



Development of a Postgraduate Communication and Outreach Module

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Abstract

It is becoming ever more important for scientists to be able to convey their research to a broad range of audiences. This paper will describe the development of a pilot postgraduate module on communication and outreach for students of science and technology in University College Dublin which aims to address this issue. The overarching rationale behind developing such a module is the premise that if a scientific concept can be broken down in such a way as to be explained to a 10 year old child, then the scientific concept can be explained to anyone. With this in mind, a dynamic course was developed which guided participating students in the skills necessary to present various scientific topics to a variety of audiences, using primary school pupils as the starting point. The course was delivered through seminars, workshops and tutorials. Students were given two opportunities to perform science outreach activities with primary school students from senior primary school classes. Eight postgraduate students participated in this pilot which took place in autumn 2010. Feedback from the students was very positive with one student commenting how the module “helped improve” communication skills. The primary school students really enjoyed the outreach sessions, one student stating that he “would give up a Saturday or Sunday to go”. Future iterations of this course will be improved through comments given in the student final reports.