# Generative AI: a guide for students

Currently in higher education and elsewhere there is a lot of interest about generative AI. Perhaps the best known is ChatGPT but there are others (e.g. DALLE-2, CoPilot, Google Bard, Midjourney, Claude, Bing, etc). It is an exciting area and we want to explore what it can do and learn how to make use of it.

At Roehampton we want to make it clear how and when you can use generative AI in your work and when to avoid it. Some assignments and learning experiences may explicitly ask you to work with AI tools, others may specify that AI tools should not be used, or only used in specific ways. This will depend on your course, so please don't assume you can use it. In all cases the use of AI should not be passed off as your own work, as this is a form of academic misconduct. If you use, it, you should credit it, just as you would with other sources.

Please refer to the specific criteria for your learning and your assignments and ask your lecturers if in doubt.

As you start your modules, more explanations will be given to you by your programme team, but this document helps to clarify our general expectations, the limitations of generative AI and the problems with relying on it as a source of information.

## Using generative AI

As a university student it is important that you use generative AI carefully and ethically. Apart from being of help in your studies, generative AI will certainly be used in most workplaces by the time you graduate and one of our key intentions at Roehampton is to equip you with skills to make you highly employable when you leave the university.

When using generative AI tools ensure that you apply rules of academic integrity and don't misuse them by trying to pass off AI-generated work as your own. This would be a form of plagiarism. Apart from this, which is perhaps the most obvious issue when it comes to using generative AI in your studies, there are also other challenges and issues you will need to consider. On your programme at Roehampton University your tutors and lecturers will help to guide you in your use of generative AI, so, if in doubt, ask them for help. The staff in the library will be able to help too, showing you how to cite your use of generative AI. You can already find very useful information in 'Cite it Right'. The bottom line is: if you are not sure if what you are doing is correct or allowed, ask. That way you will minimise the possibility of making mistakes.

## Prompting

One of the areas where you will need to build up expertise is prompting. A 'prompt' is the instructions, questions, etc that you enter into the generative AI to give it the information it needs. The more specific the prompt, the better the information it will generate.

## Tips for writing effective prompts:

It helps to give some context when asking generative AI to produce content. If you just enter very general information, generative AI will produce very general answers.

Tell the generative AI how you would like the results formatted and the length of the answer you require i.e. if you want it to generate an answer of about 200 words, make sure that you put in these instructions. If you want it to write instructions for a Year 5 class in school, make sure that you tell it to do this.

Once you have an initial answer, ask the generative AI to refine this. Again, give specific instructions. This will improve on the first 'draft'.

When you refine your prompts, the generative AI will remember what you've already asked, it, so you don't have to start from scratch again.

If you ask free versions of generative AI for academic references, it may well make these up. You need to do this research yourself, using the library searches and databases that you usually use. You can then use them to supplement and improve the outputs from generative AI.

It's important **not to enter personal data** into generative AI. In ChatGPT you can go into 'settings' to turn off the 'save' function, if you don't want your input to be stored.

## Important reminders

Generative AI tools are large language models (LLMs) rather than databases of knowledge. They work by predicting the next plausible word or section of code from patterns from large data sets.

AI tools don't understand what they generate. We, therefore, need to check the work.

The data sets that generative AI tools learn from can have flaws.

Often the outputs generated by AIs will look plausible and quite impressive but can contain errors. It's therefore important that you check any code or calculations or texts produced by generative AI.

Some AI models are trained on data that is out-of-date – ChatGPT, for example, is only trained on data up to 2021 at the moment.

Generative AI can produce fake citations and references. Your tutors and lecturers are aware of this and you need to be too.

## Generative AI can be helpful in the following:

- First drafts of writing projects
- Brainstorming ideas
- Explaining information in straightforward ways
- Summarising information
- Translating to different languages, although, again, generative AI can make mistakes and is not completely fluent in all languages.
- Helping to write or debug computing code.
- Drafting ideas and planning/structuring material.
- Generating initial ideas for presentations, images and visuals.
- Helping to improve your grammar and writing structure.
- Experimenting with different writing styles.
- Helping you to start a piece of writing or other assignment.

Remember, you'll always need to check the information generated, because sometimes generative AI will make things ups. This is known as *hallucinating*. As well as making mistakes at times, there are biases built into generative AI tools, which you need to avoid by researching widely to come to a balanced conclusion. Don’t rely on generative AI to do this for you.

Use your best judgement to determine if/where/when to use these generative AI tools. They don't always make products easier and/or better.

## Final thoughts

The key take-away message is to be proud of your own work and to have confidence in your own ability. You are a university student, who has proved that you can study in higher education. You want to hone your ability and improve what you can do to make even more progress. If you or others submit work written by generative AI that doesn’t take academic integrity into account, think how that affects the value of your degree and may affect your future career options. Use generative AI as a tool where allowed and where advisable, to help you to improve your work but not to do your work for you.