**Generative AI Principles**

[Generative AI and Study Guidance Hub](https://www.imperial.ac.uk/students/academic-support/ai-and-study-guidance-hub/)

* [**Generative AI Principles**](https://www.imperial.ac.uk/students/academic-support/ai-and-study-guidance-hub/generative-ai-principles/)

These principles are intended to provide a starting point for approaches to using generative AI in teaching, learning and assessment at Imperial. Imperial supports the use of the principles to frame and underpin activities university-wide as we as a community explore the use of generative AI, progress and develop policy, and establish guidelines.

The principles are presented with careful consideration of, and alignment with, the areas set forth in the university’s [Learning and Teaching Strategy](https://www.imperial.ac.uk/media/imperial-college/about/leadership-and-strategy/vp-education/public/Learning-and-Teaching-Strategy.pdf). These include growing our digital education capabilities and providing opportunities for discovery-based learning. We aim to do this while maintaining a supportive environment that fosters an increasingly diverse student community, ‘supporting staff and students to turn diverse backgrounds and cultures into an opportunity for mutual learning of different experiences and perspectives.’

We intend to develop our approaches to teaching the competencies and skills associated with generative AI literacy, and to continue to define what it means to be a generative AI-literate learner as it relates to students and staff, including applications for lifelong learning.

We support the idea that the use and application of generative AI will vary across academic disciplines and recognise the opportunities to learn from each other as we apply these principles. We will work collaboratively to identify, create and provide staff development opportunities related to applications of generative AI for learning, teaching, and assessment.

**The Principles**

The principles are underpinned by Imperial’s core Values. At Imperial, we take a proactive approach to generative AI. The [Imperial Values and Behaviours Framework](https://www.imperial.ac.uk/media/imperial-college/administration-and-support-services/hr/public/values/1-Values_Behaviours-Framework.pdf) presents the opportunity to approach the use of generative AI thoughtfully and help us to develop sound approaches to ‘how’ we do things, as a critical part of ‘what’ we do. We can apply the core Values in the context of generative AI as follows:

* **Respect** - We value each other’s perspectives and encourage an environment where everyone can grow, pursue opportunities, and express their individuality, ensuring generative AI is used to empower, rather than diminish, individual experience, perspective and contributions.
* **Collaboration** - We work together to cultivate inclusive, impactful and community-driven generative AI applications and solutions.
* **Excellence** - We employ generative AI carefully to enhance our impact, making a positive difference and taking personal responsibility for its effective use, maintaining the highest level of quality in our work.
* **Integrity** - We act in a principled way with generative AI and inspire trust in our actions by using it responsibly, ethically, and transparently, while addressing challenges with honesty and openness.
* **Innovation**- We approach the opportunities that generative AI brings with an open mind, exploring new ideas and continuously adapting to its rapidly evolving potential, within a culture of innovation, as outlined in [Imperial’s Science for Humanity Strategy](https://www.imperial.ac.uk/media/imperial-college/about/leadership-and-strategy/president/public/Imperial-Strategy---Science-for-Humanity.pdf).

The principles, below, are not intended to be exhaustive. They are indicative, providing a foundational outline for key areas of work related to our education remit.

**The Principles - accordion**

Collapse all

**Promoting the critical use of generative AI in teaching, learning and assessment**

* Take critical approaches to the selection, adoption and use of these tools, as well as their outputs.
* Recognise the limitations of generative AI tools and understand where use of the tools cannot and should not replace human skills and knowledge in teaching, learning and assessment.
* Encourage all in our community to consider appropriate, effective and responsible uses of generative AI in their own learning and to actively develop a mindset of continually evaluating and reflecting on their use of Gen AI as use cases and technologies change.
* Prioritise our understanding of how AI affects academic integrity standards, recognising that new challenges will arise, and that we will therefore need to adapt policy accordingly.

