

Lamar University Guidance on the Use of Generative AI Use

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What Is Generative AI?

Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a form of artificial intelligence trained on large datasets to produce content such as text, images, music, video, and code in response to user input. Lamar University supports responsible exploration of generative AI tools. Users should remain mindful of information security, data privacy, compliance standards, copyright, and academic integrity when using these tools.

AI in Every Program (AIEP) note: This guidance complements, and should be read alongside, Lamar's formal Generative Artificial Intelligence policy and the AIEP framework maintained by University Innovation. Where this document and the formal policy differ, the formal policy governs.

Guidance for the Use of AI Tools

Recommended Platform

Microsoft Copilot is Lamar University's approved generative AI platform, in accordance with the university's Generative Artificial Intelligence policy. Microsoft 365 systems, including Copilot, have undergone university compliance review. Navigate to copilot.microsoft.com and sign in with your LEA credentials (user@Lamar.edu); you will be directed through Duo two-factor authentication. Once logged in, the Lamar University logo appears in the top left corner, confirming you are using the protected institutional environment.

Copilot's interface displays a message indicating that personal and company data are protected within that chat. This does not mean any information may be entered freely. The data classification guidance below still applies regardless of platform.

Review Generated Content Before Use

Generative AI produces the statistically most likely response, not necessarily the most accurate one. Generated content must be critically evaluated before use. AI tools can produce inaccurate, misleading, or fabricated content ("hallucinations") or content that incorporates copyrighted material without attribution. The individual publishing AI-assisted content, not the university, is responsible for that content.

Existing and Updated Policy

This guidance operates alongside Lamar's formal Generative Artificial Intelligence policy. Faculty should be clear with students about course-specific policies on permitted AI use, if any, and students are encouraged to ask instructors directly when a policy is unclear. See the syllabi guidance later in this document for sample language.

Data Classification and Allowable Use

Lamar University classifies institutional data into four tiers under IT Policies and Standards 15.01.02. AI tool use should be governed by the classification of the data involved, not by which platform is in use.

- **Public** — information intended for unrestricted release (e.g., published web content, job postings, campus maps, university directory information). Freely usable in any AI tool.
- **Sensitive** — information not intended for public release but with limited risk if disclosed (e.g., internal memos, non-public policy drafts, unpublished research data at the data owner's discretion). Use only within Copilot's protected institutional environment, and only as necessary.
- **Confidential** — information that could cause material harm if disclosed (e.g., employee performance records, salary information, legal affairs and institutional relations matters, contracts). Must not be entered into any AI tool, including Copilot, absent a specific data agreement covering that use.
- **Regulated** — information subject to legal or regulatory protection (e.g., Social Security numbers, financial account numbers, biometric identifiers, health information including PHI, export-controlled information). Must never be entered into any AI tool.

This supersedes the prior three-tier (Green/Controlled/Confidential) framework referenced in earlier versions of this guidance. The four-tier framework is the institutional standard maintained by IT under Policy 15.01.02.

Prohibited Use

Data Restrictions

AI tools must not be used with Confidential or Regulated data as defined above, unless a university contract specifically protects that data within the tool in question.

Output Restrictions

AI tools must not be used to generate non-public content, including proprietary or unpublished research, legal analysis, recruitment decisions, completion of academic work not authorized by the instructor, non-public instructional materials, or direct grading of student work.

Student Work

Student submissions are both the intellectual property of the student and protected educational records under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Faculty may not upload student work to AI platforms, including for grading, feedback generation, or AI-generated-content detection, without the student's explicit consent.

This restriction applies regardless of platform. Even within Microsoft Copilot's protected environment, student submissions should not be uploaded unless a specific data privacy agreement covers that use case and consent has been obtained. Where consent is given, Copilot is the only AI platform approved for that use.

AI detection tools are not approved for use in evaluating student work at Lamar University. Their output is not a reliable basis for an academic integrity finding, and their use raises the same student data and consent concerns as any other AI tool. Concerns about the originality of student work should be addressed through existing academic integrity procedures, not through AI detection software.

When in doubt about a student data scenario, contact University Innovation or CITL before proceeding.

