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Academic Guidance 2:

Guidance on Editorial Help for Student Assessment

2025-2026

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Introduction

This guidance is for use when a student is considering whether to employ a third party such as a professional copy editing or proof-reading company or software tool (including generative artificial intelligence (GAI)) when producing work in draft or final version.

This guidance also applies when a student seeks editorial help from other, non-professional third parties, such as fellow-students, friends and/or family. It is not concerned with the regular and iterative interaction between student and tutor/supervisor(s) on draft versions of their work throughout the registration period. The student's university's tutor/supervisor is not regarded as a "third party" for this purpose.

This guidance should be used by students as a set of principles to support academic integrity when considering engaging with a third party. Ultimately it is the student's responsibility to ensure that the threshold between minor advice /corrections does not result in the core work including the writing, creativity, arguments, analysis and reasoning no longer being their own. Students should refer to the University's [Academic Integrity Regulations](#) for further information and contact their personal tutor and/or supervisor for advice if that are not clear about what might constitute a breach of Academic Integrity in this context.

In all cases, the assessment brief will specify the acceptable use of GAI. The information in the brief will take precedence over this guidance. Where GAI use is permissible, this will apply at all stages of the production of the assessment.

Principles governing use of third party help

All of the core work including the writing, creativity, arguments, analysis and reasoning must be the students own work, and a student must not employ a third party to do this work, whether in draft or as a final version, on their behalf. (This does not preclude the use of a human or AI 'scribe' where verbatim dictation might be required for a student with a particular learning support need.). If the student chooses to use a third party, it is their responsibility to give them a copy of this statement or where a software tool(s) is used, to ensure usage falls within requirements of this statement. When submitting work, the student must acknowledge what form of contribution the third party has made, by stating for example, 'this thesis/essay/dissertation was copy edited for conventions of language, spelling and grammar by ABC Editing Ltd'.

Where a Generative AI has been used as part of the editorial process, then this must be acknowledged by the student. Please see the assessment brief and the [Student Guide to AI in Learning and Teaching](#) for further information.

1. A third party **can be used** to offer advice and make **minor** corrections related to:
 - spelling, punctuation, grammar, and syntax;
 - formatting and sorting of existing footnotes and endnotes ;
 - improving the position of tables and illustrations;
 - ensuring consistency of page numbers, headers and footers.
2. The third party shall record such edits/advice by means of tracked changes on an electronic copy or handwritten annotations on a paper copy or other similar devices. The student must take responsibility for accepting any edits / choosing what advice to accept and must themselves make the changes to the master copy of the work, keeping a record of this. For work that has been edited by a proofing / GAI tool, then a record of the process followed must be kept.
3. A third party **cannot be used***:
 - to add or provide new content except for minor edits referred to above. Such edits should be for the purpose of editing grammar, spelling, punctuation, and syntax only, and such edits would normally be represented by a small number of words in an existing sentence or paragraph and would not include whole new sentences.
 - to change the text of the work so as to clarify and/or develop the ideas and arguments.
 - to reduce the length of the work so that it falls within the specified word limit
 - to add / edit references
 - to correct information within the work
 - to change the ideas and arguments put forward within the work
 - to translate the work into English
 - to shorten long sentences and edit long paragraphs
 - to change tense

*Exceptions may apply to the use of Generative AI tools where specified in the assessment brief, particularly if the 'Explicit use of GAI' has been specified.