**Adopting a consistent ethical approach to the use of generative AI**

* Adopt transparent processes in evaluating and sharing how generative AI tools are integrated, used, and maintained across the university.
* Proactively address equity related to the adoption and use of generative AI tools and remain open to feedback from our community on these issues.
* Engage in regular assessments of the carbon footprint associated with generative AI tools used across the institution and aim to reduce it through sustainable technology practices.
* Commit to regular reviews of generative AI accessibility for all students and staff, ensuring inclusive access to generative AI tools and that any identified gaps are promptly addressed.

**Building a proactive research community around the use of generative AI**

* Develop our capacity to undertake research in the use and impact of generative AI in education.
* Work collaboratively to share best practices and to contribute to ongoing research in AI applications in education.
* Partner with students to evaluate the impact of the use of generative AI in education.

The principles have been adapted from the Russell Group [Principles on the use of generative AI in education](https://www.russellgroup.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2025-01/Russell%20Group%20principles%20on%20generative%20AI%20in%20education.pdf), published 2023. They were drafted by the AI Futurists, in consultation with the AI Tools in Teaching and Assessment Working Party and the Centre for Academic English. The principles will be revisited and updated regularly.

**FAQs**

[Generative AI and Study Guidance Hub](https://www.imperial.ac.uk/students/academic-support/ai-and-study-guidance-hub/)

* [Generative AI Principles](https://www.imperial.ac.uk/students/academic-support/ai-and-study-guidance-hub/generative-ai-principles/)

**Frequently Asked Questions**

Collapse all

**What’s the main thing I need to know before I use generative AI?**

Generative AI is not conscious or intelligent. It is a predictive text machine. This means that the outputs from AI may be inaccurate, off-topic, superficial, or illogical.

There are consequences of this:

* Users need disciplinary knowledge to evaluate the outputs of AI platforms.
* The AI output will be unsatisfactory for tasks requiring human judgment.
* The AI output might not include accurate sources or references. You will likely have to manually insert or check these. You can find out more about accurate referencing by browsing the[Library’s generative AI guidance](https://www.imperial.ac.uk/admin-services/library/learning-support/generative-ai-guidance/).

**What can generative AI offer me as a student?**

Here is a [list of examples](https://platform.openai.com/examples) of AI use, published by Open AI. These examples do not directly reference tasks such as essay or general text generation, a well-known function of large language models. If you would like to use generative AI for these purposes, it is important you stay informed of the latest developments with the particular platforms you regularly use.

If you are ever in doubt about your use of AI platforms, please check in with teaching staff on your programme. As understanding of AI spreads across the university, it becomes likelier and likelier that such conversations will provide you with a framework to follow best practice at all times.

**How do users generate responses from generative AI?**

The user inputs a prompt into the model, leading to the model offering a response.

A good example is shown with [Prompt part 1](https://drphilippahardman.substack.com/i/104476483/prompt-part-start-by-giving-chat-gpt-a-role) on the website of educationalist [Philippa Hardman](https://drphilippahardman.substack.com/p/chatgpt-prompt-engineering-for-educators). In this example, the user inputs a Role, then a Task, then an Instruction. The user can then enter further prompts to obtain a refined or extended output.

As an Imperial student you already have access to a platform in which you can try out prompts – Microsoft Copilot. You can find out more by [visiting our ICT guidance webpages](https://www.imperial.ac.uk/admin-services/ict/self-service/connect-communicate/office-365/microsoft-copilot/).

**Where can I learn more about prompting?**

There are many free short courses on the internet. You can browse a [quick introduction](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_ZvnD73m40o) to prompting on YouTube. The most practical advice is provided between [15’39](https://youtu.be/_ZvnD73m40o?si=0zMaYWJSf0SOpjP1&t=939) and 37’00.

See also: ‘[How to Write an Effective Prompt in ChatGPT](https://www.linkedin.com/learning/how-to-research-and-write-using-generative-ai-tools/how-to-write-an-effective-prompt-for-ai?autoplay=true&resume=false&u=2720425)’ within the LinkedIn Learning resource ‘[How to Research & Write Using Generative AI Tools.](https://www.linkedin.com/learning/how-to-research-and-write-using-generative-ai-tools?u=2720425)‘

Imperial is also exploring whether we might develop our own short online courses on fundamental skills such as prompting, to support you to use AI responsibly and effectively.

