

# University Policy for an Ethical and Responsible Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence in Teaching and Research

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#### Introduction

This Policy aims to outline the University's general guidelines for using generative artificial intelligence in teaching and research, including activities carried out with third parties, and of knowledge valorisation resulting from collaborations with society and businesses. The Policy does not apply to the use of generative artificial intelligence to support professional staff's activities, for which specific ministerial guidelines are expected to be published soon.

The expression "generative artificial intelligence" (hereinafter "GenAI") refers to artificial intelligence algorithms capable of automatically producing content in the form of text, images, codes, audio, video, etc.

The use of these tools can entail significant opportunities in terms of productivity and effectiveness of university teaching and research. In particular, they can foster the development of specific learning paths that adapt to various needs, supporting the educational process also in the face of disabilities or cognitive atypicalities, improve access to training and experimentation in virtual environments, boost data collection and analysis, explore the state of the art in a more efficient way.

The use of GenAI, however, poses some risks in terms of data quality, ethics and privacy. Algorithms can amplify errors and generate inaccurate or incomplete information, leading to unwanted and potentially harmful effects. Existing biases in the data can be accentuated and new ones can emerge, adversely affecting the results. A particularly critical phenomenon is that of so-called "hallucinations", which occur when GenAI generates misleading or completely false information. Such information, while seemingly plausible, has no basis in reality or in the existing data, and its use poses a significant risk, especially in academic and scientific contexts where accuracy and reliability are essential. The processing of data also raises complex legal questions that call for special attention in order to avoid potential violations of individual rights and freedoms.

## Goals of the Policy

Given its focus on innovation, Alma Mater Studiorum – Università di Bologna views GenAI as a tool capable of stimulating novel, creative and experimental approaches. This Policy outlines the principles and guidelines through which the University seeks to promote effective and responsible use of GenAI in support of teaching, research, and knowledge valorisation, in order to uphold the fundamental values of academic quality and integrity and of the protection of individuals.

The Policy guidelines aim to ensure that GenAI is used:

- in a responsible and conscious way;
- to help improve the quality of teaching, learning and research also in collaborations with society and businesses;
- at the service of the people and not to replace their creative and intellectual activity.



In line with the principles of mutual trust and openness to change, the University considers that the use of GenAI should be permitted and does not adopt measures aimed at prohibiting or monitoring its use, believing that adherence to the values and principles of the Statute, the Code of Ethics and Conduct, and the Regulations on research integrity are sufficient to ensure that every member of the community acts responsibly and consciously in the face of the opportunities and risks of GenAI, thus avoiding improper or harmful uses.

# Who this policy is for

This Policy focusses specifically on the activities of those within the University community who:

- attend first, second or third cycle programmes (hereinafter "students");
- carry out teaching activities and exploit their results (hereinafter "teaching staff");
- participate in the delivery of teaching activities and in the exploitation of their results (e.g. teaching tutors and foreign language instructors, hereinafter "teaching assistants");
- carry out research activities and exploit their results (hereinafter "research staff").

## Principles

The integration of GenAI tools in all academic activities requires a thoughtful approach that puts the person at the centre and is guided by solid ethical principles.

In accordance with the Statute, the Code of Ethics and Conduct, and the Regulations on integrity of research, and in compliance with national legislation and the main EU guidelines, the University has identified the following principles:

- **Centrality of the human being**, understood as active supervision and critical thinking, in order to use GenAI as a supporting tool that enhances the user's personal intuition, creativity, judgement and decision-making.
- Honesty and transparency, understood as personal awareness and, where so provided, explicit acknowledgement of GenAI's contribution to achieving a result.
- **Accountability**, understood as taking responsibility for using GenAI and being able to account for results generated by GenAI systems, having duly implemented active supervision and critical thinking.
- Accuracy, understood as a commitment to adopt result verification processes that are suitable in the specific use case, while being mindful of the risks inherent in the use of GenAI tools.



• **Respect for rights, society and the environment**, including privacy and individual rights, protection of any intellectual property rights over the information uploaded into a GenAI system to generate output and over the output itself, as well as respect for the values of equality, inclusion and environmental sustainability.

# Use of GenAl

This Policy draws a distinction between substantial and non-substantial use of GenAI:

- **Substantial use** is when the GenAl output is an original or novel idea. For example, substantial use includes data analysis in which GenAl finds a new result or suggests a novel research perspective. The use of GenAl by researchers to produce a large part of a (scientific) article or by students in assessment tests, including dissertations, also constitutes substantial use.
- **Non-substantial use** is when GenAI is used simply as a productivity-enhancing tool in academic activities. For example, non-substantial use includes using GenAI to gather information on a given teaching or scientific topic, as a linguistic or translation assistant, except in cases where these activities represent an essential aspect of research or training.

#### Responsibilities

Responsibility for using GenAI properly is shared among the members of the University community, each within their own areas of competence, as defined in the "Who this policy is for" section above.

#### University's Responsibilities

Also in light of the existing national and international guidelines on the matter, Alma Mater Studiorum – Università di Bologna recognises the need to adopt recommendations to foster fair, responsible and ethical use of GenAI in research and teaching, and in the exploitation of their results.

