

Ensuring editorial excellence: The SfEP Code of Practice

The SfEP's Code of Practice (CoP), *Ensuring editorial excellence*, is a valuable resource for editorial workers – editors, proofreaders and project managers, whether working freelance or in-house – and their clients and employers. Its purpose is to establish standards of best practice for SfEP members and help them maintain them and to encourage good professional relationships.

Good communication between client/employer and freelance/employee is essential. Clear briefing and the agreement of terms are vital if high standards are to be maintained by both parties, and unsurprisingly they're emphasised by the CoP.

In addition, the CoP includes guidance on: the professional behaviour of both freelance/employee and client/employer; standards for proofreading, editing and project management; and information on web editing, electronic file handling, email etiquette, confidentiality and computer security.

The CoP is endorsed by the [SfEP Council](#). Although it isn't a legal document, it's considered binding on members and corporate subscribers.

Ensuring editorial excellence: The SfEP Code of Practice consists of seven sections:

- [Section 1](#) – Introduction
- [Section 2](#) – Definitions
- [Section 3](#) – Professional practice of the supplier or employee
- [Section 4](#) – Professional practice of the client or manager
- [Section 5](#) – Standards of editing and proofreading
- [Section 6](#) – Standards of editorial project management
- [Section 7](#) – Further advice and information.

1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the Code of Practice

The purpose of this code is to establish and maintain standards of best practice for members of the Society for Editors and Proofreaders (SfEP).

1.2 The need for the code

A member of the SfEP may at different times act as a client or manager, commissioning services from self-employed or employed editors; or as a supplier of services to such a client or employer, often a publisher, whether in the mainstream publishing industry or other business.

This code sets out standards of best practice both in the execution of the editorial processes and in the operation of a professional business. To achieve best results, both client and supplier should make explicit their expectations and agree on how they are to be fulfilled. This document aims to codify the best practice of both parties and suggest ways in which that may be implemented.

The code therefore describes both the overall practice of publishing and the particular content of the work undertaken, in the following sections:

- 3 [Professional practice of the supplier or employee](#)
- 4 [Professional practice of the client or manager](#)
- 5 [Standards of editing and of proofreading](#)
- 6 [Standards of editorial project management](#).

1.3 The status of the code

This code is endorsed by the SfEP Council and is representative of the views of the Society.

The attention of members is drawn to clause 6 of the Articles of Association which reads: '... By completing the online form for membership (or... signing [a paper] form), the new Member agrees to be bound by the by-laws, rules and regulations and the Codes of Practice of the Society ...' All members of the Society are therefore expected to adhere to the Code of Practice to the best of their ability (see [3.3.6c](#)).

2 Definitions

2.1 Professional roles

2.1.1 'members' This term includes all Advanced Professional Members, Professional Members, Intermediate Members, Entry-Level Members and Corporate Subscribers of the Society, but excludes Friends of the Society.

2.1.2 'supplier' This term includes any member of the Society, or other editor or proofreader, who may be contracted as a supplier of editorial services.

2.1.3 'client' This term is used to define any member of the Society or other publisher or client, whether in the mainstream publishing industry or other business or not-for-profit organisation, who commissions editorial services and who is responsible for the published product. It also includes students needing help with theses and authors wanting an eye cast over a manuscript before the publishing process.

2.1.4 References in this code to the relationship between supplier and client are also intended to include, where applicable, the relationship between an employed editor or proofreader and his or her manager or employer.

2.2 Types of work

2.2.1 'editing' In this code, 'editing' embraces copy-editing, proofreading and editorial project management. It is used as a general term for the range of work undertaken by members, in the context of printed or electronic publication.

To avoid confusion, the term '**copy-editing**' is reserved for the specific task of preparing a text for publication, including stylistic, structural, intrusive and substantive editing where applicable (see [5.1.3](#)).

2.2.2 'proofreading' This term is used in this code to define a process of identifying typographical, linguistic, coding or positional errors and omissions on a printed or electronic proof, and marking corrections.

2.2.3 'editorial project management' This term is used in this code to describe the carrying out or overseeing of all agreed editorial aspects of a publishing project, which can be from a stage before submission of a manuscript, but not including commissioning, to the final checking stage before submitting the work to a printer or electronic publisher. It will usually include contact with the author(s) and may include responsibility for briefing others.

3 Professional practice of the supplier or employee

3.1 Professional standards

3.1.1 Members should in all working relationships endeavour to maintain standards of work and conduct consistent with their professional status and should not act in such a way as to bring their profession or the Society into disrepute.

3.1.2 Continuing professional development (CPD) Members should make every reasonable effort to maintain, improve and update their skills and knowledge, especially where new technology creates changes in publishing practice. This could include reading trade journals and reference works, requesting feedback from clients, seeking advice from colleagues or attending training courses and conferences.

3.1.3 Legal issues Members should be familiar with the main provisions of the current relevant legislation relating to libel, obscenity, blasphemy, incitement to racial hatred, plagiarism and the reproduction of copyright material belonging to third parties. They should endeavour to ensure that these provisions are adhered to and bring any suspected infringement to the attention of the client.

3.1.4 Self-promotion Suppliers should give a true and fair representation of their qualifications, experience and skills when advertising or describing their services.

3.1.5 Competence Suppliers should not accept any job that they believe they cannot carry out to an acceptable standard, for whatever reason. Such reasons could include:

- a** the client allows inadequate time or remuneration for the amount of work required to complete the job to an acceptable standard
- b** the supplier has insufficient time available to accommodate the amount of work required
- c** the supplier has inadequate skills or knowledge for the type of work involved (although a supplier may accept such work on a 'trainee' basis, with the explicit agreement of the client).

If a supplier accepts a job in good faith but subsequently discovers that he or she cannot carry it out to an acceptable standard, the client should be informed as early as possible, and the supplier should be prepared to negotiate a settlement.

3.1.6 Responsibility to clients Suppliers are accountable for their services: they are responsible for making the best use of the time available for a job and expediting its completion to the required standard within the client's specified schedule, whenever possible.

