SfEP syllabus for the basic editorial test

Contents

Introduction

The SfEP basic editorial test covers: 1. Professional practice, 2. Editorial knowledge and judgement.

The tests are based on typical practice in UK publishing and the sources listed in Section 3. The SfEP basic editorial test be used by various editorial professionals, including project managers, production editors, commissioning editors, sub-editors and other journalists, typesetters, designers, trainers and indexers, as well as proofreaders and copy-editors, in their applications to upgrade their membership grades.

The basic editorial test is meant to assess editorial professionals in following typical UK practice using UK English, and requires only very limited knowledge of other language and practice. Someone who has successfully completed the SfEP's Introduction to Proofreading and Proofreading Progress and gained 1,500 hours' experience dealing with a range of different editorial matter may be expected to have reached the threshold for passing the basic test.

Where examples are given, these are not exhaustive, but the relevant test questions will be based mainly on examples similar to those in the current SfEP editorial syllabus.

Section 1 – Professional practice

Everyone in the SfEP has agreed to abide by the Code of Practice and should know what it says. This section of the syllabus addresses the professional practice of suppliers or employees, clients or managers, editors, proofreaders and project managers, with basic awareness of the professional practice of typesetters/designers, indexers, translators and permissions specialists.

Members of the SfEP must be able to demonstrate that they:

	Description	*Examples*
1.1	are aware of and take seriously their responsibilities	• to client, author, reader • to the SfEP • to self
1.2	understand business management and follow good practice	• terms & conditions • formal and informal contracts • payment • record-keeping
1.3	understand publishing workflow and production	who does what, when and how
1.4	know how to collaborate	good practice in communication, consideration for others and responsibility in meeting requirements
1.5	communicate well	• responding promptly • raising queries or problems as soon as they become obvious, taking care to communicate politely in a sufficiently clear, detailed, comprehensive and timely way, avoiding errors in grammar, spelling and punctuation
1.6	keep records	of matters agreed, documents handled, work done, decisions taken, queries, income, allowable expenses and tax liabilities, bank accounts, hardware and software details
1.7	can manage their time successfully	understand and respect schedules and budgets, and be aware of how these interact
1.8	understand the basics of file or document management	• be aware of and apply good practice in naming and versions • be able to save in rtf/doc/docx and similar formats • can work in tracked changes
1.9	protect their (and their clients') files against loss, corruption or confusion	• saving versions of files • saving in multiple locations

		• regularly defragmenting and decluttering disk space • running adequate anti-virus software
1.10	are aware of basic legal questions that are likely to arise	copyright, moral rights, plagiarism, libel, acknowledgements
1.11	understand and can apply mark-up	BS5261, Word/PDF comments, PDF tools
1.12	understand and can apply editorial standards in context and know how to deal with any perceived errors, omissions and other problems	is matter clear, concise, consistent, correct, coherent, complete and credible? Correct means honest and accurate, which includes spelling, grammar and punctuation
1.13	understand the possible extent of a proofreader's remit	follow instructions, apply editorial standards and good practice, in context and using judgement, raise appropriate queries, and deal with redundancy, omission, errors and inconsistencies, all within the limits of schedule and budget
1.14	can explain the nature, extent and limitations of proof-editing	
1.15	understand the possible extent of a copy-editor's remit	be aware of their role and possible remit
1.16	are aware of the typical contents of an editorial brief	what can be expected and what could be included, for proofreader or copy-editor
1.17	are aware of the typical elements of a house style and can extend or create a systematic style sheet for a specific job	what can be expected and what is usually essential: numbers, ise/ize, use of capitals, italics and hyphens, preferred forms, reference lists, what could be included

Section 2 – Editorial knowledge and judgement

Membership of the SfEP implies a claim to the basic knowledge needed in UK publishing and good editorial judgement. This section of the syllabus addresses the editorial knowledge and judgement needed by all editorial professionals: proofreaders, project managers, production editors, commissioning editors, trainers, indexers, journalists, typesetters, designers and copy-editors.

