Simple Writing (of training materials)

Written materials include pamphlets, handouts, bulletins, textbooks, etc., whether presented in hard copy or electronic form. In preparing written training materials, authors should consider the following recommendations with respect to content, writing and formatting:

Content:

- Prepare each document to be self-contained.
- Use a simple and clear outline (e.g. 1, 2, 3 or, if needed, 1.1, 1.2, etc.).
  Avoid further subdivisions (e.g. 1.1.1, 1.2.3, 2.3.4.5, etc.).
- Include only the **minimum** amount of information that is necessary to accomplish the objectives; prioritise what trainees must, should or might learn.
- Inform the reader about the subject with a concise **Abstract**.
- Introduce the reader to the subject with an **Introduction**; however, do not name it "Introduction" – preferably use a more explicit title.
- Relate all components of a module systematically to each other.
- Eliminate unrelated information.
- Follow a logical organisation, such as the order of tasks in performing a job. Move from general to specific, simple to complex and known to unknown.

Writing:

- Write short sentences and paragraphs.
- Use clear, simple language. Avoid culture-specific slang, colloquialisms and examples, but this does not mean your writing has to be boring.
- Be sensitive to the fact that readers may not speak English as their first language.
- Use active and direct language.
  - Bad example: Active and direct language should be used.
  - Good example: Use active and direct language.
- Spell out acronyms in full the first time you use them.
- Use the simplest words available. Examples include:
  - commence, initiate →   begin
  - inquire, request →   ask
  - utilise, utilisation →   use
  - very →   --   (in most cases unnecessary)
- Avoid "it", "they", "this" and "these"; instead, specify to what these words refer.
- Eliminate unnecessary words (e.g. very).
- Use consistent wording and terminology.
- Use a spell-check programme.

Format:

- Use an attractive format, but keep the format simple.
- Do not crowd the pages; leave empty space.
- Show illustrations whenever appropriate. Place the illustrations as closely as possible to the corresponding text.