

SPACE EDUCATION AND OUTREACH SYMPOSIUM (E1)
SPACE WORKFORCE DEVELOPEMENT – CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES (7)

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THE SPACE ENGLISH ACCESS COURSE(SEAC):CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR
CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Abstract

The Space English Access Course (SEAC): Challenges and Opportunities for Continuing Professional Education and Training

The International Space University (ISU) provides graduate-level instruction to future leaders of our global space society. Since its founding in 1987, ISU has trained more than 2700 students and space professionals from 100 countries by providing interdisciplinary programs in an international and intercultural environment. The two-month intensive schedule, known as the Space Studies Program, (SSP) incorporates the mastery of interdisciplinary course work, an individual research assignment, and a Team Project - all of which are conducted in English. The majority of students and faculty arrive as non- native English speakers with varying levels of English proficiency. This situation presents a significant challenge for those individuals who have had little opportunity to develop their English speaking and listening skills. The Space English Access Course (SEAC), which begins a week prior to the start of the SSP, is designed to provide the learners with a working English vocabulary in seven distinct space disciplines, to prepare them for maximum participation and success in the SSP.

This paper outlines the SEAC/ISU teaching experience and the particular collaborative challenges and opportunities that this diverse professional/student population presents. The paper illustrates how an English course designed to facilitate the understanding and use of the unique vocabulary and idiom of the space sector can be a valuable component of both post graduate and industry driven programs. The SEAC model is flexible enough to serve individuals within a wide range of experience - from seasoned professionals to entry-level employees or graduate students - by providing them with opportunities to broaden their knowledge of the space sector using tailored language tools and strategies they need to communicate in international settings. The SEAC also strives to meet the needs of industry professionals who require space-related education and networking in English.

The paper begins with a brief discussion of how this unique space studies support course evolved from a volunteer effort into a learner-centered program that prepares participants for full integration and collaboration in the ISU Summer Session. The authors include information about how SEAC participants access the resources and the tacit knowledge of the SSP network. The paper concludes with a proposal for a broad-based access course that can be tailored for use in integrating non-native English speaking students and professionals into a highly motivated and knowledgeable workforce whose members possess practical English communication skills.