



**Responsible Use of AI in Research – Guidance Document**

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### 1. Overview

#### Purpose

Drexel University is dedicated to advancing knowledge, learning, and research, and embraces the use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools and generative AI tools which are a subset of AI. These guidelines establish expectations for the responsible, ethical, and transparent use of AI tools in research conducted at Drexel University or by Drexel University research agents. Key considerations in the use of AI in research include safeguarding research integrity, human subject protections, inherent biases, data privacy, intellectual property, and compliance with regulatory and funder requirements.

Although the use of AI in research may not be detailed in existing frameworks, the ethical considerations in existing regulations, policies, and best practices address key issues relevant to the development and use of AI in research. These considerations, policies and practices must continue to be followed for mitigation of potential harms and inequities arising from the use and development of AI.

The regulatory environment surrounding AI in research is rapidly evolving. Policies and guidelines will continue to evolve as tools, expectations, and regulations develop. Researchers must follow the most recent/up to date regulations, funder and journal requirements and not assume that these have remained the same. Departments and Colleges may set additional guidelines and requirements regarding AI use, e.g., use for thesis and dissertation writing. Where a Department, College, funder, journal, etc. have set more stringent requirements, those requirements supersede these best practice guidelines.

#### Key Considerations

Many AI tools log user interactions including chats, meeting transcriptions, uploaded documents, etc. Depending on the licensing structure, the company may use this data to train future models. As a result, sensitive or proprietary information shared in these tools could be inadvertently exposed to other users through subsequent interactions with those models. Users must never enter sensitive information or proprietary data into a public generative AI tool and must follow Drexel University requirements for the use of [Drexel-licensed AI tools](#).

Users should review and understand how everyday tools and systems use AI and how their data is being used by the AI tool provider, e.g., AI transcription tools may upload audio and text transcriptions to cloud systems, potentially exposing information to third parties.

#### Scope

These guidelines apply to all Drexel faculty, staff, students, trainees, and agents engaged in research activities, regardless of funding source, discipline, or research setting.

### 2. Definitions

**Artificial Intelligence (AI)** – A machine-based system that can, for a given set of human-defined objectives, make predictions, recommendations, or decisions influencing real or virtual environments.



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**Drexel University Research Agents** are individuals who act on behalf of the institution, exercise institutional authority or responsibility, or perform institutionally designated activities.

Drexel University Research agents include faculty, staff, students, contractors, and volunteers, depending upon their involvement in research, sponsored programs, or projects as determined by the applicable committees (e.g., IRB, IACUC) or ORI offices.

**Enterprise AI Tool** – A Drexel licensed, centrally vetted Generative Artificial Intelligence tool.

**Generative Artificial Intelligence (GAI)** – A specialized subset of artificial intelligence that creates new content, including text, images, audio, codes, or other data types, by learning patterns from existing data and generating novel outputs that resemble human-created content. Generative AI uses techniques such as large language models, diffusion models, and generative adversarial networks to produce content that did not previously exist.

**GAI Software** – Applications, platforms, or programs that implement generative AI capabilities, allowing users to create new content such as text, images, audio, video, or code based on inputs and prompts. GAI Software incorporates large language models, diffusion models, or other generative techniques to produce outputs that did not previously exist. These systems typically offer interfaces for user interaction, content generation controls, and integration capabilities with other business systems or workflows.

**Hallucinations** – Instances where an artificial intelligence system generates false, misleading, or completely fabricated information, yet presents it as an absolute fact. As models are designed to predict probably word patterns rather than verify the truth, they can confidently “guess” incorrect answers.

### 3. Responsible Use Principles

#### 3.1 Accountability

Researchers remain fully responsible for the accuracy, integrity, originality, and validity of all research outputs, regardless of AI assistance.

#### 3.2 Replicability/Temperature

Supporting replicability when using AI in research means thoroughly documenting the AI tool, prompts, datasets, outputs, and role of AI in the research process so that another researcher could reasonably reproduce the study’s methods and findings. For example, researchers using tools for interactions with subjects or medical records in which the use of the tool is the object of the study, must show how reproducibility will be achieved. Replicability supports scientific credibility, regulatory compliance, and transparency. Researchers should save and maintain appropriate records of the exact syntax of prompts entered, specific models used, version numbers, and output generated by AI tools to document their research conduct and support replicability.



