

Guideline: Higher Degree by Research: Editing of Theses

Purpose

To provide guidelines for editors, whether they are formal supervisors, informal mentors, family or friends or professionals, regarding the extent and nature of help they offer in the editing of research candidates' theses and dissertations.

Background

1. The Institute of Professional Editors Limited (IPEd) have collaboratively developed an agreed set of [guidelines](#) based on the [Australian standards for editing practice](#) that provide guidance to candidates, supervisors and professional editors in how much assistance they should provide to candidates who have requested help in writing their theses.

Proof-Reading and Editing of Research Theses and Dissertations

2. Academic supervisors of higher degree by research candidates provide editorial advice to their candidates on:

- a. Matters of content, substance and structure;
- b. Interpretation of the research literature and data;
- c. use of illustrations and tables;
- d. use of language (including clarity, voice and tone, grammar, spelling and punctuation);
- e. use of technical and specialised terminology. (IPEd 2019).

3. Supervisors may also provide copy editing and proofreading. The [Australian standards for editing practice](#) outline the differences between editorial advice on content, substance and structure (Part C), copy editing (Part D) and proofreading (Part E).

Standard	Advice
Standard C: Substance and Structure	Appraisal

	Structural devices
Standard D: Language and Illustration	Clarity of expression
	Voice and tone
	Grammar and usage
	Spelling and punctuation
	Specialised materials
	Illustrations
Standard E: Completeness and Consistency	Integrity
	Textual elements
	Illustration
	Format layout and production

4. Candidates may use third parties (professional or otherwise) to assist in preparing their thesis for submission, provided they discuss this with their supervisor and provide the editor with a copy of this guideline and the Australian Standards for editing practice guideline before they commence work.
5. Third party editorial intervention is restricted to:
 - a. Standard D
 - b. Standard E
6. Where a third party provides advice on matters of structure (Standard C), only examples should be given, not detailed sets of changes.

7. Feedback as a result of professional editing or proofreading is provided in a format that encourages consideration of the recommendations of the editor rather than simply acceptance of those recommendations.
8. Where editorial advice is given, it is acknowledged as per the [Higher degree by research - submission and examination of theses procedure](#).

Editorial Services

9. Available editorial services include:
 - a. A [directory of editors from the Canberra Society of Editors](#);
 - b. A [searchable database from the Institute of Professional Editors \(IPEd\)](#).
10. Before commissioning an editor, the [Canberra Society of Editors](#) checklist should be used to determine the scope of work.

Use of 'Artificial Intelligence' (AI)

11. 'Artificial Intelligence' (AI) is intended to refer to generative AI tools, such as (but not limited to) ChatGPT, Microsoft CoPilot, Grammarly and other technologies reliant on Large Language Models (LLM) for text or image generation.
12. It is permissible to use AI in the editing of theses for tasks such as spell checking, grammar checking and making text shorter, consistent with Standards D and E under paragraph 3.
13. If AI tools have been used to edit the thesis, then the extent of the use of the technology should be noted in the acknowledgements section of the thesis.
14. If a candidate elects to use AI they should be mindful of ethical implications of their actions and refer [to ANU guidance](#) as updated from time to time.

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