UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

PROOF READING GUIDANCE FOR STUDENTS

Proof-reading is the final stage of producing a piece of written work. The University believes that proof-reading should be carried out by the student themselves and strongly discourages the use of third party proof-readers or commercial proof-reading services. If a student feels they need assistance with their writing they should seek that assistance in the first instance from the Student Learning Service or from the Student Advice and Support Office. Whilst the Student Learning Service can give general advice to students on their writing they do not offer a proof-reading service. The Student Advice and Support Office can assess a student for a learning difference which entitles them to a proof-reader. The School Disability Coordinator is then responsible for arranging a suitable proof-reader.

If a student, for whatever reason, chooses to ask a third party, or use a professional proof-reading service, to proof-read their work this must be declared on submission of the work and must follow the rules stated below. Students are warned that the use of such services is risky; technical terms may not be used appropriately and the meaning of the work may become distorted because of insufficient understanding from the proof-reader. Ultimately the work that is presented must remain the student's own work; the proof-reading service must not compromise authorship of the work and students remain responsible for the work they submit. Any deficiencies in the work are the responsibility of the student and not the proof-reading service.

Proof-readers can:

- *Identify* spelling or typographical errors and suggest corrections (but not change them directly)

- *Identify* poor grammar and suggest corrections (but not change them directly)

- *Highlight* formatting errors or inconsistencies

- *Identify* errors in labelling of diagrams, charts or figures

- *Highlight* a sentence or paragraph that is overly complex or where the intended meaning is not clear

- *Draw attention to* repeated phrases or omitted words

In all of the above the errors must not be corrected by the proof-reader; they should merely be identified and highlighted to the student.

Proof-readers must not:

- Rewrite passages of text to clarify the meaning; ambiguity may be pointed out but the text must not be rewritten for the student

- Change any words or figures, except to correct spelling

- Check or rewrite calculations, formulae, equations or computer code

- Rearrange or reformat passages of text

- Contribute any additional material to the original

- Re-label diagrams, charts or figures

Approved by UCTL September 2017

Prevention/investigation of academic misconduct arising from the use of proof-readers:

It is unacceptable for a proof-reader to change the content, structure or expression of ideas in the piece of work that the student has written. If a course organiser or tutor suspects the work presented by a student is not the student's own they can investigate to determine whether academic misconduct has taken place. Students who use a proof-reader (commercial or otherwise) must retain the final draft that they sent to the proof-reader along with the annotated version returned by the proof-reader. Failure to provide these, when requested, could result in the student being penalised for academic misconduct (https://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/documents/academic-quality-handbook/Code%20of%20Practice%20in%20Student%20Discipline%20(Academic).pdf).

Investigations that Schools can use to determine the authenticity of submitted work can include (but is not restricted to) an additional oral or written exam to test for understanding of the work presented.