



Responsible use of AI in research and writing activities

FEPS Guidelines

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Context and definitions

Artificial intelligence, commonly abbreviated as “AI”, is a name covering a wide array of technologies that perform tasks or behave in an “intelligent” manner. Recent developments, especially in the field of so-called “generative AI”, **present opportunities, risks and limitations** for research and communication contents.

The EU Artificial Intelligence Act defines an “**AI system**” as “a machine-based system that is designed to operate with varying levels of autonomy and that may exhibit adaptiveness after deployment, and that, for explicit or implicit objectives, infers, from the input it receives, how to generate outputs such as predictions, content, recommendations, or decisions that can influence physical or virtual environments” (article 3).

The word “**author**” is used in the following paragraphs to designate any person writing research, studies, books, policy briefs, articles and other types of publications for FEPS.

Scope of the guidelines

The present guidelines intend to foster responsible and ethical use of AI tools in the context of FEPS’ research activities and publications. **The guidelines should be respected by all authors.**

The guidelines **primarily apply to the use of generative AI tools for research and writing purposes**. They mainly focus on the use of commercially/publicly available AI tools regardless of their scope (broadly applicable or with specific purposes) and type of input/output (e.g. written text, figures, data). They also apply to AI tools that are available in software programs through plug-ins. This includes both online and offline use of commercially/publicly available AI tools (e.g. within a closed environment).

AI tools for data mining and for data analysis that do not require to make data available on an external portal are not targeted in these guidelines. However, their use and methodological implications should still be discussed with FEPS prior to the research process.



The following guidelines are adapted from the [guidelines developed by the Vrije Universiteit Brussels](#) and the [Living guidelines on the responsible use of generative AI in research](#) developed by the European Research Area Forum. We encourage all authors to read them and to familiarise themselves with current knowledge and debates on the use of AI.

General approach to AI

- ⇒ As much as possible, FEPS wishes to **prioritise contents developed by human beings**.
- ⇒ Authors are **responsible for the quality and, when relevant, the scientific standards of their manuscripts**. Authors are responsible for verifying the reliability of the AI outputs.
- ⇒ Authors should **openly discuss their intentions to use AI with FEPS at the beginning of the project or writing process**.
- ⇒ While FEPS acknowledges that interactions between authors and AI tools can generate ideas and be useful in some contexts, FEPS equally **values the expertise, human experiences, critical insights and creativity of authors**.
- ⇒ FEPS encourages all authors to critically reflect on the balance between **the expected benefits of using AI tools and the environmental costs of such use**.

Guiding principles

Deploying AI tools in the context of FEPS research and writing activities should always adhere to the following principles.

1. Human first, AI second

The fundamental starting point for FEPS' view on the use of AI for research and writing is that while AI tools can be legitimate and useful tools at various phases of the research and the writing process, authors should always work with a *human first, AI second approach*. For FEPS, this means that **human beings write the first draft of the text of a publication or other type of deliverable**. This can be done based on AI-assisted desk research, brainstorming, etc., as exemplified in Table 1 below. AI can then be used to review work written by humans. Using AI to generate a draft text and then adding a "human touch" by verifying the correctness and coherence of the content or in other ways is not an acceptable practice for FEPS, as this does not constitute genuine human work, even if the source materials on which the AI generated the text were selected by a human.



2. Authors are fully responsible for AI outputs and for the appropriateness of the research process in which AI is used in the case of activities involving research.

Responsibility cannot be passed on to AI tools. In practice, this means that **authors can be held accountable for inappropriate use of AI tools**, such as failure to comply with the rules regarding scientific and intellectual integrity (plagiarism, citing sources, etc.). This rule is consistent with the [position](#) of the *Committee of Publication Ethics (COPE)* that “*authors are fully responsible for the content of their manuscript, even those parts produced by an AI tool, and are thus guilty for any breach of publication ethics*”.

3. Authors must provide the greatest possible degree of transparency on the use of AI tools in their research and writing activities.

