

Common Awards Policy and Guidance on Generative AI

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1. Introduction

This document provides three things:

- (1) **An academic misconduct policy on the use of generative AI**, consisting of
 - a [core policy](#),
 - a table of [detailed guidance](#), and
 - a [declaration](#) for students to submit with their summative assignments;
- (2) **Advice** for [staff](#) and [students](#) on interpreting and applying the policy;
- (3) **Background information** on [theological](#) and [ethical](#) ideas that inform the policy.

If you want to know our basic stance on the uses of AI that count as academic misconduct, go to the [Core Policy](#).

If you need information on how that policy applies in detail, go to the [Detailed Guidance](#).

The limits of an academic misconduct policy

This policy has a narrow purpose: to define **academic misconduct** in this area. Students who break the rules set out in this policy can expect to face an Academic Misconduct Panel, and to receive an academic penalty. That could include needing to resubmit work, having marks docked, failing a module, or more. This is in line with the way academic misconduct is handled more generally in a UK Higher Education context.

This is, however, *only* an academic misconduct policy. There are various uses of AI that don't count as academic misconduct, according to this policy, but that does not necessarily mean that they are **wise** or **ethical**. (For why we have to distinguish between what counts as academic misconduct and what counts as unwise or unethical behaviour, see our explanation of [why we have not imposed a blanket ban](#).)

Staff may advise students against unwise or unethical uses of generative AI, and expect students to follow that advice. If the present policy says that these uses are 'not academic misconduct', that only means that they don't make students subject to academic penalties or the academic misconduct process.

Students should note, however, that **uses of AI that we don't rule out as academic misconduct can still have negative academic consequences**. Some uses will pull students' marks down significantly, not because of any formal academic penalty, but because they undermine students' learning or their ability to demonstrate it.

In our [detailed guidance](#) and in our advice for [staff](#) and [students](#), we have included some initial advice on **wise** use of AI.

The use of generative AI is also highly controversial for **ethical** reasons. We have made provision in this policy for those institutions and individuals that want to minimise the use of AI in the light of these issues.

2. Definitions

Artificial Intelligence ('AI'). Any technology that performs tasks that we normally think of as involving human intelligence – or that can simulate such performance – can be called 'artificially intelligent'. That might include a computer programme that can identify cancer cells on a mammogram, a device in a car that can help you manoeuvre into parking spaces, or a chatbot on a shopping website that can answer questions about your purchase. Whether a particular system gets called 'AI' or not is often a matter of marketing more than of precise definition.

Generative AI. An AI technology that 'learns' from a huge number of examples of works of a particular kind, and can then *generate* works of that kind, is called 'generative' AI. Some generative AIs, for instance, have scanned a vast quantity of text created by humans, and can produce text of their own. In doing so, they simulate or mimic something of the creativity and intelligence involved in human writing. Other generative AIs work in similar ways on pictures, videos, or even songs.

3. Core policy

This is an **academic misconduct** policy. It applies to students' use of generative AI in summative assessments on Common Awards modules. Its only purpose is to define which uses of generative AI count as academic misconduct in that context.

In the case of **formative assessment**, any issues with generative AI should be dealt with informally by the TEI involved.

Students and staff should be aware of the difference between what counts as **academic misconduct**, and what counts as **unwise** or **unethical** uses of generative AI, as set out in the [introduction](#).

Students with **disabilities** and/or **specific learning differences** should note that special provisions may be made for them in relation to these rules. See the 'exceptions' at the end of the policy for more detail.

To avoid **academic misconduct**

- You must *not* use generative AI to create substantive content for your assessed work that you then present as if it were your own creation.
 - The [Detailed guidance](#) accompanying this policy clarifies what is meant by 'create substantive content'.
 - This rule covers both AI-generated material that you include directly in your work, and material that you include after modification or editing.
- You must *not* provide a generative AI with any text or other material produced by others, *unless* that material is in the public domain, or you have explicit permission to do so, or you have confirmation that the content will not be used to train the AI in question.
 - This includes materials produced by your teachers, such as handouts and slides.
 - This rule covers both uploading material to an AI and providing the AI with a link to it online.
 - Note that 'in the public domain' does not simply mean 'publicly available'. You should presume that any material available to you is covered by its creators' copyright, unless you can find explicit indication that the creators have designated it as public domain, or released it on a license that allows you to provide it to an AI.
- You must *not* provide a generative AI with any confidential information.
 - This includes any personal information about identifiable individuals.

In general, however, other limited uses of generative AI to facilitate your work **do not count as academic misconduct**, provided that

- the resulting work still reflects your own engagement with your sources, your own understanding, and your own reasoning and judgments;
- you clearly acknowledge any use of AI that has substantially informed the content or presentation of your work; and
- you demonstrate appropriate caution about the limitations of the tools you use.
 - *The [Detailed guidance](#) accompanying this policy, and especially its instructions on appropriate acknowledgment, clarifies how you can ensure that your work reflects your own engagement, understanding, reasoning and judgment.*
 - *The [Advice for students](#) later in this document explains in detail how to acknowledge AI use.*
 - *The [Detailed guidance](#) also clarifies what is meant by ‘appropriate caution’.*
 - *Note that failure to exercise appropriate caution when using AI may affect your marks.*

Saying that these uses **do not count as academic misconduct** means that you will not face formal academic penalties for them. You should be aware that they may still have negative consequences, including for your learning and your marks, and that your teachers may advise against them.