Illegal or Fraudulent Activities

AI tools must not be used for any activity that is illegal, fraudulent, or violates state, federal, Lamar University, or TSUS policy.

Generative AI has made it easier for malicious actors to produce convincing phishing emails and deepfakes (audio or video that mimics a real person's voice or likeness without consent) at greater scale. Continue to follow the guidance in the annual Security Awareness training and report suspicious messages through Lamar IT's phishing reporting process.

Recommendations for Exploration of Generative AI Tools

Lamar University encourages responsible exploration of generative AI, balancing innovation with the guidelines above. Contact CITL at CITL@Lamar.edu for additional ideas or support.

Before Experimentation

- Review this guidance and the university's formal AI policy. Confirm compliance with data classification requirements before using any confidential or regulated information.
- Check which tools are currently approved and their data handling levels. Some colleges may offer additional tools for eligible users.
- Treat all output critically. AI can produce inaccurate, misleading, or fabricated content; verify before relying on it.
- Respect copyright. Do not ask AI tools to reproduce copyrighted material, and review output for unintentional infringement.

Ideas for Experimentation

- Content creation: stories, recipes, and other creative formats, with emphasis on refining prompts for better results.
- Code generation and debugging, with review for security and accuracy before publication.
- Spreadsheet formula creation from natural language, verified before integration.
- Advanced search across large datasets, with attention to bias and outdated information.
- Document summarization, verified for contextual accuracy.
- Synthesis and translation of complex material, with extra scrutiny for non-English translations.
- Editing support: error detection, readability, and content enhancement.
- Productivity support: meeting summaries, key points, and action items.
- Accessibility improvement: alt-text and audio description suggestions, manually verified for effectiveness.

Lamar University Selections of Publicly Available Generative AI Tools

This list is not exhaustive and availability may vary. Contact CITL@Lamar.edu for information on other tools.

Text-Based Tools

Microsoft Copilot

Lamar University's approved text-based AI platform. Use the LEA-authenticated version at copilot.microsoft.com for any university work. Only Public or Sensitive data should be entered, per the classification guidance above.

ChatGPT (OpenAI)

Publicly available outside any university agreement. Only Public data should be entered.

Google Gemini

Publicly available outside any university agreement. Only Public data should be entered.

Image-Based Tools

Adobe Firefly and Adobe Express

Available through Lamar University's Adobe Creative Cloud license.

Canva

Publicly available, including AI features within Magic Studio.

Learning Management System (LMS)-Based Tools

Anthology AI Design Assistant (Blackboard Learn Ultra)

Available through Lamar University's Anthology Blackboard license. Supports course creation, content-based assessment generation, rubric creation, and royalty-free image sourcing. Contact CITL@Lamar.edu for more information.

Items requiring IT data governance verification before broader publication should be confirmed with IT prior to citing them as approved.

Basics of Prompt Engineering for Text-Based Generative AI Tools

The quality of a generative AI tool's output depends heavily on the quality of the prompt. The following practices help produce more useful results.

- Be specific. Generic prompts produce generic results; specify type, audience, and desired attributes.
- Use an “act as if...” framing to set role or perspective for the response.
- State the desired output format explicitly (report, dialogue, code, list, etc.).
- Use “do” and “don’t” directives to narrow the response.
- Offer original sample sentences as reference points, never copyrighted excerpts.
- Specify intended tone and audience.

- Build on prior prompts incrementally rather than starting over.
- Give feedback and corrections as you would to a collaborator.
- Ask the AI tool to help refine the prompt itself when you are uncertain what to ask for.

Contact CITL at CITL@Lamar.edu for further guidance on effective prompting.

Basics of Prompt Engineering for Image-Based Generative AI Tools

Image-generation tools such as Adobe Firefly and Express rely on descriptive prompts to produce usable results. Review the data classification guidance above before using any image tool with non-public material, and review all output carefully; image tools can produce offensive or low-quality content and may introduce visual artifacts, particularly with people or specific places.

Adobe Firefly and Express are trained on Adobe Stock images, openly licensed content, and public domain material, which supports copyright compliance. These are the recommended tools for AI image experimentation at Lamar University.

