

SETU Staff Guidelines on the Use of Generative AI (GenAI)

Version 1.1 (October 2025)



1. Purpose and Scope

This document outlines principles and good practices to support responsible, ethical and effective use of GenAI by university staff across teaching, research, and administration. SETU's approach to using GenAI is aligned with our Strategic Plan 2023-2028 and our policies, procedures and practices related to teaching, learning and assessment, research, and administration. To guide policy and practice, SETU has established a GenAI Steering Committee.

SETU recognises that GenAI continues to become more embedded in higher education, with 92% of students acknowledging their use of GenAI in the 2025 Higher Education Policy Institute survey (HEPI, 2025). It is also prevalent in staff practices throughout the university. SETU has been careful and measured in its approach to GenAI, open to new opportunities whilst protecting our values and good practice. Responsible and ethical use of GenAI should consider the limitations of the technology, its environmental impact and its societal effects (including in terms of bias, diversity, non-discrimination, fairness and prevention of harm). This includes the proper management of information, respect for privacy, confidentiality and intellectual property rights, and proper citation of use.

These guidelines draw on national and international guidance, research and good practice from the National Academic Integrity Network (NAIN), National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI), Irish Government, EU, UNESCO, Australia's Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA), and the University of Sydney.

SETU adopted initial staff guidelines in September 2023. This was shortly followed by publication of student guidelines in October 2023. Our approach is student-centred, recognising GenAI literacy is a key component of students' digital literacy. Along with the development of these guidelines and the ongoing updating of relevant policies (such as academic and research integrity, and academic misconduct), we have focused on practical applications of AI.

For students, multimedia resources based upon the student guidelines are shared via GenAI student hubs as well as ongoing GenAI Quick Updates, and a GenAI module has been integrated into a new online programme on academic integrity. For staff, there are a range of learning initiatives and spaces for discussion, including events, workshops and online seminars, communities of practice, and online multimedia resources and GenAI Quick Updates. Research into emerging practice is encouraged and supported, including via SATLE Teaching and Learning Fellowships.

These guidelines provide clarity on responsible and ethical use of GenAI for SETU staff, however, as with any digital technology, the use of GenAI carries environmental implications, particularly in terms of energy consumption and water usage associated with the training and operation of large language models. While the carbon footprint of simple interactions with AI tools is modest, cumulative use across an institution can have a measurable impact. Staff are encouraged to use AI tools mindfully, only incorporating AI into workflows where it meaningfully improves efficiency or outcomes. Awareness of these climate considerations supports the university's broader commitments to sustainability and responsible digital practices.

2. Guiding Principles

At SETU, we will collectively and actively strive to uphold the following guiding principles:

- **Transparency:** We will be transparent and clear about AI usage across the different functions of the university, with appropriate, unbiased, and fair acknowledgement.
- **Accountability:** We remain responsible for the accuracy, appropriateness, and ethical integrity of outputs generated by AI.
- **Respect and inclusion:** We will respect the privacy and confidentiality of data from colleagues, learners, external partners, society, cultural heritage, and the environment. We will strive to ensure any use of GenAI will not impact negatively on diversity and inclusion.
- **Integrity:** We will ensure any GenAI use aligns with the SETU Academic Integrity Policy (forthcoming) and [SETU Code of Conduct for Responsible Research Practice](#).

3. GenAI Application

Teaching, Learning, and Assessment

GenAI presents both opportunities and challenges for educators, particularly in the areas of curriculum development, content generation, and assessment design. The integration of GenAI into teaching and learning should be underpinned by transparency and pedagogical focus. While individual exploration of AI is important, programme or disciplinary approaches are more likely to ensure consistency, fairness, and clarity for learners.

Key Considerations:

- Encourage deep, engaged learning by adopting pedagogical strategies and learning approaches that reduce over-dependence on GenAI. Strive to co-create with students an inclusive learning environment of trust and openness around GenAI.
- Students should be supported in developing GenAI literacy, with guidance on how to use these tools critically, ethically, and responsibly. Discuss with students the

affordances, limitations, and implications of GenAI in the context of module or discipline.