Exceptions:

- Some assignments require you to respond to questions or prompts within a short timeframe (e.g., some kinds of exam, or assessed conversations). If you are not normally allowed access to notes, books or other learning resources during such **time-limited assignments**, you should assume that you are not allowed *any* use of AI during those assignments either, unless you are given clear instructions to the contrary.
- **The core policy may be overridden by your teachers for specific assignments.** In such cases, they will give you explicit written guidance on what is or is not permitted. In the absence of such explicit written guidance, you should assume that the rules in the core policy hold.
- For some **students with specific learning differences, disabilities, or other specific needs**, reasonable adjustments may be made relating to these rules, either for specific assignments or more generally. Where that happens, you will be given explicit written guidance on what you are and are not permitted to do. In the absence of such explicit written guidance, you should follow the rules in the core policy.

4. Detailed guidance

This table must be read in conjunction with the [Core policy](#). It gives staff and students detailed guidance on what counts as academic misconduct and what does not, and some brief indications of how to exercise appropriate caution when a usage is not ruled out as academic misconduct. The table can also be used by markers, when they are assessing whether students have exercised appropriate caution, and by Academic Misconduct Panels, when assessing whether a student has broken the policy rules.

Note that, in some areas, the line between categories is blurred. For instance, there is no hard line where ‘stylistic improvements’ tips over into ‘generating substantive text’. If in doubt, students should consult their tutors for advice, and tutors should use their judgment.

Type of use of AI	What exactly is the AI being used for?	Is it academic misconduct?	What is appropriate caution?
1. Generating substantive text	Producing sentences, paragraphs, subsections, or whole assignments, for you to include in your assignment. This includes using generative AI to generate sentences, paragraphs, subsections or whole assignments that you then edit, paraphrase, or otherwise rework before you include them in your assignment. <i>Examples: prompting ChatGPT to write text for you.</i>	Producing whole assignments or subsections of assignments is always academic misconduct. Producing smaller amounts such as sentences or paragraphs need not count as academic misconduct, if you treat the generated text as you would other written sources: <i>either</i> quoting the generated material directly (putting the material in quotation marks <i>or</i> setting it out as a quotation in its own paragraph) <i>or</i> paraphrasing it. In either case you <i>must</i> acknowledge this use of AI explicitly at the point where it occurs.	Be aware that content generated by an AI may not be very good. Do not treat it as an authoritative source. Do not rely on it as your only source for factual claims.

2. Minor corrections	Identifying and correcting errors of punctuation, spelling and grammar. <i>Examples: Microsoft Word's built in spelling and grammar checker; Grammarly's correctness suggestions.</i>	Not academic misconduct. No need to give any acknowledgement.	Remember that sometimes even the most advanced proofing tools will give bad advice.
3. Consistency checking	Checking the formatting of headings, the numbering of sections, capitalisation, hyphenation, and similar. <i>Examples: PerfectIt; Grammarly.</i>	Not academic misconduct. No need to give any acknowledgement.	Don't simply accept all proposed changes without checking.
4. Suggesting wording/phrasing	(a) Providing alternative phrasing for a sentence you have already written, without changing the overall meaning. <i>Examples: Microsoft Word's 'clarify' function, used on individual phrases; Grammarly's clarity function.</i>	Not academic misconduct. No need to give any acknowledgement.	Check to see that your overall meaning has not been altered.

<i>Suggesting wording/phrasing (continued)</i>	(b) Suggesting ways of continuing a sentence you have begun to type, without adding substantive content or starting a new sentence. (If this leads to adding more than five words, see 'Generating substantive text' below.) <i>Examples: Autocorrect; Google Docs smart compose; ChatGPT.</i>	Not academic misconduct. No need to give any acknowledgement.	
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5. Stylistic improvements to existing text	Suggesting stylistic revisions to a paragraph, section, or whole text that you have already created, often with a view to clarifying the writing, or making it suitable for a specific audience. (This <i>only</i> refers to changes to the expression of ideas, claims and arguments you have already included. It does <i>not</i> include suggesting new or improved ideas, claims or arguments – for which, see ‘Generating substantive text’ above.) (Note that stylistic improvements can slightly lengthen a text. If, however, widespread stylistic improvements lengthen the overall text of an assignment by more than 2% – e.g., taking a 1,000-word piece over 1,020 words – you should see ‘Generating substantive text’ above.) <i>Examples: Microsoft Word rewrite (Copilot).</i>	Not academic misconduct. You <i>must</i>, however, acknowledge this use of AI in the Declaration accompanying your work.	Check to make sure that your meaning has not been changed. Be aware that, by altering your normal style, this may trigger suspicions that your work has been generated by AI.
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6. Shortening	Bringing an overlong text down to your specified wordcount. <i>Examples: ChatGPT, QuillBot.</i>	Not academic misconduct. You <i>must</i>, however, acknowledge this use of AI in the Declaration accompanying your work.	Check to see what has been omitted. Check to see whether the writing still flows. Check to see that your meaning has not been altered. Check that the resulting word count is right.
7. Expanding	Increasing the length of a text up to a specified wordcount. <i>Examples: ChatGPT; Jasper AI.</i>	Academic misconduct. This is equivalent to ‘Generating substantive text’ – see above.	
8. Giving feedback on your draft	(a) Identifying stylistic problems. <i>Examples: Grammarly; ChatGPT.</i>	In principle, this is not academic misconduct, but if it amounts to suggesting substantive new text, see ‘Generating substantive text’ above.	Be aware that the suggestions provided by the AI might not be good ones. Always use your own judgment when choosing which problems to tackle, and how.
	(b) Identifying problems with your argument (without suggesting new text that avoids those problems). <i>Examples: ChatGPT.</i>		

9. Suggesting an outline for an essay	Producing a list of topics, headings, or bullet points that you use to guide your writing (but that you do not quote directly). <i>Examples: ChatGPT.</i>	Not academic misconduct. You <i>must</i>, however, acknowledge this use of AI in the Declaration accompanying your work.	Be aware that the structure suggested might not be a good one. Be aware that it also might not match the instructions you were given for your assignment. If you do this, it is good practice to ask for several structures so that you need to exercise judgement about which to use.
10. Image or diagram generation	Generating visual or audiovisual material in response to your input. <i>Examples: DALL-E; Midjourney; Stable Diffusion.</i>	This is not normally academic misconduct, though you <i>must</i> acknowledge this use of AI at the point where it occurs. If, however, the creation of the image is itself a distinct activity set for you by your tutors, you should check with them as to whether AI use is acceptable. If the generation of the image or diagram involves the generation of text, see 'Generating substantive text' above.	