Authors should discuss the use of AI tools before the beginning of a project with FEPS and must provide an AI use disclosure statement. In the context of research activities, the way AI tools are used often needs to be described in detail in the methodology, Materials & Methods section and/or Supplementary Data, including prompts, output, and name and version of the AI tool.

4. Authors need to check the outputs of AI tools.

For each specific use of AI tools in research and writing activities, **authors should strictly respect the “do’s” and “don’ts” identified in Table 1 in the next section**. For example, various verification steps must be built in in the research and writing process. One should always look for the original sources and, where applicable, check licenses for the original work. Original ideas must also be properly attributed to their creator. Training data used by AI tools may also be copyrighted or reuse may be restricted by licensing. In that case, one cannot literally copy the AI output. In addition, it is necessary to provide information (mainly facts and figures) to allow *fact checking*. Researchers should check whether outputs reflect sufficiently diverse views (e.g. conflicting results of studies). In addition, one must check whether scientific statements are sufficiently supported by empirical material (if relevant to the research discipline). The more “autonomous” AI tools work, the greater the degree of verification that authors have to perform. The greater the risk of potential harm and the amount of harm that could be caused, the greater the degree of scrutiny authors must exercise.

5. Authors should carefully consider and mitigate the impacts of the limitations of AI on the quality of their manuscripts.

Authors must be very critical of text outputs from AI tools. Authors must be aware that using AI tools can also be a disadvantage in some circumstances. Using AI tools can involve issues related to biases and inaccuracies. Examples include:



- Training data used by AI tools may exhibit different forms of bias; may be influenced by existing structural inequalities between groups; may contain discriminatory language, racist undertones, and incorrect information and argumentation; may be dated; may contain copyrighted material that has been unlawfully released. AI tools can also generate text with generic statements with limited value.
- It is often impossible to determine exactly how algorithms arrive at a certain output. A lack of insight into the exact workings of AI tools can have serious consequences.
- The outputs of AI tools can be presented as convincing but can be inaccurate, completely wrong or simply irrelevant. The self-confidence with which AI tools make statements can therefore be misleading.
- Generative AI tools create outputs that cannot always be exactly replicated. For example, the same prompt can lead to different text fragments.
- Outputs may contain plagiarised elements.

6. Authors must properly manage information and data used in the context of their FEPS activities, in compliance with relevant European laws.

Research activities carried out for FEPS should respect research participants, privacy and confidentiality. **The following data must not be entered in AI tools:**

- Personal data: data that can (directly or indirectly) lead to the identification of persons.
- Data that is important with a view to future valorisation or data that is (or can be) protected by intellectual property law.
- Data whose release could be ethically problematic, such as in the event of a real risk of inappropriate use or group harm.
- Data where existing contracts (e.g. *non-disclosure agreements*) or rules from funding organisations impose restrictions on sharing.
- Data that is protected by copyright or *database rights* of another person, unless with that person's permission.

In case of any doubt, the author should contact FEPS and the policy analyst in charge of the project to discuss the matter at hand before the use of AI tools. In all cases, we recommend that researchers check the privacy settings of the AI tools and adjust them if deemed necessary.



7. Authors should not feel obliged to use AI to proofread their work from a linguistic and grammatical perspective

FEPS is aware that many authors are not native English speakers. This is reflected in the distinctiveness and linguistic richness of our written publications. Using AI to correct spelling and grammar is an understandable reflex. However, in light of how AI models work, this ends up homogenising the way English is used and eliminating the linguistic diversity which makes human writing unique. **FEPS always works with trusted, human copy editors to check the quality and correctness of written work while preserving the authors' unique linguistic fingerprint.** As such, using AI tools for this is neither recommended nor needed.

Identifying the research purposes for which AI can be used

The guidelines of the Vrije Universiteit Brussels provide a useful classification of the different purposes for which AI can be used while carrying out research and writing activities (see below in Table 1). **Authors working with FEPS should review them, clearly identify their own use of AI and apply identified best practices.**

References

- European Commission, 2025. [Living guidelines on the responsible use of generative AI in research](#). European Research Area Forum Stakeholder's Document.
- Vrije Universiteit Brussels, 2023. [VUB guidelines for responsible use of artificial intelligence for research purposes](#).
- COPE Council, 2024. [COPE Position: Authorship and AI tools](#). Committee on Publication Ethics.

