

## **QMUL policy on editorial assistance for research degree theses**

1. This policy aims to ensure that students and staff are aware of the issues of using editorial help in the production of a thesis.
2. Queen Mary University of London firmly adheres to the regulation that any thesis submitted for examination must be solely the work of the candidate. Any work conducted jointly must be certified by the supervisor at the point of thesis submission and the student's part in the joint research should be clearly defined. The use of 'ghost writers' to write parts or all of the thesis (whether in draft or as a final version) is strictly prohibited. Any student found to be in breach of this regulation will be dealt with under the disciplinary guidelines and the College reserves the right to use plagiarism detection software to check the thesis.
3. However, the College acknowledges that students may wish to use a third party to provide proof-reading or grammar checking services (editorial assistance). This third party may be a professional company or fellow students, family or friends.
4. QMUL defines editorial assistance as follows:
  - (i) advice on spelling and punctuation
  - (ii) formatting and sorting of footnotes and endnotes for consistency and order
  - (iii) ensuring the thesis follows the conventions of grammar and syntax in written English
  - (iv) shortening long sentences and editing long paragraphs
  - (v) changing passive usage into active usage
  - (vi) improving the position of tables, graphs and illustrations and the clarity, grammar, spelling and punctuation of any text in and under tables, graphs and illustrations
  - (vii) ensuring consistency of page numbers, headers and footers.
5. A third party cannot be used to:
  - (i) change the text of the thesis so as to clarify and/or develop the ideas and arguments
  - (ii) reduce the length of the thesis so that it falls within the specified word limit
  - (iii) provide help with referencing
  - (iv) correct information within the thesis
  - (v) change the ideas/arguments put forward in the thesis
  - (vi) translate the thesis into English (including using online translation tools).
6. If a student chooses to avail themselves of editorial assistance within the bounds outlined above, it is his/her responsibility to provide the third party with a copy of this statement.
7. The third party can give advice either by tracking changes on an electronic version of the thesis or by handwritten annotations on a paper copy or other similar devices. It is the student's responsibility to choose what advice to accept and he/she must themselves make the required changes to the master copy of thesis. It is the student's responsibility to keep an electronic or written record of any advice or help given to them.

8. When submitting the thesis, the student must acknowledge any contribution made by a third party and what form this took – for example, “This thesis was proof-read for the purposes of spelling and grammar by A. Copy Co.”.
9. Any contravention of this guidance will be considered an assessment offence and investigated in accordance with the Regulations on assessment offences.
10. This policy does not cover the guidance given by supervisors to students during the course of their programme and the drafting of their thesis. Supervisors and examiners are not regarded as ‘third parties’ for this purpose. Supervisors and examiners may suggest amendment, developments and clarifications as part of the supervision and examination process, but responsibility for the content of the final submitted thesis rests with the student.
11. Students and supervisors who require further guidance on the extent of supervisory involvement in drafting the text of a thesis should speak to their Director of Graduate Studies or the relevant Deputy Dean for Research for their Faculty.

*Last updated: 30 October 2013*

*This statement is based on the ‘Statement for editorial help on PhD Theses: guidance for students, supervisors and examiners’ produced by the London School of Economics and Political Science, 2012.*