

**Research, scholarship and practice in the area of Academic Literacies
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*An Investigation of Genres of Assessed Writing in British Higher Education:
A Warwick - Reading - Oxford Brookes Project.*

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One major aim of this ESRC funded project (RES-000-23-0800) is to complement the BASE corpus of spoken academic English by developing a British Academic Written English (BAWE) corpus of student-written assignments from across the disciplines and years of university study. The second major aim is to describe the genres of assessed writing through discourse community perspectives, a multi-dimensional analysis of register, and genre analysis. We will outline the project <http://www.warwick.ac.uk/go/bawe/> then present current findings from discourse community perspectives, specifically from interviews with university tutors and students. We welcome discussion on the project and on the kinds of access or future uses participants anticipate of the corpus.

This paper complements prior investigations of academic writing practices and their variation across academic disciplines. It reports on the findings from 55 semi-structured interviews with academic staff, leading to an inventory of genres of assessed student writing, and the identification, from the perspective of the academic, of a number of trends in the assignment of writing tasks. Three distinct types of student writing prevail: 'pedagogic', 'research-academic' and 'professional'. Also in evidence is the increasing use of tasks involving fiction, self reflection, 'empathy writing', and the creation and evaluation of multi-modal and web-based writing. Although there was considerable agreement regarding what constitutes 'good' academic writing, tutors emphasised their role in introducing students to discipline-specific writing norms. Student interviews are on-going, so emerging insights from student perspectives will also be presented.

Table 2: Student Interview Prompt:

Rank these features from 1-9 according to what you think are the most important features of an academic essay?

Clarity (CL)
Structure (S)
Demonstrating Understanding by Explaining Background (B)
Research (R)
Presentation (PR)
Creativity or Originality (CR)
Arguing or Counter-Arguing (A)
Expression or Voice (EX)
Time Invested (TI)

Table 1: Types and Spread of Assignments (Departmental labels)

Essay	Anthropology, Archaeology, Biology, Computing, Economics, Engineering, English Studies, Food Sciences, Health, History, Hospitality and Tourism, Law, Mathematics, Medicine, Philosophy, Psychology, Publishing, Theatre Studies
Report	Computing, Food Sciences, Hospitality and Tourism, Law, Psychology
Laboratory Report	Archaeology, Biology, Physics
Project Report	Biology, Economics, Engineering, Mathematics, Sociology
Research Project	Biology, Mathematics, Theatre Studies
Dissertation	Anthropology, Archaeology, Biology, Computing, Law, Medicine, Publishing, Sociology, Theatre Studies
Group Project	Archaeology, Engineering, Health, Physics, Publishing
Poster	Anthropology, Biology, Engineering, Mathematics, Physics, Psychology
Book Review	History, Psychology, Sociology, Theatre Studies
Website Evaluation	Medicine, Theatre Studies
Problem Sheets	Biosciences, Economics, Food Sciences, Hospitality and Tourism, Mathematics
Case Studies	Health, Publishing
Case Notes, Draft Appeal to House of Lords, Advice Notes to a client, Submissions in preparation for a case, Moots, Problem Question (judgment),	Law
Field Study/ Ethnography	Sociology
Patient Case Report	Medicine
Letter from publisher to author	Publishing
Reflective writing / journal / blog	Engineering, English Studies, Hospitality and Tourism, Philosophy, Medicine, Theatre Studies
Critical evaluation (of own production or practical task)	Anthropology, English Studies, Computing, Theatre Studies
Marketing Proposal / Plan	Engineering, Publishing
Fiction	Sociology, Law
Press Release, Fact Sheet, Technical Abstract, persuasive writing	Biology, Physics
Letter of advice to friend written from 1830s perspective; Maths in Action project (lay audience)	Mathematics

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Access to BASE, BAWE and EASE Materials

The University of Warwick

The British Academic Spoken English (BASE) corpus

<http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/celte/base/> consists of 160 lectures and 40 seminars recorded in a variety of university departments. Holdings are distributed across four broad disciplinary groups, each represented by 40 lectures and 10 seminars. The lectures and seminars have been transcribed and tagged using a system devised in accordance with the [TEI Guidelines](#) .

Freely available resources:

BASE holdings, Transcription and mark-up conventions, DTD, BASE-in-Sketch-Engine, Details of Research arising from the project

Resources available on request:

Text transcripts of BASE holdings, tagged transcripts of BASE holdings, Audio/ video files.

The BASE corpus has been used for materials development projects at Warwick and at Reading, in particular the [Essential Academic Skills in English \(EASE\)](#) series of multimedia cd-roms.

www.ease.ac.uk The EASE series provides multimedia interactive self-access EAP materials on CD-ROM. Two volumes have already been released: *Listening to Lectures* (2001) and *Seminar Skills 1: Presentations* (2004). Further volumes are in preparation.

BASE functions as a companion to the Michigan Corpus of Spoken Academic English (MICASE) <http://www.lsa.umich.edu/eli/micase/micase.htm> We anticipate that cross-cultural comparisons will be made of BASE and MICASE data, and also of data from other cultures and languages. BASE will remain a record of British spoken academic discourse at the turn of this century, and may also be compared with corpora compiled in the future to investigate diachronic change in academic language use.

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BAWE Prospective Users

Would you be interested in using the BAWE corpus? Yes/ No

If yes, as *researcher, *teacher, *student (please delete as appropriate)

If yes, in what ways and for what purposes:

.....
.....
.....

Would you like to be kept informed as the different features of the BAWE corpus become available? YES / NO

Would you be interested in evaluating the interfaces as they are developed as an end user? YES/ NO

Name:

e-mail:

University:

Position / Professional Interest:

Comments:

Thank you! Please return this form to Sheena or Laura, or e-mail the information to bawe@warwick.ac.uk