**Language Focus – organising steps in a procedure**

The clues to help the reader identify stages, steps and justifications for steps in the procedures section might include:

- **paragraphing** to indicate different stages (i.e., generally, each new stage begins with a new paragraph)
- presentation of the stages and steps in **sequential order**
- **signal markers of sequence** to indicate new steps (e.g., *subsequently, then, After …*) and **signal markers of logic** to indicate an explanation (e.g., *in order to, because, since …)*
- **concrete action verbs in full sentences** that capture the main *actions* in the procedure
- **non-finite 'to' clauses** (e.g., 'to maximise the **AFM** tip surface contact with the solution') and **non-action verbs** (e.g., 'This also *accounts* for batch-tobatch variations …') for (some) justifications.

The first two (effective paragraphing and sequential order) are important organisational strategies. The rest are the key language features you should or can employ for an effective description. Notice especially how helpful signal markers are in guiding your reader when describing steps in a continuous paragraph.

In addition, also notice that most of the time, authors use the **past passive** to describe the steps in the procedure in order to keep the focus on the procedures rather than the doers, as in the following examples:

A simple dip-coating method *was used* to … The bare AFM tips were *dipcoated* with … This was done by … The tips were then air-dried …

<div align="right">Extracted from [2]</div>

After the machine *was weighed,* it *was secured* to the testing bed… Once all the ropes were correctly attached, the platform *was raised ...*

<div align="right">Extracted from [9]</div>

Prospective participants in the focus group were *selected* from … Maritime experts in Australia and New Zealand… *were contacted.* An e-mail containing the project's background, objectives and methodology *was* then *sent* to all participants.

<div align="right">Extracted from [5]</div>