

# Seniors cashing in on writing services

**PETALING JAYA:** Thesis assistance and outsourcing services are being widely promoted – especially on social media – among students and that is a problem among educators.

And, the Malaysian Association of Private Colleges and Universities (Mapcu) is seeing a growing culture of senior students doing the work of their juniors for money.

Mapcu president Datuk Dr Parmjit Singh said varsities and regulators are concerned.

These dubious services have also created suspicion against legitimate editing and proofreading services, he said.

“If the services were confined to spelling, grammar, structure, citations and references, it would raise the quality of a thesis.

“But, there are concerns that only the financially well-endowed students would be able to benefit from this and therefore leave the others at a disadvantage,” he said.

“The role of thesis supervisors may also be undermined if students find it easier to use such services.

“There’s a fine line between using such services and what may be seen

as plagiarism.”

He said it was impossible to ban such services as they’re easily accessible online.

Varsities must strengthen the processes by which students have to defend their work to check if they’ve received help beyond what’s acceptable, he said.

Higher Education Department director-general Datin Paduka Dr Siti Hamisah Tapsir said students are only allowed to send their work for proofreading.

“Some students are not proficient in the English language and may need help to improve grammar and the clarity of their work. That’s the only editing service that we allow.

“Students cannot seek external help for content. That must come 100% from the student themselves,” she said.

“Students won’t be allowed to even defend their work at the *viva voce* if the work is not theirs.”

Universiti Putra Malaysia vice-chancellor Prof Datuk Dr Aini Ideris said UPM has no issues with students using thesis editing services for editorial purposes.



**No plagiarism:** Siti Hamisah and Parmjit said proofreading is the only service allowed for students.

Language and grammar is fine but students must be responsible for legal issues like plagiarism and copyright infringement, she said.

“Before a thesis can be accepted for examination, the supervisor will check the thesis and it’s compulsory for students to submit a Turnitin – or any other software – report,” she said, adding that the software checks for percentage of similarity (with other works) to avoid plagiarism. Turnitin is used to check against plagiarism.

While thesis editing is legal, Prof Dr Yang Farina Abdul Aziz, senior professor of Inorganic Chemistry at

Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), said writing the thesis for a student, isn’t right.

Prof Yang Farina, who’s also an Academy of Sciences Malaysia fellow, has supervised over 50 post-graduate students.

“My students send their thesis for English editing. That’s fine.

“But I will look at the content to make sure that it’s written by them.

“They cannot just provide the information and pay someone else to do the writing,” she said.

Prof Dr Hanafi Ismail, from Universiti Sains Malaysia’s School of Materials and Mineral Resources Engineering, said writing services are unethical.

Students caught engaging such services should be punished in accordance with the respective varsity regulations, he said.

Prof Hanafi, who was listed among the “Most Cited Researchers” in the Shanghai Academic Ranking of World Universities 2016 by subjects, said proofreading services are okay.

“The papers are written by the students or researchers.”