

Proofreading of Student Assessments

Students are normally permitted to engage a proofreader to make suggestions for minor changes in order to improve the readability of written English in an assignment prior to submission; this process is called proofreading. A third-party proofreader can be a friend, family member, paid professional or company. There are also a variety of online proofreading tools, which can also be used as proofreaders.

Students are not permitted to engage a third-party proofreader to make more substantive changes to their work, or to produce any content on their behalf. This is editing or ghost-writing and is considered academic misconduct. Details about what is and what is not acceptable for a proofreader to do are listed below.

1. Students' responsibilities

- Are ultimately responsible for the quality and content of the work they submit;
- Are ultimately responsible for deciding whether or not to make any changes based on the proofreader's comments or suggestions from online proofreading tools;
- Are responsible for checking with course organisers whether it is appropriate to use a proofreader in their assessments;
- Must refer their third-party proofreader to these proofreading guidelines and should declare the use of a proofreader in their work;
- Must retain copies of their work directly before and immediately after third-party or online proofreader input (i.e. with all suggested changes, comments or track changes comments added) in case they are called upon to show the extent to which a proofreader has influenced their work;
- Must proofread their own work before sending it to the proofreader or using an online proofreading tool;
- Must plan enough time to check over the proofreader's comments or suggestions from online proofreading tools and decide upon which changes, if any, they will make to their work before submitting it;
- Must never use a translation tool to generate the text which is sent to a proofreader;
- In their submitted assessment, must acknowledge the use of generative AI if this has been used as one of the functions within an online proofreading tool.

2. Third-party Proofreaders

A third-party proofreader can be a friend, family member, paid professional or company who you use to read your work and make suggestions for minor changes in order to improve the readability of written English in an assignment prior to submission. Please note that this guidance does not apply to supervisory input by academic staff.

2.1 A Third-party proofreader may do the following:

- **Edits** to text may be made but only to indicate and correct **minor issues**.
Minor issues relate to items of **spelling, punctuation, grammar and syntax**.
Minor issues are localised, typically single words or punctuation items within existing sentences.
This is the only type of direct editing which is permitted.

This editing must be recorded (e.g. using 'Review > Track Changes' in Microsoft Word).

- **Comments** on text may be added to identify and explain more **major issues**.
Major issues relate to errors in the text and problems with the **clarity of written English**.
Major issues are more extensive, typically affecting whole or multiple sentences or sections.
These types of issues can all be commented on, but not corrected by direct editing.
Comments must be recorded (e.g. using 'Review > New Comment' in Microsoft Word).
- Edits and/or comments can be made to main body of text or any text used in the legend or labelling of diagrams, charts, tables or figures. Issues identified might include word choice, tense, repetition, missing words etc. The proof-reader should include an explanation of why text is unclear, or what the alternate interpretations might be.

2.2 A Third-party proofreader must never do the following:

- Make **untracked changes** to the work;
(i.e. any edits must be made using e.g. 'Review > Track Changes' in Microsoft Word)
- Identify, correct or add anything relating to the **sequence of information or line of argument**;
(e.g. cross-referencing and the order of sentences, paragraphs and sections)
- Add **new content**;
(e.g. sentences, figures, calculations, code or additional words apart from those obviously missing)
- Check, correct or comment on the truth or accuracy of any **factual content**; (e.g. factual statements, data, calculations, equations and code)
- **Rewrite** any of the text; (e.g. replace sentences or sections, change argument(s) or logic, change or enhance writing style)
- Identify, correct or add anything relating to document **appearance**; (e.g. typography, formatting and layout)
- Identify, correct or add anything relating to **reference lists** not within the main text; (e.g. reference lists, bibliographies or footnotes)
- Identify, correct or change anything relating to use of **referencing systems**; (e.g. changing from Harvard to Vancouver referencing system)
- **Translate** any part of the work from one language into another;
- Change charts, figures or diagrams (including adding or removing text used in labelling);
- Deliberately **reduce word count** with the aim of ensuring a specified word limit is met.

2.3 Best practice in proofreading

- Proofreaders working in Word should be encouraged to use the 'Review > New Comment' function rather than 'Review > Track Changes' when making suggestions for anything other than minor changes to a student's work.
- Proofreaders are not obliged to phrase their comments in a way which provides pedagogical guidance to students in order that they can improve their own English.

3. Peer review and Peer assessment

Peer review and peer assessment are separate processes to proofreading. More information about peer review and peer assessment can be found via the Institute for Academic Development

website: <https://www.ed.ac.uk/institute-academic-development/learning-teaching/staff/assessment/resources/techniques/peer>

4. Online Proofreading tools

- Word Processors such as Microsoft Word or Google Docs include integrated proofing tools that can support with indicating and correcting minor issues that relate to items of spelling, punctuation, grammar and syntax at the time of writing.
- Proofing software applications are widely available and have versions that are free to download, such as Grammarly, LanguageTool and Ginger to support with indicating and correcting minor issues that relate to items of spelling, punctuation, grammar and syntax at the time of writing.
- Online proofreading tools are available which may have functions powered by generative AI such as Ginger Grammar Check + Paraphrase or Grammarly Shorten It & Clarity. If used this should be appropriately acknowledged, as when using other generative AI tools. Students should ensure they have read the University's; [Guidance for working with Generative AI \("GenAI"\) in your studies | Information Services](#)

4.1 An Online proofreading tool must never do the following without appropriate acknowledgment:

- Add **new content**;
(e.g. sentences, figures, calculations, code or additional words apart from those obviously missing)
- **Change the tone** of the work;
(e.g. use functions to make it sound 'more academic')
- **Translate** any part of the work from one language into another;
- Deliberately **reduce word count** with the aim of ensuring a specified word limit is met.
- **Rewrite** any of the text;
(e.g. replace sentences or sections, change argument(s) or logic, change or enhance writing style)
- Identify, correct or add anything relating to **reference lists** not within the main text;
(e.g. reference lists, bibliographies or footnotes)
- Identify, correct or change anything relating to use of **referencing systems**;
(e.g. changing from Harvard to Vancouver referencing system)