3.1.7 Presentation of work Suppliers should present their work in a professional manner consistent either with normal trade practice or with a convention agreed with the client. Correspondence, additional text, lists of queries, cover sheets, illustration lists, invoices, etc. should be typed or word-processed; any handwritten notes or corrections should be neat and legible.

3.1.8 Management of electronic files Original documents are usually supplied in electronic form, by email, on disk (CD or DVD) or via a memory stick.

- a** Files supplied by a client should be virus-checked on receipt. Edited/proofread files should be virus-checked again before being sent on.
- b** The client's original files should not be overwritten, but copied and renamed before editing. A protocol should be agreed with the client or designer for the naming of electronic files.

c All disks should be clearly labelled and dated so that they are easily identifiable.

d It is recommended that copies of completed work sent to the client should be retained in electronic format by the supplier for at least six months after the publication date of the work.

3.1.9 Original material and records It is the responsibility of the client to insure against loss of original material by keeping copies, etc. However, suppliers should take all reasonable precautions to ensure the safe keeping of documents and original material belonging to or held on behalf of clients and, where indicated, should use the method of dispatch suggested by the client. They should keep copies of query lists and important correspondence with third parties, including email and records of phone conversations, for at least six months after publication, and should make these available to the client on request.

3.1.10 Communication While a job is in progress, suppliers should keep clients informed of their availability, by email or telephone, giving alternative access numbers where appropriate. Urgent communications should be made by telephone, to avoid the risk that email will remain unanswered.

3.1.11 Email

a Members who advertise an email address should collect their email regularly and respond to it promptly.

b Although it may be informal in style, email should be written using correct grammar, spelling and punctuation.

c Email should be copied to the relevant people, where appropriate.

d Members should be aware of email etiquette – for example:

- when replying to a message, trim any unnecessary material
- use plain text in preference to html
- do not send unsolicited attachments without first checking with the intended recipient
- identify or describe the content and nature of the attachment in the text of the email.

e When participating in forums or email discussion groups, members should maintain appropriate standards and abide by the rules of the discussion group.

3.1.12 Subcontracting Suppliers should not subcontract work to others without the knowledge and consent of the client. When subcontracting work, suppliers should satisfy themselves that the subcontractor is competent and reliable. Suppliers remain responsible for the terms they agree with the client and for the quality of work supplied to the client.

3.1.13 Independence Self-employed members must take full responsibility for the running of their businesses and for their obligations to Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC, formerly Inland Revenue) and other official bodies. They should make their self-employed or limited company status known to clients.

3.1.14 Working environment Members should seek to ensure that they have an environment in which they can work efficiently and with appropriate concentration, and that they have access to the necessary equipment (including both computer hardware and software) and reference material for the type of work undertaken. Members should also make themselves aware of the health and safety legislation that applies to their working environment, and office equipment should be chosen and arranged with long-term health and safety in mind.

3.2 Working agreements and fees

3.2.1 Agreement of terms In their own interests, suppliers should ensure that the terms on which they accept a job are clearly defined at the outset, either by the supplier or by the client, and agreed between the parties, preferably in writing. Any terms and conditions beyond those which ordinarily apply should also be agreed at the outset.

Any agreement should include:

- a** the date(s) for delivery of the job, or instalments thereof, to the supplier
- b** the date(s) for delivery of the completed job, or instalments thereof, to the client
- c** an estimate of the work required, including due allowance for time spent assimilating the brief, preparing handover notes and correspondence, as agreed
- d** the proposed fee for the job, or alternatively the rate per hour or page or per 1000 words and, where possible, an estimate of the total
- e** which expenses (e.g. postage, paper, copying, travel) are to be borne by the client and, where possible, an estimate of their amount
- f** any special dispatch requirements for material belonging to or held on behalf of the client by the supplier
- g** the payment period from invoice date and any arrangement for payment by instalments
- h** whether or not the copy-editor's or proofreader's work will be credited and a complimentary copy of the published work is to be provided.

3.2.2 Progress reports It is the supplier's responsibility to keep the client informed of progress as appropriate.

3.2.3 Changes in circumstances The supplier should make every reasonable endeavour to adhere to the agreed budget and schedule for a job. Whenever circumstances arise that make it fair and reasonable that the agreed terms be renegotiated – e.g. where the work received is not of the standard, length or complexity envisaged – the supplier should inform the client at the earliest opportunity to agree on a strategy for completing and recosting the work.

3.3 Working relationships with clients, authors and colleagues

Members should be aware of their responsibilities with respect to personal data under the Data Protection Act 1998 and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

3.3.1 General attitude In all working relationships, members should treat their professional colleagues with due consideration and respect, and should co-operate with them to the best of their ability.

3.3.2 Relations with clients

a Communication In all dealings with clients, suppliers should recognise that they bear equal responsibility with the client for effective communication and for the successful completion of any job undertaken. Suppliers should be pro-active in raising with the client or others matters that require attention.

b Briefing (see [4.1.2](#)) Suppliers should endeavour to obtain a clear and adequate brief for any job undertaken. The brief should set out the tasks to be carried out and the limits of the

supplier's responsibility. While the onus rests on the client to supply essential information, suppliers should seek clarification of any points not covered by the brief.

3.3.3 Relations with clients' authors It is in the interest of both suppliers and clients for the supplier to build up satisfactory and mutually respectful working relationships with authors on whose texts they are working, and to respect their sensitivities. Suppliers should recognise authors' rights, including moral rights, and should use their best endeavours to avoid overstepping reasonable levels of editorial intervention within the context of the level of edit agreed with the client (see [5.1.3](#)).

The supplier has the right to expect the client to have agreed with the author the terms of the brief, the level of copy-editing required and the schedule requirements, and to expect the client's reasonable support in relations with the author and others in the publishing process, particularly in the event of any dispute.

3.3.4 Relations with subcontractors Members who subcontract work to others thereby place themselves in the role of client in relation to these subcontractors and are under an obligation to fulfil the requirements of [section 4](#) of this code.

