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Medical English at Edinburgh University

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【談話室】

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Introduction

Last summer, from August 14th to 25th, I spent two weeks studying at the Institute of Applied Language Studies at Edinburgh University. The course I attended was *Teaching English for Medicine* and in this essay I shall discuss the various courses offered by the Institute for medical students and teachers, as well as give some background information on Edinburgh University and its College of Medicine & Veterinary Medicine.

1. Edinburgh University

The University of Edinburgh was established by a Royal Charter over 400 years ago in 1582. It is the fourth oldest university in Scotland and the sixth oldest in the United Kingdom. Today with 18,200 undergraduates, 5,700 graduates and over 300 degree courses, it is one of the largest and most prestigious universities in the United Kingdom. Notable alumni of the university include Alexander Graham Bell, David Hume, Robert Louis Stevenson and John Witherspoon.

2. The College of Medicine & Veterinary Medicine

While origins of the Medical School can be traced back to the barber surgeons of Edinburgh in the 16th century, the Faculty of Medicine was not formally established until 1726. Three years later in 1729, the purpose-built Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh was erected and by 1764 there were so many students that a 200-seat anatomy theater had to be built in the College Garden. This period is also famous for

grave robbing where the infamous Burke and Hare not only stole corpses from freshly dug graves but also killed many homeless people to sell their bodies to the school of anatomy.

Today, medical students at the university perform no dissections. The cadavers are already pre-dissected and labeled for students to examine and sketch. Further anatomical study is carried out with state-of-the-art computer equipment in the new School of Medicine, which opened in 2002. Despite this seemingly lack of "hands-on" experience, students meet their first patients in the first month of their studies and by the time they graduate they are able to, amongst other things, establish intravenous access, administer insulin, perform basic suturing, fundoscopy, lumbar puncture and airway management.

Entrance to the medical school is extremely competitive with equal weighting given to both academic and non-academic criteria in the selection process. Edinburgh accepts 202 UK/EU students and 16 overseas fee-paying applicants per year. Students are expected to get the required grades (AAAAA) on their first sitting, thus so-called 浪人 would not be considered in the selection process. From 2006, applicants are also required to take the UK Clinical Aptitude Test (UK CAT) to assess a wide range of mental abilities and behavioral attributes identified by medical schools as important. This test is not curriculum based as it seeks to investigate innate skills.

Famous alumni of the medical school include Charles Darwin, Joseph Lister, the first doctor to use antiseptics in surgery, and James Simpson who led the way for the use of chloroform in midwifery and surgery. Many medical school

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graduates were also involved in the founding of several of the first medical schools in the US and Canada.

3. Medicine Related Language Courses

The Institute of Applied Language Studies is a self-funding unit within the College of Humanities and Social Science at the University. It offers three medicine related language courses: one for pre-clinical students, one for doctors or students with clinical experience and one for teachers of either medical students or medical professionals. I shall discuss each course in detail.

3.1 English for Medical Students

This course is intended for students in their first three years, or pre-clinical years, of medical study. Knowledge of medicine is not assumed, but the language level for the course is intermediate. A diagnostic test is carried out at the

beginning of the course and while most Japanese students pass the (written) test, they often struggle with the spoken aspects of the course. Any student thinking of taking the course must be aware that all classroom communication will take place in English. The course lasts 3 weeks with 20 hours of formal instruction per week, 5 mornings and 3 afternoons, and focuses mainly on speaking and listening skills in pairs or small groups. Students are also expected to undertake a small project and give a short presentation of their work on the last day of the course. This course takes place twice in the summer vacation and for AMC students the course in the last week of July and the first two weeks of August would be the most suitable.

