Proof-reading guidance

1. Introduction

1.1 Proof-reading refers to the activity of checking a document or piece of written work for errors by someone other than the author. These may be spelling, grammatical or matters of accuracy.

1.2 The University's policy for proof-reading is articulated in the NTU Quality Handbook (QH) Section 15 (Assessment) and Section 17C (Academic Integrity Policy) and should be read together with this guidance.

2. Principles

2.1 The University works to support students in developing the skills to produce work of a high standard. Students are expected to thoroughly read their own work to ensure that, to the best of their ability, typographical, grammatical and spelling errors are avoided in final submitted work.

2.2 In some circumstances, including reasons relating to a disability or specific learning difficulty, students may wish to make their own arrangements to have their work proof-read. Proof-readers should not change the text to correct these errors but merely record them and point them out to the author for correction (see paragraphs 3.2 and 3.3 below for further information regarding the role of the proof-reader). In all cases students must retain authorship of their work.

2.3 As part of the teaching process, course teams may find it useful to demonstrate to students how to edit and re-work a piece of work effectively. This might involve showing students the kinds of things that would improve a specific piece of writing. In these instances, it should be made clear to students that this is part of formative feedback in order to help them understand the writing process.

2.4 There may be certain assignments whose nature means that allowing them to be proof-read by others would defeat the purpose of the assignment. There may be courses where many or all of the assignments are of this nature. Where module leaders, in consultation with course leaders, agree that there is a substantial case for not allowing work for a particular assignment to be proof-read, or where proof-reading is deemed unacceptable within a whole subject, this should be clearly stated in the course and module guides and brought to students' attention at relevant times.

Explanatory notes:

- It is recognised that tutors, supervisors and specialist support practitioners, such as language support staff, academic skills advisers and dyslexia support specialists or tutors may offer

guidance on student work in draft form. When guidance is sought from students about academic writing, this guidance must not extend into systematic corrections or rewriting for the student. Visible edits, such as the comments function (rather than track changes), should be used to point out observations made by the tutor, supervisor or language support staff.

- The use of others, whether paid or not, to write or rewrite assignments for a student, is specifically forbidden and may be penalised under the Academic Integrity policy (QH Section 17C), even if the person providing such a service describes it as 'proof-reading'.

3. Proof-reading practice

3.1 Students are encouraged to proof-read their own work and there is access to support for students to develop their own proof-reading skills through: the Library; the Language Centre; and, help organised by individual academic Schools. However, where a student chooses to ask another individual to proof-read their work or engages a proof-reading service they must adhere to the following rules.

3.2 A proof-reader or proof-reading service may:

- identify spelling and typographical errors;

- identify any errors in punctuation;

- identify poor grammar and sentence structure;

- highlight clear vocabulary errors and suggest an alternative choice of wording, when the meaning is clear;

- highlight unclear syntax/sections of text which appear ambiguous to the reader;

- indicate inconsistencies in the layout of the document; use of headings; referencing conventions, etc.

3.3 Where a proof-reader or proof-reading service is used they must not:

- write an essay for a student;

- rewrite any part of the student's work or contribute any additional material to the original;

- correct student work so that the original errors are not visible. Paper and pen, or "comments" function in word processing software should be used;

- correct mistakes where the original intended meaning is not clear. Instead they should inform the student that the meaning is unclear;

- reorganise paragraphs;

- correct factual errors or mistakes in calculation, formulae or computer code;

- re-label diagrams, charts or figures;

- correct or reformat references.

3.4 Students who proof-read others' work outside the requirements run the risk of a charge of collusion or contract cheating (See QH Section 17C). Any such case will be investigated as a potential breach of academic integrity and may result in a charge of academic misconduct or serious academic misconduct.

Policy owner
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