11. Translating	(a) Translating a text you want to use into a language you can read, so that you can learn from it or cite it. <i>Examples: Google Translate.</i>	Not academic misconduct when translating individual words or short phrases (not normally more than five words in the original language). In these cases, there is no need for acknowledgment. For longer passages, you <i>must</i> acknowledge the use of AI if you quote or paraphrase the translation in your work, at the point where it occurs. If the translation is simply used as a tool for your own learning, however, and if you do not incorporate the translation into your work, either directly or in a paraphrased form, there is no need for acknowledgment. Note the rule in the Core policy on not providing an AI with material that is not in the public domain.	Be cautious about the accuracy of any AI translation: don't rely on it as your only source for a claim about what the text says or how it should be understood.
	(b) Translating a text you have been set as a translation exercise. <i>Examples: Google Translate.</i>	Academic misconduct. You must <i>not</i> use an AI translation if you have been set a translation exercise.	

12.Changing the format of references	Changing the way you cite your sources – e.g., putting your bibliography entries into a recognised format, or changing from a system of footnotes giving full bibliographic details to a system of brief inline citations. <i>Examples: EndNote; Zotero.</i>	Not academic misconduct. No need to give any acknowledgement.	If using any software that is not a dedicated reference manager like EndNote or Zotero, make sure you check that the AI tool has not mangled your references.
13.Suggesting avenues for research	Identifying key ideas, arguments, or lines of approach in response to your input. <i>Examples: Google search summary; Elicit; Consensus; ChatGPT Deep Research.</i>	Not academic misconduct. You <i>must</i>, however, acknowledge this use of AI in the Declaration accompanying your work.	Do not rely on AI to identify the only or the best avenues for research. Remember in particular that generative AI reproduces the biases of the material on which it was trained. NB: if you use a structure that AI suggests, or if you quote from it, refer to ‘Suggesting an outline for an essay’ or ‘Generating substantive text’ above.

14. Summarising a source or sources	Providing a paragraph, set of bullet points or longer text summarising some source – either one that you provide to the AI, or one that the AI already ‘knows’ about. <i>Examples: ChatGPT; QuillBot.</i>	This is not academic misconduct if this is simply a tool for your own learning. There is no need to acknowledge this if you do not quote, paraphrase, use one or more ideas from, or otherwise include material from the summary in your work. If, however, you do quote, paraphrase, use one or more ideas from, or otherwise include material from the summary in your assignment, or base your assignment on it in some way, see the guidance on ‘Generating substantive text’ above. Note the rule in the Core policy on not providing an AI with material that is not in the public domain.	Be aware that an AI summary may be inaccurate or otherwise misleading, and that might have an impact on your learning and on your marks. It should never be the sole way in which you engage with a source.
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15. Providing a discussion of a source	Generate text, audio, or other output that mimics the kind of discussion of a source that a human commentator might produce. <i>Examples: Google NotebookLM ‘Audio overview’; Perplexity.</i>	This is not academic misconduct if this is simply a tool for your own learning. There is no need to acknowledge this if you do not quote, paraphrase, use one or more ideas from, or otherwise include material from the discussion in your work. If, however, you do quote, paraphrase, use one or more ideas from, or otherwise include material from the discussion in your assignment, or base your assignment on it in some way, see the guidance on ‘Generating substantive text’ above. Note the rule in the Core policy on not providing an AI with material that is not in the public domain.	Be aware that an AI discussion may be inaccurate or otherwise misleading. It should never be the sole way in which you engage with a source.
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16.Extracting key information from a source	Extract summary information such as a timeline of the events mentioned, or a list of the main people mentioned. <i>Examples: Google NotebookLM 'Timeline'; ChatGPT.</i>	This is not academic misconduct if this is simply a tool for your own learning. There is no need to acknowledge this if you do not quote, paraphrase, use one or more ideas from, or otherwise include material from this information in your work. If, however, you do quote, paraphrase, use one or more ideas from, or otherwise include material from this information in your assignment, or base your assignment on it in some way, see the guidance on 'Generating substantive text' above. Note the rule in the Core policy on not providing an AI with material that is not in the public domain.	Be aware that the 'information' an AI extracts may be inaccurate or otherwise misleading. You should always check the accuracy of any information you rely upon in your assignment.
17.Creating a revision aid	Generating a quiz, or sample questions for you to practice on, or flashcards to memorize, or similar. <i>Examples: Quizlet (AI)</i>	Not academic misconduct. Note the rule in the Core policy on not providing an AI with material that is not in the public domain.	Where this material ends up including claims or references, check them to make sure you're revising accurate material.

5. Declaration

This declaration should be submitted by students with all summative assignments.

AI Declaration

I acknowledge the following uses of generative AI in preparation of this piece of work:

- ☐ I am not aware of having made any use of generative AI.
- ☐ I used AI as a research tool (e.g., to help me identify sources, to provide summaries or discussions of sources).

List tools used:

- ☐ I used AI to generate ideas for structuring this assignment.

