

Guidelines on third-party proofreading for undergraduate and postgraduate taught students

Introduction

Proofreading represents the final stage of producing a piece of academic writing. Students should be encouraged to proofread their own work, since this is an essential skill in the academic writing process.

However, certain types of student texts are often submitted for proofreading to a third party, and third-party proofreading is at times actively recommended by academic supervisors. Therefore students need guidance how to use the process appropriately.

These guidelines set out best practice advice for students, supervisors, and third-party proofreaders regarding proofreading of all written work up to doctoral theses. Third-party proofreaders can be professional proofreaders, fellow students, friends or family members.

Failure to adhere to these guidelines could constitute a breach of academic integrity and contravenes the University's Academic Regulations. It is therefore the student's responsibility to ensure that the third-party proofreader they engage adheres to these guidelines.

Checking whether proofreading is appropriate

Third-party proofreading is allowed for any piece of academic writing unless stated otherwise. If proofreading is not permitted, information about this will be included in the module handbook.

Principles of third-party proofreading

A proofreader may check for, identify and suggest corrections for errors in the text. In no circumstances should a proofreader edit a student's writing (for example, amend ideas, arguments or structure) as this will compromise the authorship of the work.

A third-party proofreader may:

- Identify punctuation, spelling and typographical errors
- Identify grammatical and syntactical errors and anomalies
- Identify formatting and layout errors and inconsistencies (e.g. page numbers, font size, line spacing, headers and footers)
- Identify errors in labelling of diagrams, charts or figures
- Highlight overly-long or complex sentences or paragraphs, especially where meaning is ambiguous
- Draw attention to repeated phrases or omitted words
- Draw attention to inaccurate or inconsistent referencing

A proofreader may not:

- Add content in any way

- Rewrite passages of text to clarify the meaning
- Rearrange or re-order paragraphs to enhance structure or argument
- Change any words or figures, except to correct spelling
- Check or correct facts, data, calculations, formulae, equations or computer code
- Implement or alter the referencing system
- Re-label diagrams, charts or figures
- Reduce content so as to comply with a specified word limit
- Make grammatical, syntactical or stylistic corrections
- Translate any part of the work into English

Failure to adhere to the above requirements may result in an investigation under the Academic Conduct Regulation.

Authorial responsibility

Students have overall responsibility for their work. The third-party proofreader shall give advice by means of tracked changes on an electronic copy or handwritten annotations on a paper copy or other similar devices. The student must take responsibility for choosing what advice to accept, and must make the changes to the master copy of the work him/herself.

Furthermore, it is the student's responsibility to prove that a proofreader has adhered to these third-party proofreading guidelines. Students are therefore advised to keep the original copy of their written work as well as the copy they have submitted for assessment.