In particular, the University is responsible for:

- **Providing appropriate basic information**, offering opportunities for continuous learning and promoting actions that stimulate a conscious use of this tool.
- **Promoting and supporting training initiatives on the use of GenAl for students**, teaching staff, teaching assistants and research staff.
- Engaging the University of Bologna community in order to share best practices, in light of the constant advancements in technology and its applications, also for the purpose of keeping this Policy up-to-date, identifying new learning needs and understanding what kind of support would be more useful.



• **Supporting and welcoming the use of GenAl** in teaching and research, and in the exploitation of their results, while respecting the principles enshrined in this Policy.

#### Individual Responsibilities

Students, teaching staff, teaching assistants and research staff are responsible for:

- **Taking environmental impacts into account when using GenAl tools**, given the significant amount of energy required for training and for performing tasks.
- Avoiding substantial use of GenAl tools when this could impact other people or organisations, e.g. for peer review, research project evaluation, student test assessment.
- Being mindful of the main features of the GenAl tools they use, as these could affect output accuracy, and taking appropriate mitigation measures accordingly. For example, the probabilistic nature of GenAl models can affect reproducibility of results. In this case, an appropriate mitigation measure would be to check the primary sources and apply critical thinking to the output.
- Checking the terms and conditions of contract and the privacy options of GenAl tools to understand who owns the rights to the output (which are sometimes reserved for the system provider) and what privacy obligations apply. These may vary depending on the environment in which a GenAl tool operates (e.g. closed environments, third-party hosting with privacy assurances, or open platforms accessible through the Internet).
- Refraining from providing online GenAl systems with personal data of third parties, including special categories of data such as health or genetic data, unless the data subject gives his or her consent or another suitable legal basis for the processing exists.
- **Refraining from uploading confidential information into GenAl systems**, including protected or confidential data (other than personal data), information covered by non-disclosure agreements with third parties, business strategy data that are not in the public domain, unless there are assurances that the data will be kept confidential.
- **Being aware that a GenAl system is not a legal entity** and cannot be held accountable for or identified as the author/co-author of the output it generates.
- **Checking the accuracy and validity of the GenAl output** in order to identify and correct any potential errors, including factual inaccuracies, logical fallacies, or inappropriate or potentially offensive language.
- Being aware that the GenAl output may infringe copyright law, because it may rely on copyrighted material used without permission.



- Thoroughly checking research products, teaching products and student assessment tests, including dissertations, to make sure that they do not contain plagiarism, especially when GenAI is used substantially to generate, expand or rework content.
- **Respecting other people's work and giving them credit for it**, since the output of GenAl tools may rely on other people's results. Each person using GenAl is fully accountable for the accuracy and consistency of the output, as well as liable for any plagiarism.
- **Protecting (their own and others') unpublished work** by avoiding uploading it into GenAl systems, unless there are assurances that the data will be kept confidential, e.g. that they will not be re-used to train future language models or in any untraceable and unverifiable way.
- Refraining from uploading into the GenAl system information covered by non-disclosure agreements (NDAs), for example in the context of contract-based research or company-based dissertation projects.
- **Paying attention to the use of synthetic data**, i.e. data generated by GenAl based on examples or text descriptions, rather than real-world sampling, making sure that research and/or teaching products based on the analysis or processing of such data expressly state that they use synthetic data, and testing results based on synthetic data to check that they make reasonable sense in the real world.
- Verifying that the contents produced by GenAl correctly cite sources and provide appropriate references or other attributions for the information used.
- **Declaring when GenAl is being used substantially** in research and teaching, and in the exploitation of their results, and, in any case, verifying and adhering to any specific indications on the responsible use of GenAl contained in agreements with third parties such as contracts with publishers, funding bodies, companies, etc.

The University supports the use of GenAl on condition that this enhances, rather than replaces, the activity of teachers and trainers, protects the freedom of teaching, and allows a conscious and fair management of learning.

The responsibilities of teaching staff and teaching assistants include:

- **Providing students with clear information on any non-permitted uses of GenAl** in the context of teaching activities and in their assessment tests, including dissertations.
- Encouraging students to use GenAl consciously, promoting the understanding of the importance of transparency, integrity and accuracy in using GenAl, in order to enhance personal skills and support an ethical approach to academic activities.



• Ensuring respect for the principles of equality and fair treatment, striving to create suitable conditions to allow everyone, when GenAI is used in teaching activities, to take advantage of the same tools without having to purchase personal GenAI licences.

The responsibilities of students include:

- Checking the permitted uses of GenAl and using GenAl as instructed by the teaching staff and teaching assistants, and, in any case, according to the principles and recommendations set out in this Policy. This approach is key to an educational covenant based on mutual trust, which promotes critical and creative learning while using GenAl, and ensures that all students are assessed based on their actual contribution and are not penalised for using these tools in a transparent and conscious way.
- Using GenAI output only after checking its content and provided that the original source is acknowledged.
- **Critically analysing and being able to illustrate their work** generated with the support of GenAl, demonstrating that they master the content produced.

The University is committed to keeping this Policy up-to-date, taking into account both technological and regulatory developments at national and international level, and any new needs that may emerge from the academic community. The aim is to ensure that the indications in the Policy effectively respond to changes, promoting a use of GenAI that is safe, inclusive and in line with the expectations of those who live and work within the University.