The editing of research theses by professional editors

Guidelines originally developed by the Deans and Directors of Graduate Studies collaboratively with the Council of Australian Societies of Editors. Revised by the Institute of Professional Editors and approved by DDOGS in November 2010.

Background

Candidates may use a professional editor in preparing their thesis for submission, but they should obtain permission from their principal supervisor to do so. They should also provide the editor with a copy of these guidelines before they commence work.

Professional editors need to be clear about the extent and nature of services they offer in the editing of research students’ theses and dissertations. Academic supervisors of research students also need to be clear about the role of the professional editor as well as their own editorial role. Finally, students need to be clear about the scope and limits of services they might expect from a professional editor.

These guidelines have been developed primarily to give guidance to professional editors. It also provides a guide for academic supervisors and students. This document has been developed with close attention to the current Australian Standards for Editing Practice (ASEP). Academic supervisors and students are encouraged to become familiar with this publication.

Editing and proofreading of research theses and dissertations

It is expected that the academic supervisors of research higher degree students will provide their students with editorial advice relating to matters of substance and structure; language (including matters of clarity, voice and tone, grammar, spelling and punctuation, specialised and foreign material); and use of illustrations and tables. They may also assist with copyediting and proofreading. This type of advice is covered in Standards C (‘Substance and structure’), D (‘Language and illustrations’) and E (‘Completeness and consistency’) of ASEP.

Professional editorial intervention should be restricted to copyediting and proofreading. This type of advice is covered in Standards D and E of ASEP.

In relation to matters of substance and structure (Standard C), the professional editor may draw attention to problems, but should not provide solutions. Examples may be offered in order to guide the student in resolving problems.

Material for editing or proofreading should be submitted to the editor in electronic or hard copy (although if an individual academic institution has a preference on editing format, this should be followed). If the thesis is to be edited electronically, the editor and student need to agree on the process by which the student will check each suggested change before accepting it. The editor should keep on record all marked-up versions of the work.

Acknowledgement of editor’s contribution

When a thesis has had the benefit of professional editorial advice, of any form, the name of the editor and a brief description of the service rendered, in terms of Australian Standards for Editing Practice, should be printed as part of the list of acknowledgements or other prefatory matter.