- Expectations around GenAI should be clearly communicated, outlining when its use is permitted, restricted, or prohibited.
- The use of GenAI should be clearly acknowledged in academic work using appropriate referencing and citation practices. To make the process of using GenAI visible, students should be encouraged to keep a record of all their prompts and outputs as part of module assessments.
- Transparency in teaching practices is essential in establishing a culture of integrity. Students should be informed when AI-generated materials are used in lectures, class activities, or as part of assignment briefs.
- Ensure human oversight is maintained in key academic processes including assessment, feedback, and communications.
- Recognise that unequal access to GenAI tools and related GenAI literacy may worsen existing digital divides.
- Lecturers need to be aware of how GenAI can be used to do their existing assessments. Assessment design should be regularly reviewed, to strengthen academic integrity and mitigate risks through redesigning assessment strategies. This may be an appropriate combination of supervised assessments and shifting towards authentic, process-based, and higher-order tasks that are less susceptible to GenAI misuse and more reflective of deep learning experiences. For further information see the [N-TUTORR Assessment Redesign Framework](#).
- GenAI tools should not be used to mark or provide feedback on students' assessed work.
- Be aware of the contested nature of the usefulness, accuracy, and appropriate use of AI detection tools. For example, Turnitin's AI detection can be considered a useful flag from which to start a conversation with a student. Rather than viewing it as evidence of potential plagiarism/academic misconduct, it is better to consider it as a prompt to have a deeper look using professional judgment. Note that it may generate false positives and, conversely, a piece containing text written by AI may not be detected as such. Any use of GenAI must be consistent with the [Student Academic Misconduct Policy](#).
- Document and reflect on GenAI integration, building shared practices and resources across SETU to inform future pedagogical developments.

Research

The use of GenAI in research entails many risks, in particular data privacy risks and the potential violation of GDPR through the inputting of personal or private data into GenAI systems, the lack of reliability and reproducibility of research outputs, significant risks to

intellectual property, plagiarism of others work and the production of fraudulent research, among other risks.

The core principles for the responsible use of GenAI in Research are amended from the [EU Living Guidelines on the Responsible Use of GenAI in Research](#):

- **Reliability:** in ensuring the quality, reliability and reproducibility of research outputs generated by GenAI.
- **Honesty:** Researchers must disclose that GenAI has been used in any scientific publications, including presentations, reports, proposals, applications, reviews etc.
- **Respect:** for colleagues, research participants, research subjects, society and the environment, including compliance with GDPR and respect for privacy, confidentiality and intellectual property rights.
- **Accountability:** SETU researchers remain ultimately responsible for the integrity of their research and all outputs produced by GenAI tools. Any use must be accompanied by human oversight, verification, and critical analysis.

SETU's *Code of Conduct for Responsible Research Practice* requires researchers to be transparent about their use of AI tools, including GenAI, in their research. Failure to acknowledge the use of such tools may be considered a breach of research integrity and could be investigated under the *SETU Procedures for Managing Allegations of Research Misconduct*. One of the most serious forms of research misconduct is plagiarism. Using GenAI to generate content without proper attribution or disclosure may constitute plagiarism and could lead to disciplinary action.

All those engaging in research should also refer to Section 4 below "Ethical Considerations". This outlines in more detail the many risks associated with using Gen AI in research.

Additional detailed guidance is being developed on the use of GenAI in Research to guide researchers, supervisors and students, who engage in research, on how to use GenAI ethically, responsibly, appropriately and critically throughout the research process.

If staff have any concerns about acceptable usage of GenAI for research purposes, please contact the Research Integrity and Compliance Officer kim.murphy@setu.ie.

Administration

GenAI use is not limited to academic and research functions, it also has many potential applications in administration practices/roles, for example, it could be used to assist in drafting routine communications, summarising policy documents and reports, suggesting presentation outlines and document structures.

For comprehensive consideration for the responsible use of AI in the public service, see the [Guidelines for the Responsible Use of Artificial Intelligence in the Public Service](#) (Department of Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation,

2025). This document outlines seven principles, practical information, and illustrative real-world examples.

It is important to be careful with confidential or sensitive information, including personal or private data. See section 5 for more on GDPR and data protection obligations.

4. Ethical Considerations

As GenAI becomes increasingly embedded in higher education, it is important to be aware of the ethical considerations surrounding this evolving technology (UNESCO, 2022; National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, 2025). At SETU, we acknowledge that GenAI is the subject of ongoing research and development, and that GenAI has possibilities to benefit humanity. However, there are complex ethical considerations around the use of GenAI, some of which are:

- **GDPR and data privacy:** Not all companies are transparent about the training data they have used and some outputs from these tools could contain personal data without users' consent. Students and academics need to also carefully consider whether any of their inputs/prompts contain any personal or private data. Staff need to ensure that they comply with GDPR at all times.
- **Privacy, copyright, & intellectual property issues:** Not all companies are transparent about the training data they have used, often using copyrighted material and the intellectual property of others to train their LLMs. This makes it difficult to determine ownership of AI generated content and there is a risk of plagiarism if AI outputs resemble existing work. On the other hand, and equally, students and academics must be careful not to upload/input their own intellectual property, or the IP of others (e.g. unpublished articles, grant applications or dissertations) into GenAI systems. This could risk their work being reused and passed on to others.
- **Black box & lack of replicability:** the reasons why an AI-based system takes a decision or provides an output lacks any transparency, with different outputs generated for the same prompt, or different versions of the same tool can often result in different outputs. There is a need for explainable AI so that students and academics can verify and explain outputs, and ensure results are reliable and replicable.
- **Bias and misinformation:** Since training data is scraped from the internet (among other sources), it is not equally representative of all voices and can contain biased content, hate speech and misinformation. The internet contains views which many consider harmful to society: sexism, racism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, xenophobia, etc. GenAI output may replicate these biases and views.
- **Output quality and reliability:** Staff need to consider that GenAI outputs may contain factual inaccuracies, hallucinated references and hallucinated content, lack