Table 1: Classification of research purposes and associated AI use (Vrije Universiteit Brussels)

Purposes	Type	Case	Do	Don't	Examples of AI tools
Identifying new literature	Information retrieval	When conducting a literature study, an AI tool is additionally used to identify relevant literature in lesser-known fields (e.g. in interdisciplinary research).	• Appropriate mention of AI tool in "Method" section • Free use if not within the context of a formal literature study	• Using AI-suggested papers in literature review without content checking	- Elicit (http://elicit.org) - Perplexity (https://www.perplexity.ai/) - Inciteful (http://inciteful.xyz) - Research Rabbit (http://researchrabbit.ai) - Connected Papers (http://connectedpapers.com) - Consensus (http://consensus.app) - Scite (http://scite.ai) - Iris (http://iris.ai)
Summarizing articles	Word processing	The researcher uses an AI tool that screens and summarizes recent literature. The summaries are then reviewed in detail.	• Use for initial screening before reading the full texts	• Citing/referencing articles based on a summary without having read it yourself	- Semantic Scholar (http://semanticscholar.org) - Humata (https://www.humata.ai/) - Iris (http://iris.ai) - ChatGPT (http://chat.openai.com) - Perplexity (https://www.perplexity.ai/)



Selectively searching the content of articles	Information retrieval	The researcher uses an AI tool to find “Recommendations” and “Perspectives” in scientific publications to keep up with the most recent policy implications of studies within his/her domain.	Screening for specific parts of articles or terminology and then reviewing them manually	- Summarizing specific parts across articles and not reading these individual parts thoroughly - Lack of references when processing in own academic work	- Iris (http://iris.ai) - Semantic Scholar (http://semanticscholar.org) - ChatGPT (http://chat.openai.com)
Formulating scientific propositions	Word processing	The researcher enters his or her own scientific statements and hypotheses into an AI tool to receive feedback. The AI tool suggests possible improvements (e.g. substantive improvements or clarification).	Indicate use of AI tool to rework statement, including prompts and outputs, if hypothesis testing is part of scientific publication		- ChatGPT (http://chat.openai.com) - Elicit (https://elicit.org/?via=topaitools)
Criticizing statements or positions taken	Ideation	The researcher uses an AI tool to criticize a statement. This can be used to gain more insight into the counter-arguments that can be raised.	- Self-test whether all arguments that undermine the position can be refuted - Possible use to educate students through debate	Citing very personal stories from one's own life to try to support one's own position	- DebateDevil (https://www.debate-devil.com/en) - Elicit (https://elicit.org/?via=topaitools) - Scite (https://scite.ai/?via=topaitools) - ChatGPT (http://chat.openai.com)



Carrying out a preliminary screening of evidence for and against scientific statements	Information retrieval	The researcher uses an AI tool to screen the results of scientific publications. These results can be positive or negative relationships between certain variables. In this way, the researcher wants to gain insight into the burden of proof for a particular hypothesis.	• An initial screening of evidence and shortcomings of studies, before thoroughly reviewing them later • Additional screening during systematic review and meta-analysis of studies • Take <i>publication bias</i> in favor of studies with positive results into account during this exercise	• Use of output from AI tool as “burden of proof” for or against a statement in social debate • Complete dependence on a tool for selecting studies for a <i>systematic review</i>	- Consensus (https://consensus.app/search/) - Perplexity (https://www.perplexity.ai/) - System Beta (https://www.system.com/landing) - Scite (https://scite.ai/?via=topaitools) - ChatGPT (https://chat.openai.com/)
Brainstorming	Ideation	The researcher submits his or her own ideas to an AI tool and asks whether they are already covered in existing literature. The tool finds some potentially valuable publications that partly answer the research question.	• Mention interactions with AI tool to generate ideas in publications, including prompts and outputs	• Avoid introducing completely new ideas if you anticipate to engage in valorisation later	- ChatGPT (http://chat.openai.com) - Elicit (https://elicit.org/?via=topaitools)



