



Proof-Reading and Editorial Advice Policy

Research Policy Group

1 Purpose

Victoria University of Wellington recognises that candidates for postgraduate research degrees regularly receive advice in the writing of their theses, both from University staff (supervisors and advisors) and from external parties including friends and family, colleagues and professional editors. While the University accepts that such assistance may be part of the research process, the fundamental principle that responsibility for the thesis belongs to the candidate must not be undermined. This policy sets out the limits of what is acceptable practice.

2 Organisational Scope

This is a University-wide policy, applying to all postgraduate research students and to supervisors and staff.

3 Definitions

For purposes of this policy, unless otherwise stated, the following definitions shall apply:

Thesis	A thesis is the outcome of supervised research, scholarship and/or creative activity having a value of 90 points or more.
Supervisor	A person who is appointed to provide academic and administrative guidance to the candidate during their enrolment for the degree.
University Supervisor	A member of the Victoria University of Wellington academic staff whose role in the academic supervision of a candidate is defined by particular responsibilities towards the candidate and the University. The Primary Supervisor is normally the University Supervisor if they are a member of Victoria University of Wellington staff.
Editing	Reviewing and assessing content to clarify meaning and to improve structure and argument.
Copy-editing	Checking material to correct surface errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar and to ensure consistency and completeness of presentation.
Proof-reading	Checking material prior to submission to correct surface errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar.

4 Policy Content and Guidelines

Nothing in this policy is intended to preclude the scholarly exchange of ideas that is part of any academic community, from which exchange students will often receive advice about their research. The policy only addresses those circumstances in which explicit advice has been sought

on a piece of written work. Academic supervisors and research students must ensure they understand the nature of editorial advice, including the distinction between copy-editing and proof-reading on the one hand and more extensive editorial advice on the other.

4.1 Responsibilities of candidates

- (a) A thesis must be the work of the candidate, who is responsible for every aspect of the thesis as it is presented for examination.
- (b) Candidates who give work to friends, colleagues or professionals for copy-editing or proof-reading or for any other advice must:
 - (i) obtain permission in advance from their University Supervisor;
 - (ii) ensure that those people are given a copy of this policy and accompanying guidelines as well as any relevant discipline-specific guidelines;
 - (iii) acknowledge in the thesis the help they have received. A suggested format for such acknowledgement is provided in the guidelines.
- (c) The Guidelines for including Publications in a Thesis must be followed insofar as they apply.
- (d) Any costs are the responsibility of the candidate. Candidates are strongly advised to consult with their supervisors before entering into any contract for editorial services.

4.2 Responsibilities of supervisors

- (a) Supervisors have an obligation to point out weaknesses in a candidate's work in matters of content, structure, argument, consistency and presentation. The advice they provide will often go beyond copy-editing or proof-reading and might involve substantive editorial intervention, but they must not write the thesis.
- (b) Supervisors must ensure that candidates are aware of this policy and the guidelines.

4.3 The role of Academic Learning Advisors from Student Learning

- (a) Academic Learning Advisors provide professional assistance, helping candidates clarify their thinking and written expression by acting as sounding boards, offering non-discipline-specific reader response, and supporting the development of the organisational, referencing, formatting, language, and academic English skills necessary to satisfy thesis requirements.
- (b) Academic Learning Advisors will promote a three-way collaborative approach to skills development involving the candidate, primary supervisor and learning advisor. Ideally, the candidate will initiate the process. Where appropriate, it is helpful if supervisors encourage such an approach early in the candidature. Academic Learning Advisors are bound by confidentiality if a candidate chooses not to involve their supervisor in a collaborative approach.

4.4 The role of others

The fundamental principle for all other parties is that they may not edit the thesis. The thesis remains the responsibility of the candidate being examined, who must make the final decisions on all suggested changes. Any other party asked for editorial advice may:

- (i) provide editorial advice by drawing to a candidate's attention problems with the thesis that are beyond surface errors, but they may not provide solutions to those problems;

- (ii) copy-edit and proof-read by marking for correction surface errors and inconsistencies in presentation.

External editors and advisors should mark the copy in such a way that the author must review all suggested changes before accepting them.

5 Legislative Compliance

The University is required to manage its policy documentation within a legislative framework; there is no specific legislation directing this policy.

6 References

[Doctoral Regulations: for PhD and other Doctorates with Theses](#)

[Guidelines for including publications in a PhD thesis](#)

[Master's Thesis Policy](#)

[Doctoral Procedures](#)

7 Appendices

Appendix A: Guidelines to accompany the Proof-Reading and Editorial Advice Policy

8 Approval Agency

Academic Board

9 Approval Dates

This policy was originally approved on: 28 April 2011

This version was approved on: 2 November 2015

This version takes effect from: 1 January 2016

This policy will be reviewed by:

10 Policy Sponsor

Deputy Vice Chancellor, Research

11 Contact Person

The following person may be approached on a routine basis in relation to this policy:

Manager, Faculty of Graduate Research