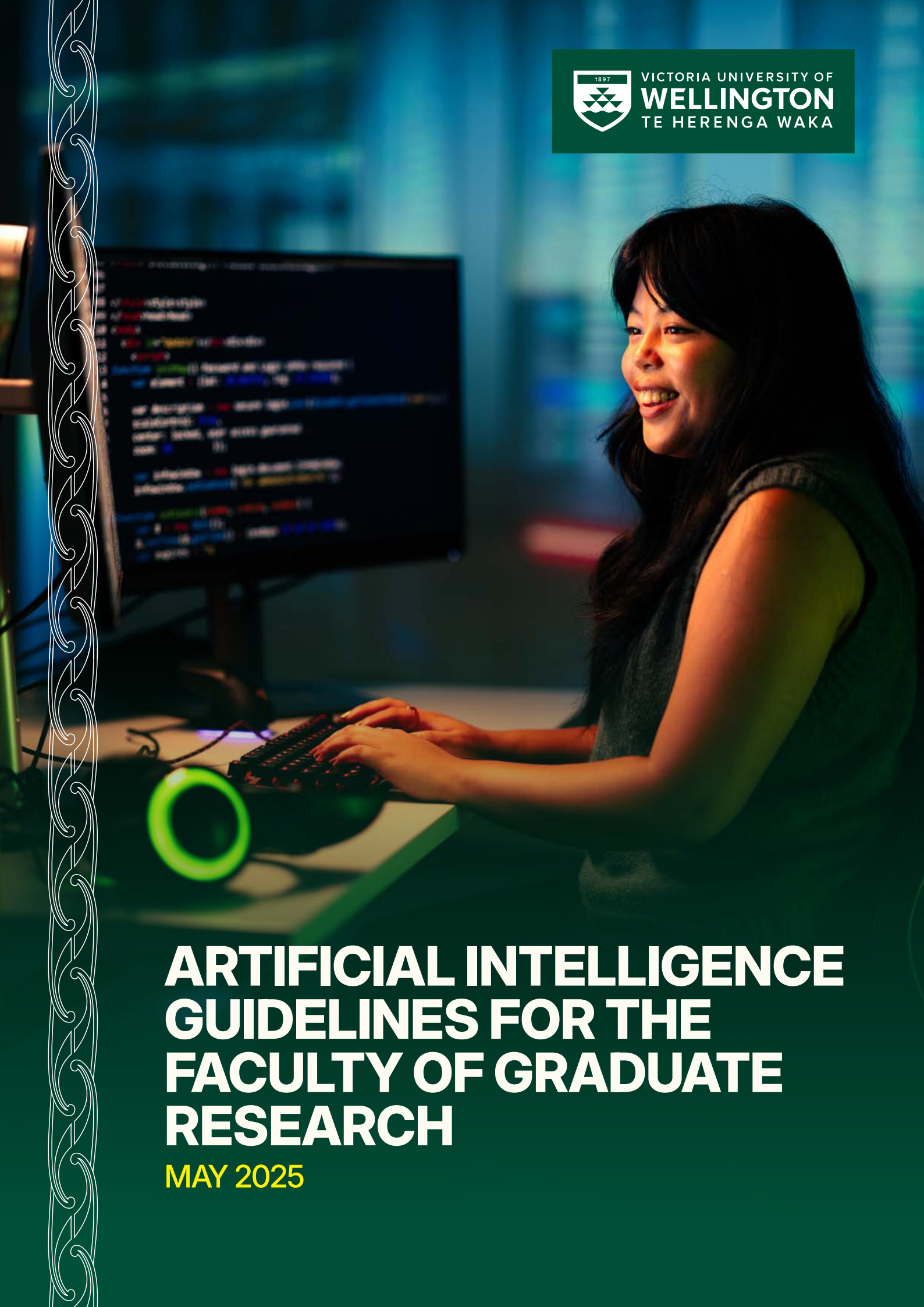


VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON
TE HERENGA WAKA

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE GUIDELINES FOR THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE RESEARCH

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SECTION 1:

PRINCIPLES GOVERNING THE USE OF GENERATIVE AI IN POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH

There are a range of ethical, environmental, privacy, and intellectual concerns surrounding artificial intelligence (AI), especially generative AI. Staff and students should be aware of these issues when thinking about what, if any, role they want AI to play in their research. Some of these issues are discussed in the University's video series on AI, Critical Conversations.

Despite the deep concerns that exist, generative AI tools can still be useful in some research processes. When used well, such tools can save time and may allow research to have more depth and scope.

The core principles below are designed to inform how supervisors and their students might navigate the risks and possibilities.



