



University of the  
West of England

## MODULE SPECIFICATION

**Code:** USSJM3-30-M                      **Title:** Science, the Public and Media                      **Version:** 2

**Level:** M                                      **UWE credit rating:** 30                                      **ECTS credit rating:** 15

**Module type:** Standard

**Owning Faculty:** Health and Life Sciences                      **Department:** Applied Sciences

**Faculty Committee approval:** Quality and Standards Committee                      **Date:** July 2011

**Approved for Delivery by:** N/A

**Valid from:** January 2012                                      **Discontinued from:**

**Pre-requisites:**  
None

**Co-requisites:**  
None

**Entry Requirements:**  
N/A

**Excluded Combinations:**  
None

### Learning Outcomes:

The student will be able to:

- Understand the origins and rationales for methods of taking science to the public
- Analyse the opportunities and constraints of a variety of different vehicles for science communication
- Relate conceptualisations of the public to the communication of science
- Devise appropriate evaluation strategies matched to types of communication initiative
- Create and execute a science communication intervention grounded in appropriate theory

### Syllabus Outline:

This module explores why and how science and technology is taken to the public, either directly or via the media.

Students will explore the origins and subsequent development of initiatives designed to take science to the public. Through the use of case studies, students will become acquainted with the wide range of methodologies and venues that are used by science communicators and explore the methodologies that are used to evaluate the effectiveness of their initiatives.

The concept of the public will be returned to in this module with a view to understanding current conceptualisations of 'public' (e.g. RCUK data on publics for science). Issues of attracting audiences as well as current dilemmas surrounding the fragmentation of publics will be examined.

The role of the media in science communication will be examined with a focus on the British media, though reference will be made to media from other countries. The ways that science is represented in a variety of different media, from broadcast to print, will be investigated with a view to exploring the differences in the media themselves (for example, how the media link to the socio-cultural pyramid). Particular attention will be paid to the role of the public, as media consumers, interact with different types of media (e.g. by examining uses and gratifications theory). Linked to this, students will examine

the differing requirements these media place on science communicators with a view to exploring their strengths and weaknesses as vehicles for communication.

### **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 discussion of the motivations of individuals and organisations that engage in science communication activity and in identifying examples of both good and bad practice by examination of case studies. Sessions will be designed to simulate the process by which such initiatives are devised and managed. Issues addressed will include consideration of venue types, audience targeting, resourcing and evaluation methods. 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.

### **Reading Strategy:**

All students will be encouraged to make full use of the print and electronic resources available to them through membership of the University. These include a range of electronic journals and a wide variety of resources available through web sites and information gateways. The University Library's web pages provide access to subject relevant resources and services, and to the library catalogue. Many resources can be accessed remotely. Students will be presented with opportunities within the curriculum to develop their information retrieval and evaluation skills in order to identify such resources effectively.

Any **essential reading** will be indicated clearly, along with the method for accessing it, e.g. students may be expected to purchase a set text, be given or sold a print study pack or be referred to texts that are available electronically, etc. This guidance will be available either in the module handbook, via the module information on Blackboard or through any other vehicle deemed appropriate by the module/programme leaders.

If **further reading** is expected, this will be indicated clearly. If specific texts are listed, a clear indication will be given regarding how to access them and, if appropriate, students will be given guidance on how to identify relevant sources for themselves, e.g. through use of bibliographical databases.

### **Indicative Reading List:**

The latest versions of:

Holliman, R., Thomas, J. Smidt, S. Scanlon, E., and Whitelegg, E. *Practising Science Communication in the Information Age: Theorising Professional Practices*. Oxford University Press: Oxford.

Nelkin, D. *Selling Science: How the press cover science and technology*, Freeman: New York.

Scanlon E, Hill, R, Junker, K eds. *Communicating Science, Professional Contexts*, Buckingham: Open University Press.

Scanlon E, Whiteled E, Yates S. *Communicating Science, Contexts and Channels*, London: Routledge.

Bucchi, M. *Science and the Media: Alternative routes in scientific communication*, Routledge: London.

Caulton, T. *Hands on Exhibitions*, Routledge.

Gregory, J. Miller S. *Science in Public: Communication, Culture and Credibility*. Perseus Publishing.

Journals:  
Science Communication Sage  
Public Understanding of Science Sage  
Journal of Science Communication (Available at <http://jcom.sissa.it>)

Newspapers and consumer magazines as appropriate

**Assessment:**

**Weighting between components A and B (standard modules only) A: 50% B: 50%**

**FIRST ATTEMPT**

**First Assessment Opportunity**

<b>Component A</b> ( <i>controlled</i> )	<b>Element Wt (Ratio)</b> ( <i>within Component</i> )
Description of each element	
SP1 Presentation - Science Communication intervention	<b>Final Assessment</b> 1

<b>Component B</b>	<b>Element Wt (Ratio)</b> ( <i>within Component</i> )
Description of each element	
CW1 Report (3000 words)	1

**Second Assessment Opportunity (Resit) further attendance at taught classes is required**

<b>Component A</b> ( <i>controlled</i> )	<b>Element Wt (Ratio)</b> ( <i>within Component</i> )
Description of each element	
SP2 Presentation - Science Communication intervention	<b>Final Assessment</b> 1

<b>Component B</b>	<b>Element Wt (Ratio)</b> ( <i>within Component</i> )
Description of each element	
CW2 Report (3000 words)	1

**EXCEPTIONAL SECOND ATTEMPT Attendance at taught classes is not required.**

**Specification confirmed by** .....**Date** .....  
(Associate Dean/Programme Director)