

Part B: Use of Generative AI in Research Degree Programmes & Assessments

This Guidance should be read in conjunction with Part A: Ethical Use of AI in Research

Your responsibility as a postgraduate researcher

The fundamental principle is that responsibility for all aspects of the work you submit for assessment remains with you as the author of your thesis. A doctoral thesis is a postgraduate researcher's own account of their investigations – research that they have undertaken under the supervision of their supervisory team. During the final oral examination, one of the responsibilities of the examiners is to establish to their own satisfaction that the learning outcomes have been met, and that the thesis is genuinely the student's own work.

Doctoral students should be particularly mindful of this assessment criterion when considering making use of generative AI tools.

Equally, any work you submit during your research degree candidature will be expected to maintain the same high standards of academic and research integrity. This guidance on the use of Gen AI tools will apply to the following:

- your thesis submission
- work submitted at the progression stage
- work submitted for your annual progress review
- drafts of work submitted to your supervisors for review and comment.

'Work' could include text, data, results, computer code, art-works, performances or any work contributing to the practice element in a practice-based PhD, or other material you generate during your research degree studies.

How you will store or share your work should be considered and documented as part of your Data Management Plan.

Consult your supervisor

You should always ask your supervisors about appropriate use of Gen AI. Make sure that the agreed use of Gen AI is recorded in the e:vision supervision meeting notes.

Ethics

As a postgraduate researcher, you will be expected to understand the wider ethical, legal and societal factors involved in responsible research and innovation.

If you will be using Gen AI for tasks such as data analysis you will need to consider any steps needed to adhere to the terms of your ethical approval (informing the research participants, making data anonymous etc).

There may also be situations where you will need to amend an ethics application as the research study progresses, to take account of changes in your use of Gen AI. You will be responsible for taking any steps need to secure an amendment to any earlier ethics review, if there have been any changes to the methodology or the usage of AI.

Recording your use of Gen AI

Wherever possible, save copies of your inputs and the outputs that the Gen AI tool produces for you. You may be asked to provide this information as part of your assessment or in any academic/research misconduct process.

Keeping records of your process is a principle of good research practice. This applies to your interactions with Gen AI tools in the same way as it would for other record keeping, e.g. lab books or keeping drafts of work and annotations from your supervisors.

In some cases it may not be practical to keep a record of every iteration of your inputs/outputs e.g. where the tool is being used to assist with coding and where the prompt may need refining multiple times. In these cases, discuss with your supervisors how best to document your interactions. These might include:

- sufficiently detailed notes recording the kinds of interactions that took place, the results it produced and how you used them, but not necessarily a record of every single input/output iteration
- a few exemplars/recordings (copies of inputs/outputs) that can help illustrate the approach you took
- a more detailed acknowledgment in your thesis to explain how you used GenAI tools so your approach is open and transparent to your examiners.

The records you keep will help you when it comes to writing your thesis and your viva, but you are also protecting yourself in the event of any challenges about whether the work is your own.

You take final responsibility for the work you submit. As part of the examination you should be prepared to provide this information, explain and justify the ways in which you have used GenAI tools to support your research process.

Developing code

Some Gen AI tools will take code from other sources without referencing the authors of the original codes/ algorithms, even though many of these have opensource IP statements that often request acknowledgement of original authorship. Carefully consider the use of Gen AI tools in the development of code. Be mindful of the risks associated with copyright and ownership and the expectations for the ethical and responsible use of AI.

Bear in mind your assessment criteria and the expectations for novelty, critical ability and engagement with ethical context and implications of your research. You will be expected to take responsibility for the accuracy of your code.

Proper attribution

As a postgraduate researcher, you should always make sure that the good research practice is followed in any work that you do. You must declare your use of any Gen AI tool whenever you submit work for assessment throughout your research degree studies.

Acknowledging use of Generative AI

In all cases, you are required to truthfully acknowledge what elements of any work you submit are your own work or ideas, and what has come from other sources – including Gen AI.

You must acknowledge the use of Gen AI in an 'Acknowledgements' or 'Declarations' section when you have used it as a functional tool to assist you as you were creating any academic work. You

should make clear in your work where you have used Gen AI (e.g. for support with writing style but not for content).

