Charles Darwin
U N I V E R S I T Y

EDITING YOUR THESIS
Some useful pointers

What is involved?

Editing is all about making it easy for the reader to read your work.

The editing process involves looking at the work in three distinct ways:
- editing for **structure** – helps the reader follow the logic of your argument
- editing for **language and style** – good use of grammar and consistency in writing style help the reader concentrate on the content
- **proof reading** – gets rid of the spelling errors, inconsistent formatting and other annoying distractions to allow the reader to remain focussed on your writing.

Where to start?

From the beginning – You need to start planning the **structure** and **style** of your thesis before you start writing it. You will need to find out the conventions required for your discipline, whether there is a particular style manual you will be required to follow, what referencing system needs to be used, etc. Deciding on and finding out about these from the beginning will save you a lot of time later on in the project.

English **language**: If you have concerns about your skills in formal written English, you need to seek advice and assistance as early as possible in the writing process. Ask your Supervisor how to find out about what workshops/tutorials/workgroups may be available.

At the end – if you have followed the planned structure and style, then editing these facets of your work should be a relatively straightforward check for consistency.

The **proofreading** side of the editing is the part that comes at the end of writing the thesis. While you will be checking your work as you go, the proof reading is where you stop writing and concentrate on accuracy and consistency - dotting the 'i's and crossing the 't's - after you have written the text.

Who can help?

- Other people can help you with editing your thesis, providing the level of editing is limited to proof reading and general advice on structure, as set out in the CDU Guidelines on Editing of Theses.
- Your Supervisor will be able to provide advice on structure, style and conventions. They will also be able to advise on assistance available for improving skills in written English.
- Attend any available workshops/tutorials on Thesis Writing and Thesis Editing.
- You can find further resources through the Library catalog and by browsing the internet (see Further Resources section below).
- Other graduate students or work colleagues may be appropriate people to read all or part of your thesis and provide editorial advice, providing the level of editing is limited to proof reading and general advice on structure, as set out in the Guidelines.
- A professional editor may be used, providing the level of editing is limited to proof reading and general advice on structure, as set out in the Guidelines.
- Any editorial assistance provided should be on hard copy, rather than electronically.
- Any editorial assistance should be properly acknowledged in the Acknowledgements section of the thesis.

General pointers on structure

Introduction
- does the introduction define the topic, state the purpose of the work and present an outlineo f the argument?

Chapters
- are the chapters ordered logically
- are the chapters divided into appropriate sections
- does each chapter have appropriate introductory and concluding sections
- is the material in the chapter ordered logically
- does the argument flow smoothly between paragraphs
- does each paragraph clearly state its topic
- does each sentence make sense
- are the details, examples and explanations adequately developed.

Conclusion
- are the introduction and conclusion linked?
- Does the conclusion sum up the argument presented in the thesis.

Bibliography
- Are all sources acknowledged appropriately
- are the sources fully referenced
- is the bibliography formatted consistently and in the recommended style for the discipline

Appendices
- appendices need to be relevant, appropriate and complete

Acknowledgements
- all appropriate acknowledgements need to be included

Lists
- contents, lists of figures, abbreviations, etc., need to be appropriate, accurate and complete.

General pointers on Language and Style
- Use of a formal, academic style.
- Style and conventions (eg. use of first person, I) can vary between disciplines
- Seek advice and read other theses in your discipline to gauge the appropriate style.
- Seek help on written English as early as possible, if necessary.
- Make sure every sentence is grammatically correct and logically connected.

General pointers on Proof reading:
This involves checking the detail of the thesis, including both **accuracy** of the text and **consistency** of layout. Some pointers to think about:

Layout
- Margins and indents, for main text and also for indented quotations, bullet lists, notes, etc.
- Title page: the title should be prominent and the subtitle (if any) less prominent. If the title runs across more than one line, make sure it is broken up into logical chunks
- Headings and subheadings need to be accurate and consistently formatted (font size, type, spacing before and after) throughout – also check that numbering (if any) is consistent and that headings are accurately reflected in the contents listing.
- Spacing – before and after headings, paragraphs, figures, etc.
- Font size / font style of headings, subheadings, captions, main body of text, quotes, headers, footers, notes
- Numbering of pages, chapters, headings and subheadings, figures, tables, notes, etc. needs to be consistent
- Headers (if any) should not appear on pages with titles (eg. contents page, first page of each chapter, etc.)

- Quotations – short quotes [up to 4 lines long] should be included within the paragraph using single quote marks, longer quotes should be separated and indented consistently.
- Figures – make sure the text flows around figures without leaving large white space gaps
- Captions – keep captions on the same page as the figure they relate to and check that the wording is appropriate and accurate
- Make sure there are no widows and orphans (single lines left at the bottom or top of a page); particularly, ensure that headings and subheadings appear on the same page as the beginning of the section they refer to.

Text
- The basics – all sentences start with a capital letter and end with a full stop.
- Spelling – accurate and consistent throughout [use the spellcheck, but be aware that it is not 100% accurate]
- Quotation marks: Check that all opening quote marks have a corresponding closing quote mark.
- Brackets: check that all opening brackets have closing brackets.
- Be consistent in use of italics, eg. et al or *et al* throughout the text for emphasis, for book titles, for ships, for foreign words
- Punctuation – eg. full stop at end of every sentence; all sentences start with capital; all open brackets have closing bracket; all opening speechmarks have closing speechmarks.
- References: check for consistency in use (or not) of italics for titles in references; and in use (or not) of capitals for titles; check that a consistent style is followed throughout.
- Abbreviations – check that these are spelt out in full the first time they are used with the abbreviation put in brackets following. Subsequently, the abbreviation only should be used.
- Lists of abbreviations – check for accuracy and consistency
- Lists of figures, tables, maps –check accuracy of titles and page numbering

Further resources:
- You can find a number of useful resources through the CDU Library. Try doing a search in the library catalog using keyword or subject like 'thesis writing', 'editing', 'copy editing', 'proof reading'.
- Similarly, many university websites post useful resources on this topic. To get a list of Australian universities, try searching 'list of Australian universities'; then try searching within some of the university websites for, eg. 'thesis editing'. For example, some

universities provide templates for laying out a thesis using MS Word.
- Style manuals – Find out what is the relevant one for your discipline and get familiar with it. Some examples:
    o AGPS: <u>Style manual: for authors, editors and printers</u> (paperback) ISBN 0 7016 3648 3
    o Chicago and MLA, APA, etc – more information on these is available on the web

A note on editing of theses by third parties
CDU has guidelines relating to the editing of theses by third parties. Editing by third parties is limited to proof-reading only, as outlined in the DDOGS document 'The Editing of Research Theses by Professional Editors', ie.:

1. The detecting and correcting of the presentation of the text to conform with standard usage and conventions (eg. Spelling, quotations, italics, lists, word usage, punctuation, graphs, charts, citations, references, heading hierarchies, symbols and equations, headers and footers, style of numbers) as noted in Standard E.

2. The identification and provision of advice, with corrections as exemplars only, in matters of language structure (the need to restructure and reword, including deletions and additions); the conventions of grammar and syntax; use of clear language; logical connections between phrases, clauses, sentences, paragraphs, and sections; voice and tone; and how to avoid ambiguity, repetition and verbosity, as noted in Standard D.

3. Recommended changes to the draft document should be on paper copy and not electronic. This is because it is too easy for the candidate to 'accept' a reader's suggested changes without due consideration.