3.2 English for Medicine

This course is intended for doctors or medical students with some clinical knowledge. In particular, it is recom-

Sample Timetable

English For Medical Students

	Session A 9:15-10:45	Season B 11:15-12:25	Season C 2:00pm-3:40
Monday	Medical News: Reading & Reporting	Laser Eye Surgery: Video Tasks	Medical Crossword: Communicative Activity
Tuesday	Numbers, Graphs & Charts	Talking to Patients: History-talking	Royal College of Surgeons Museum: Poster Task
Wednesday	Computer Lab: Interactive Case-Problems	Poster Presentation	Individual Study/ Social Program
Thursday	Killer Virus: Reading and Video	Resuscitation: First Aid Quiz	Guest Speaker
Friday	Medical Vocabulary 1	Cardiac Arrest: Video/Speaking Activity	Individual Study/ Social Program

Sample Timetable

English For Medicine

	Session A 9:15-10:45	Season B 11:15-12:25	Season C 2:00pm-3:40
Monday	Smoking & Exercise: Summarizing Spoken Report	Talking to Patients: Explaining Diagnosis and Management	Medical Crossword: Communicative Activity
Tuesday	Writing a Case Report	Medical Ethics: Group Discussion	Listening/ Reporting Oral Report
Wednesday	<i>Ankylosing Spondylitis</i> : Listening & Note-taking	Procedures: Written Description of a Medical Procedure	Individual Study/ Free Time
Thursday	<i>Mr. AA</i> : Listening to a Case Presentation	Numbers & Levels: Reporting Laboratory Results	Case Presentations: (Students present in pairs)
Friday	Individual Student Talks	Language Review: Grammar & Vocabulary Revision	Individual Study/ Free-Time

mended for those planning to do clinical-attachments in English speaking countries. The language level for this course is also intermediate or above and any student found to have too low a level will be advised to take a General English course. This course also runs for 3 weeks and follows the same type of schedule as the above-mentioned *English for Medical Students* course. Unlike the former, as well as listening and speaking, it also helps participants develop their writing skills. It is a more specialized course and by the end of it participants should feel more confident and fluent in using English in professional situations. Participants also have the opportunity to attend a tutorial at an Edinburgh hospital. This course takes place over four different periods, but for AMC students, once again, the course in the last week of July and the first two weeks of August would be the most suitable.

3.3 Teaching English for Medicine (TEM)

This is an interactive course intended for English teachers involved in the teaching of doctors, nurses and medical students, as well as medical professionals involved in the teaching of English. It is open to both native and non-native speakers with a minimum of 2 years' teaching experience. The course aims to equip participants with a knowledge base for TEM by acquainting them with medical English resources. Participants are encouraged to plan or reassess their own course design and methodology and are given the opportunity to create lesson plans for their own specific teaching situations. Instructors involved in this course collaborate closely with the medical faculty at Edinburgh University to provide authentic materials and language situations. Time is also given for observing the *English for Medicine* and *English for Medical Students* classes. While the course is only 2 weeks long, it is intensive, with at least 35 contact hours in addition to classroom observations, self-directed activities and resource consultation. It is normally held in the third and fourth week of August.

4. Fees, Transportation and Accommodation

With the strong British pound, studying at the university, even a summer course, is not cheap. The 3 weeks courses cost £725, which is close to 150,000 yen and the 2 week course £530, or about 110,000 yen. Accommodation is provided either in university self-catering flats (some offering breakfast in a campus restaurant) or with a host-family and costs around 35,000 yen per week. While there is no direct flight to Edinburgh from Japan, it is about a 60-90 min flight from most major European airports. However, with recent travel disruptions, avoiding Heathrow Airport is recommended! The earlier the flight is booked, the cheaper it will be, but since it is summer and July/August are peak traveling times in Japan, be prepared to pay between 150,000 and 250,000 yen for the return flight.

5. Conclusion

As the capital of Scotland, Edinburgh is a vibrant city and the center for government, business, learning and the Arts. But with a population of only 500,000 people it is safe and relatively compact. In the summer there are a number of festivals including the Edinburgh International Festival and the Festival Fringe. The School of Medicine at Edinburgh University offers some of the best medical research programs both in the UK and internationally. The Institute of Applied Language Studies works closely with the School of Medicine to offer highly structured courses that are tailor-made to meet the specific needs of both international students and professionals in the field of medicine. By attending medical English courses at Edinburgh University, international students are not only given the opportunity to improve their English, but also the chance to make future contacts for clinical attachments or collaborative research in the UK.