Position statement on the responsible use of generative AI tools in research

QUT strongly supports researchers in using technologies that promote research excellence and innovation and have real world impact.

Although the use of assistive technologies in research is not new, recent advances in a particular subset of assistive technologies, generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools, open new opportunities for research and innovation. These changes also prompt consideration of certain risks relating to the quality and integrity of research outputs, and discussion about how researchers can use these tools responsibly, aligned with QUT's commitment to the principles of research integrity.

This statement summarises QUT's position on the responsible use of generative AI, consistent with the QUT Code for responsible conduct of research (the QUT Research Code). The QUT Research Code articulates the principles of the Australian code for the responsible conduct of research (Australian Code).

Accountability and responsibility

Researchers are accountable for their research contributions and must therefore be rigorous in their use of assistive technologies to ensure that research outputs are reliable.

Researchers should be mindful that reliance on generative AI tools including Large Language Models (LLMs), generative multimedia systems and coding assistants, can increase risks of plagiarism, faulty citations, and potentially accusations of fabrication or falsification.

Irrespective of the tools used, researchers will be responsible for the integrity, rigour, and originality of their research outputs.

Any use of generative AI tools must be consistent with privacy and security requirements, ethics approvals, and data management requirements under Management of research data and primary materials policy.

Researchers must abide by the policies of publishers and funding bodies, noting that some publishers forbid the use of generative AI tools in research outputs.

Transparency and honesty

Researchers should be transparent in acknowledging their use of generative AI – for example, in the Methods or Acknowledgements sections of research outputs, consistent with the policies of publishers.

When using generative AI, researchers must take special care to ensure that research data and information are presented truthfully throughout the research lifecycle, not only in formal research outputs, but also in applications for funding and in other forms of research communication and dissemination.

Authorship, collaboration and credit

Under the QUT Research Code, authors of research outputs must be all those, and only those, who have made a significant intellectual or scholarly contribution to the research and its output, and who agree to be listed as an author. Authors must be willing to take responsibility for their research outputs.

Generative AI tools must not be listed as authors.

Under the Authorship Guide, an author is responsible not only for accuracy and integrity of their direct contribution, but also for, "taking reasonable steps to ensure the accuracy and integrity of the contributions of all other co-authors." QUT researchers should therefore be proactive in discussing with research collaborators whether any member of the project is using generative AI tools, and take reasonable steps to ensure that any such use by collaborators is consistent with research quality, integrity, and this statement.

Where appropriate, researchers should cite the creators or owners of assistive technologies and software to attribute appropriate credit. QUT's cite|write provides guidance on referencing internet sources, including generative AI.

Human research

Any research proposal to use generative AI tools in connection with human data must be considered as part of the ethics submission and approval process, and consistent with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research.

Higher Degree Research Students

Higher Degree Research (HDR) students are both researchers and students and are therefore a special case, particularly in relation to the assessment of theses.

In addition to the matters discussed above, HDR students must ensure that any use of generative AI tools is:

- approved by their Principal Supervisor and communicated to the whole supervisory team prior to use
- consistent with any requirements of courses in which the student is enrolled
- acknowledged transparently in any research output, including work submitted for assessment and in accordance with GRC Presenting and Editing Guidelines.

HDR students and their supervisors should be aware that when submitting a thesis, the student must make a Statement of Original Authorship. Any use of generative AI tools must be consistent with the truth of this statement and must be disclosed transparently to examiners.

For clarity, HDR students will be responsible for the integrity, rigour, and originality of their research, irrespective of any tools used.

Breaches of the QUT Research Code

Any breach of the QUT Research Code will be investigated under the Managing and investigating potential breaches of the QUT Code for responsible conduct of research policy.

The use of generative AI or any other assistive technologies will be no excuse for a breach of the QUT Research Code.

Any breach of the QUT Research Code by an HDR student may also fall under the Management of student misconduct policy.

Broader ethical considerations and risks

More broadly, researchers should consider the ethical implications of using generative AI tools noting, for example, complex and evolving issues relating to equity, diversity, justice, bias, and intellectual property rights that may implicate ownership of data and originality in creative outputs.

QUT recognises that the use of, and implications of using, generative AI tools may differ widely by discipline, and the University encourages ongoing scholarly debate, discussion and research about these issues.

Help and ongoing discussion

Research Integrity Advisors are academic staff appointed to provide advice about the responsible conduct of research in each faculty and are available to discuss particular issues of responsible research practice as they arise.

The University further recognises the need for new guidance materials and training in this space, which will be developed this year, consistent with this statement and in support of researchers and research students.