

Statement on editorial help for Postgraduate Research Theses: Guidance for postgraduate researchers, supervisors and editors

This document must be read in conjunction with the *Code of Practice on Plagiarism*, in particular section 3.7.¹

A thesis submitted for examination at the University of Birmingham must be solely the postgraduate researcher's own work (except where University Regulations permit the inclusion of appropriately referenced collaborative research or work – see Regulation 7.4.1 <http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/university/legal/regulations-part7.pdf>). Specifically, a postgraduate researcher must not employ a 'ghost writer' to write parts or all of the thesis, whether in draft or as a final version, on his/her behalf.²

Editors, whether they are formal supervisors, informal mentors, family or friends or professional, need to be clear about the extent and nature of help they offer in the editing of University of Birmingham postgraduate researchers' theses and dissertations. Supervisors of postgraduate researchers also need to be clear about the role of the 'third party' editors as well as their own editorial role.

Postgraduate researchers may use 'third party' editorial assistance (paid or voluntary) from an outside source. This must be with the knowledge and support of supervisors. Moreover, use of 'third party' editorial assistance must be stated in the thesis acknowledgements and strictly follow these guidelines below.

1. If the postgraduate researcher chooses to use a 'third party' editor, it is the PGR's responsibility to provide them with a copy of this statement and ensure they complete the Third Party Editor Declaration Form confirming their compliance with this statement. When submitting the thesis the postgraduate researcher must also acknowledge what form of contribution the 'third party' editor has made, by stating for example, "this thesis was copy edited for conventions of language, spelling and grammar by ABC Editing Ltd".
2. A 'third party' editor **cannot be used**:
 - 2.1 To change the text of the thesis so as to clarify and/or develop the ideas and arguments;
 - 2.2 To reduce the length of the thesis so it falls within the specified word limit;
 - 2.3 To correct information within the thesis;
 - 2.4 To change ideas and arguments put forward within the thesis; and/or
 - 2.5 To translate the thesis into English.
3. A 'third party' editor **can be used** to offer advice on:
 - 3.1 Spelling and punctuation;
 - 3.2 Formatting and sorting of footnotes and endnotes for consistency and order;
 - 3.3 Ensuring the thesis follows the conventions of grammar and syntax in written English;
 - 3.4 Shortening long sentences and editing long paragraphs;
 - 3.5 Changing passives and impersonal usages into actives, vice versa as may be appropriate;
 - 3.6 Improving the positioning of tables and illustrations and the clarity, grammar, spelling and punctuation of any text in or under tables and illustrations; and
 - 3.7 Ensuring consistency of page numbers, headers and footers.

¹ *Code of Practice on Plagiarism* section 3.7: "Proof reading and correction of English (for theses written in English) either by a member of the supervisory team or by a professional is acceptable. Such correction may involve the rewriting of some of the text originating from the student for the purposes of clarifying the student's written English. Rewriting of text with the purpose of improving the student's research arguments or contributing new arguments is not acceptable. Provision by any third party (including the supervisor(s)) of any sections of the thesis which have not originated from the student is unacceptable and will be deemed as plagiarism."

² This does not preclude the use of a 'scribe' where verbatim dictation might be required for a postgraduate researcher with a particular disability.

The University of Birmingham wishes to acknowledge the help from London School of Economics in compiling this document.