3.3.5 Relations with third parties Members should make every effort to maintain good relations with other professional colleagues, such as designers, web developers, picture researchers, typesetters and printers.

3.3.6 Relations with the Society and its members

a *General attitude* Members should endeavour to uphold and promote the objectives of the Society as set out in its [Memorandum of Association](#) (113KB PDF). Members should feel able to call on colleagues for advice and information and should be prepared to reciprocate.

b *Use of the Society's name* Members are encouraged to make their membership of the Society known to clients and colleagues. Members should always use their full grade name when referring to their membership of the Society in communication with clients. For example, an Intermediate member may use the words 'Intermediate Member of the Society for Editors and Proofreaders' on their stationery, website etc. Misleading descriptions such as 'Member of the Society for Editors and Proofreaders' and abbreviations such as 'MSfEP' or 'PMSfEP' are not permitted. A special Society logo is available for use by Intermediate, Professional, Advanced Professional, accredited and registered members.

The [Society's ordinary logo](#) is available to members for use as a graphic on CVs, on Facebook and in similar ways. It is available in different sizes from the SfEP office. The Council reserve the right to ask for samples of the logo's use or for it to be removed if in their opinion it is being used inappropriately.

c Members are reminded of the provision in the Articles that, if in the opinion of the Council any member seriously misrepresents the Society or brings it into disrepute, his or her membership may be withdrawn. Serious breach of this Code of Practice, for example, could be regarded as grounds for withdrawal of membership.

3.4 Confidentiality

3.4.1 Relating to members Members should respect the confidence of colleagues and refrain from discussing them by name with third parties (except with permission – e.g. if asked to provide a reference).

3.4.2 Relating to clients In the course of dealings with clients, members may be privy to confidential information and have access to sensitive and/or unpublished material, whether

contained in a text or in discussions and correspondence. Members should at all times respect these confidences and in no circumstances disclose any such information to a third party without the express authorisation of the client. In all dealings with third parties, members should bear in mind that a supplier, in fulfilling his or her editorial obligation, is acting as the client's representative.

3.4.3 Relating to clients' authors Members should respect the confidence of the author and refrain from discussing individual authors by name, except with the client, before publication of the material.

3.4.4 Relating to documents Members should take all reasonable precautions to ensure the safe keeping and subsequent disposal or return of confidential documents, either on paper or in electronic format, including copies.

4 Professional practice of the client or manager

This section covers the process by which editorial work is placed by a client or manager.

4.1 Briefing and handover

4.1.1 Initial contact The client should provide an accurate initial description of the job to be placed, followed by a clear and comprehensive brief. The brief may be written or spoken, although a written brief is preferable. Where no written brief is forthcoming, suppliers are advised to confirm their understanding of the brief in writing. Clients should recognise that suppliers reserve the right not to accept work.

4.1.2 Nature of the work The brief should set out:

- the nature of the projected work
- the extent of contact between supplier and author or other contributors
- the name of the in-house contact.

A copy of the client's house style (where applicable) should also be supplied. The brief should also include the following details:

a The level of edit to be carried out (see [5.1.3](#)) and the scope and nature of the work to be performed on the document (e.g. resolution of ambiguities, illogicalities and anomalies of style; editorial changes to take account of contractually specified length).

b Any specific requests from the author and any comments from expert readers (e.g. attention to language level).

c Style and design to be followed (e.g. for consistency with related house works and series or pages elsewhere on a website), including electronic codes, tags or styles to use if appropriate. *Note:* Copy-editors expect to mark up for an educated native speaker of the language in which they are working, so if this is not the case it is important to make this clear at brief stage.

d Style to be used for specific parts of the work as applicable (e.g. captions, tables, mathematics, references, appendices, glossaries, links).

e Instructions for the presentation and listing of illustrations (photographs or half-tones, maps, diagrams, other artwork) and multimedia (animations, audio files, video files, interactive elements), and for the presentation of briefs for these, including labels on electronic files.

f Instructions for listing items needing permissions and acknowledgements, and for handling these.

g A list of any undelivered material (e.g. preface or foreword).

4.1.3 Schedule The client should specify the schedule for the job, allowing sufficient time for the requirements of the brief to be carried out. The schedule should take into account any undelivered material and include an expected delivery date for this material.

4.1.4 Market requirements The brief should give details of the intended market and readership, any projected foreign editions and any related house works, series, electronic media or websites.

4.1.5 Presentation of the manuscript The client should provide a complete manuscript. If the supplier is to work on hard copy, the client should provide a clean print-out using double spacing and appropriate margins. Any electronic files supplied should correspond to the hard copy. *Note:* The presentation of work in the form of a high-quality typescript or print-out does not necessarily imply a high-quality product.

4.1.6 Security The client should ensure that all electronic files supplied have been virus-checked. In addition, as a further precaution, the recipient should virus-check the electronic files.

4.2 Working agreements and fees

4.2.1 Agreement of terms The client should set out clearly the terms agreed (see [3.2.1](#)).

4.2.2 Negotiation and estimates The client should endeavour to give accurate estimates of the level or type of work and amount of work involved; it is helpful if the client indicates how such estimates are arrived at. The supplier has the right to negotiate staged payment or fee (or part-fee) in advance if appropriate and to have included in the fee an allowance for reasonable time spent assimilating the brief, writing up hand-over notes, attending meetings and so on.

4.2.3 Changes in circumstances The client should inform the supplier of any changes to schedules and may negotiate further (in terms of budgets or schedules) in the light of material changes in the circumstances of the job.

4.2.4 Prompt payment The supplier shall expect to receive payment within a specified time, agreed in advance, from submission of the invoice or within 30 days, as set out in the Late Payment of Commercial Debts Regulations 2013 and associated/subsequent legislation.

The client should be aware that the supplier has a statutory right to interest and compensation in the event of late payment.

4.2.5 Indemnity It is the responsibility of the client to insure against all loss of or damage to all artwork, photographs, manuscripts, disks and marked proofs while in transit between client and supplier and while in the supplier's keeping. Where appropriate (e.g. in the case of manuscripts and disks), the client will keep copies for at least six months after publication. It is the supplier's responsibility to keep copies of electronic files, author queries and correspondence relating to the work, also for at least six months after publication.