List tools used:

- ☐ I used AI to generate text that I have quoted or paraphrased, and I have acknowledged all such uses where they occur in the assignment.
- ☐ I used AI to clarify or otherwise improve my phrasing.

List tools used:

- ☐ I used AI to shorten this piece to meet the word length.

List tools used:

- ☐ I used AI to give me feedback on a draft of this assignment.

List tools used:

- ☐ I used generative AI in some other way.

List tools used, and give details of use:

6. Advice for students

Please note that the advice below is not comprehensive. Your teachers may well have other advice for you which supplements the advice below.

Appropriate caution

- Generative AI cannot be trusted to make accurate factual claims. You should never rely on AI-generated content as your only source for a claim, but should always check against non-AI sources.
- Generative AI cannot be trusted to give accurate information about sources. It may invent sources; it may misquote or otherwise misrepresent real sources; it may give inaccurate references to them. You should never rely on AI-generated content as your only evidence for saying that a source exists, what that source says, or where that source can be found.
- Generative AI cannot be trusted to be unbiased. It tends to reproduce the biases of the material on which it was trained. You should always ask whose voices are being amplified and whose are being ignored, and where appropriate should look for ways of introducing perspectives beyond those that AI has highlighted.
- Generative AI systems require data centres that consume huge amounts of energy, and that often use large quantities of water for cooling in contexts where water is scarce. You should be aware of these environmental impacts when deciding how much to use AI.
- Generative AI systems are sometimes trained with the help of human moderators whose job it is to filter out harmful content. You should be aware of the hidden labour, some of it very poorly paid and traumatising, that lies behind some AI tools, when deciding how much to use them.
- Many generative AI tools are trained on very large amounts of data that is not in the public domain – e.g., on books and artworks by creators who have not given permission for their works to be used in this way. Although the AI tools may not store these works and may not be able to reproduce them directly, they are often capable of generating content closely based on them, for financial gain, without any recompense being offered to the creators. You should consider, when deciding whether to use AI, the extent to which you are willing to benefit from these practices.
- Given that the use of generative AI is a focus for these and other ethical concerns, some of you, and some of your teachers, may want to minimise your use of it, or even to refuse any avoidable use of it. Judgments about this will differ, but given the significant ethical concerns surrounding generative AI your teachers should respect your decisions about this. In particular, your teachers should not demand that you use AI tools, or create an environment where a high volume of AI usage is unavoidable, and they should not directly or indirectly

penalise you if you don't use them. If necessary, they should provide an alternative where a standard assignment would require you to use AI. They might, however, require you to engage with content that has already been produced by generative AI.

- If you do (within the limits set in this policy) use AI to assist with large-scale alterations to your assignment – e.g., stylistic improvements, shortening, revision in the light of AI feedback, or similar – it is good practice to keep 'before' and 'after' versions (clearly labelled as such). This can help protect you if you are accused of academic misconduct.
- If you do use generative AI to create or suggest material for an assignment, you remain responsible for the work that you submit. If, for instance, the material that you submit breaks some rule (e.g., because it is offensive, or breaks confidentiality, or breaks our research ethics policy) you will be held responsible. It will be no defence to say that 'the AI did it', and that you did not notice.

Acknowledging your use of generative AI

The [Core policy](#) requires that 'you clearly acknowledge any use of AI that has substantially affected the content or presentation of your work'. It is important to be honest about the sources of your work.

There are two main ways of citing uses of generative AI. The first is for use when you have drawn on AI-generated material at a specific point in your assignment, and the [Detailed guidance](#) accompanying the policy tells you to acknowledge this use of AI explicitly at the point where it occurs.

- Where you directly include text that was created by a generative AI tool, you should add a citation at the point where you use that text. For example, you might write,

You should use AI to facilitate, not to undermine learning. As one AI put it, 'AI-generated material may be used to inspire, explore, or reframe ideas – but not to bypass learning or relational depth.'²³

You would then need to add a footnote:

²³ Quotation generated by Aiden Cinnamon Tea, a custom version of ChatGPT, <https://chatgpt.com/g/g-6786112cedfc819190a656adb28bb58f-aiden-cinnamon-tea>, 28 April 2025.

- Where you have drawn directly on AI-generated content for specific elements of your assignment, without directly quoting it, you should cite the AI, just as you would when paraphrasing or drawing from any other source. For instance, you might write

It is a problem when AI is used in ways that weaken the relationships that should surround our learning.²³

You would then add a footnote:

²³ Idea suggested by Aiden Cinnamon Tea, a custom version of ChatGPT, <https://chatgpt.com/g/g-6786112cedfc819190a656adb28bb58f-aiden-cinnamon-tea>, 28 April 2025.

The second form of acknowledgment is for other kinds of use of generative AI. As explained in the [Detailed guidance](#) accompanying the policy, you will need to describe most of these uses you have made of generative AI in the [Declaration](#) that accompanies all your summative assignments.

In order to be able to complete this declaration accurately, it is important to **keep good notes**. Just as it is good practice to keep careful note of the books, articles, web pages, videos, and other materials that you consult when preparing assessed work, it is also good practice to keep a log of any use you make of generative AI. You won't always know, because the generative AI technology is often invisibly embedded in apps and devices that you use regularly – though you should make reasonable efforts to find out. Often, however, you *will* be aware of using an app, function or online tool on your computer, phone or tablet, to improve, extend or revise your writing. If you do this in any way that goes beyond simple correction of spelling and grammatical errors, make a note of what you were using and what you did with it. Your notes should be good enough to enable you to follow the guidelines set out above.

7. Advice for staff

Are you free to set different rules?