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Please note that some AI output may not be fully replicable. AI models use a "temperature" parameter that introduces randomness into outputs, meaning the same prompt to the same model version often yields different results on different runs.

### **3.3 Transparency**

The use of AI tools must be disclosed at all stages of research when AI meaningfully contributes to research design, data collection, data analysis, interpretation, or dissemination of results. Consent for the use of AI must be obtained, as applicable, e.g., consent requirements for human subjects research.

### **3.4 Research Integrity**

AI must not be used to fabricate, falsify, manipulate, or selectively omit data or results. Researchers are held to Drexel University's Research Integrity and Research Misconduct policies and procedures.

### **3.5 Ethical Use**

Researchers must consider risks related to managing hallucinations, bias, fairness, explainability, reproducibility, and potential harm to individuals or communities. AI is trained on vast datasets from the internet, including internet forums and social media, which contain human biases related to race, gender, and culture. These biases are often reflected in the GAI output.

### **3.6 Privacy & Confidentiality**

Researchers must protect confidential, sensitive, proprietary, and regulated data and information when using AI tools and software. Users are responsible for identifying how data are used by the AI tool provider and what uses are permitted by Drexel University's licensing agreements.

## **4. Disclosure and Documentation**

### **4.1 Disclosure Requirements**

When AI use is permitted, disclosure should occur in grant applications, manuscripts, methods sections, acknowledgments, or other appropriate locations. Some funding sources strictly prohibit the use of AI tools to develop a grant application. Investigators should check funding source requirements, data use agreements, as well as journal publishing policies for restrictions on using AI tools in grant development, manuscript writing, and research processes regularly since these are evolving rapidly. Researchers should follow the disclosure norms for their field.

Informed consent for the use of AI in research must be obtained as applicable to human subject research under the requirements of 45 CFR 46.

Researchers must disclose AI use when it materially contributes to:

- Grant or protocol development
- Data collection, analysis or interpretation
- Manuscript or report drafting
- Thesis or dissertation writing



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- Students working on research, e.g. Capstone Project, STAR Scholars Program, senior design projects
- Coding prompts
- Visual or figure generation

For purposes of disclosure, a “material contribution” refers to any use of artificial intelligence that meaningfully influences the intellectual content, analysis, interpretation, or presentation of research outputs in a manner that is more than minimal or routine assistance. This includes contributions that affect study design, data analysis, interpretation of findings, or substantive drafting of scholarly work; however, specific funders/journals/publishers may define disclosure requirements differently.

### 4.2 Documentation

AI use documentation should include:

- Names and versions of AI tools used
- Description of how the tools were used
- The dates the tools were accessed
- Key prompts and parameters

## 5. Data Governance & Security

Researchers must follow applicable University policies, procedures and guidelines for the protection of research data and should use available enterprise tools when feasible. In addition, funder requirements and other regulatory requirements, e.g., HIPAA, FERPA, GDPR, Export Control, the Common Rule, Intellectual Property, etc., must be followed regarding data governance and security.

In human subjects and clinical research, the introduction or substitution of an AI tool may constitute a change in study procedures, data handling, or confidentiality risk and therefore may require prior IRB review and approval, revised study documents, and updated consent language, as applicable.

Researchers must avoid uploading confidential, identifiable, unpublished, copyrighted, export-controlled, or regulated data into generative AI tools using personal accounts. Entering private or confidential information into a public AI tool, including by entering prompts or queries into tools like ChatGPT, is a form of release of that information to a third party. The same rules that apply to other forms of disclosure of private or confidential information apply to interactions with public generative AI tools.

Enterprise tools, when used in compliance with Drexel security protocols, e.g., logging into a Drexel licensed ChatGPT account with Drexel credentials, do not use entered information in large language models or generative content and offers enhanced security over public AI tools. However, users maintain responsibility to comply with data security requirements and copyright law. Users should consult Drexel University’s AI tools website for available AI tools and their current data security thresholds.



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## 6. Automation in Research

AI technologies, such as generative models and machine learning tools, can support research by automating tasks like coding, data processing, and model development, ultimately improving efficiency, reproducibility, and innovation. However, their use also introduces risks, including errors at scale, bias, intellectual property concerns, and potential compliance issues when handling sensitive data. Responsible use requires ongoing human oversight, validation, and accountability to ensure alignment with institutional policies, data protections, and sponsor requirements.

