PRBB Intervals Course Proposal

Course Title
Becoming a Scientific Writer: Putting 'Why' before 'How'

Proposed date(s)
15th February 2018

Course Language
English (and Catalan or Spanish, if required)

Course Leader(s) and very brief summary of relevant qualifications and experience (no more than 2 lines for each trainer)
[Gavin Lucas (link)](link)
Gavin Lucas is a biomedical scientist with more than 13 years of experience in research and scientific publishing, and 10 years of experience as an author's editor, consultant and trainer.

Rationale for course (why is this course of interest for the PRBB staff?)
This workshop takes an important qualitative step beyond '*HOW to do scientific writing*', and provokes publishing scientists to ask *'WHY do I write it like this?'*. It's important for us to have a clear perception of what motivates us as writers, what causes our most common mistakes, how our readers perceive our work, and of what makes good scientific writing attractive and accessible. This new perspective will inspire publishing scientists to become more effective, more autonomous, and more productive science communicators.

Course aim - general
The aim of this course is to help publishing scientists develop a more impartial, analytical view of scientific writing, to better understand their readership, and to make them more efficient writers and editors. Their writing will no longer be driven by the standard formula for 'How?' to write a paper, but will be inspired by the question, 'Why?'

Specific learning outcomes (what new skills, knowledge &/or attitudes will participants to take away from the course?)
In this workshop, participants will develop a deeper understanding of the structure of scientific papers, with a renewed focus on the purpose of each section and the connections between them. They will practice applying this knowledge to the task of constructing a scientific manuscript from scratch. They will gain a global framework to conceptualise the entire publishing process, and the profile of their readership. They will explore some common problems of language construction that make our writing unclear, and why we are prone to these problems; we will practice some intuitive editing tools to address them. A common thread will be greater awareness of how our own particular psychology as researchers can influence the transmission of our scientific message, and our reader's perception of that message.

Course contents (outline of topics to be covered)

- Anatomy of a Paper – visible and hidden layers of structure in papers, the purposes of the parts, and how they are connected
- Embryology of a Paper – stages of the publishing process, strategies for structuring and writing
- The Reader – who are they and what are their expectations?
- Tools for Scientific Editing – edit with the reader's expectations in mind

Training methods

This training workshop is highly interactive with extensive elements of partner work, exercises and group discussion, and a special emphasis on sharing and learning from participants' own expertise and experience. We will work with papers from the participants' field, including their own papers.

Target group in PRBB (Senior scientists, postdocs, predocs, management/admin staff, all residents)

Mid-career scientists; late pre-docs and post-docs

Number of participants (maximum)

12

Total course hours (Please specify: a) direct training with instructor present b) required self-study.

Note: only the direct training hours will be included in the post-course certificate.

8

Distribution of course (hours/days)

One 8-hour session.

Pre-course preparation and/or between sessions?

Before the course the trainer will send some reading material and a simple preparatory task based on a published paper from the participant's field.

Material participants need to bring (laptops, etc…)

None

Relevant background reading/audiovisual/websites or other materials

None