Centre for the Development Of Academic Skills (CeDAS)
Royal Holloway
Proofreading Scheme
Handbook and Code of Practice
Disclaimers

The rationale for the Royal Holloway policy on proofreading is to promote a shared understanding of what the College regards as acceptable and ethical proofreading practices. All parties (students, proofreaders, academic supervisors/course leaders and tutors) concerned with the authorisation for proofreading, or involved in proofreading of student work, particularly for assessment, have a responsibility to read, understand and abide by the policy.

All parties connected with the proofreading of student work have an ethical responsibility to follow the policy and the practical guidance presented here on how that policy is implemented. The ultimate responsibility for any alterations to a student’s text lies with the student writer themselves. Proofread written work submitted for assessment by a student will be treated as their own work. This only applies to the proofreading scheme approved by the College and use of the service is subject to the approval of academic staff.

Failure on the part of the student to comply with the policy and code of practice provided here is likely to lead to plagiarism or collusion which are serious academic offences which will be investigated. Use of the Royal Holloway proofreading scheme will not be considered as mitigation/extenuating circumstances in the event of an allegation of an assessment offence or in the event of an academic appeal. Use of the proofreading scheme does not guarantee that students will get a better mark.

Royal Holloway is unable to comment on or verify the experience or qualifications of any proofreader. The College will not take responsibility for the quality of work of any particular proofreader. All proofreaders approved by Royal Holloway will be subject to annual review and may be removed from the register of approved proofreaders if found not to be compliant with the proofreading policy and/or the code of practice.
# Contents

1 Definitions of Key Terms  
1.1 Plagiarism  
1.2 Collusion  
1.3 Third-party proofreading  
1.4 Final draft stage  
1.5 Proofreader’s Error Identification Code  

2 Introduction  
2.1 Proofreading  
2.2 Other services that can help you develop your writing  
2.3 Finding the right advice  

3 Code of Practice for the Proofreading Scheme  

4 How the Proofreading Scheme Works in Practice
1. Definitions of Key Terms

1.1 Plagiarism
The presentation of another person’s work in any quantity without adequately identifying it and citing its source in a way which is consistent with good scholarly practice in the discipline and commensurate with the level of professional conduct expected from the student. The other person’s work may exist in any published or unpublished medium, including the internet and essay banks.

1.2 Collusion
To act in agreement with another person in order to obtain an unfair advantage for oneself and/or for that person. Collusion may also include any attempt to impersonate another person, or to allow oneself to be impersonated, in an assessment.

1.3 Third-party proofreading
Third-party proofreading involves the identification only of surface-level errors (incl. inconsistencies) in grammar, punctuation, spelling, labelling, formatting and referencing that have been missed by the author. Proofreading, so defined, does not address substantial problems related to structure, argument, use of sources and written expression; these matters should be resolved at an earlier stage of drafting through dialogue with a writing tutor, writing mentor or a relevant member of academic staff.

1.4 Final draft stage
This is the point at which a piece of extended writing has been completed and is almost ready for submission. It is only at this point that a third-party proofreader may be approached in order to identify surface level errors that have been missed by the author of the text.

1.5 Proofreader’s Error Identification Code
This code is used by all proofreaders approved by Royal Holloway. Error types are categorised by prescribed letters and symbols. The code gives an example of each type of error, with a corrected version. This is designed to help the student correct work. Students are advised to fully acquaint themselves with the code when employing the services of a proofreader.
2. Introduction

2.1 Proofreading

Proofreading is an essential part of the writing process. It helps ensure that work is free of careless error and oversights, making it a more accurate and polished piece of writing. It is usually carried out by authors themselves when reviewing work as a final step in the writing process. However, for extended pieces of work, it can be useful to have a ‘fresh pair of eyes’ look at work to spot errors that have been missed. That’s where a third-party proofreader can play a role.

The following guidance is designed for postgraduate (taught and research) students seeking the services of a third-party proofreader to identify surface-level error in extended written work, i.e. a project, dissertation, or thesis. This guidance will also be of use to proofreaders themselves, and is designed to ensure that both parties are aware of the roles and responsibilities of student and proofreader in the proofreading process.

