

## Editing

GRS Writing Group – WED 6 DEC 2017

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Editing skills are important as theses need to be written to the highest standard possible. Evidence from Mullins and Kiley's study of experienced thesis examiners suggests that while examiners try not to be influenced by first impressions, they often decide very early in their examination the quality of a thesis. Lack of attention to detail can contribute to a negative first impression.

Many students come to their studies with advanced academic writing and editing skills and are well prepared to write a thesis of high standard. Others develop them along the way through the support of their supervisor and workshops delivered by StudySmarter and the Graduate Research School. Others find support from their peers. Those who continue to find editing difficult may require the support of a professional editor.

If you are editing your own work you may benefit from:

- ensuring you have revised your work sufficiently prior to editing to ensure you are clear about what you want to say and where you want to say it, and you have evidence to support what you want to say.
- timing how long it takes to edit a section of work to give you an estimate of the time required for you to edit & how long you can sustain focus
- working on a printed copy – the traditional on screen appearance of text (single column layout, single paragraph visible) is not the easiest format to edit
- taking a break between revising the text and editing to enable you to see your text as the reader does – if you are too 'close' to your writing you often miss errors (moving to a different environment may also help)
- reading your work aloud and reading it slowly - you will 'hear' problems with grammar, sentence length, connectivity and you will 'see' problems with spelling and punctuation.

- reading a style guide suitable for your discipline and developing your own editing style guide – there are many academic writing rules that you need to conform with, your supervisors will request/suggest specific changes, your project will require you to make some editing decisions of your own, and you will have editing weaknesses that you need to remind yourself to check. As a thesis is a long document it is important to ensure you check your style choices are consistent throughout the thesis – an editing style guide will provide a checklist to follow to ensure your thesis is internally consistent. Order your editing style guide from the most important concerns to the least important. (Some concerns you may be able to program into your text editor to automatically correct for you).
- editing by addressing concerns one-by-one– this is often easier or editing sentence-by-sentence looking for all concerns simultaneously and will ensure mistakes are corrected throughout the full text
- proofreading using a ruler positioned underneath the line you are reading, starting from the bottom of the page and moving upwards line by line – this will deter you from engaging with the content of the text

## Sample Editing Style Guide

- Headings - articles (a, an, the) removed, formatting
- Paragraph length
- Topic sentence length and focus
- Sentence order
- Signposting – consistent with actual order of text
- Connections between paragraphs
  
- Sentence length, punctuation & interruptions
- Sentence focus – 1 topic
- Sentences connections – repetition of word from preceding sentence
- Sentences ‘patterns’ – parallel construction
- Redundant phrases
- Positive construction - double negative construction
- Unnecessary detail
  
- Redundant words – adjectives and adverbs, lead-in text
- Synonyms minimized – consistency of terminology
- Consistent use of terms, abbreviations and acronyms
- Tense
- Modal verbs for hedging statements
- Active voice
- First person singular or plural (I or we), third person
- Stacked noun modifiers
- Transition words – required, appropriate, sufficient, not at beginning of paragraph
- Faulty pronoun reference – replace with appropriate noun
- Contractions
- Metaphors, clichés, colloquialisms
- Grammatical construction of lists – parallel construction
- Spelling and grammar check – language setting
  
- Formatting of figures, tables, quotes
- Written numbers, numerals, scientific nomenclature, units, statistics
- Capitalisation
- Colons, semi-colons, hyphens, parentheses, other punctuation
- Spacing – including two spaces after full stop – (click on pilcrow (¶) for formatting marks)
- Page numbers
- Table of contents, lists of tables and figures
- Word count
- Cross-references - to tables, figures, footnotes, pages, sections, chapters
- Formatting of lists



- Editing by professional editors is allowable at UWA within limits according to the UWA policy on the Use of Editorial Assistance by Students. You should obtain permission from your supervisor before you seek professional editing advice. The name of your editor and a brief description of the service they provided should be included in your thesis acknowledgements.  
<http://www.governance.uwa.edu.au/procedures/policies/policies-and-procedures?method=document&id=UP09%2F9>
- Mullins and Kiley. 2002. 'It's a PhD, not a Nobel; Prize': how experienced examiners assess research theses. *Studies in Higher Education*. 27(4): 369  
<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/0307507022000011507>
- The Expert Editor Blog - 100 Editing and Proofreading Tips for Writers  
<https://experteditor.com.au/blog/100-editing-and-proofreading-tips-for-writers/>
- University of Leicester - The Art of Editing  
<https://www2.le.ac.uk/offices/ld/resources/writing/writing-resources/editing>
- Institute of Professional Editors- Editing with Style  
[http://www.iped-editors.org/Resources\\_for\\_editors/Articles\\_about\\_editing/Editing\\_with\\_style](http://www.iped-editors.org/Resources_for_editors/Articles_about_editing/Editing_with_style)
- StudySmarter Editing and Grammar Survival Guides  
<http://www.student.uwa.edu.au/learning/studysmarter/getsmart/survivalguides/grammarandediting>
- Graduate research School Academic Writing Resources and Training  
<http://www.postgraduate.uwa.edu.au/students/resources#writing>

Next session: The Writing Group will recommence in FEB 2018.

Further details of the UWA GRS Writing Group, including advice sheets to download, here:  
[www.postgraduate.uwa.edu.au/students/resources/communities#writinggroup](http://www.postgraduate.uwa.edu.au/students/resources/communities#writinggroup)