4.2.6 Legal issues The client bears ultimate responsibility for matters relating to libel, obscenity, blasphemy, incitement to racial hatred, plagiarism and the reproduction of copyright material belonging to third parties.

4.3 Working relationships with editors and authors

Where applicable, the client should have agreed the terms of the brief, the level of copy-editing required and the schedule requirements with the author.

4.4 Loyalty and confidentiality

Clients should be aware of their responsibilities with respect to personal data under the Data Protection Act 1998.

The client should recognise that a supplier who is fulfilling his or her editorial obligation is acting as the client's representative, and has the right to expect the client's reasonable

support in relations with the author and others in the publishing process, particularly in the event of any dispute.

The client should respect the confidence of the supplier.

4.5 Feedback

The client should be prepared to give constructive feedback to the supplier and to accept that one function of such feedback is to inform both parties about the level of success of the briefing process. As such, feedback is instrumental in initiating and maintaining a good relationship between client and supplier.

5 Standards of editing and of proofreading

5.1 Before accepting work as an editor

5.1.1 Application of general editing skills Members should take all reasonable care to ensure, by virtue of their skills, training and/or experience, that they are competent to fulfil the expectations implied by the use of the words 'editor' and 'copy-editor'. This should include consultation with the client to confirm that the supplier has appropriate, secure, up-to-date computer and communications equipment and software to fulfil the commission. Clients should be able to approach potential suppliers in the reasonable expectation that this is the case.

5.1.2 Application of level of edit In deciding how much work to undertake on a text to impose order in terms of style and substance and what level of edit to apply to it (see [5.1.3](#)), suppliers should consult with and be guided by the client and be prepared to work within the brief.

5.1.3 Levels of copy-editing This code subdivides copy-editing into the three levels set out below, but it is acknowledged that a combination of levels may be appropriate in certain types of work (e.g. multi-author works). The supplier should establish that the client understands the difference between copy-editing and proofreading.

Level 1: Technical This is non-intrusive copy-editing and the basic mark-up for the typesetter. The client wishes the material to be prepared for publication but is willing to accept the bulk of the text as received with minimal intervention. Inconsistencies and infelicities are nevertheless dealt with and copy-editing includes the points listed in [5.4](#).

Level 2: Structural This is where more intrusive copy-editing may take place. It can often apply to multi-author works when presentation is uneven. In addition to the requirements of the Level 1 copy-editing, above, the publisher client will have agreed with the author that the text requires structural intervention for clarification. This work constitutes rephrasing as necessary rather than rewriting.

Level 3: Substantive/development editing The publisher client will have agreed with the author (who is primarily an information provider and not necessarily an experienced writer) that reconstruction and rewriting are necessary in order to adapt the material for its defined market, as well as Level 1 copy-editing and mark-up.

Note: At any of the above levels, the publisher client may or may not wish the supplier to be directly involved with the author in order to settle queries.

5.2 Before accepting work as a proofreader

5.2.1 Application of general proofreading skills Members should take all reasonable care to ensure, by virtue of their skills, training and/or experience, that they are competent to fulfil the expectations implied by the use of the word 'proofreader'. This should include consultation with the client to confirm that the supplier has appropriate, secure, up-to-date computer and communications equipment and software to fulfil the commission. Clients should be able to approach potential proofreaders in the reasonable expectation that this is the case.

5.2.2 Application of level of proofreading In deciding how much work to undertake at the proof stage, suppliers should consult with and be guided by the client and be prepared to work within the brief.

5.3 Responsibilities of the editor and the proofreader

In exercising their responsibilities to themselves and their clients, suppliers should keep in mind the following points:

- a** The importance of obtaining an accurate brief, including level of copy-editing (see [5.1.3](#)) and nature of the job – i.e. whether it is all on hard copy, or hard copy plus electronic files, or electronic files only.
- b** The importance of editorial exactitude, good communication and punctuality.
- c** The importance of obtaining constructive feedback.

5.3.1 Brief from client to supplier Suppliers should ensure that the client supplies:

- a brief that sets out the nature of the projected work, the extent of contact between supplier and author or other contributors and the name of the in-house contact
- a copy of the client's house style (where applicable).

Suppliers should request a brief where this is not supplied. It is important to make an initial assessment of the brief against the material provided before proceeding to the main part of the work and, in particular, to evaluate whether the proposed schedules will allow sufficient time to carry out the requirements of the brief.

The brief should include the points listed in [4.1.2](#).

5.3.2 Communication between supplier and client

a Good communication, editorial exactitude and punctuality are vital. It is the supplier's responsibility to raise any initial queries with the client. A fundamental requirement in the good handling of any material is to raise major queries without delay and other minor queries in batches as convenient to all concerned. If any matter in the brief or other documentation or in matters under discussion with the client is unclear, the supplier should seek clarification as early as possible in the process.

b Early communication with the designer is desirable, if that comes within the editorial remit, and particularly if the material being edited is intended for a website.

c Since the supplier is responsible neither for commissioning work nor for contracting with an author, the supplier cannot be held responsible for questionable material (whether factual or otherwise) or material where possible legal problems (e.g. libel, infringement of copyright, plagiarism) may arise. However, a supplier becoming aware of any such problems in the material should bring these to the attention of the client. Any duty the supplier has to the client will be fully discharged by this process, and the client, while being guided or advised as necessary by the supplier, bears the whole responsibility for deciding what is to be done in these cases.

d The supplier should make every reasonable effort to deliver completed work to schedule and should inform the client promptly if circumstances arise that make delay likely.

e When handing over the work, the supplier should detail any material still outstanding from the client and provide for the client's convenience a sheet of style points specific to the work.

5.3.3 Feedback Suppliers should expect to be given constructive feedback from a client on the quality of and level of satisfaction with the completed work. This feedback may be sought following a first assignment from a new client, following an assignment of a different nature from an established client, or at any point in the working relationship where the supplier and client agree it would serve a useful purpose.

