How to Not Get Exploited as a Freelance Academic Editor

Bailey Harrington, PhD

WSU, GreenPen Editing

Finding Work with Agencies

* Look online or at journal submission instructions to find agencies

* They often have an email or contact form for prospective contractors

* Send a short enquiry with a statement about your academic credentials or a résumé

* May require an advanced degree or a certain level of English fluency

Editing Tests

* Common practice in publishing

* Used by companies to assess your skill editing/proofreading

* May be paid or unpaid

    * (usually unpaid)

* Each company has their own tests and testing protocol

Compensation

Paid tests may be longer or cover unpublished material

Exercise caution with unpaid tests, which people may exploit to get free editing

Length

The EFA recommends these guidelines for unpaid editing tests:

Word count (max): 1,250
Time spent: 1 hour

Turnaround

You should be able to complete unpaid tests in your own time

Push back if an agency is asking for free labor over a weekend or when you need to prioritise paid work

Content

May be real or contrived

You should never edit a complete, unpublished work for an unpaid test

Materials should be the same for everyone

Behind the Scenes

* No guarantee of/ requirement to accept work (generally)

  * May be offered to multiple editors at the same time

* Some agencies use an (un)available status

  * Editors must accept work while they are listed as available

* Turnaround times can be tight

  * Same day up to a week

Re-edits

* Changes made to address peer review feedback or target a different journal

* Generally offered to the original editor first

* May be included in a more expensive tier

    * A portion of the payment may be withheld until after a re-edit

    * May apply a separate rate to just the altered portions
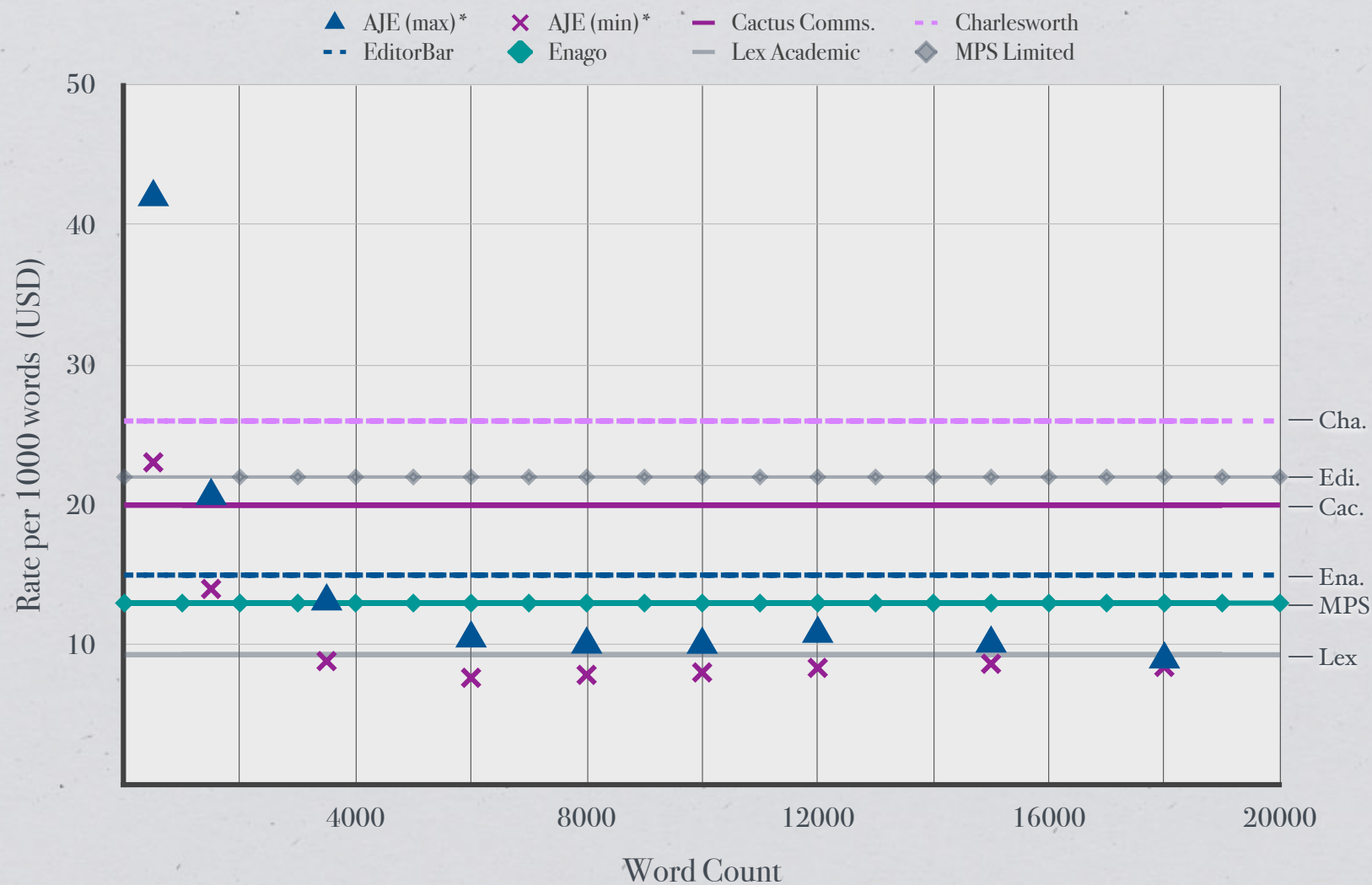
Volume of Work

