

Microsoft Copilot Agent Builder: Your Approved AI Assistant Creator

What is Copilot Agent Builder?

Microsoft Copilot's "Create Agent" feature lets you build specialised AI assistants for specific tasks. Think of it as creating a custom version of Copilot that's an expert in exactly what you need.

Key Advantage: It's university-approved, data-safe, and integrated with Microsoft 365.

Quick Start: Your First Agent in 5 Minutes

Step 1: Access Agent Builder

1. Go to copilot.microsoft.com
2. Sign in with your university credentials
3. Click "Create an Agent" (usually in the sidebar or top menu)

Step 2: Define Your Agent

Choose a clear, specific purpose: - "Help with teaching" (too broad) - "Rubric creator for business assignments" (focused)

Step 3: Set Instructions

Write clear behavioural guidelines:

You are an expert rubric designer for undergraduate business courses.
You create clear, measurable assessment criteria.
Always include specific performance levels (HD, D, C, P, F).
Focus on learning outcomes, not just task completion.

Step 4: Test and Refine

Start with simple requests, then adjust instructions based on output quality.

Pre-Built Agents for Education

Agent 1: Assignment Feedback Assistant

Name: FeedbackPro

Instructions:

You are a constructive feedback assistant for university assignments.

Your process:

1. First, identify what the student did well (be specific)
2. Then, note areas for improvement (with concrete suggestions)
3. End with an encouraging next step
4. Keep tone professional but warm
5. Reference specific passages when possible
6. Suggest resources for improvement

Never rewrite the student's work for them.

Focus on helping them learn, not just fixing errors.

How to use: 1. Paste student work 2. Add assignment requirements 3. Get structured feedback 4. Review and personalise before sending

Agent 2: Learning Outcome Aligner

Name: OutcomeMapper

Instructions:

You are an expert in curriculum alignment and learning outcomes.

When given course content, you:

1. Identify which learning outcomes are addressed
2. Suggest gaps that need filling
3. Recommend assessment methods that match outcomes
4. Flag any misalignment between content and stated goals
5. Use Bloom's Taxonomy appropriately

Format responses as clear tables when possible.

Be specific about cognitive levels (remember, understand, apply, etc.)

How to use: 1. Input your learning outcomes 2. Paste lecture content or assessment 3. Get alignment analysis 4. Adjust your materials accordingly

Agent 3: Case Study Generator

Name: CaseBuilder

Instructions:

You are a case study creator specialising in [YOUR DISCIPLINE].

Your case studies always include:

1. Realistic scenario relevant to Western Australia
2. Multiple stakeholder perspectives
3. Clear decision point or dilemma
4. Relevant data/evidence
5. 3-5 discussion questions at different cognitive levels
6. Teaching notes (when requested)

Keep scenarios current and culturally appropriate.

Include enough complexity for analysis but not overwhelming detail.

Target length: 500-750 words unless specified otherwise.

How to use: 1. Specify topic and learning level 2. Add any specific requirements 3. Generate case study 4. Customise for your context

Agent 4: Student Email Responder

Name: EmailHelper

Instructions:

You help draft professional, empathetic responses to student emails.

Your approach:

1. Acknowledge the student's concern
2. Provide clear, actionable information

3. Reference relevant policies (ask user to verify)
4. Maintain appropriate boundaries
5. Offer next steps or resources
6. Keep tone warm but professional

Always remind user to:

- Verify policy references
- Add personal touches
- Check for confidential information
- Consider if in-person meeting would be better

How to use: 1. Paste student email 2. Add relevant context 3. Get draft response 4. Personalize and verify before sending

Advanced Agent Patterns

Pattern 1: Sequential Workflow Agents

Create multiple agents that work in sequence:

Agent A: "Research Finder"

- Identifies key literature for a topic

Agent B: "Concept Connector"

- Links research to course concepts

Agent C: "Activity Designer"

- Creates activities based on research and concepts

Use: Copy output from Agent A → paste to Agent B → paste to Agent C

Pattern 2: Perspective Agents

Create agents with different viewpoints:

Agent: "Student Perspective"

Instructions: Review this content from a confused student's viewpoint

Agent: "Industry Perspective"

Instructions: Evaluate this curriculum from an employer's perspective

Agent: "Academic Standards"

Instructions: Assess against academic quality standards

Pattern 3: Quality Control Agents

Agent: "Bias Checker"

Instructions: Review content for unconscious bias, stereotypes, or exclusionary language

Agent: "Accessibility Reviewer"

Instructions: Check content for accessibility issues and suggest improvements

Agent: "Clarity Editor"

Instructions: Identify unclear passages and suggest simplifications

Best Practices for Copilot Agents

DO:

- **Start specific:** Narrow focus = better results
- **Iterate instructions:** Refine based on outputs
- **Save successful agents:** Build a library over time
- **Share with colleagues:** Export/import agent configurations
- **Document what works:** Keep notes on effective prompts
- **Test thoroughly:** Try edge cases before relying on it

DON'T:

- **Input sensitive data:** Even in approved tools, be cautious
- **Expect perfection:** Always review outputs
- **Replace judgment:** Agents assist, not decide
- **Create too many:** Focus on a few useful ones
- **Overcomplicate:** Simple, clear instructions work best

Integration with Microsoft 365

Copilot Agents can work with:

Teams: - Add agents to Teams channels - Students can interact directly - Track usage and common questions

Word: - Use agents while writing documents - Get real-time suggestions - Maintain consistent tone/style

Excel: - Analyze student data (anonymized) - Generate grade distributions - Create feedback summaries

PowerPoint: - Generate presentation outlines - Create speaker notes - Suggest visual improvements

Common Education-Focused Agents

Agent Purpose	Key Instructions	Best For
Bloom's Level Checker	Classify questions by cognitive level	Assessment design
Rubric Generator	Create detailed marking criteria	New assignments
Discussion Facilitator	Generate thought-provoking questions	Online forums
Concept Explainer	Multiple explanations of difficult topics	Student support
Scenario Builder	Create practice scenarios	Skills application
Feedback Standardizer	Consistent feedback across markers	Large classes
Meeting Summarizer	Extract actions from transcripts	Admin efficiency

Setting Up Your First Agent: Walkthrough

Example: Creating a “Tutorial Question Generator”

Step 1: Define Purpose “Generate discussion questions for weekly tutorials in [SUBJECT]”

Step 2: Write Instructions

You are a tutorial question generator for second-year Economics.

For each topic provided:

1. Create one recall question (check understanding)
2. Create one application question (use concept in new context)
3. Create one evaluation question (judge/critique)
4. Include a real-world Australian example
5. Time estimate: 10 minutes discussion per question

Format:

Q1 (Recall): [question]

Q2 (Apply): [question]

Q3 (Evaluate): [question]

Example: [brief real-world connection]

Step 3: Test with Real Content Input: “This week’s topic is supply and demand elasticity”

Step 4: Refine Based on Output If questions too complex → Add: “Keep language at undergraduate level” If too generic → Add: “Include specific numeric examples”

Step 5: Save and Share Export configuration for colleagues to use

Troubleshooting Common Issues

“My agent gives generic responses”

- Make instructions more specific
- Add examples of good output
- Include “avoid” statements

“Output is too long/short”

- Specify word counts or structure
- Add format requirements
- Use bullet points vs. paragraphs

“Agent doesn’t follow instructions”

- Simplify complex instructions
- Break into numbered steps
- Test smaller chunks

“Inconsistent quality”

- Add quality criteria to instructions
 - Include checklist for agent to follow
 - Specify required elements
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Privacy & Compliance Notes

Safe to Use:

- De-identified student work
- General curriculum content
- Public assignment descriptions
- Your own teaching materials
- Published rubrics and criteria

Never Input:

- Student names or IDs
- Grades or personal information
- Confidential meeting notes
- Unpublished research data
- Sensitive committee discussions

Always:

- Check university AI policies
 - Get consent for student work use
 - Document agent use in courses
 - Keep human oversight active
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Quick Reference Card**Creating an Agent - Checklist**

Clear, specific purpose defined
Instructions under 500 words
Behavioural guidelines included
Output format specified
Test cases prepared
Privacy check completed

Agent Instruction Template

You are a [ROLE] specialising in [DOMAIN].

Your task: [SPECIFIC PURPOSE]

Always:

- [BEHAVIOR 1]
- [BEHAVIOR 2]
- [BEHAVIOR 3]

Never:

- [RESTRICTION 1]
- [RESTRICTION 2]

Format your response as:
[STRUCTURE REQUIREMENTS]

Testing Protocol

1. Simple request → Check basic function
 2. Complex request → Check full capability
 3. Edge case → Check limitations
 4. Incorrect input → Check error handling
 5. Actual use case → Check practical value
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Getting Started This Week

Monday: Create Your First Agent

Pick one repetitive task and build an agent for it

Tuesday: Test and Refine

Try your agent with real content, adjust instructions

Wednesday: Share with a Colleague

Get feedback, learn what they need

Thursday: Build Agent #2

Create another based on learnings

Friday: Document What Works

Keep notes for future reference

Remember

Copilot Agents are **tools**, not replacements. They work best when:

- Given specific, clear tasks
- Reviewed by human expertise
- Part of a larger workflow
- Continuously improved

The goal isn't to automate everything — it's to **free your time for what matters most: teaching, mentoring, and inspiring students.**

Need Help?

- **Microsoft Support:** aka.ms/copilot-help
 - **University IT:** [your IT support link]
 - **AI Facilitator:** [your contact]
 - **Drop-in Sessions:** [schedule]
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Start small. Build confidence. Share successes. We're all learning together.

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