

Maynooth University Student Guidelines for GenAI	
Description	<p>The purpose of the ‘Maynooth University Student Guidelines for GenAI’ is to clarify how Generative AI (GenAI) can be used in Teaching, Learning, and Assessment at Maynooth University.</p> <p>The guidelines take a high-level, principles-based approach to support responsible and ethical use in a way that aligns with Maynooth University’s policies and procedures. The primary audience for these guidelines is Maynooth University students.</p> <p>The ‘Maynooth University Student Guidelines for GenAI’ are based on the ‘Staff Guidelines for GenAI’ and have been adapted and co-authored by Maynooth University Students for students.</p> <p>The writing cohort consists of students from across academic disciplines and levels, as well as staff from the Office of Students and Learning.</p>
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Audience	These Guidelines are designed for use by Undergraduate and Taught Masters students at Maynooth University. All Research Students are covered by the University’s policies and GenAI Guidelines for Staff.
Guidelines Context & Next Steps	<p>This update incorporates feedback from the Maynooth University AI Advisory Group, and the Faculty Teaching and Learning Committees, and the students themselves.</p> <p>Note: The text was written for web. The guidelines have been presented as a dedicated site on the Student Skills and Success website. Numbering is given in this document for ease of reference only.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘Introduction’ is the landing page • Sections 1-6 are the individual tiles leading to their own pages <p>The Guidelines will be reviewed in advance of the next academic year, 2025-2026.</p>

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Introduction / Landing Page Text

GenAI at Maynooth University

The launch of ChatGPT in 2022 has raised many questions for students and educators. As a part of Maynooth University's (MU) student-centred approach to teaching and learning, students and staff have co-created these guidelines to empower students to consider the responsible, ethical and productive use of Generative AI (GenAI) in their learning. The staff guidelines were the foundation from which the student guidelines were co-created to ensure alignment. The guidelines were reworked to reflect the students' concerns, voices and perspectives.

1. What is GenAI?

Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) is a form of Artificial Intelligence (AI) which produces original output in response to prompts from users. GenAI produces text or other multimedia outputs (video, image, audio) based on pattern recognition and predictive generation.

In contrast to traditional AI, which uses algorithms to serve specific functions (for example, suggesting which movie to watch on a streaming service), GenAI is much more versatile.

1.1 How does it work?

- GenAI tools are trained on data gathered from all over the Internet.
- Interacting with GenAI tools involves using instructions called '[prompts](#)'.
- GenAI then takes these prompts and constructs a response based on its training.

1.2 What could it be used for?

Generating and revising documents and media in a variety of formats, e.g.:

- Analysing text
- Translating
- Computer coding
- Generating multimedia content

GenAI can also be used to support learning (see Section 4 below) and assessment (see Section 5 below) when used appropriately and with the permission of your department lecturers. Consult department staff to find out what type of GenAI use is allowed for each assignment or task.

1.3 What are the ways Gen AI can be accessed?

- GenAI can be accessed in a variety of ways:
 - Stand-alone technologies (e.g., Copilot, ChatGPT, Claude, etc.)
 - Embedded Technologies (e.g. built-in software, such as: Grammarly, Office365, VSCode, Adobe products like Reader and Photoshop, etc., and including operating systems on devices such as laptops or phones)

2. Limitations, Disadvantages, and Inappropriate Use of GenAI

University teaches critical thinking, problem solving, and the foundational knowledge you need for those. Over-reliance on GenAI can damage students' ability to solve problems in their subjects, and actively harm academic performance, because they may not have the foundational knowledge they need later on. A key skill for students is knowing when to use and when not to use GenAI.

Reliability and Accuracy

- While GenAI tools often sound authoritative, they may produce output that can be misleading, factually incorrect, and/or made up. These are called '[hallucinations](#)'. Therefore, checking the outputs for accuracy and appropriateness is essential.
- GenAI tools cannot reason, nor interpret or understand the real world. [UNESCO](#) (2023 (b), p.11) clarifies that, 'while GenAI can produce new content, it cannot generate new ideas or solutions to real-world challenges, as it does not understand real-world objects or social relations that underpin language'.
- GenAI is limited by its training data and will reproduce biases and falsehoods contained therein ([Bender et al., 2021](#)). (Refer to Section 3 below)
- Some GenAI tools are limited by the cut-off date for data used in their training (for instance, GPT-3 Turbo's training data ends in September 2021). GenAI tools will 'pretend' they are up to date.
- Different GenAI tools will be more effective and reliable for different situations.

Inappropriate Use

- Usage outside of the prescribed guidelines can endanger a student's academic career (see Section 5 below).
- Recording and transcribing of lectures, tutorials and meetings, etc., without prior consent.
- Creation and distribution of multimedia with the intent to cause offence.
- Creation of information with the intent to mislead.
- Non-consensual use of individuals' voices, images, personal information, etc. (see Section 3 below).
- Potentially isolating if individuals rely on GenAI rather than interacting with friends / peer groups.