Staff may wish to advise students against uses of AI that this policy declares not to be academic misconduct, and they may make it clear that they expect students to follow that advice. Nothing in this policy rules that out. The policy does, however, rule out using the *academic misconduct* process to enforce those expectations, or imposing *academic penalties* (including marking penalties) as a general rule upon students who do not meet them.

Of course, some uses of AI will inherently lead to lower marks, because they will interfere with students' learning or with their demonstration of their learning – i.e., they will lead to lower marks because the quality of the submitted work will be lower, when measured against the normal Common Awards marking criteria. Where a use of AI is declared not to be academic misconduct by this policy, however, staff may *not* normally withhold or dock marks for those students who use AI in that way, in such a way that the mark no longer reflects the normal Common Awards marking criteria.

Where a *specific assignment* warrants it, you may give students instructions on AI usage that differ from the [Core policy](#) and [Detailed guidance](#), and have those instructions reflected in the mark scheme for that specific assignment. On every occasion when you do this, however, you must give clear and explicit written guidance to students on what is and is not permitted, noting how that differs from this policy, and you should provide a clear rationale (related to the relevant learning outcomes) for why this specific assignment warrants these modifications.

Please note, however, that individual tutors, or TEIs as a whole, must *not* set a blanket policy of this kind for generative-AI usage that differs from the [Core policy](#) and [Detailed guidance](#). That is, tutors and TEIs cannot *as a general rule* either permit uses of generative AI in summative assessment that are ruled out by this policy, or set more restrictive rules *and expect those rules to be enforced by marking penalties or by the use of the academic misconduct process*. (E.g., a tutor or TEI could not decide to dock ten marks from, or to fail, all assignments in which a student is found to have made any use whatsoever of generative AI.)

The Common Awards academic misconduct policy and the Common Awards marking criteria need to be applied uniformly across the whole of the Common Awards partnership.

Modelling good practice

Since we ask students to acknowledge their use of AI, you as staff should also acknowledge your own usage too. If you have used generative AI in the preparation of class materials, for instance, you should tell your students clearly and explicitly.

Since we ask students to exercise appropriate caution where they do use generative AI, you should model that caution yourself. Where you have used generative AI, you should explain to students what steps you took to ensure that the results were not problematic.

Since we ask students to pay attention to the ethical issues surrounding generative AI when making decisions about how to use it, you should model such attentiveness yourself. You should inform yourself about the ethical issues surrounding your own and your students' uses of AI, and be prepared to discuss your reasons with students.

Remember also that you remain responsible for the content of any resources you provide for students, even if that content has been generated in whole or in part by AI. You are, for instance, responsible for ensuring that the material you provide is not misleading, biased or offensive.

Setting assessments

As generative AI becomes more pervasive, tutors should be considering their assessment practices, and thinking together about how to set assignments that, as far as possible, do not encourage or reward misuse of AI.

Some assignments, like an oral presentation followed by Q&A, or an assessed conversation, or a traditional on-site exam, are very largely proof against AI usage. **TEIs should consider ensuring that all students experience some such assessments in the course of their programmes.**

For other assignments, it is very hard to design AI out of the picture entirely. This is a fast-moving area, but some good advice can be found in the following sources:

- QAA, 'Reconsidering assessment for the ChatGPT era: QAA advice on developing sustainable assessment strategies' (2023), <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/members/reconsidering-assessment-for-the-chat-gpt-era.pdf>
- Wejdan Awadallah Alkouk, 'AI-resistant assessments in higher education: practical insights from faculty training workshops', *Frontiers in Education* 4 Dec 2024, <https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/education/articles/10.3389/feduc.2024.1499495/full> – see the section on 'AI-resistant assessments'
- KCL, 'Approaches to assessment in the age of AI' (2025), <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/about/strategy/learning-and-teaching/ai-guidance/approaches-to-assessment>
- Glion Institute of Higher Education, 'How to tweak assessments to limit the use of generative AI' (2024), https://library.glion.edu/celt/tweak_assessments/
- Oliver Jarvest, Ying Zhou and Simon Sheridan, 'AI-proof project-based assessments by making them context-specific', *Times Higher Education* 4 June 2025, <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/campus/aiproof-projectbased-assessments-making-them-contextspecific>.

Marking

If you are a marker, and for any reason you suspect that a student has made a use of generative AI not permitted by this policy, you should immediately make a report detailing your suspicion and the relevant evidence to the chair of your TEI's Board of Examiners, in accordance with the [Academic Misconduct policy](#). You do not, at this stage, need to have *proof* of misuse.

Where students do make *permitted* use of AI-generated material, you should consider carefully its effect on your marking and feedback.

Your primary resource in this area is your existing academic judgment. If you know, for instance, that a student has taken the structure for their essay from a generative AI source, you should treat that in the same way that you would if you realised they had received advice on how to structure the essay from a friend or a tutor, or taken the structure from an essay written by a former student. You must not impose a marking penalty on them simply for the fact that they have done this. So, for instance, if the structure of the essay is good, and you discover that it was suggested by generative AI, you should not penalise the student by automatically docking marks, or by somehow trying to work out what mark the essay would have deserved had it been structured less well. Your mark should, instead, reflect the essay as submitted, as measured against the Common Awards marking criteria. You might well, however, consider that the student's use of this good structure does not itself give any evidence of their own understanding of the essay's subject matter, and you might decide that you need to base your assessment of their understanding on other aspects of the essay.

Similarly, and as with students' inclusion of material from any other source, you should be aware that their inclusion of (appropriately acknowledged) material substantially generated by generative AI is not in itself evidence that they have understood that material. Your judgments about their meeting of the relevant learning outcomes should focus on what they go on to *do* with this material, rather than simply on their ability to get AI to generate it.

