

Guidelines Regarding the Use of AI in Assignments

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The following guidelines are intended to inform students in the English Department at the University of Fribourg about the appropriate use of AI for assignments. They were elaborated by a special workgroup involving representatives of the professors, the intermediate staff, and the students to offer a baseline regulatory framework outlining legitimate uses of AI tools as well as specific citation requirements. At any given moment they may be changed or supplemented by more specific instructions at the discretion of lecturers in accordance with the learning outcomes of a given assignment.

I. Background

AI or Artificial Intelligence refers to tools that rely on Large Language Models (LLMs), computer systems trained on large amounts of texts or other data to generate content. Hence, we use the label *generative* AI, since AI tools produce text, images, videos, or code based on a human prompt.

AI models are extremely helpful tools. They are now used for all kinds of purposes, in any area where prediction is at stake. Moreover, the quality of these tools has improved significantly since about 2022 (when OpenAI's ChatGPT was launched). The more we use these tools, the better they get.

However, AI use also comes with problems. Chatbots may be overassertive, sycophantic, or they may hallucinate. This means that they give plausible-sounding but false answers or fabricate sources. While models continue to improve, it is important to bear in mind that they do not understand truth in the human sense. Chatbots are guided by linguistic plausibility. They predict the most plausible word in a sequence based on patterns in data. Factual accuracy or reliability is not their primary aim. As a result, chatbots sometimes reproduce biases and make ethically problematic claims, thus raising issues regarding liability and interpretability.

The use of AI also raises broader ethical concerns. While AI may appear immaterial because we encounter it through simple interfaces, it is important to remember that it relies on physical infrastructure. LLMs require enormous computational power. This raises all kinds of ethical questions regarding resource extraction and energy use. AI tools are moreover used for political disinformation campaigns as well as for security and military purposes. To be sure, individual users are not directly responsible for such AI applications, but collectively we do contribute to the training of models that are used in combat situations.

In educational contexts, the use of AI tools further raises questions about cognitive offloading, i.e. the process of reducing mental effort by delegating cognitive tasks to AI tools. In some cases, this may be beneficial and free up cognitive resources for higher-order thinking. But it may also weaken long-term skill acquisition.

In addition, AI complicates notions of authorship and academic integrity. Plagiarism traditionally means unauthorized reproduction of ideas from another source without proper acknowledgement. Plagiarism comes from the Latin *plagiare* which means

plundering or kidnapping. Machine-generated content muddies the distinction between original work and unauthorized copying from another source.

Given the above, it is important to be aware of the potential as well as limitations of AI tools and to know when and how they serve your learning aims. The following guidelines are meant to help students at the English Department use AI tools in a judicious and reflective manner and to document their use transparently and appropriately.

II. Permitted and Non-Permitted Uses of Generative AI

The use of generative AI tools in academic work requires careful consideration. While certain forms of AI assistance may be permitted, students should be aware that written assignments are designed not only to produce a final text, but also to develop essential academic skills, including close reading, critical thinking, argumentation, independent research, and written expression.

For this reason, the use of AI tools should be approached with caution. AI may simplify tasks that form part of the intended learning outcomes of a course, thus hindering the development of these skills. Students should also be mindful that they should not be placed at an advantage or disadvantage depending on whether they choose to use AI tools: assessment criteria will continue to focus on the student's own intellectual contribution, critical engagement, and ability to communicate effectively.

We do not consider the products of AI tools as scientific sources. They are tools that can help facilitate internet searches, but findings do not constitute scholarship. Students need to verify the relevance and accuracy of these results and develop them in line with their argument.

The table below provides general guidance on what may be considered permitted generative AI use, which uses need to be disclosed, which uses require instructor authorisation, and which are not permitted under any circumstances. In all circumstances, it is advisable to ask your instructor.

AI use	Status	Explanation
Language and Style		
Spellcheck and minor grammar correction	Permitted	AI may be used to identify spelling errors, grammatical mistakes, or unclear phrasing. However, students remain responsible for understanding and learning from these corrections rather than accepting them uncritically.
Language support and translation of individual words or short phrases	Permitted	AI may be used as a dictionary or language-support tool, particularly for students working in a second or third language. However, the translation of substantial sections of a text is not permitted, as this replaces the student's own written expression.