3. Ethical and Privacy Considerations

3.1 What should I consider before using GenAI?

Ethical and responsible GenAI use at Maynooth University is not just about how it can help your learning, there are also other issues around using these tools that we encourage you to consider before using them:

Privacy and data consent issues

- Not all companies are transparent about the training data they have used, often using copyrighted material in their development. Personal Data such as your name, email address, and your work could also be used for training or other purposes without your permission.

Lack of transparency in GenAI development and use

- Companies are not obliged to be open about their GenAI tools' training data and capabilities, so it is not always clear what the limits of that tool might be.

Biases and harmful representations in outputs

- Since training data is gathered from the internet (among other sources), it is not equally representative of all voices. GenAI output may replicate cultural biases and generate racist, sexist, ageist, and ableist responses.

Environmental impacts

- GenAI tools are having an increasing impact on the environment, in terms of electricity and water consumption, and other resources. Data Centres, on which GenAI tools rely, consumed 21% of all electricity in Ireland in 2023 ([CSO, 2024](#)).

The human costs of GenAI development and use

- GenAI development raises concerns about the exploitation of, and detrimental impact on workers. This includes those extracting raw materials as well as the working conditions of data workers (including pay and exposure to harmful material, etc.).

4. How could GenAI be used to support my learning?

GenAI was not intended for education. However, the responsible use of GenAI can be employed as a supplemental resource in your studies. It is important to note that these tools cannot replace other forms of learning (e.g., reading, tutorials, lectures, demonstration labs). Before using GenAI, consult your department lecturers to find out what types of GenAI are permitted in each module or assignment. You may find some modules allow a lot of GenAI use, while others do not permit it at all.

4.1 How GenAI tools can be used effectively

For research and learning, Gen AI tools might:

- Provide a quick summary of texts, transcripts and notes and identify key points in texts.
- Help re-arrange class notes and expand on points you need more information on.
- Provide explanations of difficult concepts or theories.
- Support learning through conversation to test your knowledge and understanding of a topic.
- Be used as a translation aid when working in another language.
- Enhance learning through appropriate use (e.g., [the Socratic tutor approach](#)).

For assignments, GenAI tools could:

- Brainstorm a topic.
- Suggest a structure for an assignment.
- Help with coding.
- Act as a proofreading aid to improve your grammar and writing style when permitted by your lecturer.
- Help with citations and arranging your references according to a particular style guide.
- Give feedback on draft writing, e.g., does this answer the research question?


For professional skills, GenAI tools can:

- Support with interview preparation ([ShortlistMe](#))
- Enhance CV editing and proofing ([CareerSet](#))

4.2 What tools are available to use at MU?

Remember to read assessment guidelines carefully and check with your lecturer/facilitator if it is acceptable to use GenAI in your assessment, because requirements may vary across modules (see Section 5). Talk to your lecturers if you are in doubt about what is allowed.

Microsoft's Copilot is accessible to all MU students, and we currently have a data agreement in place with Microsoft, which means that our use of Copilot is [GDPR](#)-compliant.

To use Copilot, students should log in with their MU login and password in the Edge browser. When logged in, students should see a small green shield icon, , which indicates that “[Enterprise Data Protection](#)” applies to your GenAI interactions. The same protection does not apply when you use free or paid tools which are not supported by MU. If using Copilot on a phone or tablet, you might see it listed as M365 Copilot. Make sure you have logged in with your MU student login and password.

Different GenAI tools will be more effective for different situations. You may find that Copilot is useful in one context, but other tools might suit a different purpose. However, students should always be careful about what information they enter. [GDPR](#) is about your personal data rights. *Never* put your personal data or anyone else's into a GenAI tool.

In all cases where students use GenAI for assessments, students should refer to the guidelines in Section 5 below.

If you have any concerns about how your personal data is being processed, please contact dataprotection@mu.ie.

4.3 Prompting Basics

What is a prompt?

Prompts are instructions entered into GenAI tools to generate outputs. They can be a question, statement, or any stimulus aimed at fostering creativity, reflection, or engagement. Generated outputs can be modified by re-prompting, like an open conversation.

What makes a good prompt?

A good prompt for a GenAI model should be specific enough to generate detailed and useful responses. For more information, see “[Overview of prompts](#)”.

Basic elements of a good prompt.

Task: what needs to be done?

Instructions: how it needs to be done?

Requirements: what the results should be like?

For more information, please see “[Create a Prompt](#)”.

Important note: All GenAI outputs have limitations and should be reviewed and modified to satisfy your needs.

5. How can GenAI be used in my assessments?

Acceptable GenAI use will be outlined in written guidelines in module and assignment descriptions. Open discussions with staff are encouraged to clarify assessment aims and potential uses of these technologies.

