

Guidelines for HDR Candidates and Supervisors – Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence Tools

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Overview

Generative AI tools can create content or data based on analysis of existing information. For the purposes of these guidelines, 'generative AI tools' is a technology-neutral term that includes, but is not limited to: large language model chatbots; coding assistants; image, audio and video generators; transcription and summarisation tools; AI-enabled literature discovery and review tools; and AI features embedded within standard software such as word processors, reference managers, email clients and search engines. Candidates may therefore be using generative AI without deliberately seeking it out, and these guidelines apply to all such use. Researchers must be aware that when using publicly available consumer tools, text provided as inputs is offered without copyright or other protection. Generative AI outputs can be inaccurate, fabricated, incomplete or biased, regardless of how authoritative or sophisticated they appear. Responsibility for verifying the accuracy, originality and integrity of any AI-assisted work rests entirely with the candidate.

Many consumer-tier generative AI tools retain the prompts and files entered into them and may use these to train future models. Enterprise and institutionally licensed tools may operate under contractual data protection, zero-retention or no-training arrangements; the level of protection depends on the specific tool, licence tier and settings in use. If the prompt entered into a generative AI tool contains confidential information or concerns an innovation of yours, even temporary retention of the prompt by the tool may mean that the text is no longer confidential and the IP is no longer owned by you or the University. Therefore, copyrighted text, confidential information or intellectual property should not be entered into an generative AI tool unless that tool is approved and licensed by the University with appropriate data protection arrangements in place. Candidates should consult the University's current list of approved AI tools before entering any research material. Furthermore, any text generated by a generative AI tool may be in breach of copyright or other protections and should be used with caution.

The guidance provided to HDR candidates regarding the use of generative AI is more nuanced and more flexible than that provided to the coursework candidates. The guidelines for HDR candidates primarily emphasise the critical, responsible, and ethical use of generative AI while fulfilling their research activities, such as writing research articles, thesis, and Confirmation of Candidature documents.

These guidelines are developed for HDR candidates in recognition of the inevitable use of generative AI in research carried out by HDR candidates. These serve as an addendum to the existing SCU Academic Integrity Framework which is focused primarily on educating students about the use of generative AI. It should also be considered in consultation with the Research Quality, Standards and Integrity Policy and the Research Integrity Guidelines and relevant research policies. These guidelines apply equally to supervisors in their oversight of candidature and their own use of generative AI in supervision.

These guidelines should also be read and applied in conjunction with the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (2018). The principles of honesty, rigour transparency, fairness, accountability and responsible stewardship apply equally to research activities involving generative AI.

Guidelines:

1. Doctoral candidates are reminded that the purpose of a doctoral degree is to develop new knowledge and that their thesis should make an original contribution to knowledge.
2. All creative content by an individual candidate must be their **own** work, unless otherwise acknowledged. Where a HDR candidate uses generative AI tools to generate research content and produce creative work, **these are NOT their own ideas**, research, and/or analysis, and hence, wherever used, this must be clearly and overtly **acknowledged**.
3. Candidates must be aware of the **Ethical, Privacy, Copyright and Intellectual Property** concerns and their associated implications arising from the use of AI tools. Depending on the tool and licence tier in use, information or data entered into AI tools may be retained by the provider and used to train future models. In other words, indirectly, your data or research, once fed into the AI tool, may be released in the public domain without your explicit knowledge. It can then be used by others before you have published it. Alternatively, it may result in a breach of ethics requirements and/or research integrity protocols, particularly for projects involving sensitive data which is confidential. Furthermore, it can result in transmission of sensitive data outside of Australia, even if it is restricted, as the AI services may be hosted on servers located in other countries.
4. **Candidates must understand the copyright status of AI-generated content under Australian law.** Copyright subsists only in works with a human author; content generated wholly by AI may attract no copyright protection at all. This has implications for thesis intellectual property, publication agreements and any future commercialisation. Candidates should also be aware that AI outputs may reproduce, or closely paraphrase, copyright works contained in training data. In October 2025 the Australian Government confirmed that it will not introduce a text and data mining exception to the Copyright Act 1968 (Cth); there is accordingly no general safe harbour in Australia for AI training uses, and the treatment of AI outputs remains unsettled while the Copyright and Artificial Intelligence Reference Group (CAIRG) examines licensing and enforcement models. AI-generated content must therefore not be assumed to be free of third-party rights, and must be checked before inclusion in a thesis, publication or creative output.
5. **Candidates must not upload third-party material to non-approved tools.** Third-party copyright material (for example, paywalled publications, unpublished manuscripts, examiners' reports, or the work of colleagues and co-authors) and material subject to confidentiality, ethics or contractual restrictions must not be entered into generative AI tools that are not approved by the University. Doing so may infringe copyright, breach publisher licence terms, or breach confidentiality and research integrity obligations.
6. **Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) and Indigenous data.** Indigenous knowledges, data and cultural material must not be entered into generative AI tools without

appropriate authorisation from the relevant communities, and any such use must be consistent with the AIATSIS Code of Ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research and Indigenous data sovereignty principles (including the CARE Principles for Indigenous Data Governance).

