

Global COE Scientific English Program

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The Global COE Scientific English Program based at the University of Shizuoka offers English courses to PhD science students throughout the academic year. The courses give students training in the essential practical skills required for successful communication in scientific contexts. Courses in *Oral Communication* and *Academic Writing* began in October of 2007, and this academic year an *Academic Presentations* course was added to the curriculum. *Independent Listening for Scientists*, an iPod-based listening course, was also successfully piloted during this year's summer break.

Oral Communication is a year-long course covering typical social situations that researchers face when visiting overseas conferences and laboratories. Students participate in role plays, discussions, and debates in pairs and small groups. This year's first semester course was evaluated highly by students, with 71% rating it "very worthwhile," significantly higher than last year's 56% "very worthwhile" rating.

Academic Writing, which covers the drafting and careful editing of scientific articles, posters, e-mails, and resumes, is given in the second semester. Last academic year, the instructor noted a considerable improvement in the clarity and precision of students' writing. The course was rated "very worthwhile" by 67% of students.

The one-semester *Academic Presentations* course was added to the curriculum this year. The course covers the major presentation skills of written preparation, slide design, verbal and nonverbal communication, and Q&A sessions. Student presentations are taken with digital video, which students then use to evaluate and improve their work. Presentation skills improved substantially in all areas, including an average improvement of 40.8% in verbal communication. 83% of students rated the course "very worthwhile."

Independent Listening for Scientists was successfully piloted this summer. Scientific podcasts available freely on the internet were used as the basis of the course, along with specially developed support materials. Students were provided with iPods, to which they downloaded selected audio files for listening practice. Average improvement in listening ability during the 8 week course was a statistically significant 9.3%, with a maximum improvement of 45%. 46% of students rated the course "very worthwhile."