

DATA GATHERING

The data were gathered in five different European universities, in Ireland, England, The Netherlands and Sweden. Before contacting possible participants, we requested permission from the Committees responsible for Research Ethics at each of the different universities, and drafted letters of consent in line with the ethical guidelines set down by each institution. However, in order to protect the participants' anonymity, the universities in which the recordings were made are not named on this website nor in any conference presentations and publications relating to this research.

Once permission was granted, we contacted Spanish Erasmus students spending a period of their undergraduate degree at these five universities, explaining the purpose of the research project and the nature of their (possible) participation. We asked them to suggest the name of a lecturer currently teaching a course in which they were enrolled who they thought might be willing to participate as well. We then contacted the lecturers proposed by the students, again providing a full explanation the purpose of the research project and the nature of their (possible) participation. The participants were offered a small stipend for taking part in the study.

Those who volunteered to take part in the project were informed about the different stages of the research and their role in it, and we provided opportunities for possible participants to ask any questions they might have about it and to withdraw from it at any stage of the data gathering. The student participants were asked to prepare in advance one or two questions to ask their lecturers in the simulated office hours' consultation. These should be 'real' questions about issues that they would like to have clarified, related to any of the following aspects of their academic work:

1. The system of assessment of the course taken
2. The assessment of their work in a recent exam or written piece of work they had handed in
3. The course contents.

The lecturers were not informed about the nature of the questions likely to be asked of them. At the beginning of each data gathering session, each participant was asked to read and sign a consent form, showing they understood and agreed to the conditions of their involvement.