

AI and the Responsible Conduct of Research at UNSW

1. Purpose

This document provides guidance on the responsible use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) in research conducted at UNSW. It explains how AI should be used within the University's existing research governance framework and highlights issues that require particular consideration when using AI tools in research.

This guidance should be read alongside the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research, the UNSW Research Code of Conduct, the (forthcoming) UNSW Research Policy, the UNSW Higher Degree Research Policy, the UNSW AI Assurance Framework, and other applicable University policies and external requirements (see Section 6).

2. UNSW's position

Generative AI can have both positive and negative implications for research. It can assist with data analysis, text summarisation, and other tasks that can speed up the research process. Yet, there is a risk of researchers relying too heavily on these tools, which can lead to unoriginal work and potential plagiarism. Additionally, the ease of generating realistic-looking text and data with AI tools raises concerns about the validity and reliability of research results.

At UNSW, the use of generative AI is encouraged where it supports high-quality research and is consistent with the principles of research integrity. Researchers remain responsible for the design, conduct, reporting, and dissemination of their research. The use of AI does not diminish these responsibilities.

Researchers should use AI tools in a manner that is:

- responsible
- transparent
- proportionate to the risks involved
- consistent with applicable ethical, legal and contractual obligations.

3. Expectations of use

When using AI in research, researchers should:

- remain accountable for all outputs generated with AI assistance

- verify the accuracy, completeness, and appropriateness of AI-generated material before relying on it
- protect confidential, personal, commercially sensitive, and other restricted information
- disclose the use of AI where reasonably expected or required
- comply with relevant ethics approvals, funding rules, publisher policies, and contractual obligations.

These expectations complement, rather than replace, the broader responsibilities set out in the UNSW Research Code of Conduct and the (forthcoming) UNSW Research Policy.

4. AI specific guidance

4.1 Authorship and accountability

AI tools cannot satisfy accepted authorship or inventorship criteria and must not be listed as authors or inventors. Researchers remain responsible for all research outputs, including material generated or modified using AI. AI outputs should be critically evaluated and appropriately verified before they are incorporated into research.

4.2 Disclosure and transparency

AI use should be disclosed and appropriately acknowledged where reasonably expected, particularly where it materially contributes to research design, data generation or analysis, coding, interpretation, or preparation of a research output. Researchers should comply with any disclosure requirements imposed by publishers, funders, ethics committees or collaborators.

4.3 Confidential and sensitive information

Researchers must not upload confidential, personal, commercially sensitive or otherwise restricted information into AI systems unless:

- they are authorised to do so;
- appropriate safeguards are in place; and
- the use complies with applicable University policies, ethics approvals, agreements and legal obligations.

4.4 Intellectual property

Researchers remain responsible for ensuring they have the right to provide material to an AI system and should consider how the terms of the AI service may affect confidentiality, ownership, licensing, patentability, and commercialisation. AI-generated material should be checked for plagiarism, copyright issues, and inaccurate attribution before use.

4.5 Grant applications, publication and peer review

Requirements for AI use vary between funding bodies, publishers, journals, and conferences. Researchers are responsible for complying with the requirements of the relevant organisation before using AI in:

- grant applications
- grant assessment
- manuscript preparation
- peer review
- editorial activities.



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4.6 Higher Degree Research (HDR)

HDR candidates may use AI tools to support their research where this is consistent with University requirements and the expectations of their discipline. Candidates remain responsible for the originality and integrity of their work and should discuss appropriate AI use with their supervisors where required.

Regarding the integrity of examination, UNSW has clear Guidelines on editing in Research Theses. HDR Candidates should review these guidelines and the guidelines provided by the Institute for Professional Editors and ensure that the use of AI tools is in line with this editing advice, and that the tool is acknowledged where appropriate.

HDR candidates should also consider any impact that the use of AI tools may have on the criteria that theses are examined against, which are outlined in the UNSW thesis examination procedure.

5. External requirements

This guidance provides UNSW's overarching approach to the responsible use of AI in research. Researchers remain responsible for complying with the requirements of:

- funding bodies
- publishers and journals
- ethics committees
- collaborators
- industry partners
- contractual agreements
- HDR examination.

Where an external requirement is more specific or restrictive than this guidance, the external requirement takes precedence.

6. Related policies and guidance

This document should be read alongside:

- [Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research](#)
- [UNSW Research Code of Conduct](#)
- [UNSW Generative AI in Teaching and Assessment](#)
- [UNSW Higher Degree Research Policy](#)
- [UNSW Guidelines on editing in Research Theses](#)
- [UNSW AI Assurance Framework](#)
- [Responsible AI @ UNSW resources](#)
- [UNSW Information Governance Policy](#)
- [Australian Research Council \(ARC\) AI policy](#)
- [National Health and Medical Research Council \(NHMRC\) AI policy](#)
- [Institute for Professional Editors guidelines](#)
- [Australia's AI Ethics Principles](#)

Forthcoming UNSW Policies:

- Research Policy
- Intellectual Property & Commercialisation Policy



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