

Framework for Developing Guidelines for Student Use of AI in Research (v1*)

This framework is intended to support faculty research mentors as they work with students to establish clear, ethical, and discipline-appropriate guidelines for how AI tools may be used in individual and collaborative aspects of the research process. In addition to providing a foundation for research teams, the resulting guidelines can help students generalize the standards to new contexts. Faculty should adapt each section to reflect their methods, data practices, and academic integrity standards.

1. Identify the Team's Research and Training Priorities

- Determine the core skills students/teams must learn and use to advance research and publication (e.g., experimental design, coding, literature synthesis, data interpretation).
- Decide where AI can support learning and where it risks replacing essential intellectual work.
- Consider differences between undergraduate, graduate, and postdoctoral researchers.

2. Define Acceptable vs. Unacceptable AI Use

Examples of acceptable uses (adapt as needed):

- Summarizing literature reviewed by team members, with human verification
- Drafting code templates or debugging assistance
- Grammar and clarity editing
- Assistance with writing code for data preparation (e.g., importing, cleaning, recoding, merging) and statistical analysis

Examples of unacceptable uses:

- Generating full sections of manuscripts
- Fabricating data, analyses, or citations
- Using AI to interpret results without human reasoning
- Submitting AI-generated text as original work or without disclosure of AI use
- Submitting proprietary data to tools not approved by MSU

3. Establish Transparency and Attribution Requirements

- At the beginning of each project or semester, require students/teams to document when, how, and which AI tools will be used. Require discussion and updated documentation prior to changes in use (see #8).
- Provide a standard disclosure statement for manuscripts, reports, and team notebooks.
- Clarify how AI tools should be cited when appropriate.

4. Set Standards for Accuracy, Verification, and Bias Awareness

- Emphasize that AI outputs may be incorrect, biased, or fabricated.
- Require verification of citations, factual claims, and data summaries or interpretations.
- Require cross-checking with peer-reviewed or primary sources.

5. Address Data Privacy and Ethical Constraints

- Prohibit entering confidential, proprietary, or identifiable data into AI tools unless [explicitly permitted for a specific tool](#) (i.e., MSU-enterprise licensed AI assistants) and approved by the faculty supervisor/advisor.
- Clarify that locally hosted or open-weight AI models are not exempt from data privacy rules simply because they run on internal servers; unless the specific system has been explicitly approved by MSU

and the faculty supervisor/advisor for the intended data use, students/teams must not use it with confidential, proprietary, identifiable, IRB-regulated, unpublished, or otherwise restricted data

- Clarify restrictions related to IRB protocols, human subjects' data, or unpublished findings.
- Ensure students/teams understand institutional, funding-agency, and journal requirements.

6. Align With Academic Integrity and Other Relevant Policies

- Explain how appropriate AI use fits within university academic integrity principles and rules.
- Provide examples of violations relevant to the team's work.
- Outline consequences for misuse in coursework, manuscripts, and research outputs.
- Discuss the [MSU Guidelines for the Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence Tools](#), [MSU Standards on Data Uses with AI](#), and [MSU Institutional Data Policies](#) with your team and explain how the team guidelines align with these policies.
- Clarify that instructors will outline all course-specific expectations for the use of AI tools in their syllabi. If students plan to use work produced in their research training for any class assignment, they must consult their instructor(s) in advance to ensure it aligns with the course's AI policies.

7. Provide Discipline- and Task-Specific Scenarios

Offer concrete examples tailored to the research team's domain, such as:

- AI may be used to help summarize texts but cannot produce interpretations or code qualitative data.
- AI may be used to help debug R scripts with errors, with documentation of the solution and manual verification of the output; AI may not be used to choose which variables to include in a regression model without theoretical justification or checking assumptions.
- AI may be used to rephrase a survey question to reduce ambiguity, with tests of the revised wording with peers before fielding the survey; AI may not be used to generate a full set of survey items and without reviewing for bias, validity, or alignment with the research question.
- AI may be used to gather relevant literature and improve literature review drafts but cannot be used for initial hypothesis formation, conceptual framing, or interpretation of results.

8. Create a Simple AI-Use Disclosure Process

- Provide a short form or checklist for each project, team, or manuscript.
- Include prompts such as:
 - "What AI tools will be used?"
 - "For which tasks?"
 - "How will you evaluate the effect of AI use on your thinking?"
 - "How will you verify accuracy?"

9. Pilot, Review, and Revise

- Test the guidelines with current team members.
- Gather feedback on clarity and practicality.
- Schedule periodic team discussions for how AI is being used and to discuss questions about acceptable use cases.
- Read and discuss articles specifically about how AI is used in discipline.
- Review and revise the guidelines each year to reflect evolving tools and norms and clearly date each updated version.

Document History:

**Version 1 of "Developing Guidelines for Student Use of AI in Research" was disseminated in April 2026. It was generated by Carole Gibbs, the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies, using MSU-licensed Microsoft CoPilot, adapted to the MSU context, and refined through peer review by college and unit leaders (Chairs, Directors, Graduate Program Directors) and the Graduate Dean's Student Advisory Committee.*