A Simple Formula

Subject + style + details + output format. For example: start with “create an image of a brown Labrador retriever playing fetch in a grassy park,” then add style (“in the style of a watercolor painting”), detail (“with late afternoon light casting long shadows”), and intended format (“suitable for use as a poster”).

Firefly and Express also provide sidebar controls for effects, style, lighting, and composition. Contact CITL@Lamar.edu for further assistance.

Guidance for Communications Regarding Generative AI Tools in Syllabi

Generative AI tools offer new possibilities but should not serve as unacknowledged substitutes for student-created work. Representing AI-generated work as one's own, without proper credit, is already a violation of existing academic integrity policy; no separate policy change is required to address this.

Instructors have discretion over whether and how generative AI tools fit their course's learning outcomes, and CITL recommends that course policy be clearly stated in a designated syllabus section. If adopted, students should be taught to use AI tools to strengthen their abilities as writers, coders, and thinkers, with equitable access and fair evaluation criteria applied consistently across students who do and do not use these tools.

The sample statements below are offered as a starting point. Instructors are encouraged to adapt them to their own course context, and may contact CITL for help drafting custom language.

Guideline 1: Prohibition of Generative AI Tool Use

For courses where unassisted skill demonstration is central to the learning outcome. Assignments should be designed to resist AI substitution, and instructors should be prepared to discuss the ethics of AI use with students.

Sample language: "Generative AI tool use is strictly prohibited in this course. All work submitted, including drafts and brainstorming artifacts, is assumed to be independently produced by the student. Use of generative AI tools for any part of a graded assignment will be treated as a violation of academic honesty; see the student handbook for possible consequences. Questions about what constitutes a violation should be directed to the instructor as soon as they arise."

Guideline 2: Generative AI Tools Allowed in Specified Contexts with Attribution Acknowledged

For courses where AI may support certain tasks, such as brainstorming or feedback, but instructors want visibility into how it was used. Assignments where AI is not permitted should still be designed to resist substitution.

Sample language: "Generative AI tools are allowed in specified contexts in this course, with attribution required. Students must credit AI tools whenever used, including for idea generation, and include an appendix identifying the tool, how it was used, and why. AI tools are not permitted during in-class exams or assignments unless explicitly stated. Contact the instructor in advance of a due date if you are uncertain whether a planned use is acceptable."

Guideline 3: Encouragement of Generative AI Tool Use in Coursework

For courses that actively integrate AI into activities and assessment. Instructors should be ready to provide guidance on appropriate use and to discuss its ethical dimensions.

Sample language: "Students are encouraged to use generative AI tools for brainstorming and revising work in this course. AI-assisted text must be clearly identified upon submission, for example through a different font color or an in-text citation, and a brief explanation of the tool, the prompts used, and how the output was incorporated should accompany the submission. Work that does not meet this disclosure standard may be treated as an academic integrity violation."

Acknowledgement and Citation Guidelines

Instructors and students should reflect on how to properly acknowledge and cite content derived from generative AI tools, including its role in brainstorming and argument development. Only Public data, per the classification guidance above, should be used in AI prompts. AI tools should not be used to create content intended to remain private, such as unpublished research, or to generate material a student or instructor intends to claim as solely their own intellectual property.

Lamar University's default citation style for generative AI use is APA. Where a course or discipline requires a different style, the relevant style guide should be followed instead and noted in the assignment instructions.

- APA: apastyle.apa.org/blog/how-to-cite-chatgpt (default style)
- MLA: style.mla.org/citing-generative-ai/
- Chicago: chicagomanualofstyle.org (Q&A, AI tools topic)

Contact Lamar University's Writing Center for further citation guidance.

Guidance on the Use of Generative AI in Higher Education Research

Policies governing AI use in research, including manuscript and grant preparation, continue to evolve across federal agencies, journals, and institutions. Investigators, project staff, and students are responsible for staying current on applicable policy and for critically assessing the reliability of AI tools within the research context (NIH, 2023).

AI as an Author

Journals and research communities are in consensus that AI models cannot be listed as authors. Authorship requires the capacity to take responsibility for submitted work, declare conflicts of interest, and manage copyright and licensing, none of which an AI model can do (COPE, 2023; Zielinski et al., 2023; Flanagan et al., 2023; Nature, 2023).

