

Centre for the Development of Academic Skills (CeDAS)

Royal Holloway Proofreading Scheme

Code of Practice (Revised 2021)



ROYAL
HOLLOWAY
UNIVERSITY
OF LONDON

1 Introduction

The aim of this document is to set out the core tenets of the Code of Practice for the Royal Holloway Proofreading Scheme and also explain how the scheme works in practice. All participants in the scheme whether students, proofreaders or members of staff have a responsibility to read, understand and abide by this code.

1.1 Terms

Key terms used in this document are defined below.

- *Plagiarism*

According to Section 2 (a) of RHUL Regulations on Assessment Offences, plagiarism is:

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 The other person's work may exist in any published or unpublished medium, including the internet and essay banks.

- *Collusion*

Section 2 (c) of RHUL Regulations on Assessment Offences, states that collusion is:

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.

- *Approved proofreader*

A freelance professional listed on the scheme's register of proofreaders who has formally agreed to abide by the Code of Practice outlined in this document.

- *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 an approved proofreader may be contacted.

- *Surface level error*

Minor language slips, typographical and layout error, formatting and referencing mistakes. See Section 2 below for a detailed list of errors that fall into this category.

1.2 Why proofread?

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 work. It is usually carried out by authors themselves when reviewing work as a final step in the writing process. Royal Holloway offers workshops and Moodle-based resources that can help students develop their own editing and proofreading skills. 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 proofreaders listed on the scheme's register all have professional qualifications and are trained to pick out surface level error.

1.3 Other services that can help students develop their writing

Before going ahead and paying for the services of an approved proofreader, it is important to note that there are other forms of support that can play a crucial role in drafting work. For example, for guidance on substantial issues related to e.g. structure, language and use of sources, there are free CeDAS Writing Tutorials and Drop-Ins available. Disability and Dyslexia Services offer 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. Please see the chart below for an overview of the spectrum of support and advice that the College provides.

MY NEED

WHAT TO DO

I have an academic query

e.g. a question about the assignment, task, research focus, argument, relevance of evidence.

•Check assignment information

If needed, make an appointment to see your Supervisor, Personal Tutor or another relevant member of academic staff in your department.

I want to develop my writing skills

e.g. improve grammatical accuracy, structure, style, use of sources, ability to establish my 'voice'.

•Make use of the CeDAS Academic Skills Programme

Get specialist help from a CeDAS Learning Developer. Look for the CeDAS page for your school under *My Courses* on Moodle or visit FOUNDERS WEST 141 in person.

•If you are a PhD or MA by research student, make use of the Researcher Development Programme run by the Doctoral School.

I have specific/non-specific learning needs

e.g. writing issues related to disability or dyslexia.
OR
more complex issues about my writing that may need to be treated in confidence.

•Contact Disability and Dyslexia Services

DDS will refer you to an appropriate specialist. Visit them in FOUNDERS EAST 140 or contact them by email: Disability-Dyslexia@rhul.ac.uk

I want the final draft of my work proofread for surface level errors

e.g. minor language slips, typographical and layout error, formatting and referencing mistakes.

•Develop your own editing and proofreading skills

Attend a CeDAS Workshop or get guidance from CeDAS Self-Study Resources on Moodle (under *My Courses*).

•Pay for an approved proofreader

If you have the final draft of a long piece of work (e.g. a dissertation), you can pay for the services of an approved proofreader. You will need to read the next sections carefully.

2 Code of practice for the Proofreading Scheme

The following points constitute the scheme's Code of Practice and must be adhered to.

- The scheme is only open to postgraduates (taught and research) who are at the final draft stage of projects, dissertations and theses exceeding 6,000 words.
- The scheme can only be used with the written consent of a student's academic tutor or supervisor.
- The role of the proofreader is restricted to marking up surface-level error only and, where intended meaning is clear, suggesting corrections for the student to implement.
- 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 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.

The proofreader can mark-up the following types of surface-level errors:

- 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.) or incompleteness of document i.e. required elements are missing.

While the proofreader can identify the surface-level errors listed above and suggest corrections for the student to implement, the proofreader should never:

