

Guidance on proofreading

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This guidance sets out for students and staff what is and is not considered acceptable proofreading practice for all summative work in order to ensure that at all times the student's responsibility as author of their own work is clear.
- 1.2 This guidance applies to students on all taught undergraduate and taught postgraduate courses.
- 1.3 There may be situations where the School or academic staff indicate that, for certain assessments, students should not be allowed any assistance in terms of proofreading (or editing) as the skill of writing is being assessed. This should be made clear to students in course or module handbooks.

2 Support for students

- 2.1 Students who feel that they need assistance in writing appropriate English should, in the first instance, seek guidance from their School or Student Services.
- 2.2 Online guidance about proofreading is available to all students as part of academic writing style from the University's Academic Study Kit (ASK). This aims to help and encourage students to develop their own proofreading skills as an important part of their academic writing skills.
- 2.3 The University's Peer Proof Reading Service¹ is available free of charge for students whose first language is not English and is designed to work alongside the Writing Advice Service to improve the student's spelling and grammar.
- 2.4 Students with additional learning needs arising from a disability or dyslexia will be supported via an individual Learning Support Plan. Further information can be found in the University's *General Examination and Assessment Regulations for Taught Courses* (section G) and from the Disability and Dyslexia homepage.

3 The role of the student

- 3.1 It is the student's responsibility to ensure that all work submitted for assessment is their own and represents their own abilities and understanding.

The University acknowledges that students may access a variety of forms of support to help them in the preparation of written assessed work but any use of third party² proofreaders must not compromise the authorship of this work. It is not appropriate or acceptable for students to ask or allow someone else to make substantive changes to the academic content of their work submitted for assessment e.g. by rewriting passages of text. This is considered to be academic misconduct (collusion) which will be dealt with under the University's academic misconduct procedures.

- 3.2 Proofreading is an integral part of the academic writing process and is an important skill which students should develop. Proofreading is the final stage in the process of producing a piece of written work and students are always advised to check their work for errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar. As the author of the work, students must remain responsible for its content throughout the process.

¹ located in the International Academic Study Kit (iASK)

<http://about.brighton.ac.uk/ask/internationals/peer-proof-reading-service/>

² Any person(s) other than the academic tutor/marker of the student's work, and includes other students, peers, friends, family, professional proofreaders

3.3 A student may choose to check for spelling and grammatical errors in an assignment through the use of spelling and grammar checking software before submitting it for marking. This is acceptable practice but such software should always be used with care and students should still check their work for accuracy after using this.

3.4 It is the student's responsibility to ensure that any proofreader used is aware of and abides by this guidance (particularly section 6). If the proofreader goes beyond the guidance and has an impact on the academic content, structure or expression of ideas in the written work, this is not acceptable.

Importantly, it is the student's responsibility for the correction of errors highlighted by the proofreader and for the final decision on if and how to change the original text. The student is always ultimately responsible for the work they submit for assessment. The student should also keep copies of successive drafts in order that they can demonstrate the progress of their work.

3.5 The use of a proofreader may not be appropriate on some modules, e.g. where English language skills are a learning outcome (or assessment criteria) of the module, or this is a requirement of a relevant Professional Statutory Regulatory Body (PSRB). Students are advised to check their module handbook, which will state if the use of a proofreader is not permitted on the module. If in doubt the student should talk to their Module or Course Leader. Where this is the case, and the student gets assistance in the completion of their work from another person through proofreading and correcting English, this will constitute academic misconduct.

4 The role of academic tutors

4.1 Tutors may highlight issues with spelling and grammar, as well as comments on the ideas presented and the clarity of the work, as part of formative advice on student's work in draft form. This should not extend to systematic corrections or re-writing of the work. Tutors are advised to use the insert comment function on MS Word rather than track changes. In this way the student should always take responsibility for considering the tutor's comments and making any changes they consider necessary to their work.

5 Third-party proofreaders

5.1 Peer review is a common process within academia, and encouraging our students to participate in the stage of proofreading in a structured and supported environment has the potential to nurture a collegiate academic culture among students.

The following are acceptable circumstances:

- i. in some contexts, discussion about other students' drafts is encouraged as part of the learning outcome of the module;
- ii. in group work, students take collective responsibility for a piece of work and it is appropriate to proofread others' contributions;
- iii. the use of the University's Peer Proof Reading Service for students whose first language is not English. The Service is provided by trained and supervised University of Brighton student volunteers³ and operates in accordance with this guidance. Through training and supervision, the peer proofreaders stand to gain valuable insights in the review process, and potentially improve their own writing habits and abilities. Through the acknowledgement of the proofreading process at University level, we hope that students are encouraged to engage in reciprocal academic efforts that illuminate and develop the formative process of academic writing.

³ although they receive training they are not professionals

The peer proofreaders should use the insert comment function on MS Word rather than track changes⁴. This ensures that the student is required to actively incorporate the peer proofreader's suggestions into their work and to take responsibility for the amount of changes that are made.

5.2 In all other cases where a third party such as a friend is involved in proofreading, it is important that students adhere closely to this guidance to ensure that the authorship of the work submitted, and the substance of the work, remain the student's own.

5.3 A written statement must be included by the student when their assignment is submitted for marking declaring the use of any third party proofreader which should indicate the sort of person that provided proofreading assistance and that this assistance was in accordance with the University's guidance.

A copy of the original (draft) material that was given to the proofreader, showing all annotations made by the proofreader, must be available on request by the marker.

5.4 Students are reminded that they will be held responsible for work which they submit for assessment and that the use of third party proofreaders and inadequacies in proofreading will not be accepted as mitigation for any deficiencies in their work.

5.5 The use of professional proofreaders or services offered as 'proof reading' or 'editorial services' is strongly discouraged. The University does not consider this to be conducive to the development of students' own academic writing skills and the student may run the major risk that such assistance may constitute academic misconduct where the activity goes beyond the boundary of proofreading and includes rewriting or rewording the student's original work. As such this compromises the authorship of the work submitted by the student for assessment.

6 What proofreaders may and may not do

6.1 Proofreaders may:

- identify errors in spelling, punctuation, typographical mistakes, poor grammar and suggest alternatives;
- highlight redundancy or missing words;
- highlight formatting errors;
- highlight general clarity of written English - where the meaning of a passage is unclear they may highlight this, but not rewrite it.

6.2 Proofreaders should not:

- rewrite or edit sections or sentences in order to improve the clarity of the argument/meaning or develop an argument or idea;
- rearrange passages of text or reformat the material;
- correct factual errors or change any factual information;
- add any material or comment on the content of the work;
- correct or assist with academic referencing;
- translate the work into English (or any other language);
- significantly alter the length of the work;
- check calculations, formulae or equations, or re-label diagrams, charts or figures.

Submission of work by the student as their own work where such amendments have been made would constitute academic misconduct by the student.

⁴ or make comments on a hard copy of the student's work