**How can generative AI be used to search for information on a particular topic?**

It is crucial to understand that all AI tools are continually evolving and may sound confident and persuasive even when presenting inaccurate information. This phenomenon has been well-documented and is known as [AI hallucination](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hallucination_(artificial_intelligence)).

If the topic is part of established academic understanding (e.g., physiology in Medicine) try using [ChatGPT](https://chat.openai.com/) or [Claude](https://claude.ai/chats). You will need to fact-check what is being stated. Both tools are best used as a sounding board to explore new topics.

If the topic is on a current topic, try using [Perplexity](https://www.perplexity.ai/). Because it cites its information (often from multiple sources), it is very easy to fact-check the provided information. Tools like Perplexity could be used like a search engine. Note that citations are from the wider internet and not limited to scientific literature.

If the topic is on a research area, try using [Scispace](https://scispace.com/) or [Scite](https://scite.ai/). Both tools enlist relevant papers to the search query. In our testing, both tools have often missed out enlisting seminal papers. However, they can be a reasonable starting point.

Scispace additionally summarises the enlisted papers from multiple perspectives. For example – methods used, limitations, practical implications etc. Note that the summaries are often over-simplified to be of value. Scite additionally has a widget that lists how many papers in the literature are in support or in opposition to an enlisted paper.

You can find out more about using AI as an information source by browsing the [Library’s generative AI guidance](https://www.imperial.ac.uk/admin-services/library/learning-support/generative-ai-guidance/).

**How could I use generative AI to summarise a research article?**

Try uploading the PDF copy of the research article to [Claude](https://claude.ai/chats) or [SciSpace](https://typeset.io/), and query the questions you want about the article. You can start by asking it to summarise the research article. You can then proceed to ask specific questions relevant to the article.

You can find out more about using AI to summarise and notate articles by browsing the [Library’s generative AI guidance](https://www.imperial.ac.uk/admin-services/library/learning-support/generative-ai-guidance/).

**Does generative AI have the ability to analyse data in datasets, graphs and images?**

| **Tool** | **Image analysis** |
| --- | --- |
| **ChatGPT** | No |
| **ChatGPT Plus** | Yes |
| **Claude 3** | Yes |
| **Copilot** | Yes |
| **Gemini** | Yes |

Students need to be aware of the potential issues of using sensitive or confidential data in AI systems. [Imperial’s Library Services guidance states](https://www.imperial.ac.uk/admin-services/library/learning-support/generative-ai-guidance/): “It is not advisable to add sensitive data (such as your name or other personal data) into generative AI tools, such as ChatGPT, as queries are stored and become part of the training data it draws upon.”

There are fewer concerns with using [Microsoft’s Copilot,](https://www.imperial.ac.uk/admin-services/ict/self-service/connect-communicate/office-365/microsoft-copilot/) as it does not learn from the information you input, and it does not harvest information from Imperial’s systems.

Notably, Excel also now features natural language [data analysis](https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/analyze-data-in-excel-3223aab8-f543-4fda-85ed-76bb0295ffc4) functionality (see this [video of Excel AI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b-cFv2DvEqE)) meaning that students also have some AI data analysis options provided within the software provided by the university. This sits within the same Office 365 package as Copilot.

When used with the [Notable](https://noteable.io/) plugin, the paid ChatGPT 4.0 subscription service can offer surprisingly detailed data analysis when provided with raw information, even with minimal prompting. ([Some detailed examples can be viewed here](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLlflyXwy4bT619mPF5UYntje_AYJkTAs5)). Integration between different platforms and formats (Jupyter Notebooks etc) is only likely to improve.

Copilot also now offers users access to ChatGPT 4.0 for free, meaning that staff and students can access these improvements without a paid subscription. Early tests in November 2023 have confirmed that graphs and images containing data and text can be analysed.

