

UNIVERSITY OF STIRLING

POLICY ON PROOFREADING

**VERSION CONTROL STATEMENT**

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# **POLICY ON PROOFREADING**

## **Introduction**

1. This policy applies to all assessed written work contributing to module grades in taught programmes offered at Undergraduate and Postgraduate levels, including all taught elements of Postgraduate Research programmes, unless specifically excluded in relevant assessment instructions, due to the nature of the assessment.
2. The University recognises the importance of clear and accurate written communication in academic and professional contexts. To support students to achieve the highest standards of writing, the University acknowledges there can be benefits to using proofreading tools. This policy outlines the guidelines and recommendations for the appropriate use of proofreading tools, while upholding academic integrity and learning outcomes.

## **Develop your own reviewing skills**

1. As independent learners, students are encouraged to review their own work and to use functions such as “Review” and “Read Aloud” within Microsoft Office 365, which are available to all students free of charge. This is a professional behaviour expected of students and in the world of work. Use of additional proofreaders is not normally necessary.

## **Purpose of a proofreader**

1. The purpose of a proofreader is to assist students to improve the clarity, grammar, punctuation, and overall quality of their written work. Proofreaders can be particularly useful in identifying common errors and providing suggestions for revisions.

## **Who/what can be a proofreader?**

1. If required, proofreading can be provided by friends, fellow students, family or professional/commercial proofreaders. Students with disabilities or specific learning difficulties may be provided with additional tools or tutor support. To help avoid allegations of collusion or plagiarism, it is recommended that proofreaders are not studying, or have not recently studied, the subject matter, at Stirling University or elsewhere. Finally, commercial software options, (such as Grammarly, Texthelp Read and Write Gold) and Artificial Intelligence (AI) enabled proofreading tools (such as ChatGPT) are available to all students. These will all be referred to as “proofreaders” in this policy.

## **When are students allowed to use proofreaders at Stirling?**

1. Individual assignment instructions may set out explicit instructions, due to the nature of the assignment. In the absence of explicit instructions:

* Students are **ALLOWED** to use proofreaders to identify errors and suggest or discuss changes to language, grammar, idiom, and structure with the student, but;
* Students are **NOT ALLOWED** to use proofreaders to make automatic or direct changes into the text without reviewing the suggestions and making an informed decision to accept or reject changes. Proofreaders should not translate text, add information, sources or critical argument.

## **Learning Process**

1. **Responsibility:** The ultimate responsibility for the quality of the work lies with the student. Students should develop their own language proficiency skills to produce high-quality academic work. They are expected to review assignments independently before considering using a proofreader.
2. **Process:** Proofreaders should be used as supplementary aids to enhance written work and not to replace the learning process. If used, students are expected to understand the corrections and suggestions made by proofreaders and to incorporate them thoughtfully into their work. Proofreaders’ suggestions should be evaluated critically to ensure coherence, accuracy, and context appropriateness.
3. **Informed Choice:** Students have the choice to use proofreaders. The University will not mandate or require the use of proofreaders. If students choose to do so, their choice of proofreader should be based on an understanding of the proofreader's capabilities and limitations. Proofreaders might not always comprehend the nuances of advanced academic writing or subject-specific expectations. The University does not provide a recommended list of proofreaders.

## **Recommended Workflow**

Drafting and

revision

Proofreading

Review

* Students should review the proofreader’s suggestions and make informed decisions about which corrections to accept or reject. They should also ensure that the corrections align with the context of their work.
* Students should check their assignment instructions for any explicit instruction on proofreading. Where the use of proofreaders is allowed, and the student has completed their assignment to the best of their abilities, they can use a proofreader to identify potential errors and areas for improvement. However, there is no requirement for them to do so.
* Students should complete their assignment independently, making conscious efforts to improve the

writing quality and produce their best work. They can use functions such as “Review” and “Read Aloud”

within Microsoft Office 365 throughout the process.

## **Academic Integrity**

1. **Original Work:** While proofreaders can help identify errors and offer suggestions, students are responsible for producing their original work. Plagiarism and collusion remain strictly prohibited under the [University Academic Integrity Policy](https://www.stir.ac.uk/about/professional-services/student-academic-and-corporate-services/academic-registry/policy-and-procedure/).
2. **Attribution:** If students use proofreaders, they should acknowledge their use by noting at the start of their submission:

*I acknowledge that:*

* *My final submission has been proofread by (tick all that apply):*
  + *Me*
  + *Somebody else (please provide name)*
  + *Dedicated proofreading software or AI tool (please provide name)*

## **Consequences**

1. Where a student submits an assignment in which proofreading exceeded the boundaries set out in this policy, this will be considered as poor academic practice or academic misconduct and dealt with through the [Poor Academic Practice Procedure or the Academic Misconduct Procedure](https://www.stir.ac.uk/about/professional-services/student-academic-and-corporate-services/academic-registry/policy-and-procedure/).

## **Training and Support**

1. The University provides [workshops and resources to support academic writing](https://stir.sharepoint.com/sites/StirlingEssentials-StudySkillsWorkshops) and to help students effectively use AI enabled proofreaders and understand their capabilities and limitations. Support is available to address questions or concerns related to academic writing from [Student Learning](https://www.stir.ac.uk/student-life/support-wellbeing/student-learning-services/) [Services.](https://www.stir.ac.uk/student-life/support-wellbeing/student-learning-services/)

## **Conclusion**

1. The University acknowledges that some students may benefit from the support of proofreaders to help build their confidence in written communication skills. By maintaining academic integrity and ensuring that proofreading is a supplementary aspect of the writing process, students can develop strong writing skills that will serve them well in their academic and professional lives.