Communication and transparency

- **Keep communicating:** Staff and students need to discuss the use of generative AI so both parties understand if a specific use is appropriate or if there are specific concerns that using generative AI may interfere with research.
- **Be transparent:** If you are using generative AI in your research or thesis preparation, be clear about how you are using this, and discuss it with your supervisor before you begin.
- **Acknowledge generative AI use:** It is emerging good practice to acknowledge how generative AI has been used in your research, writing, and presentations. For an example of how to acknowledge your generative AI use, see the example case at the end of this section.
- **Ethics applications:** Ethics applications should make clear what, if any, significant use will be made of generative AI tools in postgraduate research.



Privacy, publication, and data integrity risks

- **Privacy is an issue:** You must not put anybody's personal details into generative AI systems that are not sanctioned by the University or covered by your specific ethics application. Check the University's Generative AI Policy for details of what is and is not allowed.
- **Unintentional publication:** Be aware that uploading novel ideas or data to generative AI tools may place them in the public domain and put at risk your intellectual property. Be aware that some generative AI tools may irrevocably keep a copy of whatever you enter.
- **Mātauranga Māori:** There are concerns related to mātauranga Māori, Indigenous knowledge, and data sovereignty. Any use of AI should be especially mindful regarding how such knowledge is shared or manipulated with generative AI software.
- **Generative AI performance/accuracy:** There is no guarantee that generative AI systems produce truthful or accurate responses to prompts that are provided. It is in their nature to 'hallucinate' material that looks plausible as text but is factually incorrect. In academic contexts, some generative AI systems perform better than others. In particular, systems that interface with citation databases are less prone to hallucinating academic citations.

Ethics and generative AI ‘tools’

- **AI is not a ‘neutral tool’:** Generative AI brings biases and ways of operating that privilege certain approaches and world views.
- **AI is not just a singular tool**: There is a range of generative AI tools, with each new tool bringing new risks and opportunities for text, data, and images, which need to be navigated by students and supervisors.
- **Potential use can depend on your discipline or focus:** What constitutes reasonable use of generative AI tools will vary depending on your discipline and the focus of your thesis, including the type of analysis you are wanting to complete.
- **There are significant ethical concerns about generative AI:** These include equality of access to generative AI, the environmental footprint of generative AI, as well as intellectual property and personal privacy concerns. These should be carefully considered in any decision to use generative AI tools in your research.
- **AI provokes strong reactions:** The ethical concerns associated with generative AI, along with the potentially disruptive qualities of the tools themselves, mean that your use of AI tools may provoke critical commentary from other scholars. These concerns could also impact how your academic work is considered (or not) by some supervisors, journals, and examiners. In some contexts, not using AI may also provoke some critical questions.

Analogies of AI usage

The following analogies provide a simple way of evaluating if the use of generative AI is more likely to support or undermine the development of research skills for a postgraduate scholar. While these comparisons do not speak to the complexity of generative AI use, the key principle is that postgraduate students still need to be developing disciplinary research skills in the age of AI.

- **Using generative AI well might be like an e-bike:** It can augment your efforts and can support you when you are addressing something difficult, but you still need to put in effort for it to work. You still need to know how to ride a bike and you still need to do some of the pedalling. You are steering and you should know what your destination looks like when you get there. The rules of the road still apply.
- **Using generative AI poorly can be like asking someone else to write a section of your thesis:** You wouldn’t get another person to complete a section of your thesis just because they can write it better than you can. Your job as a student is to develop your expertise. But it would be appropriate to practise communicating your ideas and to learn from the perspectives of others.



SECTION 2:

BEING A POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH STUDENT IN THE AGE OF GENERATIVE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

This section provides an overview of what is expected of postgraduate research students. It also sets out specific guidelines for how generative AI can be used, or not used. This list is neither prescriptive nor exhaustive and is intended to guide the conversation between students and supervisors. Individual agreement on the use of generative AI will need to be established between the supervisor and the student, guided by the norms in their discipline.

The University is particularly concerned that postgraduate research students must pick up a range of skills to be good researchers. As a student, consider your motivation for using generative AI. This includes whether using the generative AI will enable your learning, develop your ethical thinking, support engagement with editing, develop your voice, impact the privacy of your research, and influence the pedagogical experience of postgraduate learning.

As a postgraduate student, you should be able to do the following without the use of generative AI:

- clearly present your work, both in writing and orally
- find, manage, and analyse various forms of data as per the expectations of your discipline
- design and run experiments or field work
- develop original ideas and research questions
- understand, summarise, and critique the relevant prior literature on your subject
- clearly explain how your research contributes to the literature on your subject
- summarise your findings and conclusions for academic audiences
- explain how different research methods and methodologies could be used as a basis for your research.