5.4 Copy-editing printed materials: Basic skills

In the application of all three levels of copy-editing (see [5.1.3](#)), whether on hard copy or electronically, a copy-editor should be competent in the following skills:

5.4.1 Publication Understand the basic processes of producing a publication.

5.4.2 Grammar and spelling Identify and correct errors in grammar, spelling and punctuation and in usage and style.

5.4.3 Command of English Possess a good command of English (or the working language) and an awareness of the constant evolution of language. Copy-editors should seek to establish and support good standards of clarity within the context of the work, and be conversant with the intended readership both geographically and in terms of language and understanding. Edit to the appropriate language level if necessary.

5.4.4 Consistency Establish a consistent style for the text, identify and eliminate or query inconsistencies and ensure that house style (where applicable) is followed. Create a copy-editor's style guide that can be passed on to the proofreader to ensure consistency throughout the text.

5.4.5 Factual accuracy Raise questions of factual accuracy and consistency regarding names, dates, events, people, places and references to visual elements as necessary. Refer these to the client or author as appropriate.

5.4.6 Awareness of ambiguities, etc. Delete irrelevancies, unnecessary repetitions and infelicities, and be able to correct ambiguities and to read for sense, clarifying as necessary and confirming alterations with the author(s) (see [5.1.3](#)).

5.4.7 Logic of textual structure Ensure that the structure of the text is logical and consistent, including the hierarchy of headings. Establish and maintain consistency in the marking up of headings, paragraphing, contents page(s) and, where appropriate, running heads, quotations, tables, figures, legends, lists, textual references to notes, footnotes, references, glossaries, bibliographies and any other parts of a text requiring special presentation. Use electronic means to achieve this as appropriate.

5.4.8 Author queries Raise queries for the author and present these intelligibly (not necessarily resolving them – see [5.1.3](#)).

5.4.9 Copy-editing symbols Use current British Standard copy-preparation symbols and minimal margin notation. However, copy-editors should be aware that not all designers (of either printed materials or web pages) are familiar with conventional symbols. This should be clarified at an early stage and an appropriate means of marking text agreed.

5.4.10 Mark-up Use mark-up symbols and conventions according to the client's or designer's specification. This may be done on hard copy or electronically, as agreed with the client. Make appropriate use of templates, style sheets, tags, codes and other electronic processing tools.

5.4.11 Handwriting On hard copy, write neatly and legibly to minimise typesetting errors due to misreading. Unless the client advises otherwise, copy-editors may assume that they are marking up for an educated native speaker of the language in which they are working.

5.4.12 Pagination Understand the use of signatures for layout and, where appropriate (e.g. if working to a design and a planned extent), adjust text to achieve even workings. Even when the copy-editor is not working to a design, copy should be prepared so as to

forestall layout difficulties (e.g. with tabular and/or graphic material) that could lead to costly corrections at proof.

5.4.13 Prelim pages Understand the conventions for information that must or may be included, and prepare copy as necessary/required.

5.4.14 Illustrations Where applicable, organise and relate illustrations to the text, edit labels and legends in a manner consistent with the bulk of the text and key these correctly into the text. Prepare a list of captions. Prepare artwork briefs if required, using a standard template.

5.4.15 Cross-references Check the presence and correspondence of any cross-references systematically, including inconsistencies in the spelling of names in the text, bibliographical references, tables, figures and footnotes.

5.4.16 Index Understand the basic principles of an index and be able to edit one.

5.4.17 On-screen editing Where applicable, be familiar with the use of computers in editing and the principles of on-screen editing (using authors' electronic files) and web-page editing. Where applicable, make appropriate use of a computer for editing and to prepare the document for the design to be implemented. Cultivate awareness of general technological trends that may affect the editorial process.

5.4.18 Copyright Draw attention to elements that require copyright acknowledgement and permission, and know how to seek permissions and prepare acknowledgements.

5.4.19 Legal issues Report to the client any evidence or suspicion of matter which may contravene the laws regarding libel, obscenity, blasphemy, incitement to racial hatred or plagiarism.

5.5 Editing websites

Effective website editing requires the basic skills identified in [5.4](#). In addition, the editor may sometimes need to do the following:

5.5.1 Editor's style guide Amend or create a guide that describes the editorial style for all or part of a website.

5.5.2 Making content web friendly To make scanning (which web users tend to do) easier, create sentences and paragraphs that are shorter than the equivalent printed text and insert concise, factual subheadings every two or three paragraphs.

5.5.3 Summarising Write concise descriptive headings and summaries of web pages, which can be used on higher-level pages to link them to those web pages or as file descriptions (metadata) that can be found by a search engine.

5.5.4 Link writing Rewrite sentences so that the target (internal or external) of a linked word or phrase is clear, avoiding the use of 'Click here' or 'More' wherever possible. Check that all links work and whether the client wishes to include a disclaimer for the content of external sites.

5.5.5 Splitting content Advise on the splitting of content across additional linked pages (modules) to facilitate direct access to those additional pages from elsewhere on the site and from search engines.

5.5.6 Multimedia Access and comment on the functionality of multimedia files integrated with web pages – e.g. audio, video, animations – and any associated text. Liaise with the

author, designer or developer, depending on the editor's content knowledge, to amend these elements if necessary.

5.5.7 Alternative descriptions (alt tags) Write or edit text that describes images, other multimedia elements and links, for use when images are turned off or when a screen reader is being used by a visually impaired user.

5.5.8 Site mapping Create a site map to describe all or part of a website or add to an existing one.

5.5.9 Content management systems (CMSs) Use the site owner's CMS if one is available. Not only will text be edited within this but also links will be created, images and headings of different weights will be inserted and other tasks will be carried out that, in other circumstances, might be considered the responsibility of the web designer.

5.6 Proofreading printed materials: Basic skills

Proofreaders should read first proofs of an edited document against previous marked copy when provided by the client, and second and any subsequent proofs against the preceding proofs. In many cases, the proofreader will be required to read 'blind' – i.e. not to read against any previous copy – and so advice should be sought as to whether the client wishes to limit the number of amendments, which are likely to result from editorial rather than typesetting errors.

