

Guidelines for the Use of AI-based Tools in Academic Work

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AI-based tools are becoming increasingly widely used, including in our university. Although they can be helpful with certain tasks and problems, it is not always advisable or even permissible to use them in writing tasks or for presentations, etc.

The following guidelines apply to term papers, BA/MA theses, as well as smaller written assignments or presentations throughout your studies. Please also keep in mind our general guidelines for term papers.

- Academic writing is a craft that needs to be cultivated through practice. Outsourcing parts of your writing process to AI-based tools means missing out on key learning opportunities which are essential for your further studies, for developing skills of academic argument and judgement, and for advancing your future career prospects.
- AI-generated text may appear polished at first glance, but it consistently lacks in academic rigour. If you rely on AI-generated text, these analytical weaknesses will be immediately apparent to your lecturers, and this will be reflected in their evaluation of your work.
- AI-generated text lacks the individual voice and texture that characterises human writing. Your lecturers want to find your distinctive voice and argumentative style in your work, and they will quickly detect when it is absent. Again, academic writing is a craft honed through practice, and it is perfectly normal not to write a perfect paper straight away—it is always better to present your own ideas in your own words than to use the superficial and sterile prose of AI-generated text.
- It is always forbidden to copy and paste AI-generated text into your writing assignments. Doing this is considered plagiarism and will result in you failing the assignment. Your lecturers may use specialised software to detect AI use and plagiarism.
- It is vital that you critically evaluate AI-generated text, no less than any other source. Keep in mind that generative AI often produces false or biased content rather than evidenced or rigorously argued knowledge. Make sure to carefully watch out for any false information or stereotypes that might be presented to you by AI.
- It is always strictly forbidden to use any empirical data you collected during your research as input for AI-based software (e.g. uploading audio recordings for automatic transcription or interview transcripts for analysis). This would entail breaching confidentiality and the agreements you made with your interlocutors and thus violates research ethics standards.
- Remember: it is not in the least compulsory or even expected to use any AI-based technology during your studies. You are perfectly free to refrain from using them entirely and to stay on the safe side in many respects—including that of making the most of opportunities for personal development during your studies.
- There are also several ethical concerns around the widespread use of AI technologies, especially their immense environmental impact in terms of energy consumption and emissions. Please reflect critically on this, if you decide to use them.

If you have any questions regarding these guidelines, or need assistance with writing assignments, please contact your lecturers. Some examples for permissible and non-permissible uses of AI-based tools are given below.

Examples for permissible and non-permissible uses of AI-based tools

	Permissible	Non-permissible
Finding literature	Only after a thorough lit search without the aid of AI and if necessary: Using AI-based tools to help find literature that might be hard to find elsewhere. Critically reflecting on whether the generated recommendations are useful and citable.	Solely and uncritically relying on AI-generated bibliographies. Please be aware that AI might suggest literature that is not relevant, citable or even real!
Lit review	Using AI-tools to double check your understanding of certain aspects or background information. Critically reflect on the tool's output and refer to suitable academic literature to further strengthen your interpretation.	Solely and uncritically relying on AI-tools for summaries and lit discussion. Copy-pasting insights about the literature which are not your own but the AIs.
Copyediting	Using spellchecking, grammar tools and style recommendations critically in addition to reading and editing your text yourself multiple times and asking peers for feedback.	Having an AI-based tool rewrite all or parts of your thesis.