De Montfort University Guidelines for Students on Proof Reading

What is proof reading?

Proof reading is the very last stage in the process of producing a piece of writing, when you should check your work for errors in spelling, grammar and punctuation. It will also include your use of language and your academic style. It is an integral part of the process of producing academic writing, and therefore *you* are expected to carry out *your own* proof reading. The student regulations are very clear about the consequences of using editorial and proof reading services.

What is the difference between 'editing' and 'proof reading'?

Editing is the process of making sure that your ideas and information are presented and supported appropriately, that your facts are accurate, your writing is well structured and that your argument is consistent and clear. You will do this throughout your writing and will probably produce several drafts as a result.

Proof reading is purely a check for spelling, grammar and punctuation accuracy.

Why is proof reading so important?

Writing that is well structured, well presented and free of errors is impressive in any context. No matter how hard you've worked to produce an essay, report or presentation, if it contains errors and looks sloppy, your ideas are unlikely to be taken seriously. The ability to independently identify and correct errors in your writing is an academic and professional skill that you will use throughout your studies and your professional life.

Developing your proof reading skills

De Montfort University provides information, guidance and tuition to ensure that our students have the opportunity to develop their proof reading skills:

- Higher Education Assignment Toolkit (HEAT) Stage 6 'Drafting, Editing and Proof Reading'. See http://libguides.library.dmu.ac.uk/class/HEAT
- Workshops: The Centre for Learning and Study Support offers short informal workshops on proof reading in the Library each term.
  See http://libguides.library.dmu.ac.uk/class/workshops
- Study and writing tutorials: You can book an individual study or writing tutorial with the Centre for Learning and Study Support – we will help you to develop your proof reading skills but we will not proof read or correct your work for you.
  See http://libguides.library.dmu.ac.uk/class/tutorials

Using software to assist your proof reading

Spelling and grammar checkers can be useful but they are by no means foolproof, so after using them you will still need to check for accuracy.

A spell checker cannot identify which form of a word you need to use when different spellings are possible (for example it may accept 'their' when you mean 'there' or 'form' when you mean 'from'). If this happens, your reliance on a spell checker, rather than your own careful proof reading, will be glaringly obvious to your reader.

Why doesn't DMU recommend or provide proof reading services?

De Montfort University advises *strongly against* the use of professional proof reading services, or proof reading by third parties (such as friends or parents) which edits or amends the content of your work because proof reading is an integral part of the writing process and you, as the author, should be responsible throughout. (You wouldn't for instance, expect the university to recommend professional introduction and conclusion writing services!)

For that reason, if you do use a third party to proof read your work, or a professional proof reading service, you must discuss this with your tutor and declare this in a written statement accompanying your work when you submit it for assessment.

Professional proof reading should only include the identification of errors – it should never involve correcting errors or amending content. Your work must remain your own.

WARNING! You will always be held responsible for work which you submit, and your use of third party proof readers will not be accepted in mitigation of any deficiencies in your work. If you use a third party proof reader your work may not be deemed to be your own and you are in danger of committing an academic offence.

Formal Regulations covering the use of proof readers on your programme can be found at the addresses below:

Undergraduate Regulations

http://www.dmu.ac.uk/documents/about-dmu-documents/quality-management-and-policy/academic-quality/scheme-regulations/undergraduate-regulations.pdf

Post Graduate Taught Programmes

http://www.dmu.ac.uk/documents/about-dmu-documents/quality-management-and-policy/academic-quality/scheme-regulations/taught-pg-progs-university-regs-2014-15-v2.pdf

Post Graduate Research Programmes

http://www.dmu.ac.uk/documents/research-documents/graduate-school/cop-2014/research-degree-regulations/submission-of-thesis-bw.pdf