

Writing skills for the United Nations

Spring 2023

Instructor: Anne-Marie Ibanez

(During her career at the United Nations, which spanned nearly two decades, Anne-Marie Ibanez has worked in Conference Services, Peacekeeping, The Executive Office of the Secretary-General, Public Information, UN Radio and the Department of Political Affairs, with a special focus on the Asia Pacific Region. She also has a career in teaching in International Schools and Colleges in the US, Spain and Japan. She has travelled extensively throughout Europe, Africa, Asia and the Pacific and the Americas)

This is a 12-Session Course specifically designed to teach and develop writing skills relevant to the range of work undertaken at the United Nations and applicable to the work in other international organizations. Through reading, analysis and discussion, the Course is designed to be of immediate practical use to participants and will strengthen their language comprehension, broaden professional vocabulary and foment a working knowledge of the work of the United Nations, as well as developing research and news monitoring skills and an ability to navigate the UN website effectively.

Sessions will start with an initial overview of the structure and work of the United Nations, including the UN website and its different forms of communication, both written and spoken. Practical exercises will increase fluency and familiarity with UN documents and meetings. The course will also develop core writing skills through summary writing, note taking, drafting of reports and preparation of talking points for high-level meetings, based on current key issues of concern to the International Community. Substantive issues to be included in discussions could include: The role of the UN in a Pandemic, Climate Change, Immigration, Women's Issues especially in relation to Peacekeeping Operations, Human Rights, Sustainable Development Goals, Nuclear Proliferation and Terrorism.

A high level of fluency in English is essential for attendees to be able to derive maximum benefit from the Course, as well as maintaining regular attendance. Each class is individually important but is also part of a whole. Written class and homework assignments will be tailored to the exigencies of Zoom teaching, and guided research and an individual report will be submitted to the Instructor by Lesson 10. Relevant class material will be emailed to students prior to each session, where necessary, and students will be encouraged to follow major news developments on the UN website (www.un.org) and from at least two other English language news sources: (BBC (bbc.co.uk), New York Times (nytimes.com), CNN (cnn.com), The Guardian (theguardian.com), The Japan Times (japantimes.co.jp), The Washington Post (washingtonpost.com), (Reuters (reuters.com) are highly recommended.

Writing Skills Course Outline (12 Sessions):
 April 18 – May 27
 (Tuesdays at 9pm / Saturdays 9am Japan time)

1. Introduction: Understanding the work of the United Nations:
Structure of the UN: An overview (to include The Secretariat, General Assembly, Security Council, ECOSOC), The Five Main Pillars of the UN: International Peace and Security; Sustainable Development; Human Rights; International Law; Humanitarian Aid;
UN website: Learn effective navigation skills, Introduction to special terms and acronyms.
Key UN Departments and their work:
Introduction to different types of Communication at the UN: Written and Spoken
The Importance of the Media to disseminate information; UN information sharing
2. Active Listening and Note-taking using topical audio/video material. How to write from notes in a brief and coherent manner. The connection between note-taking (identifying key points) and summary writing.
 The use of Active Verbs when writing;
 How to identify and use UN 'Buzz Words' in your writing;
 Writing a Press Release
3. Preparing to Draft: Pre-writing and Outlining Exercises, Brainstorming around a topic, how to prioritize facts, create an outline and develop paragraphs.
How to Support your Opinions in Writing
4. Summary Writing I: How to write a brief and effective summary through identifying key issues using writing samples from the UN website, and other material. Introduction to a specific UN exam text and how to summarize effectively. Writing an effective Summary.
5. Summary Writing II: further practice of the above, using another specific UN text. Review effective techniques for writing successful summaries. Writing a second Summary.
6. Report Writing I: Review Report Writing in a specific work context: Introduce Guided research on a specific topic from the UN website or other source. Identify substantive issues of interest. Outline for a report, using skills learnt earlier. Present topics to students.
7. Report Writing II: Review report outlines and discuss resources for research. How to structure a report, reinforcing and practicing techniques learned in earlier lessons. This will be the final assignment and students should be prepared to submit by the end of Lesson 10*.

8. Writing an Inter-Departmental Memorandum and Letter writing.
Review the different kinds of Communication at the UN - written and spoken through the study of sample letters from the United Nations, including from the Secretary-General, including appropriate salutations, honorific and non-honorific styles of writing and address.
 9. Language Skills for Meetings I: Diplomatic language skills for presenting an argument and giving an opinion. Effective phrases and vocabulary will be practiced in preparation for a 'real-time' meeting to advance a discussion, including clarification and questioning and how to reach and convey a compromise.
 10. Language Skills for Meetings II: Agreeing, disagreeing and interrupting effectively in the course of a meeting.
Preparing talking points for meetings: What are talking points and why are they essential in bilateral and multilateral meetings?
How to identify the key issues for any given meeting. What are 'cross cutting issues' and how to include them.
 11. How to prepare for and conduct a High-level meeting. A mock High-level meeting between the Secretary-General and a designated Head of State (eg. China). This meeting will be conducted in real time via Zoom.
 12. As the final class activity, each participant represents a specific Peacekeeping Mission (detailed background information available on the UN website (www.un.org/peacekeeping)). The meeting will follow the format of a mock-Troop Contributors' Meeting in the presence of the Secretary-General. This meeting will be conducted in real time via Zoom and will provide participants with an opportunity to demonstrate some of the language skills they have acquired, as well as confidence in presenting the material they have studied.
- * Any assignment given will be completed and sent to the teacher via email. She in turn will return a corrected version to each participant as soon as possible, which will form part of the ongoing process of learning and improvement.
 - * Specific class material will be forwarded to students the day before class at the latest.
 - * The material will also be available online during class, via Zoom.

Anne-Marie Ibanez, Instructor
New York, February 7, 2023