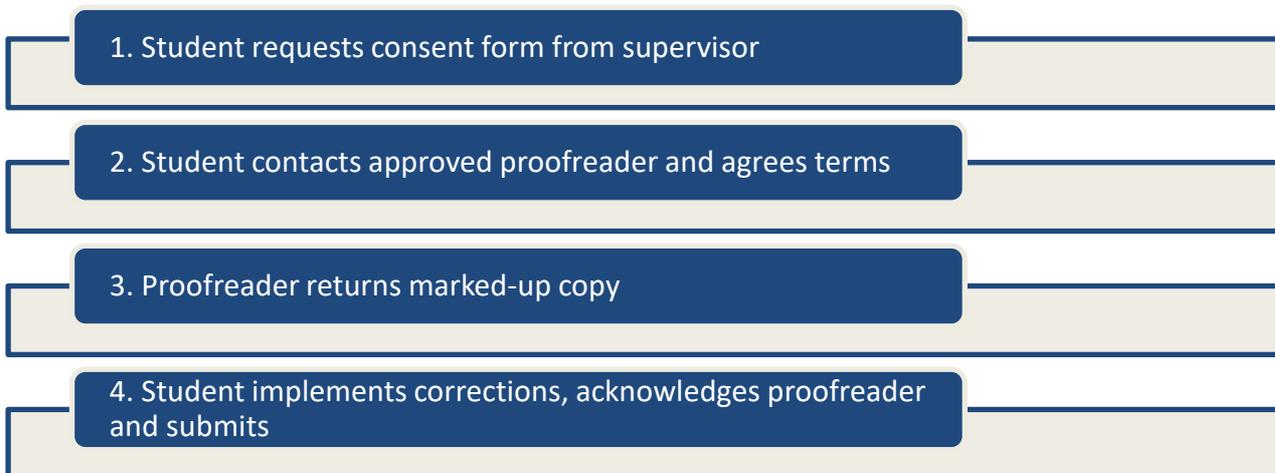
- re-write the student's own words (phrases or sentences);
- alter a student's argument;
- change paragraphing and/or sectioning within the essay;
- correct calculation errors or factual knowledge;
- comment on the content of a piece of work;
- give structural advice on a piece of work.

A NOTE ON PLAGIARISM

It is the responsibility of the student to ensure that the authorship of a dissertation or project is their own work. Should a proofreader suspect plagiarism in draft text, they are advised to cease work immediately. Following conditions set out in the written agreement with the student, the proofreader may then require payment for any work completed by this point. If the student is unclear about plagiarism or collusion, they should contact CeDAS for advice on academic integrity (if a taught postgraduate) or the Researcher Development Programme (if a doctoral student).

3 How the Proofreading Scheme works in practice

The chart below outlines a four-step workflow which all scheme participants should follow.



Step 1 Student requests consent form from supervisor

First, the student checks whether they are eligible for the scheme. The student needs to be a postgraduate and their work should be a) an extended piece of writing of at least 6,000 words and b) at a final draft stage.

Next, the student seeks permission for their work to be proofread from a supervisor or academic tutor. If permission is granted, the supervisor completes the Academic Supervisor Consent Form (available from the CeDAS website) and emails it to: CeDAS@royalholloway.ac.uk

Step 2 Student contacts approved proofreader and agrees terms

Once CeDAS has received the consent form, the student will be emailed the register of approved proofreaders along with a copy of the completed consent form. The student then approaches a proofreader from the register with:

- a representative 2-3 page sample of work that is at final draft stage. The sample will help the proofreader estimate costs
- a copy of the completed consent form
- the word count for the work that is to be proofread
- a reasonable timeframe for completion of the proofreading

TO NOTE Proofreaders are very unlikely to accept work at short notice.

The proofreader will then respond 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). The fee will be influenced by a number of variables:

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

If the student is happy with the quote, an agreement needs to be set out in writing. As with any formal written agreement, it is important that the document is signed and that both parties retain copies. The agreement will usually cover:

- an agreed date for completion of work
- details of the agreed fee and terms of payment incl. when payments are to be made
- what happens if draft work is suspected of plagiarism (see p. 3)
- any reimbursement of expenses incurred by the proofreader (postage etc.).

Once the agreement has been made, the student sends the proofreader the final draft of the work to be proofread and relevant style guidance. The proofreader can now commence work.

If the proofreader is unable to do the job, the student will need to approach another proofreader from the register.

Step 3 Proofreader returns marked-up copy

The proofreader marks up the draft, returns it to the student by the completion date.

Both student and the proofreader are advised to keep an original pre-proofread copy of the work as well as a proofread, marked-up copy. This is important because:

- if either party loses work, there is a record of what work has been done
- the student will be able to demonstrate that the proofreader's work is compliant with the scheme's Code of Practice

The proofreader should maintain up-to-date records of all work with RHUL students via the designated spreadsheet provided by CeDAS.

Step 4 Student implements corrections, acknowledges proofreader & submits

The student reviews the marked-up draft carefully and, if in agreement with proofreader's comment, implements the suggested corrections. The student declares the proofreader's involvement very clearly using the Student Acknowledgement of Proofreading form (downloadable from the CeDAS website). Finally, the work is submitted.

4 Disclaimers

The ultimate responsibility for any alterations to a student's text lies with the student writer alone. Failure on the part of the student to comply with the Code of Practice provided here may lead to charges of plagiarism or collusion which are serious academic offences. 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 proofreaders. However, any proofreader found to be in breach of the Code of Practice will be removed from the RHUL register of approved proofreaders.