



Guidelines for Editorial Support

McMaster University is dedicated to encouraging and facilitating the pursuit of knowledge and scholarship. In service of this mission, the following guidelines clarify forms of 3rd party editing (writing advising) that are acceptable for students to use.

When support is supplied by a third party (such as family, friends, and/or paid editors) these individuals are referred to as “Writing Advisors”.

Contact Information

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**Student Success Centre
(Writing Support)**
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BRIGHTER WORLD

When seeking assistance in the preparation of course deliverables, you must limit interventions as indicated below.

- **A checkmark (✓)** indicates an allowable intervention. These activities do not undermine your autonomy as an author.
- Interventions marked with an asterisk (*) are provided by the The Writing Centre. Students may book up to 10 appointments per semester with Writing Advisors working at the The Writing Centre.

Errors in Grammar, Idiom, Punctuation, and Spelling

- ✓ Flag or highlight errors for the student to correct themselves*
- ✓ Use queries and notes to raise student consciousness of the intended vs communicated meaning (ie: Do you mean to say _____?; Please check _____ in the dictionary; Please clarify this sentence.)*
- ✓ Teach a grammatical form and ask the student to correct the work themselves.*

Errors in Flow, Organization, Thesis and Topic Sentence Creation

- ✓ Use queries to clarify the student's intentions for the overall work and ask that they alter the paper to reflect their intended message.*
- ✓ Raise student awareness of logical inconsistencies through the use of instructional tasks. (Instructional tasks require the student to isolate features in the work to bring issues to the surface to independently diagnose and correct problems.)*
- ✓ Flag paragraphs that lack topic sentences*
- ✓ Flag paragraphs that include more than one idea*
- ✓ Flag papers that lack thesis statements*

Citation Management

- ✓ Flag citation errors*
- ✓ Teach citation formatting so that the student can make corrections themselves.*

Below is a list of unacceptable uses of writing support. An X (✗) indicates an intervention that is **not allowable**. These activities result in co-authorship. The Writing Advisor must be indicated as a co-author if they perform these activities. This is not meant to be an exhaustive list.

- ✗ Re-write sentences to reflect a clearer message.
- ✗ Correct grammatical errors for the student
- ✗ Correct spelling errors for the student
- ✗ Correct punctuation for the student
- ✗ Re-organize paragraphs to improve flow
- ✗ Write thesis statements for the student or tell the student what the thesis statement should be.
- ✗ Write topic sentences or tell the student what the topic sentence should be.
- ✗ Correct citation errors for the student

Resources

The Writing Centre <https://studentsuccess.mcmaster.ca/academicskills/writing-support/>
Office of Academic Integrity www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity/