



NWU Senate Rules on the Responsible and Ethical Use of Artificial Intelligence

Approved by NWU Senate on 20 August 2026

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1 Summary

The *NWU Senate Rules on the responsible and ethical use of artificial intelligence* provide basic guiding rules and principles for the ethical use of AI in academic contexts. The foundational principles and rules ensure AI use aligns with NWU policies and values for both staff and students.

These Senate rules must be read in conjunction with the [NWU Policy on Academic Integrity](#).

A regular evaluation and review of these rules will take place.

Students and staff must ensure they stay updated with the latest version. Please note:

- i. These rules apply to *teaching-learning* and *research practices* and are intended for students and academics.
- ii. Artificial intelligence (AI) is defined in the [NWU Policy on Academic Integrity](#).

2 The Pillars of Ethical Use of AI

The NWU is committed to the ethical use of AI technologies and applies the following basic principles to which you, as a student or academic, should adhere:

1. **Transparency:** You should keep a record and be open and clear about when and how you use AI during teaching-learning practices or research practices. Disclose your utilization of artificial intelligence and maintain records of its application.
2. **Honesty:** You should be honest about the use of AI in all your academic work (teaching-learning and research). It is important to adhere to the rules and guidelines provided by the lecturer, supervisor, or research publisher for using AI to avoid academic dishonesty. Any work submitted by you that is not your own, and not clearly declared as such, might lead to a report on [AIITSA](#) (Academic Integrity Information Technology System Application) for students, and IRIMS (Integrated Research Integrity Management System) students and academics.
3. **Integrity:** Maintain trustworthiness by using AI with integrity. Honest and transparent use of AI is needed to preserve the integrity of your work.
4. **Accountability and Ownership:** When submitting an assignment or research paper, students or academics are considered the owners and are responsible for the content. AI cannot be blamed for inaccurate, biased, or inappropriate information. The responsibility for the content (even if created by AI) remains with the human author.
5. **Referencing and Acknowledgment:** The use of AI without recognition may be considered as unethical use of AI, and will be reported on the AIITSA system (for students) or to IRIMS (for postgraduate students or academics).
6. **Privacy, Security, and Safety:** It is imperative to safeguard personal data and respect user privacy in all AI applications. The deployment of generative AI models, which encompass text, image, audio, and video creation, presents distinctive challenges and demands meticulous consideration for the protection of information. The following information, as provided by the NWU IT department is restricted for use on AI systems:
 - i. **Personal Data:** First and last name, Address, Email address, Phone number, Other identifiable personal details.
 - ii. **Sensitive Personal Data:** Identity Number (ID), Passport Number, Location data, Financial data (e.g., income, purchasing behaviour).
 - iii. **Academic Information:** Student Marks, Research in progress, Examination and test papers.
 - iv. **Special Categories of Personal Data:** Race or ethnicity, Sexual behaviour or sexual orientation, Political views, Religious or philosophical beliefs, Membership of a trade union, Health and medical data, Genetic data, Biometric data.
 - v. **Confidential Business information:** Corporate strategies, Trade secrets, Internal project details, Financial reports and forecasts, Staff or student data.
 - vi. **Legal Information:** Legal advice and discussions, Information related to ongoing legal cases, Confidential contracts or agreements.
 - vii. **Security Information:** Unpublished research, Patents or patent applications, Copyrighted material (without proper authorisation).
 - viii. **Security Information:** Network data, Security protocols, Vulnerability reports, Documents containing architecture or infrastructure details, Configuration

- documents.
- ix. Inappropriate or illegal content: Hate speech, Illegal activities, Content that violates privacy laws.

3 Rules for the Responsible and ethical use of AI for all personnel and students

The following rules must be followed:

1. Use AI only as permitted and specified by the lecturer, supervisor, or publisher for the specific assignment or research. Ensure you understand their stance on the use of AI within the 5 levels of AIAS. Declare your use of AI and document its application.
2. AI answers or essays may not be presented as your own work. This is a form of academic dishonesty.
3. Tools for paraphrasing and language editing are classified as AI tools and will be detected by Turnitin or other similar AI detection systems. Discuss the use of these tools with your lecturer/study leader. Always keep a copy of your original, unedited work.
4. Should the use of AI be permissible in a module or while conducting research, be critical of what AI presents as answers. It might be biased, can perpetuate stereotypes, reinforce discriminatory practices, or simply present false information as fact. Always verify the information provided by AI with reputable academic sources.
5. If the use of AI is expressly allowed, it is essential to paraphrase the content, as with most other sources. In other words, rephrase the information into your own words—this aids in comprehending and fully understanding the concepts. Ensure that (in the case of research) the context in which the original research was conducted and the context in which the current research is conducted are not lost.
6. When allowed, the use of AI in Teaching and Learning and Research must be declared.
7. Students or academics must keep a detailed record of all the prompts and answers used during their research and writing processes and keep these on record.
8. Respect Copyright and Intellectual Property. Avoid using LLMs and AI systems to plagiarise or infringe upon copyright and intellectual property rights. Give credit to the original creators when using their work, as you would like to receive credit for your own work.
9. Do not place the academic work or research of another student or academic in an AI tool for any improvement or evaluation purposes. For example, do not submit proposal review or ethics reviews to LLMs or AI systems, nor use them to improve the quality of someone else's work or research (e.g. edit, spell check, restructure).
10. Continuously Learn and Adapt. Stay informed about developments in LLMs and AI ethics, and best practices as well as the risks harboured in the use thereof. Protect the reputation of the NWU during the use of AI. Be open to feedback and willing to adapt your practices to align with evolving ethical standards.

3.1 Additional rules for lecturers and supervisors

1. It is strongly advised that staff refer to the [5 levels of AI allowance](#) when planning their teaching-learning activities, and to use these in deciding how AI may be used by learners in teaching-learning situations. These decisions should be made before teaching-learning activities commence.

2. Communicate clearly to students and colleagues on how and when AI may be used and how and when it is not allowed. Act consistently with what has been communicated.
3. When the unethical use of AI is noticed, students must be reported to AIITSA (for Teaching and Learning) or IRIMS (for research).

4 Guidelines for the use of AI

After discussing the use of AI with your lecturer/study leader, the following guidelines and advice should be considered when using AI:

4.1 Learn with AI; do not use AI to avoid the learning process

1. Do not use AI as an 'essay mill' (contracting out of thought to a person or an algorithm). Generative AI can conceptualize, do research, and write assignments, but this might be detrimental to your possible scientific reasoning and writing advancement.
2. Remember, if you use AI exclusively to do your assignments, without critically evaluating the output, you will **learn and achieve** little to **nothing** in the process. The scientific process calls for reflection. Intelligent interaction and human judgment are required.
3. Keep in mind that assessments are designed to determine the level of your content knowledge and support your learning of the module outcomes, or evaluate your ability to conduct quality research. If AI is used to complete assignments or produce a research product for you, you are not demonstrating proficiency in these outcomes. Thus, you might not have mastered what was intended with the program/module/research output.
4. Using AI as a drafting consultant, or a co-creator, from the start of the writing process might have some benefits, e.g., planning a research write-up, shaping and developing an argument, and requesting sample lines. However, this should be discussed with the lecturer/supervisor/publisher and should be acknowledged by the student or academic. The overuse of AI leads to the authorship becoming opaque, and the mastery of skills expected from scientists and academics might not take place.
5. Do not become too dependent on AI. You must develop a deep understanding of the content and material you are studying and develop the skill of intelligent interaction and applying human judgment.
6. Keep in mind that dependence on AI discourages independent and critical thinking. It diminishes confidence in one's ability to learn and display critical skills (e.g., synthesis of ideas) and may thereby inhibit thinking. In research, it limits the development of critical analytical synthesis as a higher-order thinking skill. There is also a risk that AI may diminish creativity, as well as reading and writing skills.

4.2 Use AI and information with a critical mindset

1. Critically evaluate the sources that AI offers as a reference. Be sure to reference a wide range of sources and do not over-rely on a particular source. Ensure that the in-text referencing and the final reference list match.
2. Verify information and evaluate the accuracy and reliability of AI-generated work. Always double-check the responses that AI generates. Sometimes results are far-fetched and false, or references are inaccurate and in-text references differ from the final reference list. Be aware that AI can also obscure poor research behind apparently brilliant writing, and therefore, one should ensure the presented research is of good quality. Do not rely solely on an AI-generated literature study. Include additional relevant research to demonstrate your understanding of the field of study.

3. Do not exclude human interaction in your use of AI. The exclusive use of AI has the risk of diminishing social skills and skills of collaboration and cooperation, and complex interdisciplinary problem-solving with other people should not be lost.
4. Be aware of the limitations of AI. LLMs can produce credible untruths (hallucinations, simulated authority, or compelling misinformation), and it may omit attributions of its source of training data (which is a form of plagiarism).

4.3 Conduct proofing, planning, and editing with a critical mindset

1. Using AI as a proofing tool at the end of the writing process might have some benefits, e.g., fixing spelling, grammar, register, tone, and style. However, be aware of the risk of AI paraphrasing changing the context of what the original research author intended. *Keep a record of what you use these tools for in case this is flagged as AI-generated.* It is considered good practice to keep a copy of your original work.
2. Using AI as a copyediting tool during and after the writing process may have some benefits, e.g., shortening wordy text, expanding for clarity, and rephrasing for clarity. However, this should be discussed with the lecturer/supervisor/publisher and must be acknowledged by the student or academic. Each suggestion should be evaluated individually. Do not use “accept all” without intelligent interaction. Again, a copy of the original, unedited work should be kept.

5 Rules for Referencing and Acknowledgment of AI

The referencing of AI as a source is only permitted when it forms part of a formal research design, as indicated by your lecturer or negotiated by your supervisor and approved by your ethics committee. When instructed or approved, all interactions should be shared on a data repository with a permanent link, especially in the postgraduate context and employee research. How to reference AI in this regard must be consulted with and confirmed by LIS.

Generative AI tools should not be regarded as authors and should not be included in the reference list. AI use should be declared and described in different sections of the research, like the research methodology.

6 Rules for Ethical and Responsible use of AI in Research

6.1 Introduction

Modern academic work necessarily involves digital systems that transmit and process data. Ethical AI governance, therefore, focuses on how tools are used, what decisions are delegated, and where responsibility lies, rather than on simplistic notions of data “uploading”.

In all cases, the responsibility for scholarly judgement, originality, confidentiality, and ethical compliance rests with the human academic actor, regardless of the tools used.

6.2 Instructions to examiners

The integrity of the examination rests on independent human scholarly judgement, confidentiality of unpublished work, and accountability of the examiner.

6.2.1 Examiners may not use generative AI tools to:

- 6.2.1.1 upload any part of a dissertation, thesis, research dissertation, draft chapter, or research data into a publicly available generative AI system for purposes of evaluation, interpretation, summarisation, analysis, report drafting, recommendation, or the formation of scholarly judgement, or
- 6.2.1.2 upload any part of a dissertation or thesis to public domain AI systems where the content may be stored, reused, learned from, or accessed beyond the examiner’s direct control. In-house AI tools such as Copilot,

Grammarly, and Writefull are considered safe and not considered public-domain tools.

- 6.2.2 Examiners may use AI tools solely for language editing or stylistic refinement of their own examination report, provided that:
 - 6.2.2.1 the examiner's scholarly judgement remains entirely human, and
 - 6.2.2.2 the AI system used does not retain, reuse, or train the model using the research content, nor make it accessible to third parties.
- 6.2.3 Examiners must be transparent about their AI use during the examination report writing process and declare the following:
 - 6.2.3.1 how the NWU data (students' unpublished research) safety was ensured, and
 - 6.2.3.2 which AI tools were used and for which purposes.

