Your Editing Profile

Everybody needs to edit their work. But *how* you edit, and how much time you need to set aside for it, varies from writer to writer. Use the following guide to help you identify how best to approach editing and what features you may need to focus on when revising your work.

Making use of feedback

Feedback can help you develop self-criticality: the ability to evaluate your work from the reader or markers' perspective so that you can align it to the assessment criteria. It can help raise your awareness of the particular areas you need to focus on. Indeed, editing is quicker and easier if you know what you're looking for. So, review your feedback and consider:

- The three stages of editing: structure, criticality and style
- Does you feedback indicate that you may need to focus on all three of these stages equally, or one more than the others?
- Think about the specific feedback you get for each of these three areas to narrow down exactly what you need to address. For instance, when it comes to structure, is it signposting you need to pay attention to? And or paragraphing, linking between paragraphs, checking the relevance of your material? In terms of style, is it overly long sentences or informal language you need to watch out for? And or formatting, clarity, conciseness, using the appropriate terminology? Regarding criticality, do you need to focus on signalling your critical stance on the literature you're citing, and/or unpacking points sufficiently?

Once you've reviewed your feedback in this way, you can produce a checklist that helps you streamline the editing process. This strategic, focused approach can be especially useful if you have limited time to edit your work ahead of the deadline.

Example Editing Checklist

Structure: check links between paragraphs. Am I linking them together logically to create 'flow'?

Criticality: am I developing my points enough? Is my own stance obvious in the Literature Review?

Style: check comma use. Am I overusing 'however'?!

What type of writer are you?

There are many different approaches to writing. It's a case of experimenting with the strategies that best help you get words on the page. And when it comes to writing a dissertation, not every

chapter may have been written in the same way. It's important to recognise that the way you write can impact on the kind of editing you need to do and, indeed, on how much editing you need to do. Use the questions below to help you get a sense of what type of writer you are, and therefore what type of editor you may need to be.

Do you jump right in without plan and write to work out what you want to say?

This can be a great way of getting started and generating some content. You'll probably be able to produce a rough draft fairly quickly so may spend less time drafting than other writers. However, this rough draft will probably require extensive revisions. You'll thus need to devote more time to editing, with structure, criticality and style all needing development.

Before you start writing, do you spend a lot of time reading, making notes and/or very detailed plans, and thinking about what you're going to say?

It may take you a bit longer to produce a draft than the writers who just dive in. Because you spend a lot of time refining your ideas and planning your work, you may be able to produce a more polished draft that needs less editing. However, since you've done so much reading and planning, you may have been unable to fit it all the material you initially intended to. You may wish to spend some time editing for both structure and criticality: ensuring all your points are essential to the argument you want to make and that you have left yourself sufficient space to develop these points fully.

Do you spend a lot of time crafting individual sentences or searching for the 'right' word when you're drafting?

It may take you a while to produce a draft; however, this draft may be very 'polished' in terms of style so you may spend less time editing for this at the end. Something to watch out for with this approach, though, is that you don't run out of time to edit for structure and criticality at the end. If you're concerned that this could happen, perhaps focus on producing a rougher initial draft and factor in time to edit for style later.

Do you tend to create a full outline – overall structure, sub-headings/individual content, bullet points for each section/paragraph – before you write?

You may need to spend less time editing for structure if you've planned it out so thoroughly before you began writing. Criticality and style may be where you need to devote your time. In terms of the former, you may need to watch out for the transitions between paragraphs to ensure your writing flows, isn't overly abrupt, and doesn't read like a disjointed list of points. In terms of the latter, keep an eye out for descriptive writing (this typically answers 'what?' 'when?' and 'who?' questions as opposed to 'why?' 'how?' and 'so what?!' questions).

Do you separate a larger piece of writing into smaller chunks then write each one up individually, not always in a linear way?

Breaking an assignment, particularly a longer one, into smaller, more manageable chunks can be an effective way of making it seem less daunting. This technique can help prevent procrastination, too: if you're not sure what to write in the introduction, but you feel you could easily write the third paragraph or the conclusion, you can just start there. Just bear in mind that, with this approach, you may need to focus particularly on editing for structure – fitting all the individual 'pieces' together in a logical order and adding signposting to make sure the writing flows.