Proofreading guidance

Introduction

Proofreading is the process of checking your work to make sure it is of a high academic standard and quality. Proofreading is a skill which improves with practice and the University provides help and advice to help you learn how to proofread your own work. You should always allow plenty of proofreading time before submitting your work to correct any errors, such as grammar, sentence structure or correct use of English.

This guidance document explains what proofreading is, what is good practice and how to seek help to check your work. If you fail to follow this guidance there is a risk that your work may be subject to academic misconduct. This guidance should be read alongside the Academic Misconduct Regulations.

Proofreading guidance

You should always build in ample time to proofread your work before you submit it. When you get the deadline for your work, you should aim to complete it before the deadline and allow the extra time to proofread your work. Further help and good proofreading tips are available from the Skills Team, who can provide proofreading support, to help you learn how to proof read your own work.

Who is allowed to proofread my work?

You should be the first person to proofread your work. However, sometimes it helps to have someone else check it too, as they might spot things you don't. It is ok to ask friends and family to check your work but you should advise them on what they can help with.

What can a proofreader help me with?

A proofreader can help you correct for:

- Spelling errors
- Typographical errors
- Grammar errors – such as wrong or inappropriate words used to describe something or incorrectly formatted sentences
- Accidentally repeated or missed words
- Referencing errors – incorrectly cited or wrong referencing style, or incorrectly formatted references
- Language errors – if English is not your first language, it is acceptable to correct language structure but this should **not** improve the quality of the work. It should only improve the quality of the English so the reader can understand the content.
- Other general corrections that improve the grammatical quality of your work to make it easier to read
What should a proofreader not help me with?

A proofreader must not change the general meaning of the academic content which can improve its quality. They must also not:

- Change or make suggestions about your content, or change the order of your work
- Make comments about improving your content or suggesting ideas for improvement
- Change any facts, figures, or calculations
- Alter any academic arguments or conclusions of your work
- Translate your work into English from any other language
- Check your work for plagiarism

Can I pay someone to proofread my work?

You should never need to pay anyone to proofread your work, because the University provides a lot of support and advice to help you learn how to proofread your own work. Additional help is available from the Skills Team in the Library.

We have also produced some guidance for you and the proofreader if you decide to pay for a proofreading service.

What should I do if I decide to pay for a proofreader?

Before choosing a commercial proofreader you should check that they have appropriate qualifications, experience and expertise. The society for editors and proofreaders (SfEP) provides information about proofreading, standards and contracts. The University does not endorse any commercial proofreading service.

You should provide the commercial proofreader with a copy of the Proofreading Guidance for Commercial Providers so that they know what they should and should not be doing to update your work. For your protection, you should also agree a contract with them to make sure they do not use your work for their own purposes, such as re-sell your work, or add it to any essay databases for use by third parties.

If you decide to use a commercial proofreading service, you do so at your own risk. For example, if you have a tight deadline and your proofreader fails to proofread your work on time, this will not be given due consideration if you attempt to claim mitigating circumstances. You should therefore allow ample time for a commercial proofreader to proofread your work, but ideally you would use this ample time to proofread your own work.