Proofreading Policy 2023-24

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List of Related Policies:

Policy No	Policy Title
01	Academic Misconduct Policy
46	Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy
	Undergraduate Handbook
	Postgraduate Handbook
	Foundation Year Handbook

Proofreading Policy 2023-24

1.   Introduction

1.1   ForMission College is committed to developing a culture of academic integrity and to conducting fair and equitable assessment for all students. One of the final stages of producing work for assessment is proofreading. Section 3 of this policy seeks to clarify what constitutes proofreading and what constitutes editing. Section 4 of this policy seeks to clarify who can proofread an assessment. Section 5 of this policy seeks to clarify the role of technology in assisting a student with proofreading.

1.2   This policy has been adapted from several policies from several other universities, including Swansea University, University of Leicester, and Loughborough University. At time of creation, ForMission is aware that QAA is sponsoring a research project on proofreading in higher education (https://www.qaa.ac.uk/membership/collaborative-enhancement-projects/academic-integrity/accessibility-and-equity-in-proofreading).

2.   Summary – Key Principles

2.1.   All students are encouraged to proofread their own work. This includes slides for presentations, essays, reports, dissertations, and all other forms of written work.

2.2.   ForMission does not permit use of third-party proofreaders unless this has been approved in advance by ForMission. For example, if a student has dyslexia and they have permitted to use a proofreader as a reasonable adjustment, as agreed with ForMission. Where a proofreader has been approved by ForMission, they are permitted to proofread, but they are not permitted to edit, as per the definitions below.

2.3.   Students are encouraged to use spellcheck and grammar-check software, where this is used for the purpose of proofreading. Software should not be used for the purposes of editing (see section 3 below for details).

2.4.   Students are not permitted to submit text that has been generated by artificial intelligence (AI), as noted in the [Artificial Intelligence Policy](), unless assessment guidance explicitly permits for a specific assessment.

2.5.   ForMission's staff are permitted to give general feedback on a draft version of an assessment, but 'staff should not proof-read or give advice which amounts to 'approving' students' work prior to marking' (Newman University General Academic Regulations, E4.1).

2.6.   Dissertation supervisors are permitted to make suggestions to students as to where they can edit their work, but it is the student's responsibility to edit their work. Dissertation supervisors are permitted to suggest area where students should proofread their work, but it is the student's responsibility to proofread their work. Dissertation supervisors should not act as proofreaders.

2.7.   A student is responsible for the work they submit.

3.   Definitions of Proofreading and Editing

3.1. Proofreading is checking a piece of work prior to submission for errors in spelling, punctuation, grammar and sentence construction, formatting, and layout.

3.2. Editing is changing an assessment in way that changes the meaning, or expands or condenses the content. Editing impacts the substance and the content of an assessment.

3.3. A proofreader can make suggestions, but they should not make any corrections. Proofreaders should use the 'comments' function, and the student should then choose whether to make any corrections.

3.4. These are things that a proofreader can legitimately do. Proofreading includes the following things:

- identifying spelling and punctuation errors (commonly referred to as 'typos').
- identifying poor grammar and sentence structure.
- highlighting clear vocabulary errors and suggest an alternative choice of wording when the meaning is unclear.
- highlight unclear syntax/sections of text which appear ambiguous to the reader (a proofreader should not make suggestions, but merely note that something is unclear).
- indicate inconsistencies in the layout of the document; use of headings; referencing conventions, etc.

3.5. These are things that a proofread must not do. These things are regarded as editing:

- writing, changing, or re-writing any part of an assessment.
- making suggestions about content. This includes contributing additional material to an assessment or offering advice about addition/omission of content.
- correcting factual errors.
- reorganising paragraphs.
- correcting or reformatting references.
- translation.

4.   Clarification on who may Proofread

4.1. Students: All students should proofread their own work. Students should not proofread other students work.

4.2. Tutors: Tutors should not proofread work. Tutors can give generic comments on a draft assessment, but as noted above: 'staff should not proof-read or give advice which amounts to 'approving' students' work prior to marking' (Newman University General Academic Regulations, E4.1).

4.3. Supervisors: As noted above, supervisors can make suggestions for editing and corrections, but a supervisor should not proofread a dissertation.

4.4. <u>Third parties:</u> Friends and family members should not proofread assessments, whether it is for free or for payment. This will be regarded as academic misconduct.

4.5. <u>Professional proofreading services:</u> ForMission does not permit use of proofreaders unless this has been approved by ForMission. For example, if a student has dyslexia and they have been permitted to use a proofreader as a reasonable adjustment, as agreed with ForMission. Where a proofreader has been approved by ForMission, they are permitted to proofread, but they are not permitted to edit, as per the definitions above.

4.6. <u>A warning again unscrupulous websites:</u> In recent years, several websites have appeared which offer proofreading services for a fee. ForMission strongly advises students not to use these websites for several reasons:
- Paying for proofreading services without formal approval is academic misconduct.
- Several of the websites that offer proofreading services are connected to essay mills. If a student gives their essay to a proofreading website, it might be passed to an essay mill, who will sell it to other students, which is illegal. For more information about essay mills, please see ForMission's Academic Misconduct Policy.

5. Use of Software and Student Responsibility

5.1. <u>Appropriate use of software:</u> Almost all modern software has tools that help with proofreading, such as spellcheck, grammar-check, and other helpful features. This includes word processing software, and software for making presentations. There are also several software packages that can be used for proofreading (perhaps the most well-known is Grammarly). Students are encouraged to use proofreading software judiciously, for the purposes of proofreading only:
- Most software has an in-built dictionary. If you type a word that is not in the software's dictionary, it will be underlined. This is helpful as a prompt. You then need to check what you have written. If you have made an error, you can correct it, but it might be that you have not made an error at all. As such, you need to use your judgment when you proofread your work. A student is responsible for what they submit.
- In a similar way, most software will now check grammar, punctuation, style, and other issues. This can be very helpful, but the suggestions are not always correct. As such, you need to use your judgment when you proofread your work. A student is responsible for what they submit.
- Most spellchecking and other proofreading software will have settings. It is important to use the appropriate language (As noted, in ForMission's Style and Referencing Guide, for most students this will be UK English. If a student has learned US English, then they should use US English.)

5.2. <u>Inappropriate software:</u> Since 2022, much new software has been released that uses artificial intelligence. Such software should not be used to create material for assessments unless this is permitted for that specific assessment. Please refer to ForMission's Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy for more information.

5.3. <u>Reasonable adjustments:</u> If, for example, a student has dyslexia, and they have had a professional assessment, it might be recommended that they use proofreading software. This should be discussed when the student meets with ForMission's Disability Lead.

5.4. <u>Some words of caution:</u>
- Students should still proofread their own work, because spellcheck software will not spot every error. (An example of this is the word 'Christian.' If a student writes 'Christina' by mistake, this will not normally be identified by spellcheck software.)
- A lot of software will automatically correct common typos. This can be helpful, but it is not always correct, so students should still proofread their own work. (An example of this is the expression *missio Dei*. Students have submitted work where the autocorrect function has changed this to *mission die*.)

5.5. <u>Student responsibility:</u> If an approved proofreader or any form of software makes a mistake, the student is still responsible for that error. A student cannot claim mitigation for an error made by software or an approved proofreader. Ultimately, it is important to remember that a student is responsible for what they submit.