

Writing Scientific English as a Foreign Language VT2012, Graduate student course

Starts 7 February 2012. Applications are accepted on a first-come, first-serve basis for TekNat PhD students. M.Sc. students are not eligible. Maximum 14 students. Deadline for application: 16 January 2012.

AS of 27 December, the course is full. No more applications are being accepted.

Course description: The scientific paper is an essential part of the research process. This course will teach how to structure and write an article for publication in a scientific journal. The course will cover mechanics of good English usage (grammar, punctuation, and writing style), especially from the viewpoint of non-native English speakers. A lecturer from the Dept. of English will present the most common errors encountered in scientific English and provide individual feedback on the students' writing. The submission and referee processes are covered by an editor from a scientific journal. One optional lecture will cover LaTeX, a program useful for writing the thesis.

Who is eligible to take the course:

Ph.D. students registered at departments within the TekNat Faculty. If there are available places, students from other Faculties can be accepted. Although it is assumed that most of the students do not have English as their native language, native speakers of English will benefit equally from the course content. Students are encouraged to bring their own papers and results as material for the course.

When and where: Tuesdays 14.15-16.00 at the Biomedical Center (BMC)

How to apply: Applications should be made by email to the contact person. State your supervisor's name, department, and native language(s). Applicants will be accepted on a first-come, first-serve basis. The class is limited to 14 students to ensure individualized attention in the writing exercises.

Contact person: Terese Bergfors, ICM, tel 471 4543, terese.bergfors@icm.uu.se

Credit points: 3

Examination form: The examination consists of the writing exercises assigned throughout the eight-week period. Some of these will be done during the class and others must be completed at home. All of the writing assignments must be completed on time to receive the course credits and attendance is mandatory. In the event of illness, up to one absence can be replaced with an extra writing assignment. Seven of the 8 lectures are obligatory.

Lecturers:

David van der Spoel, Molecular Biophysics, ICM

Roberta Aplin, Dept. of English

Terese Bergfors, Structural Biology, ICM, & co-editor of Acta Crystallographica

Expected learning outcomes of the course:

After the course, the student should be able to:

1. Use the classical IMRAD structure to write, in acceptable English, a scientific journal article containing: Title, Authors List, Abstract, Materials and Methods, Results, Discussion, References, Tables, Figures, and Figure Legends.
2. Understand how to convert raw data into text, illustration, or table, as appropriate for the type of data to be presented.
3. Recognize and correct the most common mistakes in English grammar in their manuscripts.
4. Understand the submission, editorial, and referee processes.

Topics to be covered include:

1. How do I start? The choice of journal and different genres (review, original work, popular science) determines what style to use. What is the IMRAD style?
2. Structure and content: How is an article constructed? How is a (good) paragraph constructed?
3. Why is the title so important? How do I write a concise abstract?
4. How to write the Introduction: stating the problem, what is known, what is not, and what is the objective of your study. How to review the literature.
5. How to write the Discussion: The discussion is not simply a rehash of the Results. What is the difference?
6. Exercises in writing and English grammar. Tutorials and individualized exercises for problems specific to certain language backgrounds. British vs. American English.
7. Write a figure legend for an illustration, compile a table and construct a figure from raw data.

Course literature:

- Robert Day's **How to Write and Publish a Scientific Paper**, 4th edition or later.

Updated 27 December 2011