Module Specification

Writing Science

Version: 2023-24, v2.0, 19 Jun 2023

Contents

Part 1: Information

Module title: Writing Science

Module code: USSJC8-30-M

Level: Level 7

For implementation from: 2023-24

UWE credit rating: 30

ECTS credit rating: 15

Faculty: Faculty of Health & Applied Sciences

Department: HAS Dept of Applied Sciences

Partner institutions: None

Delivery locations: Not in use for Modules

Field: Applied Sciences

Module type: Module

Pre-requisites: None

Excluded combinations: None

Co-requisites: None

Continuing professional development: No

Professional, statutory or regulatory body requirements: None

Part 2: Description

Overview: Not applicable

Features: Not applicable

Educational aims: See Learning Outcomes

Outline syllabus: This module explores science communication through written formats and will specifically examine magazine, newspaper and internet media. The

emphasis in this module is on communication with lay publics, though students will also consider written and verbal communication between scientists in public fora such as journal articles and conference presentations. These latter will be examined primarily as source material for communications with lay publics.

Topics covered include:

Rhetoric in science communication - including framing, argument structure, storytelling and use of metaphor.

Science journalism - concepts such as the role of the media in public opinion formation, agenda setting and newsgates, as well as practical issues such as news gathering, including sourcing expert scientific information, and writing and interviewing styles

Science in public relations and affairs- including role of public relations in organisations, stakeholder theory, theory of publics as well as practical issues, such as writing for public relations and selling science as news.

Informational or educational science writing - including issues such as the role of the audience and trust in information sources, as well as practical issues relating to style.

Students will explore the purposes of various writing genres and their strengths and weaknesses as vehicles for science communication. Editorial constraints and news values will also be examined.

Students will also critically analyse current/recent media coverage of scientific topics, referring to theories such as cultivation theory, normative theory and media cultural theory.

As part of this module, students will be expected to develop their written communication skills. This will include writing for a variety of different audiences (from quite technical audiences through to tabloid news) and purposes (e.g. educate,

inform, entertain, convert or convince). Practical writing exercises will help students develop their ability to translate complex scientific concepts into a form that is readily understood by different audiences. Practical topics covered include:

Understanding and researching your audience

Identifying a topic – importance of news value

Practical interviewing skills and strategies for gathering information directly from scientist sources

Structure of different writing genre (e.g. news, feature articles, press releases etc)

Developing a story line

Pitching stories to editors

Language issues – style, grammar, jargon

Part 3: Teaching and learning methods

Teaching and learning methods: The module will be taught in block teaching sessions. During the intensive teaching sessions, material will be delivered using a mixture of problem-based learning, seminar and workshop sessions.

Considerable emphasis will be placed on developing practical writing, interpretive and story researching skills. Sessions will be designed to simulate both newsroom and public affairs environments. Students will be expected to take an active role in developing and running workshop and seminar sessions. The intensive teaching periods will be supplemented by guided and independent reading to provide suitable background on the subject and examine theoretical concepts in detail.

In the case of small student numbers the teaching and learning methods will be

adapted appropriately to support a stronger element of independent learning. This self-directed study will be supported by tutor-led workshops combined with case studies and site visits as appropriate.

Module Learning outcomes: On successful completion of this module students will achieve the following learning outcomes.

MO1 Demonstrate breadth and flexibility in writing styles

MO2 Interpret scientific information intended for a specialist audience and present this information at a level and in a style suitable for a variety of lay audiences

MO3 Identify the 'news' in a scientific paper and transpose to appeal to the mass media

MO4 Synthesise information from a variety of sources in developing a coherent piece of written communication

MO5 Analyse and apply the journalistic process, including understanding the roles and responsibilities of the media with respect to science communication

MO6 Demonstrate an ability to work across disciplinary boundaries when producing copy for publication

Hours to be allocated: 300

Contact hours:

Independent study/self-guided study = 228 hours

Face-to-face learning = 72 hours

Total = 300

Reading list: The reading list for this module can be accessed at readinglists.uwe.ac.uk via the following link https://uwe.rl.talis.com/modules/ussjc8-30-m.html

Part 4: Assessment

Assessment strategy: Assessment 1 is a written assignment (magazine assignment).

Assessment 2 is a portfolio of science writing.

Assessment 3 is a timed case study.

Assessment components:

Written Assignment (First Sit)
Description: Magazine Assignment
Weighting: 20 %
Final assessment: No
Group work: No
Learning outcomes tested: MO1, MO2, MO3, MO4, MO5, MO6

Portfolio (First Sit)
Description: Portfolio of science writing
Weighting: 45 %
Final assessment: No
Group work: No
Learning outcomes tested: MO1, MO2, MO3, MO4, MO5, MO6

Case Study (First Sit)
Description: Timed Case Study
Weighting: 35 %
Final assessment: Yes
Group work: No
Learning outcomes tested: MO1, MO2, MO3, MO4, MO5, MO6

Written Assignment (Resit)
Description: Magazine Assignment
Weighting: 20 %
Final assessment: No

Group work: No

Learning outcomes tested: MO1, MO2, MO3, MO4, MO5, MO6

Portfolio (Resit)

Description: Portfolio of science writing

Weighting: 45 %

Final assessment: No

Group work: No

Learning outcomes tested: MO1, MO2, MO3, MO4, MO5, MO6

Case Study (Resit)

Description: Timed Case Study

Weighting: 35 %

Final assessment: Yes

Group work: No

Learning outcomes tested: MO1, MO2, MO3, MO4, MO5, MO6

Part 5: Contributes towards

This module contributes towards the following programmes of study:

Science Communication [Frenchay] MSc 2023-24

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