A proofreader should be competent in the following skills:

5.6.1 Paragraphs and pagination Ensure that the page sequence within the document is complete and that illustrations are present or appropriate space has been allowed. If paragraphs are numbered, ensure that the numbering sequence is correct.

5.6.2 Typographical errors Identify and correct typographical errors – e.g. misspellings.

5.6.3 Editor's style guide Follow the editorial style guide (the list of spellings, etc. adopted by the copy-editor and passed on to the proofreader) if provided. If this is not available, compile a style guide while reading the proofs. Do not seek to amend or 'improve' a copy-editor's work unless specifically asked to do so by the client. Errors and omissions should, of course, be corrected or queried.

5.6.4 Proof-correction symbols Use current British Standard proof-correction symbols or terms, and colour coding for corrections (if required by the client) to permit accurate apportioning of costs.

5.6.5 Consistency Identify internal textual, typographical and design inconsistencies, and query or correct as appropriate. Cross-check text with prelims and endmatter, identify inconsistencies and eliminate or query them.

5.6.6 Accuracy Ensure that textual and typographical alterations, including matter brought forward and/or taken back, are made accurately, consistently and cost-effectively.

5.6.7 Illustrations Ensure that captions correspond to illustrations and are consistent with the text. Proofread labels if requested in the brief.

5.6.8 Chapter and/or section titling Ensure that titles in the contents page(s) and the body of the text correspond, and insert page numbers or ensure that, if present, they correspond. Check or query cross-references and illustration numbers.

5.6.9 Queries Clearly identify and list queries and refer these to the client. Ensure that queries made in pencil on the proof are circled, so that the client retains the final decision about which changes to sanction.

5.6.10 Running heads Ensure that running heads are correct and correspond to the convention imposed.

5.6.11 Headings Check that type size, style and fonts all appear consistent.

5.6.12 Fonts, alignment and line length Identify erroneous font changes, misalignments and inappropriate line lengths and suggest corrected formats. Check alignment of columns in tables.

5.6.13 Colours If reading colour proofs, check that all colours are used appropriately and consistently.

5.6.14 Overall page design Check bad word breaks and column breaks, and eliminate widows and orphans if required by the client. In books with a complex design layout (many illustrations, tables, etc.), ensure that these are placed logically and that the text can be read easily.

5.7 Collation

Proofreaders may be required to collate proof-correction marks made by several individuals – e.g. author, adviser, other proofreader. Where comments are in conflict, the proofreader/proof collator should be able to make justifiable judgements and amend appropriately, to maintain the required quality of the final product, the schedule, the budget and good author relations.

5.8 Proofreading online content

Effective proofreading of online content requires the basic skills identified in [5.6](#). In addition, the proofreader may sometimes be required to do the following:

5.8.1 Technology Use appropriate types of software to access text, images and multimedia contained in any web page that forms part of the work, including browsers and plug-ins.

5.8.2 Page mark-up Agree with the client the method to be used for marking up web pages – e.g. annotating PDF copies of a page, correcting html files or marking up hard copy using conventional proof-correction symbols. (Hard copy can be obtained by creating and printing out a screenshot of a page, which can then be marked up and scanned.)

5.8.3 Communication Agree with the client or designer a method for communicating corrections or amendments to web pages – e.g. by emailing marked-up files to a named contact, using FTP (a file transfer protocol) to transfer files to a location made available for the purpose, or faxing or posting marked-up hard copy.

5.8.4 Navigation and page location Ensure that any navigational controls – e.g. buttons, drop-down menus, jump-down lists or visual representation of page location – work and that the text on them is consistent with that on the site map and with page titles and/or headings.

5.8.5 Multimedia Download and proofread multimedia files – e.g. animation, audio, video – against the author's or editor's brief to the designer or web developer, paying special attention to captions and titles.

5.8.6 Alternative descriptions (alt tags) Ensure that 'alt', 'title' and 'longdesc' tags are correct and are editorially consistent.

5.8.7 Links Check that all internal and external links work and take the user where intended.

5.8.8 Alternative versions Check text-only and printer-friendly versions of web pages or other versions of the work – e.g. PDF.

5.8.9 Content management systems (CMSs) If the client has one and allows access, proofread using a CMS and check the effects of your changes on the appearance of each web page.

6 Standards of editorial project management

6.1 Scope

6.1.1 Brief The project manager should, in discussion with the client, first define carefully the boundaries of his or her responsibility and obtain a brief. The project manager will need to carry out (or subcontract) many or all of the tasks listed in sections [6.2](#) and [6.3](#), but not all of these will be required in each case and the order of work may vary. The precise scope of editorial project management varies widely from client to client, and even from project to project. When a project manager is also the project copy-editor and/or proofreader, the relevant elements of [section 5](#) apply.

6.1.2 Schedule and budget It is the project manager's responsibility to ensure that the schedule and budget are adequate for producing a work of a stated quality, and to inform the client immediately of any shortcomings and their implications.

6.1.3 Communication It is the project manager's responsibility to keep in contact with the author(s), volume editor(s) or web editor/developer throughout the project and to keep copies or records of correspondence and supporting material.

6.2 Processes involved: Printed materials

6.2.1 Initial checklist

a Evaluation Inspect the received materials (hard copy and/or electronic typescript) to determine whether they are complete and conform to the contract and synopsis or to the client's stated requirements in all respects, including adequately addressing the subject, clear structure, accuracy and readability.

b Content Check the overall length of the whole work, including references, illustrations, tables, index, prelims and other elements. Check that the presentation of materials conforms to the requirements of the determined production processes: that hard copy is clean and double spaced, that electronic files are compatible with the systems to be used and that the hard copy matches the electronic files.

c Irregularities Inform the client of any omissions or deviations from the agreed brief, especially regarding estimated extent, and recommend action.

d Permissions Ensure that text and illustration permissions are sought, and that accurate acknowledgements are prepared in accordance with the terms and conditions of the permissions.

e Level of copy-editing Assess materials to determine the level of copy-editing required (see [5.1.3](#)) and to ensure that the schedule and budget remain adequate.

f Assemble a team Determine what jobs need to be done throughout the project and which ones will be delegated. Choose people with the relevant skills and equipment for all the delegated tasks, contact them a reasonable length of time in advance, negotiate fees within the budget, confirm the schedule for each job, and brief all team members and supply them with the necessary materials to enable them to do their jobs to the required level of quality. Keep each member of the team informed of any alterations to the schedule throughout the duration of the project.

g Revisions Ensure that suggested changes are agreed with the author(s).

h Prelims and endmatter Ensure that these are compiled and arranged in the correct order.

