Coventry University London

GUIDELINES ON PROOF-READING

Purpose

Proof-reading is the last step in the process of producing a piece of written work. Proof-reading involves finding and correcting errors in grammar, punctuation, spelling, labelling, and formatting in a document. Proof-reading is important because poor use of grammar, punctuation, spelling, labelling, and formatting can obscure meaning and make writing difficult for readers and markers to understand.

The purpose of these guidelines is to provide Coventry University London students, and the staff who teach and support them, with clear guidance on proof-reading and on the use of proof-readers in relation to their academic work.

Overview

Coventry University London recognises that sometimes students may wish to engage a proof-reader, particularly for research theses and Masters dissertations and projects. Coventry University London regulations do not forbid the use of proof-readers, but the use of a proof-reader must not compromise the authorship of the submitted work. The responsibility for the submitted work lies with the student.

Scope

This policy applies to all students of Coventry University London.

The Guidelines

1. There is no obligation for any Coventry University London student to hire a proof-reader to check any piece of coursework or assessed writing. Coventry University London recognises, however, that sometimes students may wish to engage a proof-reader, particularly for research theses and Masters dissertations and projects.

2. Coventry University London regulations do not forbid the use of proof-readers, but the use of a proof-reader must not compromise the authorship of the submitted work. The responsibility for the submitted work lies with the student.

3. Students can proof-read their written work by reading it aloud to check for errors in sentence flow, grammar, punctuation, and word choice.

4. In addition, students can visually scan their writing for repetitive words and decide if these are key words that need to be repeated or use a thesaurus to find alternative words, and can check spelling and homonyms (words that sound alike but are spelled differently) by using the spelling and grammar checker and thesaurus in Microsoft Word.

5. Students can also look closely at their draft to check that all is consistent in terms of: font, typeface size, use of bullet points, formatting of headings and subheadings, labelling of figures and tables, and referencing.
6 Students may ask their Personal Tutors for advice on how to proof-read. They may also book on a Spotlight workshop or attend an academic writing tutorial in which proof-reading strategies can be discussed.

7 Coventry University London holds a list of independent proof-readers, which provides names and contact details of individuals who offer proof-reading services for a fee.

8 These proof-readers are not employed by Coventry University and any agreement students enter into with a proof-reader constitutes a private contract between the student and the proof-reader.

9 Whilst the University shall use its reasonable endeavours to ensure that proof-readers on its register are sufficiently qualified, the University makes no warranty or assurances regarding the standard of service they provide, nor their availability at any particular time.

10 For the avoidance of doubt, Coventry University London does not accept any liability for any use of such independent proof-readers.

11 Contacting a proof-reader less than ten days before a submission deadline may result in the proof-reader declining to assist.

12 A proof-reader may:
   • Point out spelling errors
   • Spot typographical errors
   • Highlight poor grammar
   • Identify repetitive words or phrases
   • Note where words have been omitted
   • Pinpoint errors or inconsistencies in formatting
   • Highlight potentially inappropriate use of words or phrases
   • Draw attention to incorrect or inconsistent labelling of figures, diagrams, or charts
   • Check if the correct reference style is being followed

13 A proof-reader must not:
   • Rewrite sentences, paragraphs, or sections of text
   • Comment on the structure of the paper’s argument
   • Change any words
   • Add new material to the document
   • Correct factual errors
   • Revise equations, calculations, computer coding, formulae, or data

14 Students must not expect to earn a higher mark on an assessment solely because their work has been proof-read, nor should students’ use of a proof-reader detract from an assessment mark.

15 There may be specific assessments where a proof-reader is not permitted, for example students may not use a proof-reader for their written work completed for Pre-Sessional English courses. This will be specified in the module descriptor, if appropriate.

16 Students must ask permission from their module leader if they want to use a proof-reader to identify errors in assignments where accurate English is a main part of what is being assessed. This would include modules in areas such as academic English and academic skills.
17 Students must make sure that the proof-reader follows the guidance here and only points out mistakes, and does not correct them. When someone corrects errors, that is called ‘editing’ and this is not permitted.

18 All students who use a proof-reader should retain a copy of their original own version that should be submitted on request to their Module Leader or an Academic Conduct Officer (ACO) in case there is any doubt that more than the permitted amount of help was given.

19 In cases where there is doubt regarding the authorship of a student’s work students may face an allegation of academic misconduct. Students may then have to demonstrate to an Academic Conduct Officer that they have followed the guidance outlined in this policy. Students should also familiarise themselves with ‘Examinations and other assessment responsibilities of students’, Appendix 1 to the General Regulations.

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**DEFINITIONS**

*Proof-reading:*

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| **Related Policies, Procedures, Guidance, Forms or Templates** | General Regulations Appendix 1: Examinations and other Assessments  
| Academic Conduct Guidance and Penalty Table |