2.2 Other services that can help you develop your writing

It is important to place the Proofreading Scheme within the broader range of writing support offered by the College. As the chart on the following page shows, there is a wide array of academic support available, and most of it is free of charge. Whilst academic staff provide crucial guidance through feedback on written work, you can also get one-to-one advice on work-in-progress from writing specialists at the Centre for the Development of Academic Skills (CeDAS). Disability and Dyslexia Services offer more specialist support for students with learning needs, and research students can develop their writing skills via workshops that form part of the Researcher Development Programme.

If you want to proofread your work by yourself, CeDAS offers an editing and proofreading workshop that helps students to develop techniques that can assist them in identifying their own errors.

See overleaf for the options that are suitable for your needs.
### 2.3 Finding the right advice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MY NEED</th>
<th>WHAT TO DO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have an academic query</td>
<td>Check assignment information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e.g. a question about the assignment, task, research focus, argument,</td>
<td>If needed, make an appointment to see your personal advisor or other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>relevance of evidence.</td>
<td>relevant member of academic staff in your department.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I want to develop my writing skills</td>
<td>Make use of the CeDAS Academic Skills Programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e.g. improve grammatical accuracy, structure, cohesion, academic</td>
<td>• Book a 1:1 writing tutorial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>register, clarity of expression, use of sources, ability to</td>
<td>• Bring your work to a writing drop-in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>establish a ‘writer’s voice’.</td>
<td>• Attend a writing workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have specific/non-specific learning needs</td>
<td>Check CeDAS website for details.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e.g. writing issues related to disability or dyslexia.</td>
<td>Contact the Disability and Dyslexia Services (ESO)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have more complex issues about my writing that may need to be</td>
<td>They can refer you to an appropriate specialist. Visit them in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>treated in confidence.</td>
<td>Founders West 151 or contact them on email:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I want the final draft of my work proofread for surface errors</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Disability-Dyslexia@rhul.ac.uk">Disability-Dyslexia@rhul.ac.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e.g. minor language slips, typographical and layout error, formatting</td>
<td>Develop your own skills by attending a CeDAS Proofreading Workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and referencing mistakes.</td>
<td>If you have the final draft of a long piece of work (e.g. a dissertation),</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>you can pay for the services of an approved proofreader.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Check the CeDAS website for available courses and information.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. Code of practice for the Proofreading Scheme

This regulated scheme is based on the principles set out in the Proofreading Policy. It is the only legitimate proofreading service available to students at Royal Holloway.

Students seeking a third-party proofreader are directed to a register of approved proofreaders who have undergone training in the use of a prescribed Proofreader’s Error Identification Code and who have agreed to abide by the Royal Holloway Proofreading Policy and the guidance set out in this document.

Briefly, the following code of practice must be adhered to:

- The scheme is only open to postgraduates (taught and research) engaged in extended written work, i.e. a project of over 6,000 words, a dissertation, or thesis.

- The scheme can only be used with the written consent of a student’s academic tutor or supervisor.

- Third-party proofreading only takes place at the final draft stage of a piece of work.

- The role of the proofreader is restricted to the identification only of surface errors as delimited below.

- The involvement of a proofreader must be declared in the work.

- The service is paid for by students; costs and turn-around times must be agreed in writing by both the approved proofreader and student in advance of any work done.

- As the service is by private arrangement between proofreader and student, the College bears no liability for any failings in the arrangement.

- Further, it is the sole responsibility of the student to ensure that the authorship of a submitted dissertation or project is his or her own work alone and not that of a third party.
The proofreader can identify the following types of surface-level errors, and catalogue them according to the Royal Holloway Proofreader’s Error Identification Code:

- typing, spelling or punctuation errors;
- grammatical slips, e.g. lack of agreement, word class error, comma-splice sentences;
- unnecessary repetition of words or obvious omission of words;
- inaccurate or inconsistent application of referencing conventions;
- unclear or inconsistent signposting and labelling of visual information;
- formatting that does not comply with a prescribed layout style (typography, heading hierarchy, pagination etc.);
- incompleteness of document, i.e. required elements of a document are missing.

In order for a proofreader to check the accuracy and consistency of layout, formatting and referencing, **students are expected to provide the relevant departmental style guidance.**

Third-party interventions made by a proofreader should only identify, and never alter, the academic content of a piece of writing.

The proofreader **cannot:**

- change wording and language;
- alter a student’s argument;
- change paragraphing and/or sectioning within the essay;
- correct calculation errors or factual knowledge;
- comment on the content of a piece of work;
- give structural advice on a piece of work.

