The collection process: dealing with students and their texts

Corpus Linguistics 2005
Birmingham University
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Facilitate collection of texts to meet sampling policies, timeframe and budget:

- Investigate: modules (course/department documentation)
- establish personal contacts (interview)

**Presentation in core lectures**

**Cohort emails**

- Students email texts to project (bawe@xxx.ac.uk)
- Reply – accept texts, specify collection point

**F2F Collection:**
- St. forms checked.
- Money paid.

**Text and data handling**
Issues arising from the pilot study

1. Establish contacts + promotion of project

2. Level of monetary incentive

3. Efficient and user friendly collection process
Sampling Grid and collection:

Sample students’ assessed work:
- module courses/departments ‘disciplinary groupings’

Benefits for collection process
- enables access to students and their assessed writing through the administrative systems of the institutions.
- contacts can be established
- permission can be sought
- administrative tasks can be readily achieved
- outcomes can be identified for courses/departments

Meets expectations of tutors and students and establishes trust and channels of communication
The process

- Establish tutor contact and support – set up collection
  - email / website / meeting / flyer

- Student Contact: 5 min presentation in lecture:
  - Flyer explaining the overall research project
  - Cohort specific handout: collection criteria and contact details.
  - Students’ questions:
    - our collection criteria,
    - purpose of the corpus
    - writer anonymity
  - Follow-up cohort email

- Face to face contact versus ‘cold call’ email to a cohort,
Submission of texts: 2 stage process

1. Students encouraged to submit their work via email

   We can:
   - Select texts that meet sampling grid.
   - Check texts meet sampling criteria (word count, grade etc)

   Students can:
   - Work out payment in advance
   - Complete forms in advance
     = no disappointment and saves time

   In reply:
   - Confirm texts needed, collection arrangements and attach electronic submission form
2. Collection:

- in the students’ own departments
  (+ designated fixed weekly times in office)

  - Arranged around compulsory/ key modules
  - Lunch time and after afternoon classes.
  - Central/ high profile area
  - Finance (cash, receipts)
  - Paperwork (forms/ laptop)
The paper trail

- Generate unique identifier for each student/text
- Monitoring the submissions – expected and collected
- The submission form – student data and ‘disclaimer’ (IP)
- Transferring the student data – maintaining links