## 7. Publication & Grant Compliance

### 7.1 Authorship

Authors are ultimately responsible and accountable for the content and methodology of their published and disseminated work.

When considering the use of generative AI in scientific writing, users must accept responsibility and accountability for the content produced by such tools. Because generative AI tools cannot be responsible or accountable, they cannot be attributed authorship. Because generative AI has been found to plagiarize and fabricate material, authors who rely upon AI-generated material without confirming the accuracy of the information may be subject to research misconduct inquiry should fabrication, falsification or plagiarism be contained within those AI materials. In addition, AI tools are unreliable in identifying retracted research papers; therefore, AI generated data may include retracted and inaccurate information. Accuracy and integrity in scientific work remain the researcher's responsibility, for which they are accountable.

Authors who use AI tools in the writing of a paper, the production of images or graphical elements for the paper, or in the collection and analysis of data must appropriately disclose its use in the Materials and Methods or similar section of the paper how the AI tool was used, which AI tool was used, and must not be submitted as the author's own work.

Note that some publisher policies do not permit the use of generative AI. Please review applicable publisher policies prior to generation or manipulation of information or images using AI.

### 7.2 Grant Writing

Many of the concerns that exist when using AI for writing/developing manuscripts and publications as described in Section 6.1 also apply to writing grant applications. Grant applications are assumed to represent the original and accurate ideas of the applicant institution and researchers. Sponsor guidelines may strictly prohibit the use of AI. As AI tools have the potential to introduce plagiarized, falsified, and fabricated content, grant applicants should be cautious of any AI-produced content. If prohibited or undisclosed use of AI in grant writing is identified, the grant may not be reviewed, or the PI may incur research misconduct penalties.

#### **Funder Examples, as of May 2026:**

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) will not currently consider applications that are either substantially developed by AI, or contain sections substantially developed by AI, to be the



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original ideas of the applicants. The NIH now limits applicants to six submissions per calendar year due to increasing AI-generated applications.

The NSF does not currently prohibit the use of generative AI tools during the preparation of proposals. However, proposers remain fully responsible for the accuracy, authenticity, and originality of all content submitted to NSF. Proposers are encouraged to describe, within the proposal as appropriate, the extent to which generative AI tools were used in preparing proposal materials.

### 7.3 Peer Review

Reviewers are trusted and required to maintain confidentiality throughout the peer review process.

The NIH prohibits scientific peer reviewers from using generative AI technologies for analyzing and formulating peer review critiques for grant applications and contract proposals. Uploading or sharing content or original concepts from an NIH grant application, contract proposal, or critique to online generative AI tools violates the NIH peer review confidentiality and integrity requirements.

Additionally, NSF prohibits reviewers and panelists from uploading proposal content or review materials into non-approved generative AI systems due to confidentiality requirements associated with the merit review process.

Other funders and journals may also prohibit the use of AI for peer review, specifically regarding uploading the manuscript into an AI tool. Please refer to applicable funder and journal requirements.

### 7.4 Citation

Transparent and complete reporting of methods and materials used is crucial in promoting reproducibility and replicability of research. Therefore, researchers should clearly cite AI tools that were used to write a manuscript, produce images or graphical elements of a paper, or collect and analyze data. The citation should describe which AI tools were used as well as how those AI tools were used to support the research. Associations and/or journals may have specific style-guide requirements for citing the use of generative AI tools. Drexel University Libraries provides resources on citing generative AI.

Generative AI tools should not be used to manipulate original research data and images. Authors must critically review and refine any AI-generated text to ensure it accurately reflects their intellectual contribution and original ideas. AI should not be used to fabricate data, e.g., lab data, survey data. This process is necessary because tools cannot be credited as authors; only humans can take legal and ethical responsibility for the work's integrity and conclusions. Source: [Generative AI Tools - IOPscience - Publishing Support](#)



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## 8. Research Misconduct Risks

AI tools can unintentionally facilitate fabrication, falsification, or plagiarism by generating data, text, images, or analyses that appear credible but are inaccurate, unverifiable, or not transparently disclosed. Overreliance on AI-generated outputs without appropriate validation may compromise data integrity, reproducibility, and authorship accountability. Additionally, failure to document how AI was used in study development and design, data analysis, or manuscript preparation can obscure methodological transparency and undermine trust in the research record. These are some examples of how the use of AI can impact research integrity and lead to a research misconduct inquiry. Research misconduct applies whether committed by an individual directly or through the use or assistance of other persons, entities, or tools, including AI tools.

