

## Science Media SAVVY - Media skills for scientists

Researchers and scientists keen to improve their public outreach are invited to apply to participate in the Science Media Centre's *national series of media skills workshops*.



The two-day Science Media SAVVY workshop is designed to help scientists gain the confidence and skills to engage with the media - and get their science across more effectively.

More than basic media training, this course has been built from the ground up to meet the specific needs of scientists and researchers. We offer practical exercises to help researchers explain complex ideas clearly, introduce tools and strategies for connecting with new audiences, all while providing feedback and support from fellow researchers.

The workshop also offers a unique chance to make valuable media contacts and gain first-hand insight into news media practices during an invited journalists' panel and newsroom tour. New skills are then put to the test with the chance to pitch research stories directly to interested reporters.

### Science Media SAVVY - workshop overview

#### Day One

##### Communication skills and media training

###### Introduction

Media encounters, impressions, stereotypes

###### Universal communication principles

Know your audience  
Overcoming nerves

###### Interview practice in small groups

###### Preparing key messages

How to influence the editing

###### Handling the first phone call

###### Giving an effective interview

On-camera practice, feedback

###### Using clear, compelling language

Your science in a soundbite  
Jargon: finding better alternatives

###### When the interview gets challenging...

On-camera practice, feedback

###### Practicing your media "pitch"

#### Day Two

##### Behind the scenes: news and social media

###### New Zealand's changing media environment

###### Inside the news media

What journalists want

###### Newsroom tour

###### Your science media arsenal

Working with your press office

Online tools to help you stay savvy

###### New media opportunities

Blogging and social media for scientists

Producing your own online content

###### Visiting media panel - Q&A

Journalists from television, radio, newspaper and magazines offer their perspectives and answer your questions

###### Media pitch session

Put your new skills to the test, panel of visiting media "judges" offer feedback

## Researchers on the SAVVY course will:

- gain insight into what works for media
- work out compelling ways to explain tough concepts
- learn to be enthusiastic without losing credibility
- improve their on-camera presence with simulated TV interviews
- get advice on handling risk and controversy
- practice saying what they really mean to under pressure
- learn how scientists can use social media to their advantage

Each workshop is limited to 12 participants, to maximise hands-on experience and individualised attention. The intensive two-day format allows new skills to be developed, mastered and put directly into practice. Following a competitive selection process, a final group of twelve participants is chosen to represent a broad range of research disciplines and experience levels.

### Applicants must be:

- Active researchers or scientists, at any stage of their career
- Experienced with media or likely to encounter media in the future
- Highly motivated to improve their media skills
- Able to identify a specific research project or area of expertise of potential interest to media

Participants have a broad range of prior media experiences. Mid-career researchers and postgraduate students sit alongside department heads and senior scientists. Participants tell us this diverse mix lends a very positive dynamic to the course.

**Course fees: \$595 + GST per participant (lunch and refreshments included)**

## Scholarships

One scholarship covering full course fees is available for a qualifying postgraduate student who shows exceptional promise in the field of science communication. This award is funded by 2011 Prime Minister's Science Media Communication Award winner Dr Mark Quigley.

A second scholarship is available to fund course fees for a post-doctoral scientist or other qualifying early career researcher (5 years post-PhD). Full details are available in our online workshop [application](#).

Other scholarships may be available for upcoming workshops -- please enquire.

If your organisation is interested in subsidising course fees for members accepted onto the workshop or supporting a specific career-stage or discipline of researcher to attend, please contact the SMC for more information.

## Workshop trainers

Science Media SAVVY workshops are led by Science Media Centre staff Peter Griffin and Dacia Herbulock, with support from veteran media trainer [Michael Brown](#) of Skillset NZ.

Participants gain from the Science Media Centre's extensive network of relationships with journalists and our experience handling complex and controversial science-related issues. SAVVY alumni receive ongoing support from the Science Media Centre, including an annual media impact report upon request.

## Feedback from scientists on previous SAVVY courses:

*"I recommend this workshop to anyone needing to speak about science to the public -- i.e. all scientists!"*

*"The time flew by -- I couldn't believe how much we covered!"*

*"I'd absolutely recommend it as a crash course in both presentation and communication skills that apply to everything, not just media involvement."*



*"Other short media training sessions I've done don't compare. This course was way more informative, and packed with practical advice"*

*"There aren't many opportunities that merit two whole days of an early-career scientist's time, but this was worth every moment."*

*"What sets this experience apart is in-depth information regarding how the news process works and real reporters/professionals' feedback. The practice pitch to news reporters was fantastic."*

*"Participants in the workshop ranged broadly [in their level of prior experience with media] and it seemed appropriate for all of us. As a neophyte, it was great to see some old media hands work their way through the same paces."*

*"The workshop demystified media interactions and let me see the landscape from the reporter's point of view."*

*"I found the practice extremely helpful for confronting my worst fears and scenarios. Even with information I thought I could communicate clearly, the course showed me additional areas to work on and improve."*

## More comments from SAVVY participants:

*"Attending the Science Media Centre's SAVVY course was easily one of the best time investments I made this year. My experience there inspired a complete overhaul of how our 60+ person research team communicates with the media and public.*

*"As an almost-immediate direct result of the course, our project has received fantastic publicity from major newspaper, magazine, and television news sources, and my fellow researchers and I are now much better equipped to deal with this attention. I cannot recommend this course and its trainers enough!"*

Elaine Smid, volcanic hazards researcher

*"Overall impression: I have never been so busy in all my life at work, and was questioning the reality of taking two days out for this course, particularly since I have already been involved with the media a bit. However, the course was so worthwhile that it made the weekend catch-up completely worth it. One of the most valuable professional development sessions I've had in a long time -- thank you to the awesome team."*

Caryn Zinn, public health and sports performance nutritionist

## Acknowledgements

Science Media SAVVY workshops were launched with support from 2011 Prime Minister's Science Media Communication Prize winner [Dr Mark Quigley](#). Additional, targeted support from the Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment has enabled us to lower course fees from July 2014 and increase scholarship support for PhD students and early career researchers.

## About the Science Media Centre

The [Science Media Centre](#) is an independent, publicly-funded resource for New Zealand scientists and journalists covering science-related issues. Our aim is to promote accurate, evidence-based reporting on science and research by helping the media work more closely with the scientific community.

The SMC (NZ) is an independent centre established by the Royal Society of New Zealand with funding from the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment .

## For more information

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