

Using Editing Services of Outside Parties and Commercial Companies

Instances of using the editing services of outside parties and commercial companies by LUC students for the output that is part of their studies at LUC can be judged as constituting a breach of academic integrity. The Board of Examiners strongly discourages LUC students from pursuing such practices, and LUC student organizations, from facilitating their members' use of such services provided by outside parties and commercial companies.

1. *Any submitted piece of coursework at LUC should be the original work of the student(s) submitting it.* The person identified as the author of the written piece of work submitted should be its only author (or, if it's a joint paper with another student, its only authors). A student is free to consult fellow students when working on an individual assignment. The final product handed in, however, should be the result of the student's own intellectual labour. If a student uses the services of a commercial company to have his/her draft piece of coursework edited, including through correction, restructuring or rewriting, this means that there is no longer just one writer of the text in question. Beyond the student, an employee of the company has substantially contributed to giving the text its structure and shape. Even so, the student would still submit the work in his/her own name only, as if he/she were its only writer or author.
2. *A central purpose of the LUC programme is to train students in academic writing.* The College provides ample opportunities for such training, through compulsory courses, opportunities offered by the Brill-Nijhoff Writing Centre (BNWC) and generally class sizes and course durations that allow for considerable formative feedback along the way. A central logic of giving this priority is that we believe it will be useful for students to acquire good writing and argumentation skills as a platform for their onward studies and career. Editing one's own draft texts for the purposes of greater clarity and analytical rigour is an essential part of developing such skills. If such editing is 'outsourced', students will miss the opportunity to improve their own skills. A possible result is that, if such coursework is assessed based on the belief that this is the student's own work only, the student will be assessed more favourably than what his/her own individual work otherwise would. As a result, the grade level of a given student will not accurately reflect his or her own capabilities. This jeopardizes the quality of education that LUC provides and the student receives.
3. *Allowing students to access and use commercial editing services risks creating an unequal playing field at LUC.* Those students who can afford to pay the price for these services stand the chance of using them and, thus, without extra effort, getting higher grades; while those who cannot afford to pay will not have the same opportunity. This compromises our common aims of promoting inclusion at LUC, including equal opportunities for students from different socio-economic backgrounds.
4. *Students should be aware that they alone remain fully accountable for the papers they submit.* For instance, if an editing company or 'ghost writer' were to include materials in a student's paper which are not properly referenced, the student would be fully liable for plagiarism charges and their the consequences, including failing a course and expulsion from LUC. The fact that plagiarism is the result not of the student's own doing but of enlisting the services of third parties is not a mitigating factor. To the contrary, the Board of Examiners will consider this an aggravating factor in dealing with the case.