Basic members of SfEP need to have basic knowledge of the symbols, terminology and practice that they may meet, and awareness of variations, in:

	Description	*Examples*
2.1	types of published material	prelims, headings, running/body text, lists, quoted matter, links, URLs, tables, flowcharts, artwork/images, captions, endnotes, bibliographies, appendices
2.2	types of content	general non-fiction, fiction, guides, manuals, websites, reports, public information, art, music
2.3	house styles	• typical styles/variations: numerals from 10, 11, 21, 100; elision in number spans/ranges; measurements; units; single/double quotes; first-line indent or line space; -ise/-ize; , e.g.,/ e.g.,/eg; set-up/setup; how much punctuation • be able to understand coding (Word styles, A,AA,B/H1,H2/<Ahd> … </Ahd>, EX, LIST, etc.) and cues (<Fig. 1 here>, <Table 2 near here>) • be able to follow a given style and brief, and to create a style sheet if necessary
2.4	citations and references	• be able to recognise Harvard, Vancouver and short-title systems • be aware of typical styles/variations (data required, ordering/punctuation of data, elision, capitalisation) • know the difference between citation (details of a source or authority) and quotation (wording taken from a source or authority) • understand how to treat quotations
2.5	terminology	know the meaning and significance of: • extent, prelims, running head • note indicator/note cue/note marker

		• quotation marks/quotes/inverted commas • extract/displayed quotation • ellipsis • solidus/oblique/forward slash • keyed, rekeyed • font and typeface • min. caps • recto and verso • caret • rule • *stet* • stub head • mm, in. (inch) and pt (point) • plain English • sentence case and title case
2.6	layout terminology	know the meaning and application of: • indent(ion) • hard/soft return • turnover line • headword • run on • tab • subscript/inferior and superscript/superior • justification, align/range • portrait, landscape • on the baseline, • typesetting/layout/design, pagination
2.7	image terminology	know meaning and significance of: figure, diagram, map/plan, caption, resolution, graph
2.8	electronic terminology	know the meaning of: hardware, software/program, macro, memory stick
2.9	electronic equipment	be aware of: • operating systems (Windows PC/Mac/Linux) • software (MS Office, Adobe Acrobat, anti-virus, browsers, email) • housekeeping (anti-virus scan, updates, temp files, disk clean-up, defragment) • file formats – doc/docx, rtf, pdf, xls, jpg, html, zip • file size

		be able to work in word-processing software (tracked changes)
2.10	typefaces	be aware of reasons to use Arial, Times New Roman, Courier or other typefaces, sans serif, distinction between typeface and font/fount (*pronounced* 'font')
2.11	numeracy	be able to check arithmetic totals, calculate average/area/percentage
2.12	abbreviations	• be aware of short forms being spelt out at first mention • be aware how to treat all-caps, acronyms, units, contractions • understand rom., ital., t.o., t.b., n.p., #, ff., etc., i.e., e.g., MS, TS, u/c, l/c, p./pp., l./ll., i.c.l.c., ibid., fig./figs, ch., URL, WP, OS
2.13	understand, use and name symbols	& © °× ÷ + − * † ‡ # %
2.14	usual practice	• min. caps or caps on all significant words • ise/ize • numbers in words/at start of sentence • single/double quotes • serial comma • elision/reduction in no. spans/ranges • hyphenation and adverbs • use of small capitals • limited use of upper case/italics/bold • use of hyphens, en/em rules and parenthetical dashes • orphans/widows • between … and/from … to (not from + en-rule) • paragraphing (indent/line space) in print, smaller type for notes/extracts, simple tables
2.15	understand and use spacing	• leading (*pronounced* 'ledding') • indention • non-breaking space/hyphen
2.16	understand and use punctuation correctly	? ! ' ' " " – . , … : ; - – — () [] / apostrophes
2.17	languages	• know and order Roman alphabet, recognise other characters (omega/lambda/delta)