[Copilot also allows users to generate detailed images using DALL-E 3](https://blogs.bing.com/search/october-2023/DALL-E-3-now-available-in-Bing-Chat-and-Bing-com-create-for-free).

**Is Copilot the university’s officially approved generative AI platform?**

No generative AI platform is perfect. This is a fast-moving field of technology, and privacy, copyright, and other important themes are changing from one day to the next.

Currently, our ICT team are reassured that Copilot has a resilient approach to data encryption, is already readily available across all the community’s devices, and has an accessible user interface.

Other free and paid-for platforms are available online and mentioned on these webpages. However, it is important to understand that we will not be able to offer you as much, or in many cases any, user support compared to products that are packaged within Office 365.

We seek to use these Hub webpages to introduce you to the main generative AI platforms available on the market, as well as their advantages and disadvantages.

**Can unauthorised use of generative AI be detected?**

Firstly, it is important to clarify that Imperial does not ban the use of generative AI. In fact, we encourage students to explore its potential and gain skills in this important technological field. We do however ask that you always acknowledge its use and that you ensure you can thoroughly prove your own understanding of learning outcomes, independent of the use of any AI platforms.

Sometimes a member of teaching staff may encourage or discourage you from using AI tools to complete a practice or an assessed piece of work. Please take note of their guidance.

When you have been advised that AI is not to be used, or when you are told to use AI in a specific manner, please do not step outside of these parameters. If you do, you should expect to be queried on this to demonstrate your understanding of learning outcomes.

**What about plagiarism? Is that relevant with generative AI?**

It is highly relevant. You should make all efforts to acknowledge your sources, as you would if you were not using AI.

Submitting work and assessments created by someone or something else, as if it was your own, is plagiarism and is a form of cheating and this includes AI-generated content. Please refer to the university’s [Academic Misconduct Procedures](https://www.imperial.ac.uk/student-records-and-data/for-current-students/undergraduate-and-taught-postgraduate/exams-assessments-and-regulations/plagiarism-academic-integrity--exam-offences/) for further information.  To ensure quality assurance is maintained, your department may choose to invite a random selection of students to an ‘authenticity interview’ on their submitted assessments. This means asking students to attend an oral examination on their submitted work to ensure its authenticity, by asking them about the subject or how they approached their assignment. Being invited to an authenticity interview does not mean that there is any specific concern that you have submitted work that is not your own.

At this time, we do not intend to deploy any additional AI detection functionality due to concerns regarding the maturity of these products and their ability to accurately identify incidents of students utilising AI without the express permission of their teacher or outside the parameters of what has been agreed for their programme.   
   
Our current approach, in line with many other universities in the UK, is to train our staff to understand AI, identify its various uses, set parameters for those uses within students’ programmes, and be alert to the common features of AI-generated work. In turn, our students should also receive support from Imperial and proactively stay informed of the latest capabilities of AI platforms.  
  
This approach is not prejudicial to Imperial deciding to review this decision in future, should we and the wider university sector have greater confidence in any technological solutions which may become available to detect the misuse of AI.

**I would like to talk more about the use of generative AI in my studies**

We value curiosity at Imperial and anticipate many students will feel excited and perhaps slightly uncertain about the development of such fast-evolving technology. It is important to understand that for the foreseeable future it is likely that staff and other students may have varying levels of knowledge and experience in engaging with and discussing these platforms. This will change in time.

We therefore recommend you talk directly with teaching staff, discuss your approach to AI with other students and discover how they are finding platforms helpful or challenging, explore resources inside and outside of the university, and thoroughly read community messages that you will receive from your department and the university.

The Imperial community is welcome to contribute further questions and answers to this webpage by contacting the [Education Office](mailto:ltstrategy@imperial.ac.uk). We acknowledge and appreciate the significant contributions of [the Faculty of Medicine AI Taskforce](https://medlearn.imperial.ac.uk/artificial-intelligence/#who-we-are) to the FAQs featured on this webpage.