

Policy on Acceptable Assistance with Assessments (including Generative AI, Proofreading and Translation)

Applies to: All taught [non-professional] York programmes and York Online programmes.

Does not apply to: HYMS, CITY College, York-Maastricht Partnership and Professional Programmes.

Approved by UTC: November 2023

1. Key principles

When completing assessment at the University of York, there is the fundamental expectation that the student has produced the work independently and in English (unless otherwise stated, e.g. group work, language modules). Students are considered the authors of their work and are responsible for the content they submit. Producing work independently does not, however, mean working in isolation. Students are encouraged to seek assistance for their studies which is provided on a school/departmental level and on an institutional level. Students may, however, seek assistance from other third parties (whether involving human or software input) but only to the extent that doing so adheres to the principles set-out in this document. Students are expected to be transparent about the sources of information used via [referencing](#) and the assistance they have received in the form of acknowledgements. Students who do not adhere to these principles may be in danger of committing *plagiarism, false authorship, collusion or personation* as defined in the [Academic Misconduct Policy and Procedures](#).

2. Scope

These provisions apply to all assessed work for students on taught programmes.

Schools/departments, may specify that, for certain assessments, some or all of the tools, services or support mechanisms described may or may not be allowed for pedagogic reasons. For example, translation and proofreading might not be appropriate if the purpose of the assessment is to determine students' abilities in linguistic areas such as grammar or syntax. Acceptability of use should be clearly communicated to students in the assignment briefs.

3. School/Departmental assistance

Schools/departments may specify appropriate levels of assistance with assessments that they will provide. **Any such assistance does not require acknowledgement and is not subject to this policy.** Teaching staff use their pedagogic judgement to best assist students with their assessments to ensure they can be independently completed. Such assistance should not generally involve proofreading, translating or editing student work, though they may make qualitative judgements about the work and make recommendations for improvement.

4. Institutional advice and assistance

Students may also seek assistance from institutional services such as the [Maths Skills Centre](#), [Writing Centre](#), [Academic Liaison Librarians](#) and [Disability Services](#). Students with a contemporary formal diagnosis of relevant disabilities may be entitled to more extensive assistance and should consult Disability Services about this. These institutional services do not require acknowledgement but they are subject to this policy with limited exceptions.

5. Peer support

Peer support is subject to this policy with the exception of group members of a project group who are legitimately expected to complete assessments together. In the course of their studies students may study with other students either on their programme or students on other programmes during the course of their studies. This may include classmates from a particular module or students from a different stage of study. Students, however, must ensure that they are not contributing to the assessments of other students. If a student provides peer support beyond the principles of this policy they may be committing the following academic misconduct offences:

- a. Collusion - if students are completing the same assessment;
- b. False authorship - if a student receives assistance from a student from a different module;
- c. Personation - where a student provides assistance to a student on another module/programme.

6. External assistance

Students may access a variety of forms of external assistance only if used in line with the provisions of parts 7-10 below.

- a. **Generative AI:** Artificial intelligence tools which can understand and respond to human natural language and multimedia input. Such tools are likely to assist students in a wide range of tasks similar to the bullet points below.
- b. **Informal assistance:** Friends and family checking a student's work, providing an audience's reaction, commenting on drafts, proofreading etc. in order to improve the work prior to submission.
- c. **Professional proofreader:** An external, paid person or company employed by the student to proofread their work prior to submission.
- d. **Language-enhancement applications:** Applications such as Grammarly, Pro Writing Aid and integrated spelling and grammar checkers can highlight issues and offer suggestions for improvements in various areas of writing, e.g. with grammatical errors, alternative vocabulary and sentence rephrasing.
- e. **Translation tools or services:** The process of translating text from one language to another. This could be human translation and/or using machine translation tools, such as Google translate.

The above tools, services, and assistance mechanisms are only permitted if used in line with the policy below.

