



ACU Policy on Acceptable Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence in Applications, Review Procedures, and Project Outputs

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Policy Statement

This policy sits under the overarching Generative AI Policy for the ACU, and is intended to be utilised by external stakeholders to guide their use of AI when working with the ACU.

With the increasing popularity of generative artificial intelligence (AI) chatbots such as Copilot, OpenAI's ChatGPT and Google's Bard, as well as other machine learning (ML) tools, we would like to outline the appropriate use of such tools for external stakeholders when interacting with the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU).

While we remain committed to the adoption of new technologies to support our work, when possible, we understand the risks and limitations of generative AI and ML and want to ensure responsible use. Our goal is to ensure that generative AI tools are used to work more effectively and to protect staff, members, clients, partners, scholars and the ACU from harm.

All staff and external stakeholders are expected to apply our core values and behaviours when accessing, interpreting, and acting on AI-generated outputs. We expect appropriate human judgement and oversight wherever AI is used, and this policy will be reviewed and updated as technologies and good practice evolve.

Purpose and scope

This document sits under the ACU's overarching Generative AI Policy and outlines the ACU's policies on generative AI in the context of our awards, recruitment, and assessment processes. It is designed to ensure consistent expectations and safe practice.

This policy applies to external individuals and organisations engaging with the ACU for the following purposes:

- Application processes for funding and employment opportunities (applicants)
- Recipients of ACU funding (including scholarship holders, fellows, grant holders, contractors and project partners)
- Voluntary reviewers (review panel members)

What we mean by 'Generative AI'

Generative AI refers to tools that can create new content (for example, text, images, or other media) using machine learning techniques trained on large datasets.

Generative AI outputs can appear plausible but can be entirely inaccurate, biased, misleading, or entirely fabricated (also known as "hallucinations"), so human checking is essential.

Core principles

The principles set out here underpin both our internal approach and our expectations for the ACU's stakeholders, as set in the remainder of this document.



Individuals and organisations that use generative AI when working with the ACU are responsible for ensuring that the content produced aligns with the ACU's values, ethics, and quality standards. Generated content must not be used if it is misleading, harmful, offensive, or discriminatory.

AI should only be used as a tool to aid judgement, not replace it. Partners and other stakeholders are expected to use their expertise, judgement and empathy when using AI tools. We all have a duty to guard against inherent biases when using AI.

We expect all our partners and stakeholders to be transparent about their use of AI, as per the guidance in [Appendix II](#), explaining where AI has been used, where it has been tested and with what data inputs, and how outputs are validated. This enables us to ensure that decisions remain accountable and builds both expertise and confidence in the use of AI tools.

How the ACU currently uses AI

The ACU and its staff utilise the principles outlined above in accordance with our internal Generative AI Policy to guide our usage of AI tools in relation to review and selection procedures.

We do not use generative AI to assess applications or make selection decisions. AI may be used to support administrative tasks (with appropriate human oversight), and only through tools approved by the ACU IT Programme Board.

Further Information

If you are unsure how this policy applies to your situation, please contact the relevant ACU team for assistance before proceeding.

Date of last review	July 2026
Date of next review	January 2027
Policy owner	COO



Appendix I: Guidance for Applicants

The Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU) recognises that applicants may use artificial intelligence (AI) tools, such as ChatGPT or similar services, when preparing applications for awards (ACU managed grants, scholarships, fellowships) or jobs.

AI can be a helpful support tool, but your application must always be your own work and must reflect your real experience, skills and motivation. Applications that are generic, impersonal or inaccurate are unlikely to be successful.

Before submitting, you should ensure that:

- All information provided is truthful and accurate
- You can explain and evidence anything included in your application
- The final submission reflects your own voice and judgement

By submitting an application, you confirm that it meets these standards.

Acceptable use of AI

You may use generative AI tools to help you:

- Clarify, structure or improve the wording of your own ideas
- Check spelling, grammar and readability
- Brainstorm topics or reflect on how best to present your experience
- Research publicly available information relevant to your application
- Prepare for interviews (for example, by practising responses or generating mock questions)

Used in this way, AI should help you express your own thinking more clearly, not replace it.

Unacceptable use of AI

You must not use generative AI tools to:

- Write all or substantial parts of an application on your behalf
- Fabricate, exaggerate or misrepresent experiences, achievements or qualifications
- Submit AI generated text, examples or answers as if they were your own work
- Complete assessments, tests or interviews (live or recorded) using AI
- Gain an unfair advantage over other applicants through the methods outlined above or in any other manner

Using AI in these ways may result in your application being rejected or any offer being withdrawn.



Further information

Unless explicitly stated otherwise in a specific call or job advert, ACU permits responsible use of AI in line with this guidance. If a particular application has different requirements, these will be made clear.