6.3 AI use by Supervisors

Supervision requires academic evaluation, judgment, mentorship, and pedagogical responsibility, while being sensitive to digital environments where AI tools routinely process data remotely.

- 6.3.1 Supervisors may not use generative AI tools to:
 - 6.3.1.1 upload a student's thesis, dissertation, research proposal, draft chapter, or research data into a public domain generative AI system for purposes of evaluation, feedback generation, rewriting, interpretation, or supervisory decision-making, or
 - 6.3.1.2 upload student research onto a public domain generative AI system in ways that compromise confidentiality, intellectual ownership, or academic integrity.
- 6.3.2 Supervisors may use AI tools in a responsible manner to support:
 - 6.3.2.1 language clarity and academic writing,
 - 6.3.2.2 structured and organised feedback,
 - 6.3.2.3 pedagogical guidance and skills development.
- 6.3.3 Supervisor AI use must:
 - 6.3.3.1 not substitute for supervisory engagement,
 - 6.3.3.2 be transparent to the student, and
 - 6.3.3.3 avoid uploading student work to public domain AI systems that retain, reuse, or repurpose the content beyond the supervisory context.

6.4 Submission of AI Use in Research Declaration Form

- 6.4.1 In a digital research environment, integrity is ensured through disclosure, responsibility, and informed consent, not by attempting to prohibit normal technological operations. Doctoral, Master's, and Honors programs must describe the type of AI tools used, the purpose for which they were used, how the AI information was verified, where in the research AI was used, and whether the tools involved external systems with data retention or reuse beyond the researcher's control, through the AI use declaration form.
- 6.4.2 It is compulsory for Master's (structured and research), and Doctoral students to submit the AI use declaration form, as approved by Senate, with the submission of their research proposal. This form must be updated and resubmitted with every progress report and with the final submission of the dissertation, thesis, or research

processes. Honours students must submit this form with their research proposals and final submission. Academics must submit this declaration form as required by the faculty's scientific- and research ethics committees or any other applicable evaluative structure.

- 6.4.3 Submission of the completed and signed declaration is a mandatory requirement for the acceptance and processing of research proposals, progress reports, and final submissions. Submissions without the required declaration will not be accepted for examination or review.

6.5 Scientific and Research Ethics Committees

- 6.5.1 Ethical oversight requires independent human deliberation, while recognising that administrative drafting and documentation occur in digital systems. Committee members may not use AI tools to make ethical judgments or evaluations.
- 6.5.2 AI tools may be used for administrative drafting or language refinement of committee documents, provided that no evaluative judgement is delegated, and sensitive research content is not exposed to public domain systems that retain, train or reuse such data outside the ethics process.

6.6 No compulsory submission of AI score for Research

- 6.6.1 According to the Senate Rules for the Responsible and Ethical Use of AI, postgraduate students (Master's and PhD) and academic researchers are permitted to use AI tools in their studies and research, as discussed and approved by their supervisors and the scientific journals or publishers. However, students must declare any AI usage on the Senate-approved AI Use in Research Declaration Form. With the final submission of postgraduate studies and research, no AI scores will be required. The Turnitin Plagiarism report will still be required.
- 6.6.2 Postgraduate research integrity is ensured through supervision, peer review, and disclosure and not through automated detection systems with uncertain reliability. If a particular journal, examiner or supervisor requests an AI similarity use report from a detection tool, this may be arranged.
- 6.6.3 Detection tools for AI use remain relevant in undergraduate settings, including Honours programs, since lecturers can require varying degrees of AI involvement or prohibit it entirely, making it important to identify any unacceptable AI use.

7 Summary

The NWU is committed to providing students the opportunity to engage with AI in various forms while considering the associated risks, environmental impact, and potential biases of the technology. The goal of these Senate rules is to educate and guide students and academics on the ethical use of these powerful tools, in alignment with the high academic integrity standards expected for them to contribute effectively to their subject field and community.