



SPEAKING SCIENCE: COMMUNICATIONS TRAINING FOR SCIENTISTS

ONE-DAY WORKSHOP PROGRAMME

**AUDIENCE: 4TH LEVEL STUDENTS, MSc & PhD
CANDIDATES**

**PRESENTER: SEÁN DUKE CO-FOUNDER AND JOINT EDITOR
OF SCIENCE SPIN MAGAZINE**

Seán has 15 years experience as a science writer and editor. In addition to his role as an editor with Science Spin Sean presents Ireland's only regular TV science slot on Ireland AM, the TV3 breakfast morning show. He also is the creator and presenter of Ireland's only weekly radio science slot on 103.2 Dublin City FM.

Seán founded the Speaking Science initiative in 2008, in response to the need for scientists to develop better communication skills.

CONTENT:

This one-day module is divided into five parts, each of which is aimed at providing professional scientists with the practical, 'real world' communication skills that require in their daily work. The emphasis at all times is on interaction, discussion and activities.

PART ONE: WHY COMMUNICATE

The group will be encouraged to discuss why they believe that scientists in Ireland need to become better communicators.

Delegates will be asked to outline what kind of communicating they want to do, and how they go about that job at present.

The presenter will outline the case, as he sees it, for why scientists in Ireland today **MUST** be good communicators to be successful.

He will provide an overview of how scientists can start to identify their communication goals, and then to achieve those goals.

PART TWO: AVOIDING SCIENCE JARGON

One of the major barriers facing scientists in the bid to become better communicators is the vexed issue of scientific jargon.

Put simply, scientists speak a different language to the general public, and within each discipline there are lots of sub-languages.

Scientists use jargon on a daily basis with their colleagues, so it is important for them to become aware they speak a 'foreign' language.

This unit will first of all seek to increase awareness among the group that they use jargon, and then to rectify that.

PART THREE: SCIENTIFIC WRITING SKILLS

4th level students often state that they don't like writing, are not good at it, and, thus, put writing jobs on the 'long finger'.

This is not good enough, as post-grads need to have some basic writing skills if they wish to have a successful career in science.

Even at 4th level, students require good writing skills, whether it is writing up their final thesis or a script that will form the basis of a presentation to members of staff, or to members of the public.

The ability to write clearly will impact on people's careers.

Here, the goal is to outline some basic rules for clear, effective writing and to assign tasks so that delegates can test new skills.

PART FOUR: ORAL SKILLS

Being an effective oral communicator is absolutely essential for any scientist that wishes to have a successful career.

The job of making oral presentations in public is an integral part of a scientist's life and it can take many forms.

For example, it might involve presenting new research findings to a scientific conference, or outlining the achievements of a research programme to a group of visiting, non-scientific decision makers.

But, whether a post-grad likes or dislikes oral presenting, or feels that they are good or bad at it, they must do it in order to succeed.

The task at hand, therefore, is to develop the skills to improve. Here, the presenter will ask delegates to perform oral presentation tasks, assess their performance, and outline ways to improve.

The idea is that the post-grads will also learn from each other.

PART FIVE: OUTREACH

More and more these days, post-graduates are asked to do 'outreach', which means interacting with a lay audience.

The task at hand might be to present research at a departmental public 'open day' or talk to a group of local schoolchildren.

In their future careers, post grads will be expected to do more of this, and to interact with the media, as well as industry.

Therefore, it is crucial that post-grads learn how best to convey a 'message' to a particular group, and to become skilled at outreach.

Defining the message, and tailoring the message is the aim of this final unit, and the presenter will provide tips and insights here.

ENDS.