Generating new ideas for manuscripts	Ideation/ production of new works	The researcher uses an AI tool and receives an output that contains an idea/argument that is suspected to be new. The prompts provided by the researcher did not actively generate this idea.	• The origin of the output is determined via multiple prompts. The researcher also searches through other sources. If necessary, the original source is referenced. The prompt of how the idea was arrived at is added as Supplementary Data in the Method section • The idea is used as an impetus/starting point	• Copying ideas and presenting them as one's own intellectual contribution • No checking whether ideas come from other sources and no acknowledgment of sources	- ChatGPT (https://chat.openai.com/)
Generating an initial structure for writing subparts of a scientific publication	Word processing	The researcher uses an AI tool to create an initial structure for the introduction section. Afterwards, the researcher writes the text himself based on this structure.	• The use of AI tools is mentioned in the Method section of the publication		- ChatGPT (https://chat.openai.com/)



Generating a text by entering the initial structure of subparts of a scientific publication	Word processing/ Producing new works	The researcher gives the titles of five paragraphs with the instruction to write six lines per paragraph. The AI tool generates a general text with source information.	• The researcher must have read all cited publications and check whether the quotation is an accurate representation • The researcher checks whether the paragraphs present sufficiently diverse views or evidence (e.g. studies with contrasting results) • Use of the AI tools is reported in the Method section of the publication and the prompt and output are shown in Supplementary Data	• Copy-pasting text in your own publications without checking for plagiarism, for possible licenses that limit reuse	- ChatGPT (https://chat.openai.com/)
Correcting spelling errors, grammatical errors and structure of	Word processing	The researcher uses an AI tool to improve their own text. The tool makes suggestions to improve the structure of paragraphs and corrects	• The use of AI tools is mentioned in the Method section of the publication	• Automatically accepting all possible adjustments without checking whether the content has changed	- Writefull (https://www.writefull.com/) - Quillbot (https://quillbot.com/) - ChatGPT (https://chat.openai.com/)

paragraphs based on your own text input		grammatical and spelling errors. In addition, the AI tool suggests replacing vague terms.			
Analyzing research data	Data analysis and visualization	Various AI methods are already available to analyze research data. This doesn't necessarily have to be about generative AI. Analyzes can possibly be done based on prompts within existing software.	- Performing analyzes with AI with sufficient substantive control and in accordance with ethical (e.g. checking for bias in data sets) and legal principles - Mention of AI tool in Method section	- Performing analyzes based solely on prompts without checking whether the prompt has been interpreted correctly - The <i>post-hoc</i> formulation of hypotheses based on a given data set so that these hypotheses are always confirmed	- Code Interpreter in GPT-4 (https://chat.openai.com/?model=gpt-4-code-interpreter) - AutoML
Writing a Data Management Plan (DMP)	Writing assistance for administrative and additional tasks	The researcher uses an AI tool to ask specific questions about completing the DMP (e.g. certain sections). The AI tool provides targeted answers about the researcher's options.	- Use of AI to better answer specific questions (e.g. which databases are suitable for data type X?) - Writing DMPs by AI if substantive control	Avoid generating very generic DMPs with little detail	- ChatGPT (https://chat.openai.com/)

			and understanding of DMP implications Take into account specific guidelines regarding Research Data Management		
Writing project applications	Writing assistance for administrative and additional tasks	The researcher uses an AI tool to write certain parts of a project application.	- The researcher who submits the application has final responsibility for the scientific content and must be sure that it is an original proposal - Publicize the use of AI tool for generating the text - Check whether AI-generated text is sufficiently precise - Check whether the project application meets the conditions of the <i>project call</i>	Completely outsource the writing of project applications to AI tools	- Grantable (https://grantable.co/) - Granted AI (https://grantedai.com/) - ChatGPT (https://chat.openai.com/)