5.1 Is it a breach of academic integrity (including plagiarism) to submit assignments that have been wholly or partly created by GenAI?

Using GenAI in an assignment beyond what is permitted is a breach of academic integrity (including plagiarism). For more details, see “[Maynooth University Policy on Academic Misconduct and Academic Integrity](#)”. Further advice is available at [Moodle Help For Students page](#).

5.2 Acceptable use of GenAI in assessments

IF IT IS NOT CLEARLY INDICATED BY TEACHING STAFF AND/OR DEPARTMENT GUIDELINES – NO GENAI IS PERMITTED.

The following table outlines the various acceptable GenAI uses within Maynooth University assessments. However, teaching staff may deviate from this. Always refer to module and assignment documentation, where acceptable types of use will be prescribed.

Table 1. Types and Descriptions of GenAI for Assessment (adapted from Perkins et al., 2024)

GenAI use	Description
No GenAI permitted	The assessment is completed without GenAI assistance. GenAI is not used at any stage of the assessment. Students using software with GenAI components should ensure that these are deactivated. If this is not possible, such software should not be used.
GenAI assistance in research and structuring	GenAI can be used in the initial stages of the assessment, including brainstorming, creating structures (outlines), and as an initial research assistant. No GenAI output (including paraphrased) in final submission.
GenAI editing	GenAI can be used as an editing tool to improve the clarity or quality of assessment. It may <i>not</i> be used to create new content. Students must provide a list of prompts.
Full GenAI assistance	GenAI may be used throughout the assessment process, including the inclusion of GenAI output within the assessment. All GenAI output should be referenced. A full list of prompts and GenAI outputs should also be included as an appendix.

5.3 GenAI detection and Turnitin

Turnitin compares submitted text with matched text found in its database and on the internet (this provides you with a similarity score). Turnitin also provides teaching staff with a second score outlining possible GenAI use (students will not have access to this). This Turnitin GenAI score is not definitive proof of GenAI use. However, if it indicates possible use beyond that permitted (see section 5.2 above), it might be a first step in a process of ensuring academic integrity. For more details, see the [CTL Turnitin Page](#).

5.4 What do I do if I am contacted about using GenAI in my assessment?

Follow instructions contained in communications from your teaching staff, contact relevant staff if you have queries and familiarise yourself with the procedure in your department's guidelines. Processes are laid out in the "[Maynooth University Policy on Academic Misconduct and Academic Integrity](#)". Other supports and resources are available (see Section 6 below).

5.5 Student Declaration of Use

The student declaration of use will be attached to every assignment submission sheet.

5.6 Grading and Feedback

Where GenAI use is allowed in assessments, marking criteria will be the same whether or not students choose to use prescribed tools. GenAI tools will not be used by staff to grade or provide feedback on students' assessed work.

5.7 Citations and Referencing

All use of GenAI should be acknowledged in academic work, including citations and referencing where appropriate and according to departmental handbooks.

6. Where can I find more information?

These guidelines are a starting point to inform your responsible, ethical, and productive use of GenAI in your learning. Various additional supports and resources are available to complement the information contained within these guidelines.

To access these, we recommend the following:

- **Refer to the Student GenAI Hub:** This web resource built by and for students contains a range of relevant and additional resources for students on the Student Skills and Success website. (Web link: [GenAI and My Learning](#))
- **Talk to your Lecturer or Module Coordinator:** The best source of additional information on the permissible use of AI within your education is your lecturer and/or module coordinator. Always discuss any doubts or questions with them.
- **Speak to your Maynooth Students' Union Representative:** Your MSU Vice President Academic Affairs is your one stop shop for all things academic and can be contacted directly via email on academicaaffairs@msu.ie. (Web link: [MSU Vice President Academic Affairs](#))

- **Book into a one-to-one appointment or group session with Academic Writing Support:** This service offers free, friendly, non-judgemental writing help to any student who can discuss their writing with expert peer tutors. (Web link: [Academic Writing Support | Maynooth University](#))
- **Contact the Maynooth University Counselling Service.** The Service offers one-to-one counselling and support on a wide range of psychological and mental health issues, as well as academic, family and social concerns. (Web link: [Maynooth University Counselling Service | Maynooth University](#))
- **Contact your MAP advisor**, if applicable.
- **Check out the MU Life podcast on Generative AI:** Dr. Adrian Kirwan discusses the merits, perils, and possibilities of Generative AI in higher education. (Web link: [Ep 2.6 - Generative AI - Maynooth Life Podcast | Podcast on Spotify](#))
- **Contact the Data Protection Office:** If you have concerns about your personal data, such as privacy issues, compliance queries, access requests or security breaches, email the MU Data Protection Office at dataprotection@mu.ie. (Web link: [Data Protection | Maynooth University](#))