Guidelines for the Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GAI) in Graduate Education Research

Overview

In response to the growing role of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GAI) in academic research, scholarship, and creative works, the Graduate School has established the following guidelines to help graduate students, graduate faculty, and graduate programs navigate the use of GAI in graduate capstone projects, theses, dissertations, and synthesis projects.

The **Guidance on Generative Artificial Intelligence in the Classroom** establishes the foundation for ethical engagement with GAI in classrooms across all levels of education at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette.

Building on that framework and guided by principles of permissibility, disclosure, accountability, and mentorship, these guidelines aim to ensure ethical practices while maintaining the integrity of the research and scholarship produced in graduate education at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette.

Graduate research proposals, capstone projects, theses, dissertations, and synthesis projects are essential milestones in the intellectual development of graduate students and their academic journey. These works are opportunities for graduate students to assume authorship in the creation of original knowledge and creative works. In providing a framework for the responsible use of GAI where appropriate, these guidelines aim to uphold the integrity of authorship and substantial, original academic contributions.

Guiding Principles

1. Transparency and Disclosure

- **Full Disclosure:** Graduate students must disclose use of GAI tools in their research and writing. This includes specifying the tools employed, their purpose, and the scope of their application (e.g., for brainstorming, organization, data analysis, revision).

- **Faculty Engagement:** Graduate students must engage with their faculty, chairs, and committee members early in the research process to ensure mutual understanding and alignment on the acceptable use of GAI tools.

- **Documentation and Placement of Disclosure:** While disclosure and documentation requirements may vary by discipline, disclosure must be prominently included in the manuscript, either in the introduction, methods section, or a dedicated GIA disclosure

statement following the acknowledgements section. Appendices that document the use and include work product (e.g., text of prompts and queries, prompt evolution, post-generation editing) also may be required.

Example General Disclosure Statement:
"Generative Artificial Intelligence (GAI) tools, including [specific tools], were utilized in this [capstone project/thesis/dissertation/synthesis project] for [specific uses]. While AI-generated outputs were reviewed for accuracy, relevance, and integrity to align with academic standards, I am responsible for the integrity, originality, and academic validity of this scholarly work."

2. Accountability

- **Student Responsibility:** The graduate student author remains solely responsible for the integrity, originality, and academic validity of their work, even when GAI tools are used.

- **Validation of Outputs:** Graduate students must critically evaluate AI-generated content for accuracy and appropriateness and fact-check against authoritative sources to maintain scholarly integrity.

3. Ethical Use and Awareness

- **Bias and Limitations:** Graduate students must recognize and address the inherent biases in GAI tools, which often reflect the datasets on which they are trained. Outputs should not be accepted uncritically, and remediation of bias is the student's responsibility.

- **Authorship:** GAI cannot be credited as an author under any circumstances. As emphasized in the **Policy on Generative Artificial Intelligence in the Classroom** and by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE, 2023), authorship carries accountability for work that AI cannot assume.

- **Academic Integrity:** Improper use of GAI to produce unattributed or unverified content risks violating academic integrity policies. Any such violations may result in sanctions consistent with university policy.

Permissibility

Graduate research at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette spans diverse disciplines with unique standards and practices. The permissible use of GAI in research and writing must reflect these variations:

- **Departmental and School Guidelines:**
  Individual departments and schools with graduate programs have been charged with establishing and maintaining guidelines on the permissible use, documentation, and disclosure of GAI in capstone projects, theses, dissertations, and synthesis projects. These guidelines should:

- Align with disciplinary knowledge, standards, and publishing expectations in their respective fields of study.
- Outline acceptable and prohibited uses of GAI in research and writing.
- Be communicated to graduate students and integrated into program orientation, handbooks, advisement, research methods courses and training, and dissertation/thesis/synthesis project direction.
- Be shared with the Graduate School.

- **Student Responsibility:**
  Ultimately, graduate students are responsible for the following:
  - Conducting their research ethically and ensuring scholarly integrity in their work.
  - Understanding and adhering to discipline standards and program-specific, college-level, and university-wide guidelines on GAI use.
  - Anticipating potential impacts on research dissemination (e.g., publication, presentation, patent disclosure, or creative works) and addressing potential repercussions if accuracy, originality, or intellectual ownership of AI-generated data or content cannot be established.

- **Prohibited Practices:**
  - Generating substantive sections of a manuscript without acknowledgment.
  - Using GAI tools to replace original critical thinking, analysis, or argumentation central to the graduate student's academic or scholarly contribution.
  - Inputting sensitive, confidential, or proprietary data into GAI tools unless their compliance with robust data privacy policies has been verified.

Ethical and Legal Considerations

1. **Authorship and Accountability**
   Authorship involves accountability, which GAI tools cannot provide. As emphasized by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE): "AI cannot meet the requirements for authorship as they cannot take responsibility for submitted work. AI tools cannot meet the requirements for authorship as they cannot take responsibility for the submitted work. As non-legal entities, they cannot assert the presence or absence of conflicts of interest nor manage copyright and license agreements. Authors who use AI tools in the writing of a manuscript, production of images or graphical elements of the paper, or in the collection and analysis of data, must be transparent in disclosing in the Materials and Methods (or similar section) of the paper how the AI tool was used and which tool was used. Authors are fully responsible for the content of their manuscript, even those parts produced by an AI tool, and are thus liable for any breach of publication ethics."

2. **Copyright and Intellectual Property**
   Graduate students must recognize that GAI outputs may be derivative of copyrighted material. They must ensure that the use of such content complies with fair use principles and does not infringe on intellectual property rights.

3. **Plagiarism and Academic Integrity**
   Misusing GAI to produce unattributed text or failing to disclose its use risks violating plagiarism

policies. Graduate students must ensure that any AI-generated content is properly documented, acknowledged, and cited.

4. **Data Privacy and Security**
   Sensitive or regulated data must not be shared with open AI tools unless their compliance with data protection standards can be ensured.

   Entering confidential or sensitive information into open AI tools tools—including by submitting prompts, uploading data, or generating and revising text—is functionally equivalent to publicly disclosing that information to a third-party.

   Uploading research data, proprietary analysis, grant proposals, or unpublished manuscripts into open AI tools may result in unintended exposure or unauthorized reuse of that content. Graduate students, faculty, and staff should assume that content submitted to open AI platforms will be stored, reused, or incorporated into future model training or system improvement in ways that compromise privacy, security, or intellectual property.

   Graduate students should not enter their research or writing into open AI environments without explicit permission from their chair. Likewise, sensitive data governed by FERPA, HIPPA, contractual agreements, or other privacy protections must not be entered without prior authorization from the Office of Research Integrity. Such disclosures may violate federal or state laws, funding agency policies, or university-level data governance protocols.

   When in doubt, treat any open AI tool as a non-secure environment.

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