CET)** and provide opportunities for direct interaction, discussion, and guided learning. Participants need a computer (or mobile device), a reliable internet connection, and a headset with a microphone or telephone connection for audio. We recommend using computer audio for optimal sound quality. No special software is required, but participants must be able to access Zoom. Instructions for access will be sent to registered participants, and we recommend testing access in advance.

The **asynchronous** components include self-paced study, discussion forums, and group activities on the UNSSC (UNICLI as of 1 Jan 2027) learning platform. These elements are available throughout the course, allowing participants to engage with content and peers at their own pace while respecting the overall course timeline. On average, participants should plan to dedicate at least two hours per week for self-paced learning, assignments, and course activities on the platform. The exact amount of time may vary depending on individual learning styles and engagement preferences.

After the first two weeks, participants choose one of two learning paths: General Writing or Report Writing.

Course contents

The course covers the following topics:

Week 1 (all participants) - Effective document drafting I: process and getting started

- Pre-writing strategies and considerations (including linguistic considerations) required to write a first draft with a clear sense of direction, message and voice.

Week 2 (all participants) – Effective document drafting II: the linguistic jungle

- Approaches, techniques and skills to express an idea with maximum clarity.
- Emphasis on reader-friendliness, but not at the expense of professionalism.
- Additional linguistic issues (e.g., nominalisations, passive voice) will be addressed.

Week 3:

General writing skills path - Composition of emails

- Formulating the appropriate subject line, opening and closing;
- Internal versus external communication;
- Determining the appropriate tone/degree of formality;
- The human touch above all.

Report writing skills path - Dense, denser, densest

- Exploring most common linguistic constructions and pitfalls that make a reader or longer documents shut down.

Week 4:

General writing skills path - Getting it right

- How to best organise complex information in an email;
- Draft emails that contain negative messages;
- Diplomacy;
- “Me” versus “you” correspondence.

Report writing skills path - Beyond text: structure, format and graphics

- Importance of a reader-friendly structure and format, and the underuse, use – and abuse – of acronyms, charts, graphs, tables, text boxes and photographs.

Week 5:

General writing skills path -Reviewing your work and basic email etiquette

- Quality assurance techniques to ensure structural coherence, linguistic clarity, and compelling messages.

Report writing skills path - Revising and refining your work

- Methodologies to ensure structural integrity and attractiveness, linguistic clarity, compelling messages and proofreading techniques.

Target audience

All United Nations(UN) personnel (professional and general service staff) at headquarters and field locations and personnel of UN partner organisations.

This course can also be run as in-house/on-site training for an individual agency on demand – please get in touch with us for additional details and pricing.

Cost of participation

The course fee of $1,100 covers full participation in the online course.