

## Guidance on the use of Proof-Reading Services

**Students are advised to read this document in conjunction with the University's Academic Integrity Regulations. Should students require advice on academic skills, students are encouraged to seek advice from the Schools' Academic Skills Tutors (ASTs).**

Whilst it is not essential for students to use a proof-reader, Section 4 Assessment Regulation 2 of the University's Students' Handbook of Regulations *Conduct of candidates in examinations and assignments* contains the University's regulations relating to the use of proof-readers. These regulations allow for the use of proof-reading services by students but make it clear that students are solely responsible for the content of the work that they are submitting for assessment. The following guidance aims to help students understand the boundaries between legitimate support and unacceptable intervention when using a proof-reader or proof-reading service.

This guidance applies to all forms of proof-reading services which can be provided by either professional (i.e. paid for) proof-reading services (which includes the use of on-line services) or non-professional proof-reading e.g. provided by friends/relatives.

The University does not offer proof-reading services to students. Students who are seeking to use the services of a proof-reader must be aware of the following:

### **1) Services which can be provided by proof-readers:**

Proof-readers may provide guidance and developmental advice on the improvement of spelling, grammar and syntax either within the text of an assignment or the labelling of diagrams/figures/charts, this includes indicating (but not amending):

- Spelling errors;
- Incorrect use of capitalisations;
- Incorrect use of punctuation;
- Incorrect use of verb tense;
- The omission of articles (a/an, the); prepositions (in, to, at) or pronouns (he, she, it);
- Instances where sentences are ambiguous or too complicated;
- Where there are errors in the formatting of the document (e.g. differences in font or spacing).

### **2) Services which cannot be provided by proof-readers:**

Proof-readers must not make amendments to any piece of written work. Submission of work in which such amendments have been made would constitute a breach of the academic integrity regulations on the part of the student. Examples of the services that proof-readers cannot provide include:

- Rewriting any section of the assignment;
- Translating the text from a student's native language to English;
- Introducing any new content to the work
- Providing factual correction of content contained within the assignment;
- Reducing or expanding the document size (e.g. to meet a word limit)
- Changing the order of sentences/ paragraphs/chapters;
- Adapting or amend formulae, calculations or code;
- Adapting the content to help clarify arguments.

### 3) Levels of Guidance Provided by Proof-readers:

The University acknowledges that the level of support provided by proof-readers to students can vary. For the avoidance of doubt, the appropriate level of proof-reader support which can be provided to taught undergraduate or taught postgraduate students is limited to:

**The proof-reader providing an indication to the student that an error has occurred within a document; however, no solution to the error is given to the student.**

An indication of the presence of an error may be made by, for example, underlining a miss-spelt word. The University accepts that, for the purposes of illustration, the proof-reader may model or offer an example of how a possible correction could be made; however, the responsibility for making the correction within the assignment rests with the student.

Any other form of support and guidance provided by a proof-reader is considered unacceptable by the University. For example, it is unacceptable for a proof-reader to make:

1. The actual correction within the text;
2. An indication that an error has occurred and to provide the solution or the correction for the student to insert

Should the student have any doubt, they should seek advice from the Academic Skills Tutors or Students' Union Advice Centre before using a proof-reader.

### 4) Responsibilities when Selecting a Proof-reading service:

When using a proof-reader, students must remember that they remain responsible for the content of the work which is submitted for assessment. In view of this, students must ensure that both the student and proof-reader are aware of the boundaries between legitimate support and unacceptable intervention. The Guidance in sections 1, 2 and 3 (above) can help students to decide if the service offered by a proof-reader is appropriate. However, if there is any doubt, the student should seek advice from the AST or Students' Union Advice Centre before using a proof-reader.

When using the services of a proof-reader it is advisable to:

- Provide the proof-reader with a copy of this guidance;
- Keep a record of any written correspondence between the student and proof-reader;
- Keep a separate copy of the original work sent to the proof-reader;
- Keep a separate copy of any advice received from the proof-reader;
- Maintain evidence that the student has made the changes.

### 5) The Role of the Academic Skills Tutors:

The University's Academic Skills Tutors will not provide proof-reading services for students. They will provide advice, guidance and teaching in the following areas:

- Improvement of academic writing style;
- Structuring work appropriately;
- Constructing arguments;
- Referencing skills;
- Research skills: finding and evaluating information;
- Exam preparation.

## **6) Proof-reading and Academic Integrity:**

Students are ultimately responsible for the content of the work that they submit for assessment. In instances where a student has used a proof-reader and the submitted work becomes the subject of an investigation under the Academic Integrity Regulations, the University will not accept the use of a proof-reader as mitigation or defence in relation to the allegation.