7. There are strong concerns related to bias caused by generative AI tools. For example, use of generative AI as a brain-storming tool can result in bias based on inputs from the human user, to influence human judgement by incorporating this biased content into AI generated output. Graduate researchers should be aware of these biases and ensure they do not influence the direction of their research or the interpretation of any findings.
8. For research grant applications and peer review, all members of the University, including HDR candidates, must comply with the current ARC and NHMRC policies on the use of generative AI. Updated versions of both policies were released jointly in April 2026 and apply to scheme rounds opening from 28 April 2026. In summary: applicants may use generative AI as a support tool when preparing applications but remain fully responsible for the authorship, accuracy and intellectual content of the application; peer reviewers may use AI only to improve the grammar, spelling, formatting and readability of drafted assessments, and must not use AI to form an opinion on the quality of an application; and entering application or assessment material into public generative AI tools is a serious breach of confidentiality. Candidates involved in health and medical research should also consult NHMRC's Guide for assessing research involving Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning and Large Language Model technology (December 2025). These are living documents and the current versions must be checked at the time of application.
9. As an author, it is the responsibility of the HDR candidates to ensure that, for any research publication or creative output:
 - All AI generated material in the preparation/generation of their research content, **must be appropriately acknowledged and cited** in accordance with University's research policies (mentioned above). Since the information obtained from generative AI is not published anywhere (although it may be derived from published sources), its citation can become problematic. Content sourced from AI must be properly cited.
 - The authors are fully responsible for academic integrity and accuracy of their publications. Note that a generative AI tool **CANNOT** be considered as a co-author and cannot be assumed to be responsible for content.
 - The authors must be fully aware of, and familiar with, the AI related rules of the University as well as the specific journal, or equivalent, in which they wish to publish. Publisher and journal policies on AI use change frequently. Most major publishers now permit disclosed AI assistance while prohibiting AI authorship, but disclosure requirements vary considerably. The current AI policy of the target journal or publisher must be checked at the time of submission.
 - The authors must be aware of the Intellectual Property (IP) issues associated with the use of AI. For example, images and figures generated by AI may attract no copyright protection, may embody third-party rights, and are restricted or prohibited by many

publishers. Publisher policy and any necessary permissions must be checked before such images are used.

10. HDR candidates must ensure they are completely informed of details of using AI by carefully reading the comprehensive information provided by TEQSA guidelines.
11. Knowingly using generative AI tools, either directly or via third party, to generate/write/produce any work (paid or unpaid), without proper acknowledgement of the source, is tantamount to deliberate academic and research misconduct. All HDR candidates who fail to follow the above guidelines may become subject to the penalties outlined in the University's academic misconduct policies.
12. In order to quote the output of a generative AI tool that has provided content, it is recommended that:
 - Authors undertake the necessary due diligence to establish the veracity of the generated material, where appropriate;
 - The material be subject to a plagiarism check, as generative AI output can be a close paraphrase of another source;
 - The material be subjected to a copyright infringement check, as generative AI may produce outputs protected by copyright law;
 - AI use be disclosed through a consolidated AI Use Statement (see the AI Use Statement guideline below) and, where AI output is quoted or reproduced directly, cited in accordance with the referencing style used in the discipline (major styles, including APA 7th edition, now provide guidance for citing generative AI output);
 - Authors need to be explicit as to which material, such as specific passages of text or images, were created or modified by AI tools.
13. **AI Use Statement.** Candidates must include an AI Use Statement at key candidature milestones: in Confirmation of Candidature documents, in the front matter of theses submitted for examination, and, where relevant, in progress reports. The statement should identify the tools used (and versions where practicable), the purposes for which they were used, and how outputs were verified, edited and integrated into the candidate's own work. A nil statement should be provided where no generative AI was used beyond basic spelling and grammar checking.
14. **Agreed expectations with the supervisory panel.** Candidates and their supervisory team must discuss and record agreed expectations for the use of generative AI early in candidature, and review these at each milestone. Legitimate expectations vary across disciplines; what matters is that the agreed approach is documented, is consistent with these guidelines, and is revisited as tools and disciplinary norms change.

