

CASE Editing Standards

National policy on editing theses

Editors have long been concerned about the ethics of editing student work that is to be submitted for academic assessment. Editorial intervention may misrepresent the student's academic ability or proficiency in English, and it may unfairly advantage students who have the means to pay for editorial services. In the absence of guidelines, the committees of the state and territory editors' societies have often found themselves in a difficult position when asked to adjudicate in particular instances.

The Society has adopted an official national policy on the editing of theses, reproduced below. It was developed by the Council of Australian Societies of Editors (CASE) in collaboration with the Deans and Directors of Graduate Studies (DDOGS), the peak body for forty universities in Australia and New Zealand.

The CASE representative for this issue, Janet MacKenzie, has been negotiating with Professor Elaine Martin, head of the Postgraduate Research Unit of Victoria University, representing DDOGS, to draw up a policy acceptable to all interests. There were two meetings in Melbourne and considerable email correspondence. Professor Martin reported that the academics were impressed with Australian Standards for Editing Practice and felt that it provided a sound basis for the policy.

Having gone through various drafts, the final policy was ratified by both DDOGS and CASE in May 2004. This is the culmination of three years of effort by CASE, which first approached the Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee about this matter in April 2001.

Having been agreed at a national level by representative bodies, the policy has considerable standing. Although it is written specifically for higher degree theses, it can be taken as guidance for the editing of student work at any level. The policy sets out the roles of academic supervisors and editors and stipulates requirements for acknowledging editorial services. It provides editors with a clear statement of their responsibilities in undertaking this type of work, and it should enable them to resist any pressure for inappropriate intervention.

The editing of research theses by professional editors

This policy was developed collaboratively by the Deans and Directors of Graduate Studies with the Council of Australian Societies of Editors.

Background

Professional editors need to be clear about the extent and nature of help 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.

This policy has been developed primarily to give guidance to professional editors. It also provides a guide for academic supervisors. This document has been developed with close attention to the current Australian Standards for Editing Practice. Academic supervisors are encouraged to become familiar with this very useful publication.

Proofreading and editing of research theses and dissertations

It is expected that the academic supervisors of research higher degree students will provide editorial advice to their students. This type of advice is covered in Standards C, D and E of Australian Standards for Editing Practice:

- Standard C, Substance and Structure
- Standard D, Language and Illustrations
- Standard E, Completeness and Consistency.

Students may use a professional editor in preparing their thesis for submission, but they should discuss this with their principal supervisor and provide the editor with a copy of this policy before they commence work.

Professional editorial intervention should be restricted to:

- Standard D
- Standard E

Where a professional editor provides advice on matters of structure (Standard C), exemplars only should be given.

Material for editing or proofreading should be submitted in hard copy. In electronic copy it is too easy for the student to accept editorial suggestions without thinking about their implications.

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. If the professional editor's current or former area of academic specialisation is similar to that of the candidate, this too should be stated in the prefatory matter of the thesis.