You should also look for evidence of appropriate caution. If, for example, you find that a student has included AI-generated citations of non-existent material, or other AI 'hallucinations', this would be evidence of poor academic practice even where the use of AI is acknowledged. Such poor practice would count against the meeting of a learning outcome like 'Identify, gather and evaluate source materials for a specific purpose'. (Many modules include such learning outcomes; see, for example, [TMM1011](#).) Such incautious use can appropriately be reflected in your marking.

All of this *only* applies to the allocation of marks for summative assessed work. TEIs remain free to respond in other ways to uses of generative AI that they deem unwise or unethical.

The Academic Misconduct process

When a marker or external examiner has notified the chair of the TEI Board of Examiners of a possible offence, the chair must, according to the [Academic Misconduct policy](#), make a judgment as to whether there is ‘sufficient detailed evidence of an offence’. The chair is not being asked at this stage whether they think there is sufficient evidence to *demonstrate* that misconduct has taken place, but whether there is sufficient evidence to make the suspicion of misconduct *plausible*. The chair is then asked to convene a panel to pursue the matter further.

It is the job of the Academic Misconduct Panel to determine whether there is sufficient evidence to demonstrate that misconduct has taken place. In the case of suspected misuse of generative AI, the panel might take into account, but should not rely solely upon, the scores generated by AI-detection software such as Turnitin. The panel might also take into account numerous other factors, including:

- the presence of invented citations (i.e., quotes that aren’t real, or references to sources that aren’t real);
- the presence of implausible factual mistakes (possible AI ‘hallucinations’);
- the presence of material in a style significantly different from the student’s other work;
- answers that show no sign of engagement with the specific content covered in the classes the student has taken; and
- answers that show no sign of contextual engagement.

The panel will also be able to discuss the suspect material with the student, and may take into account

- a student’s explanation of the working methods they used in producing the suspect material; and
- a student’s ability or inability to explain the thinking behind the suspect material.

A panel does not have to demonstrate ‘beyond reasonable doubt’ that misconduct has taken place, but must show that their judgment represents the ‘balance of probabilities’. The Office of the Independent Adjudicator explains that ‘Although the “balance of probabilities” standard is lower than “beyond reasonable doubt”, it must still be supported by evidence. It is more than simply believing that something is likely to have happened.’¹

To put it another way, for the panel to conclude that misconduct has taken place, they must judge that alternative explanations of the problematic material are *significantly less plausible* than the explanation that it was produced with inappropriate help from

¹ Office of the Independent Adjudicator, ‘Glossary’ (no date), www.oiahe.org.uk/information/glossary/.

generative AI. The panel's report should include a clear description of the evidence on which their judgment is based, and an explanation of their reasoning.

The Chair of the Board of Examiners, and the Academic Misconduct Panel, should use the [Detailed guidance](#) provided in this document to guide their judgments about what does or does not count as misuse of AI. Where their judgments differ from, or go beyond, that advice, their report should detail their reasons.

8. Background ideas: Ethical issues

A number of ethical concerns have been raised about the use of generative AI, and some of them have been mentioned in the [core policy](#) and [detailed guidance](#). To help staff and students make judgments about how much they will use generative AI, we provide here some initial pointers to further reading.

Energy usage

- Generative AI is powered by data centres that consume a great deal of energy. According to one analysis, sixteen queries to ChatGPT require the same amount of energy as boiling a kettle. See Yilun Chu, 'Carbon footprint and water shortage: the by-product of AI chat generation', *NetPositive*, 24 Nov 2023, <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/carbon-footprint-water-shortage-by-product-ai-chat-generation-4fxde/>, using data from the Machine Learning Emissions Calculator, <https://mlco2.github.io/impact/#compute>.
- According to another analysis, 'Already, data centers account for 1% to 2% of overall global energy demand, similar to what experts estimate for the airline industry.... That figure is poised to skyrocket, given rising AI demands, potentially hitting 21% by 2030, when costs related to delivering AI to consumers are factored in.' See Beth Stackpole, 'AI has high data center energy costs – but there are solutions', *MIT Management: Sloan School*, 7 Jan 2025, <https://mitsloan.mit.edu/ideas-made-to-matter/ai-has-high-data-center-energy-costs-there-are-solutions>, drawing on statements by Vijay Gadepally, MIT Lincoln Laboratory Supercomputing Center.
- See also Chris Baraniuk, 'Electricity grids creak as AI demands soar', *BBC News*, 21 May 2024, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cj5ll89dy2mo>, and Nikita Shukla, 'Generative AI is exhausting the power grid', *Earth.org*, 5 Aug 2024, <https://earth.org/generative-ai-is-exhausting-the-power-grid/>.

Water usage

- The data centres that power generative AI also require a lot of water for cooling, often in areas where water is a scarce resource. According to one analysis, one 100-word email generated by GPT-4 uses enough water to overfill a half-litre bottle. See Pranshu Verma and Shelly Tan, 'A bottle of water per email: the hidden environmental costs of using AI chatbots', *The Washington Post*, 18 Sep 2024, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2024/09/18/energy-ai-use-electricity-water-data-centers/>, drawing on data from the University of California, Riverside.
- See also Cindy Gordon, 'AI is accelerating the loss of our scarcest natural resource: water', *Forbes*, 25 Feb 2024, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/cindygordon/2024/02/25/ai-is-accelerating-the-loss-of-our-scarcest-natural-resource-water/>, Leonardo Nicoletti, Michelle Ma and Dina Bass, 'AI is draining water from areas that need it most', *Bloomberg UK*, 8 May 2025,

<https://www.bloomberg.com/graphics/2025-ai-impacts-data-centers-water-data/>, and John Naughton, ‘AI’s craving for data is matched only by a runaway thirst for water and energy’, *The Guardian*, 2 Mar 2024, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2024/mar/02/ais-craving-for-data-is-matched-only-by-a-runaway-thirst-for-water-and-energy>.

