

## Proof-Reading Policy and Guidance

*This policy should be read in conjunction with Part L of the University's General Regulations: Academic Offences*

### 1. Definition

- 1.1. In a University context, proof-reading is usually defined as the final quality check prior to submission of written work. For the purposes of this policy, it is the systematic checking and identification of errors in spelling, punctuation, grammar and sentence construction, formatting, and layout in the text.
- 1.2. This policy applies to apprentices as well as students. The term student is used to refer to both students and apprentices on taught and research programmes.

### 2. Purpose

- 2.1. This document advises staff and students on the use of proof-reading. Students should read this policy in conjunction with [University Regulations](#) on academic misconduct. Students should be aware that essay writing services are distinct from proof-reading, and use of such constitutes a form of academic misconduct (cheating) in our regulations.
- 2.2. This policy applies to all forms of proof-reading, either professional (paid for) or non-professional (friends & relatives). The policy does not apply where proof is approved as part of PASS<sup>2</sup> adjustments.

### 3. Context:

- 3.1. The University of Lincoln expects students to develop and demonstrate levels of technical proficiency in written English which are both commensurate with the level of study and consistent with the norms and expectations of relevant subjects or disciplines. The University [Assessment Policy](#) and associated grade descriptors outline our general expectations in terms of written communication.
- 3.2. The University of Lincoln provides a range of [online](#) and face-to-face support for academic writing which is accessible to all our students. [Writing Development](#) is open to all our students for online and face-to-face academic writing support. Furthermore, we provide a dedicated [International College](#) to support our International Student community or students whose first language is not English.
- 3.3. Whilst the University of Lincoln neither provides nor recommends the use of proof-reading services, we acknowledge that students and apprentices may access a variety of support whilst producing written work, beyond that provided by academic tutors. This could be in the form of peer support from other students/apprentices, informal (family, work colleagues & friends) and/or professional proof-reading services.

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<sup>1</sup>The Doctoral School will clarify the nature of supervisory review and specificities of proof-reading in this context.

<sup>2</sup> Personalised Academic Study Support

#### 4. Principles:

- 4.1. As authors of their own work, the responsibility for proof-reading rests with the student. Proof-reading is the final stage of producing written work and as such students should carry out their own proof reading, which is an essential skill in academic writing<sup>3</sup>. Programmes must therefore ensure that students are inducted into appropriate academic practice and signposted to appropriate services and resources.
- 4.2. It is not essential that students use a proof-reading service, but if they choose to do so they should familiarise themselves with both this policy and the University Regulations for taught programmes of study as appropriate.
- 4.3. A key principle of academic integrity is that students are part of the academic community and as such they act with honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility. This means that all must practise academic integrity in their academic writing. Practically, this means:
- 4.3.1. All work submitted by a student must be their own and any use of third-party proof-reading or editing services must not compromise the authorship of the work submitted.
  - 4.3.2. Students should consult their School or Department where there may be specific rules or prohibition on the use of proof-reading<sup>4</sup>.
- 4.4. Academic writing is an active process involving students in the planning, researching, drafting, writing, reviewing, and editing of their own work. Editing and re-writing are ways to improve clarity, argument or adjust elements of a written piece. Therefore, students are expected to be able to evidence this by retaining successive drafts.
- 4.5. The writing process culminates in proof-reading. Whilst, students are allowed to use online dictionaries and thesauri, spelling and grammar checking software they should be made aware of the limitations, particularly in relation to technical terms. Such systems support rather than replace the student's own proof-reading.

#### 5. Services which can be provided by a Proof-Reader:

- 5.1. Proof-readers may provide guidance and developmental advice on spelling, grammar, and syntax, either within the text of a submission or in the labelling of diagrams/figures/charts.
- 5.2. Within the context of students' written work, to proof-read is to check for, identify and suggest corrections for errors in text. Therefore, **a proof-reader may:**
  - 5.2.1. Identify typographical, spelling and punctuation errors.
  - 5.2.2. Identify formatting and layout errors and inconsistencies (e.g., page numbers, font size, line spacing, headers and footers).
  - 5.2.3. Identify grammatical and syntactical errors and anomalies or ambiguities in phrasing (where meaning is not clear).
  - 5.2.4. Identify minor formatting errors in referencing (for consistency and order).
  - 5.2.5. Identify errors in the labelling of diagrams, charts, or figures.