If you are unsure whether a particular use of AI is appropriate, it is safest not to use it.

Appendix II: Guidance for Recipients of ACU Funding

Recipients of ACU funding (including scholarship holders, fellows, grant holders, contractors and project partners) must use generative AI tools responsibly and in a way that protects the integrity, reputation and legal obligations of the ACU and its programmes.

This policy is a condition of accepting ACU funding and, unless specified otherwise, applies alongside (and may be superseded by) any programme handbook, grant agreement, fellowship/consultancy contract, offer letter, due diligence requirements and any host institution or funder rules.

You are advised to always carefully review the funding-specific conditions and policies in the first instance. If any aspects of the funding conditions or the policy below are unclear, please reach out to the relevant ACU contact for clarification.

Research principles

All individuals or organisations conducting research on behalf of any ACU-funded or administered programme are expected to abide by the guiding principles set out in the ACU's Research Ethics Policy, as summarised below:

1. **Respect for Persons:** We honour the autonomy, dignity, and privacy of all individuals involved in or affected by our research. Participation must be voluntary and based on informed consent.
2. **Beneficence:** Our research seeks to maximize benefits while minimizing potential risks or harms to participants and the communities we serve. We continuously evaluate and address any risks.
3. **Justice:** We strive to ensure fair and equitable treatment for all research participants and stakeholders, taking into consideration issues of equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility.
4. **Scientific Integrity:** We uphold the highest standards of scientific rigor, honesty, and transparency in our research practices. Data is managed securely and ethically, in accordance with GDPR.



Guidelines that apply across all ACU programmes

The principles above have informed the following guidelines on the use of generative AI tools for any individuals or organisations conducting research on behalf of the ACU:

- **Maintain accountability** – You are responsible for your outputs and deliverables, including anything produced with AI assistance. AI tools cannot take responsibility for the work; human authorship and oversight must be clear. Verify AI-assisted content for errors, omissions, bias and “hallucinations”; remove or correct anything false or misleading.
- **Protect confidential and personal information** – Do not upload confidential information, personal data, unpublished manuscripts, sensitive research data, or commercially sensitive material into public/open AI tools (or any tool where you cannot be sure how data is retained or reused).
- **Maintain research and academic integrity** – You must not use AI in ways that breach the integrity expectations of your organisation/institution or those of the ACU, including those outlined in the ACU’s Research Ethics policy.
- **Be transparent about AI use** - Ensure that you are always compliant with the relevant policies and procedures of your organisation/institution concerning the use of generative AI tools and disclosing such use. For all research outputs or deliverables commissioned by and delivered to the ACU, you will be required to complete the Generative AI Disclosure Template in [Appendix IV](#).
- **Respect intellectual property and third-party rights** – Ensure you have the right to use any third-party material (including training data, images, and copyrighted text) and do not use AI in ways that infringe others’ rights.

Outputs funded/commissioned by the ACU

For all research outputs or other deliverables commissioned by and delivered to the ACU:

- You **must** complete the Generative AI Disclosure Template in [Appendix IV](#), outlining where and how generative AI has been used in your outputs.
- It is **advisable** to keep all records necessary to evidence the originality of your work. This can include utilising “Track Changes” on Microsoft Word, or other tracking methods, to indicate that your outputs are your own.

What this means in practice

The below examples have been provided to help you contextualise acceptable and unacceptable usage of generative AI tools. However, it is your responsibility to ensure that you review and understand the conditions attached to your funding:

- **Scholarships/fellowships/grants (funding awarded to individuals):** AI may support writing and learning but must not replace your own work or breach integrity requirements (including plagiarism and misconduct rules).



- **Grants/fellowships awarded for projects:** Do not use AI to invent or “tidy up” evidence; ensure outputs are accurate and appropriately attributed.
- **Commissioned work/research:** Because outputs may inform high-level external discussions and carry reputational risk, the ACU will require clear disclosure and attribution of AI use within deliverables using the Generative AI Disclosure Template in [Appendix IV](#), alongside peer review/quality assurance.

If AI is misused

If generative AI use appears to breach integrity, confidentiality or contractual requirements, the ACU will investigate and apply proportionate consequences (which may include withdrawal of funding or other penalties). The ACU will assess potential misuse through a combination of expert review, technological tools and contextual evaluation of submitted work, drawing on professional or academic judgement. This applies across all interactions with the ACU, including research outputs, programme participation, and job or funding applications.

Appendix III: Assessment Guidance for Voluntary Reviewers

This section outlines the ACU’s policy on the use of AI within its review and selection procedures for awards (grants, scholarships, fellowships) and jobs, as well as providing guidance to volunteer reviewers on handling suspected usage of generative AI tools within applications.

