Proofreading guidance for commercial providers

Introduction

Although the University of Hull does not endorse commercial proofreading services, it acknowledges that students may wish to use them from time to time. This guidance is for any proofreader, or proofreading service that provides a paid-for service to students, to avoid the risk of unfairly improving the academic quality of a student’s work.

The academic standard of an assignment or piece of work produced by a student must not be improved as part of the proofreading service. The academic content is the responsibility of the student alone and should not be changed on behalf of the student. Students must declare if they use a commercial proofreading service and if the academic content has been shown to be changed or improved then this may constitute unfair means.

Acceptable proofreading support

By providing paid for proofreading support, the University accepts that you can correct for:

- Spelling errors
- Typographical errors, such as ‘to or too’, ‘were or where’ etc.
- Grammar errors – such as wrong or inappropriate words used to describe something or incorrectly formatted sentences
- Accidently repeated or missed words
- Referencing errors – incorrectly cited or wrong referencing style, or incorrectly formatted references. The University of Hull uses set styles for referencing (mainly University of Hull Harvard and University of Hull Footnotes) and these can be accessed from the Skills Team website.
- Language errors – if English is not the student’s first language, it is acceptable to correct language structure but this should not improve the academic 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 the student’s work to make it easier to read

Unacceptable proofreading support

You should not make changes which will improve the academic quality of a student’s work. To avoid this happening, you must not:

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

Contractual agreements

By providing a commercial, paid for service, you should agree not to use the student’s work for any other purpose, other than providing proofreading improvements. This includes:

• Not re-selling the student’s work to third parties
• Adding the student’s work to any databases, either personal or third party
• Distributing, or making public the student’s work without express written permission of the student