* Highly variable, based on:
  * number of contractors in the subject area
  * amount of work the agency brings in overall
* More like supplemental income than something to rely on

Rates

* Agency rates are generally not very good

* Rates are often based on word count

* Sometimes the per-word rate depends on the overall word count

Agency Rate Comparison

Legend:
- ▲ AJE (max)*
- ✕ AJE (min)*
- — Cactus Comms.
- – – Charlesworth
- – – EditorBar
- ◆ Enago
- — Lex Academic
- ◆ MPS Limited

Y-axis: Rate per 1000 words (USD) — 10, 20, 30, 40, 50

X-axis: Word Count — 4000, 8000, 12000, 16000, 20000

Right-side labels: Cha., Edi., Cac., Ena., MPS, Lex

* American Journal Experts (AJE) use flat rates for 'word-count bins', so the per-word rate is not fixed.

EFA Rate Chart Info

Type of Editing	Per 1000 Words		Per Hour	
	EFA (STEM) *	EFA (Hum) *	EFA (STEM) *	EFA (Hum.) *
Proofreading	30–50	20–34	40–50	40–50
Copyediting	38–60	35–50	50–60	45–60
Structural Editing	50–60	40–50	55–70	56.5–70
Line Editing	40–60	40–60	50–60	50–65
Formatting	16–40**	28–40**	50–60	50–60

*EFA rate information are median ratnges from a survey of freelancers' rates; they do not represent rate requirements or recommendations made by the EFA.

**Based on page rate data and a standard definition of 250 words per page.

Rate Comparisons (USD)

Rates for Copyediting	Per 1000 words	Hourly
My freelance rates*	60	–
EFA – STEM**	38–60	50–60
EFA – Humanities**	35–50	45–60
CIEP**	–	46
WSU	–	30
American Journal Experts	~9	–
Cactus	20	–
Charlesworth	26	–
EditorBar	15	–
Enago	13	–
Lex Academic	9–21	–
MPS Limited	22	–

*Depends on difficulty of material, quality of the language, amount of text to cut, and other factors.

**EFA rate information are median ratnges from a editors' rates; CIEP data is a suggested minimum; they do not represent rate requirements or recommendations made by the EFA or CIEP.

Converted from GBP.

Resources

* EFA Rate Chart
  https://www.the-efa.org/rates/

* CIEP suggested minimum rates
  https://www.ciep.uk/knowledge-hub/suggested-minimum-rates.html

Questions?

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Website:

www.greenpenediting.com

Prospective clients can reach me at:

bailey@greenpenediting.com

For other queries, please use:

baileythegreenpen@gmail.com