Use of AI within review processes

The ACU does not permit the use of generative AI tools to inform decision making within review and selection processes either by its staff or voluntary reviewers.

When reviewing applications, **DO NOT:**

- Speculate on permitted AI-use or allow this to influence your assessment. Guidance on handling suspected AI usage is provided below.
- Use AI to grade, rank, or decide on applicants. For instance, do not have an AI tool “score” personal statements or recommend who to shortlist.
- Input or upload any part of an application into generative AI tools or online services. Doing so will be considered as a breach of confidentiality and of the Data-Sharing Agreement (DTA) signed by all voluntary reviewers.
 - This includes “AI detectors”. Automated AI-detection services are unreliable and pose the same confidentiality risks as any other generative AI tools.



Handling suspected AI use within applications

By default, the ACU permits responsible use of AI by applicants (for example, to improve clarity or structure). However, applications must still reflect the applicant's own experience, ideas and judgement. Reviewers should assess applications fairly, consistently, and on their merits.

Some uses of AI are unacceptable, such as plagiarising others work, providing falsified information, or using AI to wholly generate responses.

In the first instance, always check the selection criteria provided, which will clarify whether a specific programme or call explicitly prohibits AI-generated content. If this is the case, be sure to follow the guidance provided and flag any clear violations for further review.

Here's how to respond if you suspect a violation of the policies set out above:

- Do not penalise permitted AI use (i.e. for wording or structure).
- Focus your review on the quality and relevance of the application.
- If concerns arise, consider them alongside other evidence (interviews, references, work or academic history).
- If content appears generic, inconsistent or unclear, reflect this in your scoring or comments rather than trying to determine cause.
- If you have a clear concern about integrity (e.g. plagiarism or false information), note this briefly and confidentially and flag it to the relevant ACU contact.
- Do not contact applicants directly or investigate independently.

In all cases, decisions should be evidence-based, consistent, and fair, with the emphasis on **selecting the strongest candidates** rather than policing AI use.

Appendix IV: Generative AI Disclosure Template

As outlined in [Appendix II](#), this template should be completed and appended to any research outputs or other deliverables commissioned by the ACU upon delivery. You will be notified of the requirement to complete this template when accepting the offer of award or upon commissioning of the relevant deliverables.



1. Output details

Award Title and Year (e.g. ACU Expert Group Grant 2025/26):	
Application ID: The ID assigned when you submitted your application. This is included in your offer email. If you are unsure, ask the relevant ACU team.	
Awardee/Project Lead – Name:	
Awardee/Project Lead – Email Address:	
Organisation/Institution:	
Applicable Outputs: Please list the outputs that this document is applicable to.	
Date Submitted to ACU:	

2. Declaration

2.1 Overall Declaration

How was generative AI used in the outputs indicated above (tick one)?

Usage Declaration	Tick the relevant box below:
No AI Used This output was produced without generative AI assistance.	
Minor AI Use This might include: - Spelling/grammar corrections - Readability/clarity suggestions - Word-count reduction or light copy-editing - Translation support (without generating new substantive content)	



Substantial AI Use

This might include:

- Drafting new text (sections/paragraphs)
- Generating or substantially rewriting content/structure (beyond light editing)
- Summarising source material beyond minor editing
- Generating images/graphics or other media
- Analysing or interpreting data
- Refining or generating code/scripts

2.2 Details of Generative AI Use

If you have indicated either Minor or Substantial AI Use in section 2.1, please use the below space to outline:

- Which generative AI tools were used, and whether these are institutionally approved with the appropriate data protection measures, or public/open tools;
- What purposes generative AI was used for;
- What data/inputs/prompts were provided;
- How outputs were checked for accuracy;
- Whether you retained evidence of your original work and edits (e.g. Track Changes, version history, notes);
- Any other pertinent information

Details of Generative AI Use:



2.3 Final Declaration

Please tick the boxes below to confirm your adherence to each statement:

Statement	Tick Below
I confirm no confidential, personal, or sensitive information was entered into public/open AI tools (or any tool where retention/reuse was unclear).	
I confirm that all outputs of Generative AI usage (if used) listed in section 1 were appropriately checked and their accuracy verified, and, as such, reflect my (or my team's) judgement and expertise.	
I confirm I have the right to use any third-party material included in these outputs, and the use of Generative AI to produce these outputs (if used) did not infringe others' rights.	
I confirm I have complied with all of the conditions outlined within the ACU Policy on Acceptable Use of Generative AI and/or the conditions under which this project was funded.	

By signing below, you confirm that all information included in this declaration is true and accurate to the best of your knowledge:

Name:	
Signature:	
Date:	