

# SCA: Guidance on Proofreading and Editing

Appendix P in the *Guide to Assessment, Standards, Marking and Feedback 2017/18*

Approved Nov 2013/Revised Oct 2019



## Preamble

The University acknowledges that students (from undergraduate to PhD) may access a variety of forms of support to help them in the preparation and production of written assessed work beyond that provided by their teachers or supervisors, such as:

- a. peer support: collaboration and mutual support between students on the same programme (group members of a project group, classmates in a particular module, higher level students supporting lower level students);
- b. informal support: friends and family checking a student's work for them, providing an audience's reaction, commenting on a piece of work;
- c. professional proofreader: an external, paid person or company employed by the student to proofread their work prior to submission.

The purpose of this guidance is to set out, for students and staff, what is and is not acceptable support.

The default position is that this Guidance applies to all assessed work (with the exception of International Pathway College modules).<sup>1</sup> However, departments may opt to specify that, for certain assessments, students should not be allowed any assistance at all in terms of proofreading or editing. This is permitted only if the purpose of the assessment is to determine students' abilities in linguistic areas such as grammar or syntax, making proofreading inappropriate. In this case, the rubric for the assessment should state clearly that this standard Guidance does not apply and that no proofreading assistance is permitted.

## For students on taught programmes (undergraduate and postgraduate)

**Acceptable support:** The amount of support that is required or appropriate, from peers, friends and family or professionals, may vary in relation to the student's level of expertise and familiarity with academic conventions. However, regardless of level or familiarity, in the above situations the **University defines support which is acceptable as:**

The identification and correction of errors related to -

- Word usage (excluding specific terminology).
- Spelling, punctuation, capitalization, italics, abbreviations, headings, quotations, metrification, numbering, citations, referencing, tables, illustrations, footnotes and appendices.

The identification (**but not correction**) of issues related to -

- Grammar and syntax
- Clarity of expression
- Voice and tone
- Issues with logical sequencing and linkage between sentences and paragraphs

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<sup>1</sup> International Pathway College: IPC students should not be allowed any assistance in terms of proofreading or editing on all IPC modules (including, but not limited to, Foundation Certificate, Pre-Masters and Pre-Sessionals). This applies from academic year 2017-8, including any Pre-Sessionals taught leading into that year.

- Ambiguity
- Repetition

## For students on postgraduate research programmes

**Acceptable support:** The amount of support that is required or appropriate, from peers, friends and family or professionals, may vary in relation to the student's level of expertise and familiarity with academic conventions. However, regardless of level or familiarity, in the above situations the **University defines support which is acceptable as:**

### The identification and correction of errors related to -

- Word usage (excluding specific terminology)
- Spelling, punctuation, capitalization, italics, abbreviations, headings, quotations, metrification, numbering, citations, referencing, tables, illustrations, footnotes and appendices
- Grammar and syntax

### The identification (but not correction) of issues related to -

- Clarity of expression
- Voice and tone
- Issues with logical sequencing and linkage between sentences and paragraphs
- Ambiguity
- Repetition

For issues listed above where identification but not correction by a third party is appropriate, students (taught or research) should be directed to correct these issues themselves following feedback. Self-correction will aid students in recognising their weaker areas and encourage more independence from the tutor.

Students with a contemporary formal diagnosis of relevant disabilities should consult Disability Services about appropriate support.

Unacceptable support for taught or research students For summative work, undertaking the following tasks for a student is inappropriate.

- adding or re-writing any of the student's sentences or sections of work
- rearranging passages of text, sequences of code or sections of other material for the student
- reformatting the material for the student
- contributing additional material to the original
- checking calculations or formulae
- rewriting formulae, equations or computer code
- re-labelling figures or diagrams

**Acknowledgement** If a student receives assistance with proofreading or editing, whether paid or not, an acknowledgement should be inserted in the final submission. This should explain the sort of person providing the assistance (for example, the name of professional proof-reader but not the name of a friend or family member which might lead to the breaking of anonymity), and a statement that the assistance has been in accordance with the University's Guidance on Proofreading and Editing. The student should also accept full

responsibility for the authorship and standard of the submitted work.

## Advice for students regarding professional proofreading

Departments and Students Unions are often asked for advice by students who are seeking professional proofreading assistance. The following generic pieces of advice may be helpful:

- \* **Dissertations / Theses / projects** – students completing significant projects, dissertations, Masters ISMs and PhD theses should always consult their supervisors before seeking the services of a professional proofreader.
- \* **Contract and Payment** - The student bears the sole cost of services rendered by a professional proofreader, therefore students are advised to agree on a payment rate, overall cost and timescale before the procedure begins. The contract is a private matter between the student and the proofreader.
- \* **University guidelines and department requirements** - Students should provide the proofreader with a copy of the University's Guidance on Proofreading and Editing (above) and ensure that the proofreader accepts the conditions included in them. The student should also provide the proofreader with their department's specific reference formats and other appropriate writing guidelines.
- \* **Proving the extent of the proofreading** - In order to be able to prove the extent / limits of the proofreading, the student should keep a copy of the edited / corrected work, showing the changes that have been made. This copy may then be produced should any challenge arise concerning the degree of guidance given. This copy should be kept until the student's degree has been conferred. If the student has no evidence as to the advice which was given, this could have serious consequences for the marks awarded for their work and for their degree classification.
- \* **Student authorship and responsibility** - Responsibility for producing the final version and for authorship of the work lies completely with the student. Blame for inaccurate or inappropriate proofreading which results in a lower grade is not the responsibility of the proofreader and will not constitute mitigating circumstances. It is up to the student to accept, ignore or challenge the advice and corrections suggested by a proofreader.
- \* **Acknowledgement** - Students must formally acknowledge the use of a proofreader in the final submitted version of essays, dissertations, theses and projects. See the Guidance on Proofreading and Editing.