

Phased Developmental Editing of a Novel-Length Manuscript

How a three-phase developmental edit was scoped, delivered, reviewed and corrected — with the client's identity, manuscript and commercial terms withheld.

ENGAGEMENT TYPE	Phased developmental edit of a novel-length literary fiction manuscript
CLIENT	Independent novelist. Identity and manuscript title withheld under our client-confidentiality policy.
EDITORIAL LEAD	Gabriel Isaac, Editorial Project Lead
ENGAGEMENT LENGTH	Four weeks of active editorial work across three phases
DOCUMENT TYPE	Anonymised process case study prepared for publication

Why this document is anonymised. Client names, manuscript titles, private correspondence, contract values and payment information are never published by this agency. What follows describes how the work was structured and reviewed, so a prospective author can judge our method rather than read another author's private file.

1. The brief

The author submitted a completed novel-length manuscript and asked for a developmental edit rather than a proofread: the concern was narrative flow and whether supporting characters were carrying enough weight. Before any editing began, the scope was written down and agreed — what would be edited, in what order, and what the author would receive for review at the end of each stage.

2. How the edit was structured

The manuscript was edited in three sequential phases. Each phase was delivered for the author's review and written approval before the next began. No phase started on an unapproved draft.

PHASE	SCOPE OF WORK	AUTHOR CHECKPOINT
Phase One Story structure	Chapter order, pacing, narrative flow, scene function and the balance between narrative threads.	Delivered for review; approved in writing before Phase Two began.
Phase Two Character development	Character presentation, consistency of voice, development of recurring and supporting characters, reduction of repetition and tightening of prose.	Delivered for review with the author's queries answered in writing.

PHASE	SCOPE OF WORK	AUTHOR CHECKPOINT
Phase Three Line and consistency pass	Line-level consistency, continuity checks and correction of items raised during Phase Two review.	Delivered on the agreed schedule.

3. Quality control in practice

The most useful part of this engagement, from a reader's point of view, is what happened when the author disagreed with an editorial decision. Reviewing Phase Two, the author reported that one late chapter had become harder to follow because scene breaks had been removed where the chapter moved between characters.

CONTROL POINT	WHAT WAS DONE
Author raises the concern	The specific chapter and the specific effect on readability were identified by the author, not inferred by us.
Independent re-check	The original manuscript was compared against the edited version to confirm exactly what had changed.
Editorial conclusion	The author was correct: the breaks were carrying information about shifts in character and narrative thread.
Correction	The scene breaks were restored, and the rule was applied consistently across the remaining chapters.
Process change	Scene breaks are now retained wherever they signal a change of character, location, time or narrative thread.
Change visibility	At the author's request, substantive changes are flagged so a review does not require a page-by-page comparison of the whole book.

4. What this engagement demonstrates

Scope agreed in writing before work starts. Staged delivery with the author approving each stage. Editorial decisions explained rather than asserted. An author correction accepted, verified against the source text, applied, and turned into a standing rule. Substantive changes made visible so the author can review efficiently.

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