External accreditation

If your research degree programme will be accredited by an external, professional body you will also need to make sure you comply with any guidance on the use of Gen AI issued by the professional body, in addition to the guidance given here.

Ethical or appropriate use of Gen AI in producing written work for assessment

As a general principle, you can use Gen AI to enhance your own learning and help your research process but cannot use AI to generate, write or falsify work.



AI tools cannot be used

For research degree programmes there are some activities where the use of Gen AI tools is not appropriate and is not permitted and doing so would be considered an academic or research integrity offence and would be investigated under the relevant procedures.

Examples where Gen AI use is not allowed include:

- presenting any AI generated text as your own words in your thesis, work submitted at the progression stage, annual progress review or to your supervisors for review and comment.
- falsifying work or breaching guidelines for the research assessment and examination processes.
- taking text you have written yourself and using Gen AI to re-write this. This would include any substantive changes to your original text, for example adding, condensing or re-writing any your sentences or sections of work.
- using Gen AI to paraphrase, substantively rewrite, or change, the work of other authors to create content that is then presented as the researcher's own work
- translating work you have written in another language into English, which you then submit as your own writing.
- helping you to answer questions during your progression or viva.
- altering the substance of any ideas and arguments put forward within the work.
- Fabricating or falsifying data e.g. generating transcripts of interviews that never happened or responses to surveys that never occurred
- Manipulating images copied from research publications (see also [Academic Image Integrity – Appropriate Image Manipulation in Research Publishing](#))



AI tools may be used in an assistive capacity

You may use Gen AI tools to enhance and support the development of specific skills in specific ways, as agreed in discussion with your supervisors. You may use AI tools as a search engine, or to clarify a concept, ask for examples of use, etc.

As with sources such as Wikipedia and other non-peer-reviewed publications you may quote a response from an AI tool but should be aware that such tools are not considered a reputable source, due to the inherent limitations in the way they work. Hence, while you may quote an AI's response you may receive no/little credit for doing so.

If you use Gen AI tools in these ways you must:

- take a critical approach to using outputs, analysing and verifying any information the tools provide.
- critically evaluate any results to address the weaknesses of Gen AI. When your thesis is assessed, you will be expected to have engaged with, and critically evaluated, the existing scholarship in your discipline. You will need to present this in your own words and demonstrate your understanding of the literature in relation to your research.

Examples of where you may use Gen AI in an assistive category include:

- to help you identify and correct issues with spelling, grammar and punctuation, formatting and presentation before you submit work for assessment.
- to help prepare for APR, Progression, viva by generating mock questions.
- data analysis, pattern recognition or generating insights.
- supporting a particular process such as translating or testing and debugging code
- organising your references (do not use Gen AI to generate references as they may unintentionally fabricate references by amalgamating parts of real sources with incorrect or fictional details).
- project planning
- to support your literature review process, for example: supporting the development of database search strategies, constructing a search strategy and search terms, literature mapping and finding papers relevant to your topic.
- summarising papers to help you check your understanding – but you must not use any summary in your thesis
- analysing content
- creating artwork or any work contributing to the practice element in a practice-based PhD (images, audio and videos)
- developing code



AI can be used

There are some specific areas of research where the development or use of Gen AI tools will be integral to answering the research question. In these cases, the use of Gen AI is fundamental to both the research process and the assessment.

Your research question will require you to demonstrate your ability to use Gen AI tools effectively and critically to tackle complex problems, make informed judgments and generate creative solutions. The use of Gen AI and your critical appraisal of its output will explicitly form part of the research. Your thesis submission and oral examination will provide an opportunity to demonstrate effective and responsible use of Gen AI.

If you use Gen AI tools in these ways you must:

- take a critical approach to using outputs, analysing and verifying any information the tools provide
- read and follow the guidance on Data restrictions and security and never enter sensitive or personal data in any prompt or content that you provide to any Gen AI tool.

Examples of where you may use Gen AI if your research is in this category:

- during your viva if you need to demonstrate to your examiners the tool you have developed or worked with during your research process
- comparing content (AI generated and human generated)
- creating content in particular styles
- researching and seeking answers
- analysing content
- creating artwork (e.g. images, audio and videos)
- translating content.