Supervisor responsibilities.

15. Supervisors must provide active, proportionate oversight of generative AI use throughout candidature, consistent with the nature of the research, the candidate's stage of development and relevant disciplinary practice.

16. Supervisors should ensure that candidates understand that the use of generative AI must be consistent with the principles and responsibilities set out in the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (2018).
17. Supervisors must discuss and document acceptable and unacceptable uses of generative AI with candidates early in candidature, revisit those expectations at each milestone and record any material changes.
18. Supervisors must direct candidates to relevant University policies, approved-tool requirements, ethics approvals, funding body conditions, contractual obligations and discipline-specific standards. Where there is uncertainty about whether a proposed use of generative AI complies with University policy, ethics approvals, funding body requirements or other regulatory obligations, candidates and supervisors must seek advice from the Graduate School or another relevant University authority before proceeding.
19. Supervisors must use only University-approved tools when handling candidate or research material and must not enter confidential, sensitive, unpublished or third-party material into a tool unless the relevant approvals and protections are in place. Supervisors must be transparent with candidates where generative AI has materially assisted supervisory feedback or administrative work.
20. Generative AI must not replace a supervisor's independent academic judgement, critical review or responsibility for the accuracy and appropriateness of advice provided to a candidate. Supervisors must verify any AI-assisted feedback before providing it.
21. Supervisors should review AI Use Statements at key candidature milestones and support candidates to maintain appropriate evidence of authorship and provenance, including drafts, version histories, research notebooks, code repositories and significant prompts where relevant.
22. Concerns about possible undisclosed or inappropriate generative AI use must be addressed fairly, confidentially and through established academic or research integrity processes. Supervisors must not rely on the output of an automated AI-detection tool as the sole basis for an allegation or referral.
23. Agreement within a supervisory team does not override University policy, ethics approval conditions, legal or contractual obligations, funder requirements, publisher requirements or the requirements of these guidelines. A supervisor or supervisory panel cannot authorise a use of generative AI that would otherwise contravene University policy, ethics approvals, contractual obligations, legislation, funding body requirements or these guidelines
24. **Candidate responsibility** - Notwithstanding any advice provided by a supervisor or supervisory panel, responsibility for the accuracy, originality, integrity and appropriate disclosure of AI-assisted work remains with the candidate. Candidates remain responsible for ensuring that their work complies with all applicable requirements

25. **Recordkeeping and provenance of work.** Candidates are strongly encouraged to retain evidence of the development of their work – successive drafts, version histories, research notebooks, code repositories and significant prompts – as a record of authorship. Such records protect candidates should questions about the provenance of their work arise during examination or in an integrity process.
26. **Assessment of concerns about undisclosed AI use.** The University recognises that automated AI-detection tools are unreliable and can produce false positives. Any concern about undisclosed use of generative AI will be assessed on the totality of available evidence – including drafts, supervision records, milestone documents and, where appropriate, an oral defence of the work – and not on the output of a detection tool alone.
27. Where there are reasonable concerns regarding undisclosed or inappropriate use of generative AI, or where further assurance regarding authorship, provenance or understanding of the work is required, the supervisory team may recommend to the Dean that the candidate undertake an oral defence of the relevant work. The oral defence may form part of the University's assessment of the matter and is intended to establish the candidate's understanding of, and contribution to, the research. It is not a punitive measure.

Beyond editing assistance and content assistance for text, it should be noted that the use of generative AI tools to falsify or fabricate (in the sense of 'inventing in order to deceive') data is a breach of Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research, 2018 | NHMRC.

HDR candidates should be aware that unacknowledged use of generative AI tools to generate or alter text that authors imply is their own may constitute a breach of the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research, 2018 | NHMRC. Even when the use of generative AI tools for content assistance is acknowledged, this may impact the degree to which the work is considered their own (with impacts on thesis examination) or trigger plagiarism concerns.

Additional resources:

- Academic Integrity Guidelines
- Academic Integrity Framework - Southern Cross University
- NHMRC - Policy on Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Grant Applications and Peer Review (updated April 2026)
- ARC – Policy on Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence in the ARC's grants programs (updated April 2026, effective 28 April 2026)
- NHMRC – Guide for assessing research involving Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning and Large Language Model technology (December 2025)
- Attorney-General's Department – Copyright and Artificial Intelligence Reference Group (CAIRG)
- TEQSA - Higher Education good practice hub: Artificial Intelligence