6.2.2 Illustrations

- a** *Picture research and artwork* Ensure that the picture researcher, any other researcher and/or illustrators are briefed.
- b** *Illustrations* Ensure that all illustrations required are supplied, have the correct editorial content and are checked for quality for reproduction.
- c** *Photography* Brief the photographer, and oversee the photo shoot if required.
- d** *Captions and legends* Ensure that the illustrations are correctly captioned and, where relevant, acknowledged in accordance with the conditions laid down by the copyright and/or material owner.
- e** *Originating illustrations* Send all electronic files, transparencies, monochrome prints and line artwork to the originating house or pass to the client's production department.

6.2.3 Copy to typesetter or designer

- a** *Marking up* Ensure that the text is coded/tagged for setting, on hard copy and/or electronically. Check whether the typesetter will be a native speaker of the language of the project and, if not, make appropriate allowance.
- b** *Designer's brief* Brief the designer or typesetter on the layout required and on any style details deviating from those already agreed.
- c** *Complete document* Ensure that the materials are complete, from prelims to endmatter, and arrange typesetting or deliver the materials to the client's production department.
- d** *Jacket or cover copy* Where applicable, prepare cover copy and arrange for cover design. Ensure that a draft copy is seen by everyone specified by the client.

6.2.4 Proofs (text plus illustrations)

- a** *First proofs* Ensure that the proofreader, author(s) and any other readers required by the client receive a set of first proofs.
- b** *Illustration proofs* Ensure that all artwork is checked against original artwork briefs, that labels (annotations) are proofread and that colours are used appropriately. Check photo proofs, which may also have to be approved by the copyright and/or material owner.
- c** *Collation* Ensure that corrections are collated on to the marked proofs (see [5.7](#)).
- d** *Return of proofs* Return the marked proofs, ensuring that the typesetting package is complete.
- e** *Subsequent proofs* Ensure that all amendments requested at the previous proof stage have been made correctly and that any material set since then is proofread.

6.2.5 Index and other endmatter

- a** *Index* Ensure that the index has been prepared, edited and marked up for setting and that it is sent to the typesetter, proofread and corrected on schedule.
- b** *Endmatter* Ensure that any other matter, such as a new appendix, is marked up and is sent to the typesetter, proofread and corrected on schedule.

6.2.6 Management

- a** Monitor each job at key stages to ensure that it is adequately prepared, and take any necessary action to correct errors, omissions and other shortcomings.

- b** Monitor all work to ensure that it is completed on time, within budget and to the required quality.
- c** Warn all team members of potential delays and work with them to prevent or minimise the problem.
- d** Warn the client's sales and marketing department immediately if delay is unavoidable.
- e** Initiate and maintain communications with all personnel involved in the project.
- f** Provide constructive feedback to all members of the team.

6.3 Processes involved: Web content

6.3.1 Initial checklist

- a** *Evaluation* Evaluate the content supplied in terms of the client's requirements – for adequately addressing the subject, for clear structure and for accuracy and usability. Bear in mind the range of users who will be accessing the site and identify any age, language, cultural or other barriers – such as physical or learning disability – to understanding and accessibility.
- b** *Structure* Create a structure for the site, preferably in conjunction with the editor. Use graphic representation (e.g. wireframes) to test out initial ideas and, if possible, carry out early usability testing with a few individuals.
- c** *Content* If updating an existing site, on receipt of the URL, check that the site is working, whether it is clear which (if any) software or plug-ins are required to access multimedia elements and that all such files are available. Confirm with the client what hardware and software the likely audience for the site will have, and make sure that the web design is informed by that. Be aware that alternatives to multimedia files may have to be provided – e.g. images in place of an animation, text as well as or instead of an image. Commission the required text.
- d** *Permissions* Ensure that text, image and other permissions (e.g. for audio or video) are sought, and that accurate acknowledgements are prepared in accordance with the terms and conditions of the permissions.
- e** *Level of copy-editing* Assess materials to determine the level of copy-editing required (see [5.1.3](#)) and to ensure that the schedule and budget remain adequate.
- f** *Editing* Agree on how this will be done – e.g. using original text or Word files, an html editor, web design software or a content management system (CMS). Allocate editing by agreement with the client. Ensure that the editor has the necessary skills, connectivity, hardware and software, and virus protection.
- g** *Updating and upgrading* Discuss with the client suggested changes to the style guide, page templates or navigational controls.

6.3.2 Multimedia

- a** *Image research* Find out whether the client has access to an image bank and if (and how) editors, designers and others can access it. Alternatively, brief a picture researcher, any other researcher and/or an illustrator for preparation of graphics and other multimedia items. Confirm whether, because the images will be used on a website, they need only be of a relatively low resolution. However, check whether the client also requires high-resolution images for print purposes – e.g. marketing materials.

b Captions and legends Ensure that, if necessary, images are correctly captioned and acknowledged in accordance with the conditions laid down by the copyright owner and/or image owner.

6.3.3 Copy to designer

a Designer's brief Brief the designer on the layout required and on any style details already agreed with the client.

b Page designs and site structure In conjunction with the designer, ensure that web page designs and the site structure and navigation are approved by the client.

c Accessibility Liaise with the designer on issues of accessibility to multimedia content – e.g. to make content accessible to users with sensory or motor disabilities. This is a legal requirement (Equality Act 2010 and associated/subsequent legislation).

