UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

Centre for Academic Development

Guidance for Students on the Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence Tools in Education

The University is committed to supporting staff and students to use generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) tools in a responsible, critical, and ethical manner. GenAI tools can be used to generate various types of new content, including images, text, music, and videos. Examples of GenAI tools include, but are not limited to: Bing Chat, ChatGPT, DALL-E 2, GitHub Co-pilot, Google Bard, and Perplexity AI.

GenAI offers immense potential, from boosting creativity to improving writing skills. However, these tools can generate misleading or incorrect information and can negatively impact on your learning. You can find out more by watching our introductory video.

⚠️ **Important:** You must not use GenAI to do your critical thinking, analysis, evaluation, or synthesis. Neither should you use it to generate essays, poems, or any creative works. The purpose of these assignments is to demonstrate your unique ideas and creativity.

Remember, using GenAI tools to generate content for work submitted for assessment, without authorisation or acknowledgement, will be regarded as academic misconduct and investigated as a plagiarism offence under the Code of Practice on Student Discipline (Academic).

This guidance outlines:

1. The limitations and ethical considerations when using GenAI tools.
2. How GenAI tools can be used to support your learning.
3. Your responsibilities when submitting work for assessment.
4. How to acknowledge the use of GenAI content in work submitted for assessment.
5. Support Available.

1. Limitations and Ethical Considerations When Using GenAI Tools

Limitations and ethical considerations associated with using GenAI tools in your studies are listed below.

⚠️ **Important:** You must understand the limitations and ethical considerations associated with using GenAI tools in your studies if you are to develop the skills to use these tools responsibly, critically, and ethically.
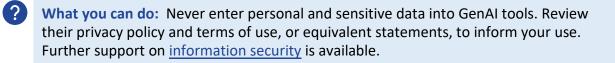
1.1 Inaccurate information and misinterpretation of users' prompts

GenAI tools generate content by predicting the next plausible word or section of programming code based on patterns in the data it has been trained on. They do not get the underlying message or understand and therefore the output can be inaccurate or reflect incorrect information and biases inherent in the data it was trained on. They can therefore confidently fabricate content, as well as generate fake citations and references. This is a phenomenon known as "hallucinations". In addition, prompting GenAI tools to generate useful content is a skilled process and any misleading or unclear prompts can also lead to incorrect and irrelevant information being generated.

> **What you can do:** Ensure you critically evaluate the outputs from GenAI tools and use academic sources and discipline-specific sources to fact check the outputs. Further support on developing your information skills is available.

1.2 Privacy and data considerations

There are risks to data privacy and intellectual property when entering prompts or data into GenAI tools. Always ensure that you have the appropriate ethical permissions in place before entering any data into these tools.

> **What you can do:** Never enter personal and sensitive data into GenAI tools. Review their privacy policy and terms of use, or equivalent statements, to inform your use. Further support on information security is available.

1.3 Ethical considerations

GenAI tools should provide clarity and transparency in how their AI models are trained, what data they use and their decision-making processes, thus enabling you to understand the potential biases and origins of generated content. Since AI models can inherit biases from their training data, it is essential that these biases are detected and rectified, to ensure generated content doesn't perpetuate harmful stereotypes. Clear lines of accountability and equal access for all are also important ethical considerations.

> **What you can do:** Review information on how the GenAI tool has been developed and critically evaluate the content generated, using your expertise to identify appropriate sources of information and compensate for inherent weaknesses and biases.

1.4 Copyright and plagiarism

GenAI tools can generate new content from content produced by people (e.g. artists, musicians, writers, scientists) without acknowledging them, which is regarded as plagiarism. Infringement of copyright may also occur if content or artwork was generated from copyrighted materials.

> **What you can do:** Review the data the GenAI tool has been trained on (is the dataset open source? Or a licensed dataset?) and reference appropriate sources even if the GenAI tool didn't. Never use GenAI content as the final product – integrate your thoughts, ideas and words. Further information on referencing and citing is available.

1.5 Sustainability and exploitation

Training AI models as well as the long-term storage of the outputs can use large amounts of electricity, which has an environmental impact. Ensuring that GenAI tools don't generate violent, racist, and sexist content necessitates additional AI powered safety mechanisms and some developers have outsourced data labelling to low-wage workers in poor working conditions.