7. Permissible proofreading and editing assistance

Proofreading is defined by the [Chartered Institute of Editing and Proofreading](#) as: *a process of identifying typographical, linguistic, coding or positional errors and omissions on a printed or electronic proof, and marking corrections.*

Two types of proofreading or editing assistance might be permitted under this policy: (a) identification and correction of errors; or (b) identification (but not correction) of errors.

The only assistance from a third party that is appropriate for students is:

1. The identification and correction of errors related to:
 - a. Word usage (excluding specific terminology);
 - b. Spelling, punctuation, capitalisation, italics, abbreviations, headings, quotations, metrification, numbering, citations, referencing, tables, illustrations, footnotes and appendices (typographical errors).

2. The identification (but not correction) of issues related to:
 - a. Grammar and syntax;
 - b. Clarity of expression;
 - c. Voice and tone;
 - d. Issues with logical sequencing and linkage between sentences and paragraphs;
 - e. Ambiguity;
 - f. Repetition.

Where identification but not correction by a third party (human or software) is appropriate, students should correct these issues themselves following feedback. In the case of language enhancement tools, the software usually provides feedback in the form of suggested edits for the author to choose - the selection of these options is permissible and subject to the judgement of the student.

8. Unacceptable assistance

For summative work, it is not appropriate for a third party (human or AI) to offer or for a student to seek any of the following editing and proofreading assistance:

- a. Using generative AI tools in a way which could be considered false authorship;
- b. Using translation tools or services to translate text in whole or significant sections (oral or written), which is then submitted as summative work;
- c. Generating or re-writing (including shortening or summarising) any of the student's sentences or sections of work;

- d. Rearranging or paraphrasing passages of text, sequences of code or sections of other material for the student;
- e. Reformatting the material for the student;
- f. Generating or contributing additional material to the original;
- g. Generating or checking calculations or formulae;
- h. Generating or rewriting formulae, equations or computer code;
- i. Generating, labelling or relabelling figures or diagrams.

Further details and expanded examples of acceptable and unacceptable assistance can be found via the student-facing '[Guidance on Generative AI, Language Enhancement/Proofreading, and Translation](#)'

9. Contract, payments and records

The following refers to agreements between students and professional/human proofreaders.

- a. **Contract and Payment:** The student bears the sole responsibility for the recruitment and cost of services rendered by a professional proofreader, therefore students are advised to agree on a payment rate, overall cost and timescale before the procedure begins. The contract is a private matter between the student and the proofreader.
- b. **University guidelines and department requirements:** Students should provide the proofreader with a copy of the University's *Policy on Acceptable Assistance with Assessment* and ensure that the proofreader accepts the conditions included in them. The student should also provide the proofreader with their department's specific reference formats and other appropriate writing guidelines.
- c. **Proving the extent of the proofreading:** In order to be able to prove the extent/limits of the proofreading, the student should keep a copy of the edited/corrected work, showing the changes that have been made. This copy may then be produced should any challenge arise concerning the degree of guidance given. This copy should be kept until the student's degree has been conferred in case a marker accuses the student of academic misconduct.

10. Approval and acknowledgement of proofreading or editing assistance

If a student receives assistance with proofreading or editing, whether paid or not, an acknowledgement should be inserted in the final submission either at the beginning of the document or after the reference list. This should explain the type of assistance provided by human¹/language enhancement/generative AI, and a statement that the assistance has been in accordance with the University's *Policy on Acceptable Assistance with Assessment*.

I acknowledge that I received assistance from (eg professional proofreader/family member/friend/ChatGPT/Grammarly) to proofread this assessment in line with the *Policy on Acceptable Assistance with Assessment*.

¹ The student should not name the person who has given assistance.

- a. Students should always consult their supervisors before seeking the services of a professional proofreader.
- b. If a student uses spelling and grammar checking tools which are integrated into MS Word or Google Docs as standard, then no acknowledgment is required. The student should also accept full responsibility for the authorship and standard of the submitted work.

Students can find out more about the use of software, digital tools and services, and the implications should the above policy not be followed, via the University's [Student guidance on using AI and translation tools](#) and the university's [Academic Misconduct Policy](#).