Harm to content moderators

- Some AI tools require human moderators to sift the material on which the tool is trained, removing harmful content. This can be low-paid, psychologically damaging work. In one report, ‘moderators in Nairobi ... were tasked with reviewing texts, and some images, many depicting graphic scenes of violence, self-harm, murder, rape, necrophilia, child abuse, bestiality and incest.... The moderators say they weren’t adequately warned about the brutality of some of the text and images they would be tasked with reviewing, and were offered no or inadequate psychological support.’ Niamh Rowe, “‘It’s destroyed me completely”: Kenyan moderators decry toll of training of AI models’, *The Guardian*, 2 Aug 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2023/aug/02/ai-chatbot-training-human-toll-content-moderator-meta-openai>. It is, however, hard to discover how much human moderation is involved in the training of generative AI tools at present.

Stealing content

- Generative AI tools are only able to generate new content because they are trained on vast quantities of existing content. Most of that content is produced by human beings, and it is typically used without the consent of those human creators. Although the AI tools may not store this content, and may not be able to reproduce much of it directly, they are often capable of generating content closely based on it, for financial gain, without any recompense being offered to the creators. See, for example, Bernard Marr, ‘Is generative AI stealing from artists?’, *Forbes*, 8 Aug 2023, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/bernardmarr/2023/08/08/is-generative-ai-stealing-from-artists/>, Gary Marcus and Reid Southern, ‘Generative AI has a visual plagiarism problem’, *IEEE Spectrum*, 6 Jan 2024, <https://spectrum.ieee.org/midjourney-copyright>, and Timothy B. Lee, ‘Study: Meta AI model can reproduce almost half of Harry Potter book’, *Ars Technica*, 20 Jun 2025, <https://arstechnica.com/features/2025/06/study-metas-llama-3-1-can-recall-42-percent-of-the-first-harry-potter-book/>.
- Some major AI tools seem to have been trained, in part, on pirated versions of copyrighted books. See Dan Milmo et al., ‘Zuckerberg approved Meta’s use of ‘pirated’ books to train AI models, authors claim’, *The Guardian*, 10 Jan 2025, <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2025/jan/10/mark-zuckerberg-meta-books-ai-models-sarah-silverman>.

Bias

- Generative AI tools tend to reproduce the biases of the data on which they are trained – and so their use can reinforce those biases. One analysis, for instance, points to the tendency of generative AI to create images that reinforce racial stereotypes. See Victoria Turk, ‘How AI reduces the world to stereotypes’, *Rest of World*, 10 Oct 2023, <https://restofworld.org/2023/ai-image-stereotypes/>.
- See also UNESCO, IRCAI, *Challenging systematic prejudices: an Investigation into Gender Bias in Large Language Models* (UNESCO, 2024), <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000388971>; Leonardo Nicoletti and Dina Bass, ‘Humans are biased. Generative AI is even worse’, *Bloomberg UK*, 9 Jun 2023, <https://www.bloomberg.com/graphics/2023-generative-ai-bias/>.

Impact on learning

- Conflicting claims are made about the impact of generative AI on its users’ learning. One widely cited study, for instance, reports that the more confident people were about using generative AI, the less they employed critical thinking: see Hao-Ping Lee et al., ‘The impact of generative AI on critical thinking: Self-reported reductions in cognitive effort and confidence effects from a survey of knowledge workers’, *CHI ’25* (2025), Article 1121, <https://doi.org/10.1145/3706598.3713778>.
- Other reports suggest that generative AI can be used in ways that enhance learning. See, for instance, Jin Wang and Wenxiang Fan, ‘The effect of ChatGPT on students’ learning performance, learning perception, and higher-order thinking: Insights from a meta-analysis’, *Humanities and Social Science Communications* 12 (2025), Article 621, <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41599-025-04787-y>.

Impact on jobs

- The spread of generative AI is already leading to job losses in some industries, and is predicted to lead to many more. One analysis suggests that as many as 8 million jobs in the UK might be at risk: see IPPR, press release for *Transformed by AI* report by Carsten Jung and Bhargav Srinivasa Desikan, 27 March 2024, <https://www.ippr.org/media-office/up-to-8-million-uk-jobs-at-risk-from-ai-unless-government-acts-finds-ippr>; the report itself is available at <https://www.ippr.org/articles/transformed-by-ai>. It is not easy, however, to trace the links between such predicted job losses and individual decisions to use or not use generative AI.

9. Background ideas: Why not a blanket ban?

In the light of the [ethical issues surrounding generative AI](#), and in light of evidence of the negative impact some of its uses can have on student learning, some will ask why our policy is not for a blanket ban on the use of generative AI in summative assessments.

Opinions differ strongly around the Common Awards community as to whether such a ban would have been desirable in principle. Had we agreed to impose one, however, we would immediately have run into problems. Generative AI has been all-but-invisibly embedded in many tools and services that we use regularly, often without any notice to users or any requirement to 'opt in'. Avoiding generative AI while using these tools and services has therefore become, in many contexts, both time-consuming and technically difficult – sometimes all but impossible. In this context, a blanket ban would have ended up punishing *students* for things that *tech companies* have done.

For example: suppose a student performs a simple Google search on the topic of their assignment, and notices something in the 'AI Overview' at the top of the results page that informs their thinking – a useful idea, compelling structure, or captivating form of words. Under a blanket ban on any use of generative AI in preparation of an assignment, that student would already have committed academic misconduct. And whilst it is possible to turn this feature off, a student trying to avoid misconduct would need to remember to do this – and know how to do it – on every device on which they used Google.