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<sup>3</sup> See the UoL Library [Writing Development Team](#)

<sup>4</sup> For example, where the purpose of assessment is to determine abilities associated with linguistics.

5.2.6. Identify lexical repetition or omissions (drawing attention to repeated phrases or omitted words).

5.2.7. **Services which cannot and should not be provided by a proof-reader:**

5.2.7.1. Proof-readers must not make amendments to or edit any piece of written work. Submission of work in which such amendments have been made would constitute a breach of the academic misconduct regulations on the part of the student. In no cases should a proof-reader make material changes to a student's writing (that is, check or amend ideas, arguments, or structure), since to do so is to compromise the authorship of the work.

5.3. Therefore, a proof-reader **must not:**

- 5.3.1. Add to content in any way.
- 5.3.2. Check or correct facts, data calculations, formulae, or equations.
- 5.3.3. Rewrite content where meaning is ambiguous.
- 5.3.4. Alter argument or logic where faulty.
- 5.3.5. Re-arrange or re-order paragraphs to enhance structure or argument.
- 5.3.6. Implement or significantly alter a referencing system.
- 5.3.7. Re-label diagrams, charts, or figures.
- 5.3.8. Correct any information within the work.
- 5.3.9. Reduce content to comply with a specified word limit.
- 5.3.10. Translate any part of the work into English.
- 5.3.11. Contribute any additional material to the original.
- 5.3.12. Comment on how well the work answers the question.

**6. Authorial responsibility**

- 6.1. Students have overall authorial responsibility for their work and should choose whether they wish to accept the proof-reader's advice. A third-party proof-reader should mark up the student's work with suggested changes which the student may then choose to accept or reject.
- 6.2. Failure to adhere to these guidelines could constitute a breach of academic integrity and be an academic offence under the University Regulations; appropriate penalties would be applied. It is therefore the student's responsibility to provide the proof-reader with a copy of this policy statement.
- 6.3. If there is any doubt, the student should seek advice from their Personal Tutor.
- 6.4. When using a proof-reading service, students must be able to provide evidence (where required) to the University Academic Offences Committee:
  - 6.4.1. That they provided the proof-reader with a copy of this policy.
  - 6.4.2. Any written correspondence between the proof-reader and themselves.
  - 6.4.3. The original work prior to being sent to the proof-reader.
  - 6.4.4. The advice provided by the proof-reader.
  - 6.4.5. The changes which were accepted.
- 6.5. Where assessments require the production of a collaborative piece of work, involving a team of students, the module guide should make clear the boundaries of

such collaboration and the extent to which students may correct each other's contributions<sup>5</sup>. In circumstances where work is explicitly assessed as a group exercise, there may be grounds for exception to some of the principles outlined previously. However, collusion prohibited for individual assessments, in accordance with the University Regulations.

## 7. The role of academic tutors.

- 7.1. Whilst academic staff will provide feedback through assessment, they may also offer formative advice on draft work. In addition to specific comments on ideas and content and referencing staff may indicate where work requires further clarification or improvement.
- 7.2. As part of this formative advice academic staff may highlight specific errors in spelling, grammar, or punctuation; offering exemplification on how such errors can be addressed. Staff should be clear about how such failing are likely to be problematic.
- 7.3. Academic staff should not seek to provide the systematic or comprehensive correction of such errors throughout an entire piece of work.
- 7.4. Academic staff must not attempt to rewrite, edit, or amend aspects of student assessed work. This extends to figures, notation, and sequences of code as well as text.
- 7.5. When reviewing draft work in electronic form, staff should use comment functions rather than Track Change and must not make direct edits to text.
- 7.6. Electronically annotated text should be returned to the student in PDF format, enabling distinctions to be drawn between different drafts.
- 7.7. In relation to dissertations and extended projects it is recognised that good supervisory practice involves an iterative process, providing feedback on successive drafts. Therefore, there may be instances and contexts where interventions by academic staff extend beyond the provisions outlined above. However, supervisors must not compromise the student's role as author of the work.

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<sup>5</sup> It is recognised that such collaborative working and editing is often a key component in the learning experience.