AI in Manuscript Writing

Authors using AI tools in writing, analysis, or graphical elements must disclose that use in the Materials and Methods section (or equivalent). Authors remain responsible for the accuracy of AI-assisted output and should review and edit carefully, since AI can generate authoritative-sounding but inaccurate or biased content (ICMJE, 2023; Hosseini, Rasmussen & Resnik, 2023).

Citation of AI in Manuscripts

Authors must take care to avoid plagiarism in AI-generated text and images and must properly cite quoted material. When citing an AI model such as ChatGPT, credit the developer (e.g., OpenAI) rather than the model itself (ICMJE, 2023).

Copyright and Patent Considerations

The U.S. Patent and Trademark Office recognizes only natural persons as inventors. Relying substantially on generative AI for an invention's creation may jeopardize patent eligibility, since patent law requires meaningful human intellectual contribution (USPTO, 2024).

Use of AI in Grant Applications

The same concerns that apply to manuscripts extend to grant applications. Funding agencies hold applicants responsible for any AI-introduced plagiarism, falsification, or fabrication in submitted materials (Lauer, Constant, & Wernimont, 2023).

AI in the Peer Review Process

NIH prohibits AI use in scientific peer review of grant applications and R&D contract proposals, including for drafting or refining a critique, because AI tools offer no guarantee of where submitted data is stored or used afterward (NIH, 2023). Lamar University does not advise AI use in peer review without explicit permission from the relevant funding or publishing organization.

Non-Public Research Data and AI Tools

Non-public or IRB-governed research data is Sensitive, Confidential, or Regulated under Lamar's data classification framework and may not be entered into any AI tool, including Copilot, without prior review. De-identification alone does not authorize AI use of IRB-regulated data; re-identification risk and IRB protocol terms still apply.

Researchers seeking to use AI tools with non-public research data must complete a DARpA AI Data Use Request Form prior to that use. Contact University Innovation or the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs for the current form and review process.

Reporting AI Use in Research

Transparent, complete reporting of AI methodology supports reproducibility and replicability. See the Association for the Advancement of Artificial Intelligence's reproducibility checklist at aaai.org for a current framework.

References

Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE). (2023, February 13). Authorship and AI Tools.

Flanagin, A., et al. (2023). Nonhuman “authors” and implications for the integrity of scientific publication and medical knowledge. *JAMA*, 329(8), 637–639.

Hosseini, M., et al. (2023). Using AI to write scholarly publications. *Accountability in Research*.

International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE). (2023, May). Recommendations for the conduct, reporting, editing, and publication of scholarly work in medical journals.

Lauer, M., Constant, S., & Wernimont, A. (2023, June 23). Using AI in peer review is a breach of confidentiality.

National Institutes of Health (NIH). (2023, June 23). NOT-OD-23-149: The use of generative artificial intelligence technologies is prohibited for the NIH peer review process.

Nature. (2023, January 24). Tools such as ChatGPT threaten transparent science; here are our ground rules for their use.

United States Patent & Trademark Office. (2024, January 24). 2109 Inventorship [R07.2022].

Zielinski, C., et al. (2023, May 31). Chatbots, ChatGPT, and scholarly manuscripts: WAME recommendations on chatbots and generative artificial intelligence in relation to scholarly publications.

More Resources

The following resources support ongoing generative AI work at Lamar University:

- Lamar University's formal Generative Artificial Intelligence policy (MAPP)
- University Innovation's AI in Every Program (AIEP) resources, including the four-phase developmental progression framework and program-level AI checklist
- CITL's Faculty AI Community of Practice and WednesdAI Workshop series
- Lamar University Writing Center, for citation guidance
- CITL@Lamar.edu, for tool selection, prompt engineering, and syllabus language support

This guidance is reviewed periodically as university policy, approved tools, and institutional AI initiatives evolve. Check CITL's website for the current version.

This guidance was originally created by the Center for Teaching and Learning Enhancement, approved by Lamar University's Digital Learning Committee with input from university community stakeholders, and has been revised by CITL in coordination with University Innovation to reflect the university's current data classification standards, formal AI policy, and active institutional AI initiatives.