Research Degrees Programmes and Examinations Board

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 concern that a student may have breached this regulation will be investigated under the Academic Integrity & Misconduct Policy. Queen Mary reserves the right to use plagiarism detection software to check the thesis.

3. However, Queen Mary 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. Queen Mary defines permitted uses of 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 use editorial assistance within the guidance outlined above, it is their 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. It is the student's responsibility to choose what advice to accept. Students must, themselves, make the required changes to the master copy of the 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 for examination, the student must acknowledge any contribution made by a third party and what form this took – for example, "*This thesis was proofread for the purposes of spelling and grammar by A. Copy Co.*"

9. It is recognised that students use web search engines, and may also use Artificial Intelligence text generation technology, to assist with the identification of publications and references in their field of study. This technology can generate extended pieces of plausible-sounding writing, in response to prompts on a wide range of topics. These responses may be vague, general and may not be accurate.

Students are advised to check all references and information obtained from web search engine, and Artificial Intelligence text generation technology, before including these in their thesis.

If a student uses material obtained from an Artificial Intelligence site, in their thesis, they must reference the material used in line with the referencing practices in their field of study. Please see examples by citethemright online (to log in via the university subscription, enter Queen Mary University of London and then login, using your Queen Mary credentials).

Unauthorised or unacknowledged text manipulation, as well as any other activity which undermines the integrity of an assessment, can be interpreted as an attempt to gain undue advantage in an assessment. The use of paraphrasing software or generative artificial intelligence to author the text or the use of machine translation of the work submitted cannot be considered wholly the student's own work and may be considered academic misconduct.

Queen Mary Academy and the Doctoral College provide useful resources and good practice on the use of Generative Artificial Intelligence technology.

- https://www.qmul.ac.uk/queenmaryacademy/educators/resources/assessment-and-feedback/resources/
- https://www.qmul.ac.uk/doctoralcollege/doctoral-students/current-students/ai-guidance-for-pgrs/

10. Any contravention of this guidance will be considered an assessment offence and investigated in accordance with the Regulations on assessment offences in the Academic Integrity & Misconduct Policy.

11. This policy does not cover the guidance given by supervisors to students during their study and during the drafting of their thesis. Neither does it cover any other university support the student receives, such as academic writing or referencing support from the Library. Supervisors, examiners and other university support services are not regarded as '*third parties*' for this purpose. Supervisors, examiners and other university support may suggest amendment, developments and clarifications as part of the thesis writing up and the examination processes, but responsibility for the content of the final submitted thesis rests with the student.

12. Students and supervisors who require further guidance, on the extent of supervisory involvement in drafting the text of a thesis, should speak with their School/Institute Director of Graduate Studies, or the relevant Deputy Dean for Postgraduate Research for their Faculty.

This document was originally 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.