If you are intending to use generative AI in your work, discuss this with your supervisor before you start, and keep discussing this throughout your research project and the writing of your thesis. If you find that you are relying on generative AI too much for any of the above contexts, check in with your supervisor and work out a plan to ensure you are the one doing the learning. Remember that the key point of any University study is to develop you as a human being.

Different disciplines will have different norms—what is acceptable in preparing a humanities thesis may not compare to what is acceptable in software development, mapping work, or preparing a report in the physical or biological sciences.

Depending on your context, generative AI might be able to be used to:

- improve the readability of your work, such as correcting grammar, helping to prepare subheadings, or reorganising sections for better cohesion or flow
- help with analysing datasets, although you still need to understand the processes used by any AI analysis tool and be able to describe and justify the processes used by the AI tool
- help to refine themes or survey and research questions
- help in developing slides for presentations based on the work you have previously drafted, and for non-academic audiences
- help to tidy up your references and ensure that the format is correct
- help with brainstorming ideas. Be aware that there is already evidence that generative AI can impact your critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and confidence when it is regularly used to replace your thinking for tasks of this nature.

In general, generative AI should not be used to:

- write entire sections of your thesis for you
- substantially rewrite entire paragraphs of text
- generate your research questions
- write a literature review for you
- analyse data in ways that are considered inappropriate in your discipline (note that some disciplines routinely using non-generative AI data analysis tools and, where this is a disciplinary norm, such tool use is appropriate)
- intentionally manipulate still or moving images without clearly stating this has been done.

As a broad guideline, if your disciplinary norms allow another human being to provide help in some aspect of your research, it should be acceptable to use generative AI to do that same thing. If it would not be acceptable for a human being to provide the help, then it is unlikely that it is acceptable to use a generative AI tool either.

Refer to the University's Proofreading and Editorial Advice Policy for one example of guidance on what constitutes acceptable help. Note that these examples are intended for guidance only and need to be discussed in supervision.



SECTION 3:
GUIDANCE FOR SUPERVISORS

Supervisors are expected to guide postgraduate research students about how generative AI can be used to support their development as researchers. Supervisors and students need to agree on an AI policy for the student to follow. Students need to be made aware that they must follow the specific policy agreed to with their supervisor, rather than that of their peers. Supervisors are best placed to monitor and ensure that students' use of generative AI adheres to established policies.

Some questions for supervisors to consider are:

- What do students need to be able to achieve to be effective researchers in a specific discipline?
- How can these guidelines be used to inform specific parameters for a student's research project?
- How do supervisors work with each other to determine what constitute disciplinary norms?
- What are the best ways to keep the communication going with students, especially as new AI tools become available?

Some other things to consider are:

- sometimes students will know more than supervisors about what AI tools are available
- sometimes there can be real advantages in students using generative AI, especially for new analysis tools
- the development of both a critical awareness of generative AI and an understanding of how such tools operate will benefit students in their future.

How to acknowledge generative AI use

Supervisors should also consider how to help students acknowledge any generative AI use. One way this can be done is to encourage students to keep a logbook throughout their research project. This should document specifics such as the AI tool used and the key approaches taken with these tools.

Students can be clear in their research by using an Acknowledgement Statement like the modified example below sourced from Deakin University.

> I, **[student name goes here]**, acknowledge the use of **[Name of generative AI tool (accessed Month Year)]** and **[Name of generative AI tool (accessed Month Year)]** in developing the following aspects of this research: **[the relevant sections where you've used Artificial Intelligence goes here]**. All AI-generated output was critically reviewed. Examples of prompts, outputs, and my responses are provided in Appendix 2. The final content, conclusions, and assertions in this thesis are my own.

Acknowledgement Statement example:

I, Simon McCallum, acknowledge the use of Perplexity.ai (Pro and auto, accessed March 2025) and Claude.ai (Claude 3.7 Sonnet, accessed March 2025) in developing the following aspects of this research: Understanding the background for the literature review Chapter 2 and exploring research in Scopus, writing code to analyse data and present figures in Chapter 4 Results, and assistance with brainstorming for implications of the results in Chapter 6 future work. Examples of prompts, conversations, context and environment settings, and outputs are provided in Appendix 2. The final content, conclusions, and assertions in this thesis are my own.

Appendix 2 example:

In Claude 3.7 Sonnet with a commercial licence, I created a project and added my notes from meetings and drafts of chapters and result data. Then I had conversations with the data such as "Give 5 different possible interpretations of the relationship between confidence in multichoice answers and transferable ability. Give both pros and cons for each of the interpretations and suggest ways to evaluate the interpretations." Following the response, I asked, "Clarify the potential issues with being overconfident." I then used Perplexity to find papers related to overconfidence and the Dunning Kruger effect. I copied the generated output into the Claude project and ask Claude to repeat the analysis with the additional context given by the Dunning Kruger research from Perplexity."