Under no circumstances should parts of the text (phrases, sentences or expressions) be rewritten by the proofreader, as this will be regarded as an academic offence.
4. How the Proofreading Scheme Works in Practice

The chart below outlines a six step workflow which students should follow:

1. If eligible, ask supervisor to email consent form to CeDAS.

2. Complete online booking form and include sample work.

3. Agree fee and timeframe with proofreader.

4. Provide proofreader with final draft and style guidance.

5. Proofreader returns marked-up copy and is paid.

6. Make corrections, acknowledge proofreader and submit.
Now please read the detailed guidance about each of the six steps:

Step 1

If eligible, ask supervisor to email consent form to CeDAS

First, check whether proofreading is appropriate for your piece of work. Are you a postgraduate? Is the work an extended piece of writing, e.g. a project of at least 6,000 words, a dissertation, or thesis? Is the work at final draft stage?

Next, you will need to consult your supervisor and request permission for your work to be proofread. If permission is granted, ask your supervisor to complete the Academic Supervisor Consent Form (available from the CeDAS website).

A copy of the Academic Supervisor Consent Form must be emailed to: cedas@royalholloway.ac.uk

Step 2

Complete online booking form and include sample work

The next step is to complete the online booking form (available through the CeDAS bookings website). You will need to have the following things ready to complete the form:

- your top 3 preferred proofreaders.
  The list of approved proofreaders is available on the CeDAS website. These proofreaders have undergone training in use of the Proofreader’s Error Identification Code and have agreed to abide by the Royal Holloway Proofreading Policy. You will find details about their proofreading experiences on the register.
- a sample of your work.
  The proofreader will need to see a representative 2-3 page sample of work that is at final draft stage. The sample will help the proofreader estimate costs.
- your estimated word count for the work you want proofread.

Step 3

Agree fee and timeframe with proofreader

CeDAS will notify your first choice proofreader of your interest. The proofreader will then contact you with a fee quote and an estimate of how long the job will take.

The fee is calculated on the basis of a word count rate (x pounds per 1000 words) or an hourly rate (x pounds per hour). Typically, professional proofreaders charge around £10-£12 per 1000 words or £20 per hour. However, the fee will be influenced by a number of variables, e.g.

- the estimated amount of error in the work (based on submitted sample);
- how soon the work needs to be proofread (so a short turnaround time will mean added expense);
- any requirement to be familiar with specific style or referencing conventions.

You will need to check that the proofreader can take on the job within your required timeframe. Please note: proofreaders are unlikely to accept work at very short notice.
Once you hear back from the proofreader with a fee quote and time frame, you will need to decide if you want to proceed. If you are happy with the quote, both you and the proofreader should formalise the conditions of your agreement in writing. This will usually cover:

- what material you are supplying and when;
- when you expect the work to be completed and returned to you;
- details of the agreed fee and terms of payment;
- any reimbursement of expenses incurred by the proofreader (postage etc.).

As with any formal written agreement, it is important that the document is signed and that both parties retain copies.

**Step 4**

**Provide proofreader with final draft and style guidance**

Email a copy of your final draft work to the proofreader by the date agreed on the proofreading agreement.

**Both you and the proofreader must keep an original pre-proofread copy of the work** as well as a proofread, marked-up copy. This is important because:

a. if either party loses work, a record will still be kept of the changes made.

b. you will be able to demonstrate that your work has not been changed or added to in the proofreading process, so avoiding charges of collusion or other misconduct.

Should you want the proofreader to check the accuracy and consistency of referencing and layout conventions, it is imperative that you provide the proofreader with a departmental style guide.

**Step 5**

**Proofreader returns marked-up copy and is paid**

The proofreader marks up the work using the Proofreader’s Error Identification Code and returns it to you by the date agreed. Pay the proofreader the agreed amount on satisfactory completion of the job.

**Step 6**

**Correct marked-up draft, acknowledge proofreader and submit**

You will now need to work through the marked-up work correcting your text with reference to the Proofreader’s Error Identification Code. Next, make sure that you declare the proofreader’s involvement very clearly using the Student Acknowledgement of Proofreading form (downloadable from the CeDAS website). Finally, submit your work by the set deadline.
Contact information
Enquiries
Email us at cedas@royalholloway.ac.uk
or visit CeDAS Reception at IN002 on the ground floor of the International Building
For more information visit royalholloway.ac.uk/cedas