Comparison of Tasks in Proofreading, Copy Editing and Substantive Editing Services

Proofreading is the final check before printing, publication or submission.
Choose this service if you are satisfied with the quality of your writing but require a final check of your document.

Copy Editing focuses on accuracy and consistency in language (vocabulary, grammar, spelling and punctuation), style and layout.
Choose this service if you require a check on the accuracy and consistency of the language in your document with some rewording.

Substantive Editing (or Structural Editing) ensures the content, structure, language, style and presentation of a document matches its purpose and audience.
Choose this service if you require some restructuring and rewriting to suit the content, audience and delivery method of your document by adding, changing and deleting material where necessary.

TASK DESCRIPTION	PROOFREADING	COPY EDITING	SUBSTANTIVE EDITING
corrects errors of:			
grammar	✓	✓	
punctuation	✓	✓	
spelling	✓	✓	
typography	✓		
checks document completeness:			
preliminary matter (title page, copyright page, foreword and preface)	✓	✓	
body of document (text, tables, illustrative material, footnotes and endnotes)	✓	✓	
endmatter (appendixes, abbreviations, glossaries, references and bibliographies)	✓	✓	
checks consistency in:			
alignment and spacing	✓		
font styles and font sizes	✓		
glossaries, indexes, contents and tables	✓		
heading hierarchies	✓		
hyphenation, capitalisation and abbreviations	✓		
numbers, dates, percentages, symbols and equations	✓		
page layout and formatting	✓		
page numbers and headers and footers	✓		

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referencing (bibliographies, footnotes and endnotes)	✔		
spelling, grammar and punctuation	✔		
word and line spacing and paragraph indentation	✔		
word breaks at end of line	✔		
ensures:			
accurate cross-references	✔		
content list matches headings, pagination and figures and tables	✔		
correctly inserted amendments	✔		
proofreading marks incorporated from previous copy	✔		
web links are working	✔		
ensures language consistency in:			
parallel structure of words and phrases		✔	
terminology		✔	
spelling		✔	
capitalisation		✔	
hyphenation		✔	
abbreviations		✔	
expression of numbers		✔	
ensures visual consistency in:			
typography		✔	
heading hierarchies		✔	
page and screen layouts		✔	
tables		✔	
illustrations		✔	
captions		✔	
references		✔	
figures		✔	
checks accuracy of:			
cross-references within text		✔	
cross-references between text and figures		✔	
cross-references between content lists and body of document		✔	
links to illustrations and tables		✔	
textual and bibliography references and quotations		✔	

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ensures:			
sources have been acknowledged		✓	
meaning is clear		✓	
clarity of language		✓	
conformity with style sheet		✓	
functionality of on-screen publications		✓	
evaluates the document's structure in terms of:			
the intended audience			✓
the publication's purpose			✓
establishes whether changes to the document are required in these areas:			
content			✓
structure			✓
language			✓
style			✓
presentation			✓
advises when the following required:			
additional material, such as illustrations, cross-references, glossaries, summaries, abstracts, hyperlinks, indexes and appendixes			✓
charts or tables more appropriate in text format or vice-versa			✓
diagrams more appropriate as descriptive passages			✓
dialogue better suited as narrative text			✓
lengthy digression better suited as dialogue or an appendix			✓
rearranging, expanding or abridging content for structure and audience			✓
referencing, such as citations, bibliography, list of references, endnotes, footnotes, margin notes, cross-references, glossaries and indexes			✓
checks:			
academic language used appropriately			✓
accuracy of cross-references and quotes			✓
accuracy of material in tables and figures against textual references			✓
all sources are referenced			✓
argument appears fallacious			✓
headings and links are user friendly			✓

Editio

Proofreading and Editing Services

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material could present legal problems			✓
referencing suited to document type			✓
ensures:			
active voice used instead of passive			✓
awkward phrasing eliminated			✓
cohesive and varied paragraphs and sentences			✓
verbose writing condensed			✓
conformity with style sheet			✓
consistency in tone and writing style			✓
consistency with referencing style throughout document			✓
correct list formatting			✓
correct use of numbers, dates, percentages, measurements, statistical data			✓
gender neutral writing where appropriate			✓
information and arguments presented clearly and unambiguously			✓
jargon and cliches removed			✓
links to web sites are appropriate			✓
long paragraphs converted to short paragraphs			✓
long words converted to short words			✓
meaning is clear and nothing can be misunderstood			✓
no inconsistencies, no irrelevant material, no repetitions, no unnecessary words			✓
symbols, abbreviations and terms explained			✓
title and headings accurately illustrate contents			✓
writing style matches targeted audience			✓