There are an increasing number of such contexts in which generative AI (and other closely related technology) is embedded in tools we use regularly. A student might, say, use Google to get a translation of an untranslated Latin sentence in a book they are reading – and yet those results may now be fine-tuned by generative AI. Or a student might write some of their assignment on an Apple device that completes sentences with Autocorrect – and yet the 'Transformer language model' that Apple's Autocorrect now uses is a form of generative AI. Or a student might even simply use the normal Windows search function to find documents on their own hard drive relevant to their assignment, without knowing that for some users that function is already now enhanced by a technology based on generative AI. The list could go on, and we expect it to grow rapidly in coming months. Under a blanket ban, all of these would count as academic misconduct.

We have taken the view that we cannot ban as academic misconduct activities that it is very easy to engage in unwittingly or accidentally, or that are very hard to avoid, even for tech-savvy students.

We have also taken the view that we should not create a context that encourages students to be dishonest – to pretend, for instance, that they did not see that summary at the top of a Google results page, or that it did not influence their thinking, because to admit that it did would mean admitting to academic misconduct.

Finally, we have taken the view that we must treat a given activity the same way regardless of the specific tool used to engage in it. There are, for instance, numerous

uses of generative AI which replicate activities for which we already permit students to use other kinds of electronic tools. One student, for instance, might ask a generative AI to format their references consistently; another might do the same thing using EndNote, Zotero or a similar reference manager (and might have been encouraged by their teachers to do so). We cannot fairly ban the former and permit the latter. There are also numerous instances where the uses of AI that it is easy to make inadvertently are identical in their impact to uses that students might make knowingly and deliberately. If we cannot (as explained above) fairly ban students from getting ideas for an essay structure from a Google search summary generated by AI, then we cannot ban them from getting exactly the same kind of help from ChatGPT. It would not be fair to do so, and decisions made on that basis would be unlikely to survive an appeals process.

This does lead to a considerably more permissive policy than some would like. For some, it will not line up well with what they think is good for students' learning, or with their ethical judgments. That is why we have had to distinguish between the question of what is *academic misconduct*, and the question of what is *wise* or *ethical*.

We acknowledge that TEIs can have good reasons, in the light of the ethical or pedagogical problems with generative AI, to caution students strongly against various kinds of uses of generative AI in ways that go beyond the rules set out here – but for the reasons given above we do not believe that we are now in a context where that caution can fairly be policed by imposing marking penalties or by means of an academic misconduct policy.

The flip side of this point, however, is that the Common Awards AI policy is *only* an academic misconduct policy. It does *not* dictate any of the other ways that TEIs might respond to generative AI usage outside of this realm of marking and academic misconduct.

10. Background ideas: Developing your own contribution

The [Core policy](#) insists that students do not take substantial material generated by AI and present it as if it were their own creation. In part, this can be seen as a matter of honesty or integrity: we are asking students to tell the truth about the sources of their work. In part, however, the reason for this rule goes deeper. It has to do with the nature and purpose of theological education.

Going deeper into conversation

Students typically enter formal theological education as people already involved in local conversations about their faith. They are often, that is, already familiar with the ways that the people around them speak about Jesus, read the Bible, make decisions about ministry and mission, and discuss their faith. Students will often already be adept at joining these conversations, understanding what is said by the people around them, and knowing how to make meaningful contributions of their own.

In formal theological education, students are drawn into some of the wider Christian conversations of which their local conversations are a part. They are introduced to people from around the world and from across the history of Christianity engaged in conversations about the faith – conversations within the church, and conversations between the church and wider society. They are helped to see and to understand more of the variety that marks those conversations, a variety that is likely to exceed anything they have already encountered. They are taken deeper into some of the knots of controversy around which those conversations swirl. They are shown some of the ways in which those conversations can challenge, enrich, and support their own faith and the faith of their communities.

A central purpose of formal theological education is to enable students to participate more fully in these conversations. That will certainly involve a good deal of listening, and learning to make sense of what is already being said. The goal, however, is also for students to be able to make their own contributions to those conversations – contributing in ways that are recognisable as responses to the existing conversation, but that are also recognisably the students' own. That is, the goal is for each student to be able to contribute in a way that reflects their own particular context, history and understanding, and to do so in respectful and intelligent engagement with the other participants in the conversation.

This is the goal because theological education ultimately takes place within the Body of Christ, in which each member has something to contribute, and in which the whole Body needs every member's contribution in order to flourish. The conversations of this Body are the means by which the experience, the insights, and the questions of each member are brought into interaction with those from all kinds of other members, in pursuit of a shared life of worship, ministry and mission.

Some basic principles

This picture gives us one way of thinking about the role that generative AI might appropriately play in theological education.

Putting aside, for now, the wider [ethical issues](#) (which we have explored elsewhere), and focusing only on the inherent capabilities and limitations of the technology, the use of generative AI might be appropriate where it can

- help students to understand the existing conversations about theology, ministry and mission – deepening their ability to make sense of and to navigate those conversations; and
- help students to make their own contributions, finding a way of joining in with those conversations that does justice to their own history, context, and understanding.

The use of generative AI is likely to be inappropriate where it

- removes the need for the student to listen respectfully and seriously to other participants in the conversation, for instance by ensuring that they only encounter material already digested and made palatable for them; or
- interferes with the development of their own contribution, by speaking for them.

The use of generative AI is also likely to be inappropriate where it runs against shared commitments that should characterise these conversations as a whole:

- a commitment to honesty;
- a commitment to respecting the diversity and integrity of other participants in the conversation;
- a commitment to caring for all those other participants; and
- a commitment to caring for the natural and human contexts for the conversation.