## 9. Other Limitations & Risks

1. AI tools may generate content that is unverifiable via validating primary sources.
2. AI-generated output is based on previously existing data and thus reflects the biases and other limitations of that data. These biases need be interrogated and acknowledged. The output may also be inaccurate or entirely fabricated, even if it appears reliable or factual.
3. It cannot be assumed that generative AI tools are compliant with rules and laws designed to ensure the confidentiality of private information, such as HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996) and FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act). Uploading information (e.g., research data, grant proposals, unpublished manuscripts, or analytical results) to a public AI tool is equivalent to releasing it publicly.
4. Generative AI may present privacy risks to both individuals and the institution, such as those implicated by data breaches, exposure of intellectual property (IP), and Science & Security concerns.
5. Generative AI raises a range of intellectual property concerns regarding the ownership of its output, as well as questions about whether its output is properly treated as equivalent to a published resource. In particular, generative AI may create content that infringes on others’ intellectual property (IP) or copyright-protected works. Generative AI may also create content that leads to allegations of plagiarism or other forms of misconduct against the researcher/scholar. Federal agencies are using AI detection tools to identify plagiarism and intellectual property concerns arising from AI-generated paraphrasing.
6. Norms and requirements surrounding the citation of AI-generated output, as well as disclosure of the use of AI technologies, are complex, rapidly evolving, and oftentimes unclear. In addition, these norms and requirements may vary substantially depending on the source; for example, publishers, journals, professional organizations, and funding organizations all may have (or be in the process of developing) policies surrounding the use of AI that need to be navigated.

## 10. Use of AI in Research Compliance Checklist

<input type="checkbox"/>	1. Has the project PI approved the specified use of the AI tools being utilized?
<input type="checkbox"/>	2. Have you ensured that no confidential or private information/data is being entered into unauthorized AI tools?
<input type="checkbox"/>	3. Have you verified the accuracy and integrity of all generated content?



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<input type="checkbox"/>	4. Have you disclosed all uses of AI at all stages of the research process?
<input type="checkbox"/>	5. Have you made explicit attempts to mitigate biases in generated content?
<input type="checkbox"/>	6. Have you adhered to guidelines and requirements for authorship, publication, peer review, and source citation?
<input type="checkbox"/>	7. Have you contacted Drexel University Information Technology, Privacy, the IRB, as applicable, to ensure that utilized AI tools meet expectations for confidentiality and security?
<input type="checkbox"/>	8. Do applicable project documents, e.g., grant, protocol, consent form, etc., identify the AI tools being used? If switching to a new AI tool, ensure applicable project documents are updated and approved, e.g. getting IRB approval for modification of study documents; named AI tools may not be used interchangeably.
<input type="checkbox"/>	9. Have you checked whether the use of AI is permitted by all data use agreements, security requirements, and other funder requirements associated with your project?

## **11. Responsibilities**

### **11.1 Office for Research & Innovation Responsibilities**

The Office for Research & Innovation is responsible for maintaining this guidance document, applicable tools, and monitoring. For inquiries regarding these procedures, please contact the Associate Vice Provost for Research Compliance and Regulatory Affairs, as part of the Office for Research & Innovation (ORI).

### **11.2 Principal Investigator Responsibilities**

The Principal Investigator (and Faculty Mentor, as applicable) is ultimately responsible for the conduct and oversight of the project and personnel. Please refer to ORI-002, Principal Investigator Eligibility and Responsibilities, for a listing of the PI and Department Responsibilities. The principal investigator is responsible for understanding and approving the AI tools being used in their research as well as complying with these guidelines, all university policies and applicable state, federal, and international regulations, including those dealing with copyright and other intellectual property.

### **11.3 Research Team Responsibilities**

Research team members who generate, acquire, and work with research data are responsible for understanding the AI tools they use in their research and ensuring the project PI has approved all AI usage. Research team members are also responsible for complying with these guidelines, all university policies and applicable state, federal, and international regulations, including those dealing with copyright and other intellectual property.