> **What you can do:** Understand the environmental footprint associated with training AI models and choose AI models optimised for efficiency or by providers that use renewable energy or are committed to carbon neutrality. Use providers that share their data practices and are committed to fair wages and good working conditions.

2. How GenAI Tools Can Be Used to Support Your Learning

GenAI tools can be a useful learning aid, for example by summarising complex concepts in a form that you may find easier to understand. However, when it comes to work submitted for assessment, it is important that the work is entirely your own. GenAI tools, if authorised by the Course Coordinator, can aid the process of completing an assignment, but they should not be used as a means of generating the assignment (or part of the assignment) and submitted as if it were your own work. The latter is regarded as academic misconduct.

You would do yourself a disservice by outsourcing your work to a GenAI tool as you will not develop the requisite level of knowledge, skills and understanding needed to succeed in University and in your future career.

Below are some suggestions on how GenAI tools can support your learning:

- Generating ideas, sparking your creativity
- Drafting an outline structure (headings, bullet points)
- Enhancing your writing skills by providing suggestions on alternative ways to communicate to improve the coherence, style and grammar of your writing
- Experimenting with tone, voice and style
- Formatting a reference list by specifying the citation style you are using (e.g. APA, MLA Chicago, Harvard) though staff and students do have access to ProQuest Refworks
- Generating summary explanations for complex concepts, being mindful that inaccurate information can be generated

> **Important:** GenAI tools can be powerful aids, but they are a poor substitute to developing your own academic abilities. View GenAI tools as a means to enhance your learning journey, not replace it.

3. Your Responsibilities When Submitting Work for Assessment

When submitting work for assessment it is your responsibility to:

- Adhere to the assessment guidelines specified by your Course Coordinator. Ensure you check your course guide and assessment instructions for guidance on the use of GenAI tools in work submitted for assessment. If in doubt about their use consult your Course Coordinator.
- If your Course Coordinator has made it clear that you can use GenAI tools in work submitted for assessment, ensure you understand to what extent these tools can be used.

- Ensure it is your own original work, embracing the [values of academic integrity](#) (honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility and courage), and avoiding the [pitfalls of plagiarism, collusion, contract cheating and data falsification](#).
- Ensure you keep copies of drafts, notes, your workings, and any annotations or comments on documents, so that you can show the development of your ideas and writing. [Guidance on assignment notes, drafts and document versioning](#) is available.
- Be prepared to demonstrate your understanding and explain your thinking, if asked by your Course Coordinator or tutor to do so.
- If you use GenAI tools for preparing your assignment, ensure you [acknowledge them according to the guidance](#) available.
- [Reference](#) all sources, ensuring you credit and acknowledge the work and ideas of others.

3.1 What happens if you are suspected of using GenAI tools inappropriately?

In instances where a staff member suspects that there are elements in your assessed work that have been created using GenAI tools, and this usage has not been acknowledged or was explicitly prohibited according to the assessment guidelines, they have the option to discuss this with you or they may request that this be investigated further.

During this process, you may be required to:

- Provide Evidence of the Creation Process
  This evidence could include earlier drafts, notes or documentation that illustrates the development of the final assessment. [Guidance on assignment notes, drafts and document versioning](#) is available.
- Engage in a Discussion
  You might be asked to engage in a discussion about your submission, to determine if your level of knowledge aligns with that demonstrated in the submitted assignment.

It is your responsibility to ensure you can satisfy the staff member that the work you submitted for assessment is your own original work. These measures are in place to ensure the integrity of the assessment process and uphold academic standards.

4. How to Acknowledge the Use of GenAI Content in Work Submitted for Assessment

It is recommended that you provide:

- The name(s) of the GenAI tool(s) used
- A statement summarising how they were used
- The prompts used
- The date on which the content was generated
- A description of how the generated content was used.

Consult the detailed [guidance on acknowledging the use of GenAI tools](#) for further information.

5. Support Available

The [Student Learning Service (SLS)](#) works with all students to enhance their academic skills including academic writing, maths skills and study skills. They also offer support for students with dyslexia and other specific learning differences (SpLDs).