



## Challenges and opportunities in collecting and providing student writing samples online

### Key Words

Student writing; Samples; Exemplars; Online; Digitising; Challenges and Opportunities

### Abstract

Academic Language and Learning (ALL) educators and learning or academic skills services from Australian and New Zealand Universities often provide online samples or exemplars of academic student writing. In addition, there has been extensive research into many aspects in the provision and development of writing samples (Ädel & Römer, 2014; Chen, Huang, Chang, & Liou, 2015; Nesi, Sharpling, & Ganobcsik-Williams, 2004; Sadler, 2010; Sherry, 2014; Swales, 2014). Subject-specific writing samples can help students to see what is expected of them and improve their academic writing in order to meet said expectations. This could consequently make it easier for students to apply what they have learned to their own writing. However, there are a number of issues in collecting such exemplars (Alsop & Nesi, 2009). For example, there are difficulties with ensuring that the samples obtained are the type, level, quality and discipline – or disciplines, needed. This presentation will give an overview of theoretical and practical issues related to the creation of a student writing sample database (small or large, for one or more disciplines) in four parts. First, it will review sample selection and collection, including how writing samples are made available and maintained. Then, it will consider options in digitising or making writing samples digital - in terms of presentation, integration and interactivity, and also the inclusion of features that make writing samples more useful for students, such as comments, annotations and marking criteria. Next, it will also highlight how samples will be used by both educators and students, including the issue of ensuring that educators have the skills needed to create and effectively utilise them. Lastly, the presentation will address current and future advances in 'digitalisation'; improvements in digital resources and communication tools that may be applied to - and improve, how well students learn from writing samples.

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