Formatting and citation support	Permitted	AI may be used for assistance with formatting or citation styles, but students remain responsible for checking that all references are accurate and correctly formatted.
Study and Presentation Skills		
Organising notes, creating study plans, or helping manage workload	Permitted	AI may be used as an organisational tool (for example, creating revision schedules or helping to structure personal notes), provided that it is not used to replace engagement with course materials or to generate assessed academic content.
Generating practice questions or quizzes for revision	Permitted	AI may be used as a study aid to test knowledge or practice concepts, provided that students verify the generated material.
Explaining concepts or terminology	Permitted	AI may be used as a supplementary learning tool to clarify unfamiliar concepts, terminology, or technical language. However, students remain responsible for verifying the accuracy of the information and should not rely on AI as a replacement for engaging with assigned materials.
Summarising assigned readings, literary works, or secondary criticism as a substitute for reading the full text by yourself	Not permitted	Reading, understanding, and critically engaging with course materials are core academic skills. Using AI-generated summaries as a substitute for direct engagement with assigned texts undermines these learning objectives and limits the development of independent analytical and critical skills.
Technical Support		
Assistance with slide design / formatting for presentations	Permitted	AI may be used to improve the visual presentation of slides, such as suggesting layouts, design elements, or ways of presenting information clearly.
Generating images or illustrations for slides	Permitted with disclosure	AI-generated images may be used where appropriate in a presentation, provided that they are acknowledged and comply with ethical and copyright considerations.
Argumentation		
Brainstorming ideas or developing research questions	At instructor's discretion	Depending on the learning objectives of the assignment, generating initial ideas, identifying possible approaches, or developing a research question may constitute part of the intellectual work

		being assessed.
Writing analytical paragraphs, interpretations, or arguments	Not permitted	The generation of analytical content constitutes a replacement of the student's own critical thinking and intellectual contribution.
Generating essay outlines, thesis statements, or argumentative structures	Not permitted unless explicitly authorised by the instructor	The organisation of an argument is a central element of academic thinking and writing.
Generating a presentation outline or suggesting a structure	Not permitted unless explicitly authorised by the instructor	Depending on the assignment the organisation of your presentation and its argumentative structure may be a part of the work being assessed
Generating the analytical content of slides, speaker notes, or scripts for presentations.	Not permitted	The interpretation, synthesis, and argumentation presented should be the student's own intellectual work.
Writing Process		
Rewriting, paraphrasing, or making substantial stylistic changes to a student's own writing	Not permitted	Students are expected to develop their own academic voice and writing skills. AI should not be used to transform a student's text into a more academic style.
Asking AI for general feedback on a draft (e.g. identifying unclear sections or areas that require further development)	Permitted with disclosure	AI may be used as a feedback tool, provided that students remain responsible for making the revisions themselves. The AI should not rewrite passages or provide new arguments.
Generating substantial sections of an assignment or complete essays	Not permitted and may constitute academic misconduct	Submitting AI-generated work as one's own is incompatible with principles of academic integrity and authorship.
Generating a complete presentation or script	Not permitted and may constitute academic misconduct	Submitting AI-generated work as one's own is incompatible with principles of academic integrity and authorship
Prompting AI tools to generate references or citations	Not permitted and may constitute academic misconduct	Students remain fully responsible for verifying the existence and accuracy of all sources included in their work.

Students remain responsible for all content submitted under their name, including any content that has been assisted by AI tools. The fact that inaccurate information was generated by an AI system does not exempt students from responsibility for errors, fabricated sources, or misrepresentations.

III) Declaring the Use of Generative AI

1) Pledge

The Faculty's pledge can be found here:

https://www.unifr.ch/lettres/fr/assets/public/files/pdf/formation_doctorat/Declaration_honneur.pdf

Instructors can adapt it according to their specific course requirements.

2) Style sheets

Departmental stylesheets in literature and linguistics are available on the Departmental website.

<https://www.unifr.ch/english/en/studies/timetables/>

We advise students to refer to the MLA website for advice on how to cite generative AI for their academic assignments: <https://style.mla.org/citing-generative-ai-updated-revised/>

IV) Procedure in Case of Suspected Fraudulent Use of AI

Oral interviews based on written assignments can be conducted to verify authorship.

Cases of suspected fraudulent use of AI in student work will be reported to the Dean's Office for further examination, which could result in the case being submitted to the Rectorate in line with the university's plagiarism regulations:

<https://www.unifr.ch/uni/fr/organisation/services-du-rectorat/service-juridique/procedure-disciplinaire.html>

If a plagiarism case is established, this can result in a warning, a fee, or, in the case of grave or repeated misconduct, expulsion.

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