6.3.4 Proofreading and validation

a Proofreading Ensure that the proofreader and any other readers (e.g. author) required by the client receive the html files or are directed to a private URL, as appropriate.

b Collation Ensure that corrections made by the author and others to text, graphics and dynamic or interactive features are collated into the final version (see [5.7](#)). Make sure that the designer can understand what the amendments mean (e.g. if BSI proof-correction marks have been used).

c Subsequent proofs Ensure that all amendments requested at the previous proof stage have been made correctly, that the pages are complete and that any material added since then has been proofread. In particular, check navigation, headings, links, and the positioning, size and functionality of multimedia elements.

d Validation Ensure that the proofreader has examined the website using at least three different (popular) browsers and, ideally, both PC and Apple Mac computers, making sure that, within limits, all elements of the site work as intended.

6.4 Skills required

In order to carry out editorial project management efficiently and effectively, a project manager should be competent in the following skills:

6.4.1 Restructuring Recognise when work needs restructuring. Suggest cuts and additions where necessary, or provide guidelines for the author to cut or add. Ensure that the length of the work is as specified. Recognise when prose material would be better presented in another format (e.g. table, diagram, bulleted or numbered list, animation) or vice versa. Make comprehensive notes and discuss changes with the author, or provide a list of queries for the client.

6.4.2 Copy-editing Copy-edit or, with the client's agreement, allocate the work to a copy-editor of known competence, ensuring that house style is followed, if appropriate.

6.4.3 Design and production Be familiar with the skills and requirements of others involved in the production process. Have a good working knowledge of that process, including, as appropriate, typesetting, picture origination, printing, web conventions and use of electronic tools including web design software, and be aware of the capabilities of standard multimedia authoring programs. Be aware of the implications of cuts or additions at book and journal proof stages.

6.4.4 Proofreading Proofread or allocate the work to a proofreader of known competence.

6.4.5 Permissions Recognise what is likely to be in copyright. Know how to request permission to use copyright material in print and electronic formats. Ensure that credits are correctly stated.

6.4.6 Costs and schedules Be aware of costs, including cost implications of design requirements over and above those already budgeted for. Know the possible consequences of delays to the schedule (costs; time-collision with other projects, both client's and supplier's; sensitivity to the market).

6.5 Liaison with authors

To ensure the smooth running of the project, the project manager must be available to attend to the following:

6.5.1 Liaison with the client's author If required by the client to do so, liaise with the author during the period of writing or compiling the text. Respond to requests for help in tackling specific problems or general questions of coverage and organisation. Monitor progress and ensure that the author is aware of both schedule requirements and those relating to presentation of material. Notify the client if the deadline seems in danger of being missed.

6.5.2 Agreeing changes Discuss all significant changes to the text, illustrations and dynamic or interactive elements and secure the author's acceptance or refer to the client.

6.5.3 Author's special requirements Ask the author to specify any special requirements for the design and/or treatment of illustrations or other multimedia, their relative sizes and positions, etc.

6.5.4 Proofs Ensure that the author receives copies of proofs or access to web pages at appropriate stages and give guidance on the appropriate procedure for requesting changes, if required.

6.5.5 Collation Deal with any queries and collate the author's corrections on to the marked set or proofed page, minimising the cost of alterations wherever possible in discussion with the author. Secure the author's acceptance or refer to the client.

6.5.6 Blurb Where applicable, secure the author's acceptance of blurb or refer to the client.

6.5.7 Disagreements with an author If a difference of opinion with an author regarding the text or other elements remains unresolved at any stage of production, bring this to the client's attention before the text proceeds to the next stage.

6.6 Liaison with others

Direct contact with others involved in the production process (author, editor, designer, illustrator, typesetter, web developer, web content editor) may be essential, and close contact between them highly desirable, throughout the execution of the brief.

The client should be expected to introduce team members to one another as appropriate, at the earliest opportunity. Thereafter it is up to the project manager to build up a productive working relationship. As close to the outset of the project as is feasible, an appropriate method should be devised to monitor the progress of the work and to ensure that all participants deliver on time and within budget.

7 Further advice and information

Training organisations

- [SfEP Training](#)
- [SfEP editorial syllabus](#)
- [Publishing Training Centre](#) (PTC)
- [National Occupational Standards](#)

Personal and business finances

- [Income tax](#): HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC)
- [Working for yourself](#): HMRC
- [National Insurance](#): HMRC
- [VAT](#): HMRC
- [Employment status indicator](#): HMRC
- [Late Payment: Pay on Time campaign](#)
- [User's guide to Late Payment of Commercial Debts Regulations 2013](#): Pay on Time campaign

Health and safety in the office

- [Health and Safety Executive](#) (HSE)
- [Health and safety made simple](#): free PDF download from the HSE

Contracts

- [Contracts and terms & conditions between freelancers and their clients](#) and [Contracts between freelancers \(limited companies\) and their clients](#): SfEP's own advice
- [Editors' Association of Canada's standard freelance editorial agreement](#), including detailed checklists: free download
- [Epoq](#) provides SfEP Professional, Advanced Professional and Retired Members with a free 24-hour telephone helpline; for advice from Epoq on contracts or any other legal matter, you will need your membership number – see [legal help](#) in the members' area for more details

Copyright

- [Intellectual property](#): Government guidance on copyright, designs, patents and trademarks
- [Crown copyright](#): Guidance from the National Archive on the use of Crown copyright material
- [Copyright Licensing Agency](#): Licenses organisations to copy and reuse extracts from print and digital publications on behalf of copyright owners – authors, publishers and visual artists
- [Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988](#)

Data protection

- [Information Commissioner's Office](#) (ICO): Information on data protection and freedom of information issues, and guidance for individuals and small businesses
- [Data Protection Act 1998](#)
- [General Data Protection Regulation](#) (GDPR): ICO guide

British Standard Institution marks

- *BS 5261C: 2005 Marks for copy preparation and proof correction* (extracted from BS 5261-2:2005): Can be bought from the [BSI shop](#) or at a discount from the [SfEP online shop](#).