

To M. Shaun Payen
Regarding Public Speaking Masterclasses

Louvain-la-Neuve, 7th March 2019

Dear Shaun,

On behalf of the *Université catholique de Louvain (UCLouvain)*, I would like to thank you for your inspirational lecture and workshops on public speaking to our PhD candidates.

Young scientists always overestimate the value of public speaking in their professional and everyday life, thinking that it should be limited to CEOs, politicians or professional public speakers. However, through your lecture and workshops, you shared inspirational stories and past experience to enlighten PhD candidates about the importance of public speaking. We believe that communication skills are an important part of the training of a doctoral student, so we align with your goals.

It was evident that you put a lot of thoughts into developing the sessions. Your charismatic teaching style got the participants really captivated from the start until the end. In each session, different presentation aspects were presented, with lots of emphasis on giving impromptu speeches. These in particular were very interesting yet playful. You taught techniques that, although seemingly trivial, are very effective to combatting the usual issues with presentations – stage fright, poor slides, bad connection with the audience, *etc.*

The PhD students were amazed by your ability to answer their questions spontaneously and confidently. Furthermore, your prompt and professional evaluations where you decorticated every aspect of their speeches was not only surprising but also extremely useful in helping those students to further their communication skills. You managed to engage very strongly with the participants who worked after the class to deliver new content at the next one. It was very hands-on and demanding, but also worth it.

The students have learnt a lot and did not personally expect the courses to be delivered at such a high quality level. The participants were therefore highly satisfied with their participation in the Masterclasses. Despite your young age, you have been able to persuade students at PhD level to take part and engage with you in a friendly yet very competent manner.

I would not hesitate to recommend this course to friends and colleagues in Belgium and abroad, and wish you every success in your future endeavors.

Kind regards,



Sophie Hermans
Professor, Maître de Recherches FNRS
Vice-President IMCN Institute