		• handle diacritics/accents (acute, grave, circumflex, cedilla, tilde, stroke, umlaut • be aware of alternative transcriptions (al-Qaida, Mao Tse-tung, Kirghiz, Mumbai) • know very common foreign-language terms/names (*département*, Land, *Schadenfreude*, *piazza*, Don Quixote, *mañana*)
2.18	general knowledge	• recognise common SI units (A, Hz, kg, l, m, s, V, W) and elements (C, Cl, Cu, Fe, H, N, Na, O, S) • know significance of CO_2, DNA, NATO, carbon footprint • recognise UK culture, terms and names (counties, towns, rivers, Fleet St, Canary Wharf, fish & chips, corner shop, mobile, phone hacking, tube/underground, ISA, NHS, GP, National Trust, the Old Bailey, Whitehall, SATs, Boots, M&S, W.H. Smith, Tesco, Crick and Watson, Oxbridge, iPad, UK/Britain/England) • place and spell countries (Iran/Iraq, Slovenia/Slovakia, Libya/Liberia) • be aware of controversy (creationism, homoeopathy, democratic deficit) • spot large errors of scale (a man weighs 7 kg, a town 6mm away)
2.19	recognise and spell well-known names	• famous names: Barack Obama, Hans Christian Andersen, Peter Mandelson, Nigel Farage • match pairs: Newton + gravity, Sherlock Holmes + Conan Doyle, Baird + television, Stephenson + railway, Dr Zhivago + Pasternak, Einstein + relativity, Fleming + Bond, Gutenberg + printing, Wooster + Wodehouse, Armstrong + moon
2.20	reference sources	• use online sources with discrimination • be aware of the content in *Hart's*, *ODWE*, *Butcher*, *Fowler*, BS5261, dictionaries, spelling dictionaries, SfEPLine
2.21	judgement of sense	• does content appear correct? appropriate for context?

		• if doubtful: flag, query or change? • is your change justified and appropriate? • correct any confusable vocabulary
2.22	judgement of voice	• respect author's voice, but is it suited to the content and the target/likely audience? Is it appropriate for context? • making changes in keeping with context
2.23	judging conciseness	• eliminating redundancy/repetition • if space is limited or layout is fixed, can you fit any change into the available space without causing a new problem?
2.24	judging author queries	• when, what and how to query • how many queries are appropriate • judging client queries (remit, style, problems): how many, when and how to ask • judging how and when to use online resources and which are to be trusted • formulating clear, concise, useful questions

Section 3 – Sources

SfEP editorial tests are based on typical practice in UK publishing and on the documents listed below, listed in order of importance, along with this syllabus and typical practice in UK publishing. To pass the basic test, it is not necessary to have studied all the sources listed nor any one of them in its entirety. For example, everyone in SfEP should be familiar with the code of practice but they need know only the parts that are relevant to them.

These sources are addressed mainly to proofreaders and copy-editors, but the SfEP basic editorial test represents the knowledge and practice that all members of the SfEP should know or be aware of, and it is a standard that can be applied to all editorial professionals.

	Description
3.1	*Ensuring editorial excellence*, the SfEP Code of Practice
3.2	BS5261:2005
3.3	*New Hart's Rules* (latest edn)
3.4	*Butcher's Copy-editing*, 4th edn
3.5	SfEP courses: Proofreading 1 and 2
3.6	Burchfield, *Fowler's Modern English Usage* (latest edn)
3.7	*New Oxford Dictionary for Writers and Editors* (latest edn)
3.8	Top tips for editorial professionals: https://www.sfep.org.uk/resources/top-tips/
3.9	National Occupational Standards PUB 19 and 20: https://www.ukstandards.org.uk/PublishedNos-old/SKSPUB19.pdf#search=SKSpub19 https://www.ukstandards.org.uk/PublishedNos-old/SKSPUB20.pdf#search=SKSpub20