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**12. Resources**

- [Drexel AI Tools](#)
- [Drexel Policy for Academic Integrity Pertaining to Artificial Intelligence](#)
- [Drexel Third Party Risk Management](#)
- [Drexel Software List](#)
- [Drexel Libraries – Citing Generative AI](#)
- [Drexel Research Integrity](#)
- [NIH Notice – The Use of Generative AI Technologies is Prohibited for the NIH Peer Review Process](#)
- [NIH Artificial Intelligence in Research – Policy Considerations and Guidance](#)
- [NIH Application Submission/Resubmission Policy](#)
- [NIH Research Misconduct](#)
- [NSF Artificial Intelligence Policy and Strategy](#)
- [NSF Notice to Research Community](#)
- [NSF PAPPG 24-1 Supplement 1](#)
- [ACM Policy on Authorship](#)
- [ACM Policy on Authorship FAQs](#)
- [ACM Peer Review Policy](#)
- [ACM Peer Review Policy FAQs](#)

**13. Revision and Workgroup Members**

**13.1 Revision**

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**13.2 Workgroup Members**

The Office for Research and Innovation appreciates the following individuals who served as Workgroup Members:

<b>Workgroup Members</b>	
<p><b>Sarah N. Archibald, PhD, MSL, MS, MDE, MA, CCEP, CRCMP</b> Associate Vice Provost, Research Compliance &amp; Regulatory Affairs Office of Research &amp; Innovation</p>	<p><b>Carissa Miller</b> Research Compliance Coordinator Office of Research &amp; Innovation</p>
<p><b>Jay Bhatt, MS</b> Engineering Librarian Drexel University Libraries</p>	<p><b>Alex Quistberg, PhD, MPH</b> Associate Research Professor, Urban Health Collaborative Department of Environmental &amp; Occupational Health</p>



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<p><b>Sharon A. Budman, MS Ed, FIP, CIPP/US, CIPT, CIPM, CHC, CCEP, CCEP-I</b> Executive Director, Privacy Program Services Office of Compliance</p>	<p><b>Timothy Raynor</b> Associate General Counsel Office of the General Counsel</p>
<p><b>Daniel Conway, MD</b> Assistant Professor, Pediatrics College of Medicine</p>	<p><b>Sue Rhoades</b> Assistant Vice Provost, Applied Innovation Office of Research &amp; Innovation</p>
<p><b>Marisa Corbett, BA, CCRC</b> Executive Director, Research Quality Assurance Office of Research &amp; Innovation</p>	<p><b>John Roberts, BA</b> Executive Director of Human Research Protections Program Office of Research &amp; Innovation</p>
<p><b>Rose Ann DiMaria-Ghalili, PhD, RN, FASPEN, FAAN, FGSA</b> Senior Associate Dean for Research, Professor College of Nursing and Health Professions Interim Associate Vice Provost for Research and Innovation</p>	<p><b>Aleksandra Sarcevic, PhD</b> Professor of Information Science Interim Associate Dean for Research Development College of Computing and Informatics</p>
<p><b>Elea Feit, PhD</b> Associate Professor LeBow College of Business</p>	<p><b>Jacqueline Stults, MBA, BS</b> Research Quality Assurance/Quality Improvement Office of Research &amp; Innovation</p>
<p><b>Elizabeth Hann</b> Director of Animal Welfare Office of Research &amp; Innovation</p>	<p><b>Mary Jean Tecce DeCarlo, EdD</b> Clinical Professor, Literary Studies School of Education</p>
<p><b>Lacey Harris, PhD</b> Executive Director, Research Compliance Office of Research and Innovation</p>	<p><b>Elena Varela</b> Senior Business Analyst, Business Operations Office of Information Technology</p>
<p><b>Hai-Feng (Frank) Ji, PhD</b> Department Head, Professor Department of Chemistry</p>	<p><b>Steven Weber, PhD</b> Senior Vice Provost, Undergraduate Affairs Undergraduate Education</p>
<p><b>Gregory Johnson</b> Assistant Vice Provost of Clinical System Support Drexel Information Technology</p>	<p><b>Anne Willkomm, MFA</b> Assistant Vice Provost of Curricular Support Services Office of the Provost</p>
<p><b>Janet Matthews, MSN RN</b> Senior Director, Research Program Development College of Medicine</p>	