

Guidance on Proofreading Your Thesis

The University of Manchester does not have an official list of proof readers nor do they endorse an individual or organisation. If you are looking for someone to proofread your thesis, here are some guidelines to consider:

Time: Most PGRs underestimate how long it takes to proofread 80,000 words and so it is up to you to plan accordingly to allow enough time for someone to proofread your work. As a general guide allow for at least one month before your submission deadline. If you are not sure how long it will take, ask your proof reader!

Rates: Good proof readers are upfront with their costs and generally charge for the number of words rather than per hour. As a potential client, you should be clear about what you need from them and provide deadlines. Proof reading is a service and costs can be higher than you expect. Moreover, rates are often higher for short turn-around times so it is essential that you negotiate date(s) for when you need your work returned and get these quotes in writing (e.g. an email). Also, it goes without saying, pay your proof reader on time at the agreed rate.

Remaining work left on your thesis: You should aim to hand over a complete thesis draft to your proof reader so that they can work with the whole document. If you are not able to hand over the whole draft, then it is possible to have it proofread chapter-by-chapter. You would need to be well organised because you will be simultaneously writing, editing and polishing different sections of your thesis. Furthermore you should aim to have the most complete version of your thesis/chapter(s) proofread in order to minimise the chances of you adding additional errors should you need to re-write sections after the proofreading has taken place.

Proofreading vs Copyediting: Essentially proofreading is looking through a document and identifying the mistakes so that the writer can make the corrections themselves. Copyediting is looking through a document, identifying the mistakes, and corrections are made on behalf of the writer. To what extent you are comfortable with having someone else correct the errors in your thesis is something you need to negotiate with your proof reader. *A word of caution:* proof readers must not be used to (re)write ANY section of your thesis in order to make them more 'grammatically correct' or 'sound better' etc. The content and presentation of your thesis is your responsibility and yours alone. They may make detailed suggestions to which you may or may not apply, but proof readers must not be used as a short-cut to completing / improving your thesis.

Finding a Proof Reader: There are a variety of proof reading services available. The quality of the services they provide and the cost are variable. Asking for recommendations from friends or colleagues is a good place to start, or you could look online, but be careful to stay away from essay writing and ghost writing websites.

Questions to ask a potential proof reader:

- What experience do you have with proofreading doctoral theses?
- May I see a sample of your work?
- Do you have any testimonials from previous clients?
- What are your rates for proofreading 80,000 word thesis?
- Do you charge extra for short turn-around times?
- How many clients do you have at the moment? Will you have time to proofread my work?

What happens if something goes wrong: Sometimes things don't work out between you and your proof reader, such as submitting / returning documents after an agreed date. You should have a written agreement (e.g. an email exchange) as proof. It's important that you keep communicating with your proof reader in a rational and civilised manner in order to come to an agreed decision that works for both of you.

DIY Option: Proofreading your own work is an important skill to develop. Start by reading out loud what you have written. Speaking your work out loud slows down your reading speed to allow you to spot errors more easily. It takes time but is it an effective way to proofread your own work.