of proper citation and logical inconsistencies. It is essential that there is always human oversight and verification of GenAI outputs.

- **Equality and equity of access:** Students and staff may not have equal access to GenAI tools, and paid versions of these tools, in their learning and work. Recent research indicates that paid versions of certain LLMs provide higher accuracy and reliability in outputs than free versions.
- **Environmental impacts:** As part of SETU's sustainability commitments, we need to be aware of the impact of GenAI and related technologies on the environment, including energy and resource use, water consumption, and waste.
- **Human Exploitation:** GenAI has associated concerns about the exploitation of, and detrimental impact on, workers.

5. Security and Data Protection

All staff must ensure compliance with the GDPR, SETU Data Protection Policy, SETU Data Protection Procedures and SETU Intellectual Property (IP) Policy prior to inputting any personal, private, or proprietary information into external GenAI tools. Please also note that all records which pertain to SETU, regardless of where they are uploaded, are subject to the Freedom of Information Act. If staff wish to use other tools which are not supported by SETU, they must be aware of their legal obligations with regards to data privacy under GDPR.

If there are any concerns regarding GenAI usage and GDPR or FOI compliance, staff should consult the Data Protection Officer at dpo@setu.ie before proceeding.

GDPR Responsibilities

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) applies to all use of GenAI tools where personal data is processed. This includes identifiers such as:

- Student work and feedback
- IP addresses
- Login credentials
- Metadata from online activity

Under GDPR, SETU must have formal agreements in place with any third-party AI provider that processes such data on its behalf.

Approved Tools and Institutional Protections

SETU staff and students have access to Microsoft Copilot Chat via their Office 365 accounts. When **logged in** using SETU credentials, *Enterprise Data Protection* applies to all GenAI interactions within the Microsoft digital infrastructure. This includes enhanced security for:

- Prompt inputs

- AI-generated outputs
- Any processed data

Staff are responsible for understanding and upholding their legal obligations under GDPR, including choosing the least invasive way of performing a task with personal data.

Using Non-Approved GenAI Tools

Where tools outside of SETU's approved digital infrastructure are used:

- Staff must not require students to create accounts or input personal data into unapproved tools
- Tools may only be recommended where no personal data is collected or required from students (e.g. anonymous, account-free access)
- Staff are responsible for understanding and upholding their legal obligations under GDPR

Training and Support

- GDPR training is available via [Legal Island](#). This one-hour module should be repeated every two years
- Staff are encouraged to stay informed about privacy obligations and safe use practices when engaging with GenAI tools

Summary

Action	Permitted	Conditions
Inputting personal student data into GenAI	No	Only with informed consent and DPA in place
Using Microsoft Copilot Chat via SETU login	Yes	Enterprise Data Protection applies
Requiring students to use unapproved GenAI	No	Unless no personal data is required or collected
Using unpublished research in GenAI tools	No	Consider IP and confidentiality policies
Accessing GDPR training	Yes	Available on Legal Island Platform

6. Disclosure and Attribution

Transparency in the use of GenAI is essential in maintaining academic integrity, building trust, and providing a model for responsible practices. Staff should clearly communicate when and how AI tools have been used in the creation of teaching materials, assessment design, feedback, or other outputs. Similarly, students must be guided to appropriately acknowledge any AI use in their work.

- Do not misrepresent AI-generated work as solely human-authored.
- In teaching and supervision, provide clear guidance to students on when and how AI use is permitted.
- All use of GenAI should be acknowledged in academic work. Introduce a declaration, template, or specific guidelines for students to disclose the use of AI in their work when permitted.

7. Training and Support

To ensure the ethical and effective integration of GenAI into teaching, research, and administrative practices, all staff are encouraged to engage with ongoing professional development in GenAI literacy. Building a shared understanding of the opportunities and limitations of GenAI is essential in navigating the evolving higher education landscape and supporting our learners as they progress into an increasingly AI-enhanced society.

- Engage with Professional Development training sessions on GenAI literacy and GenAI tools.
- Share effective practices and insights with colleagues through communities of practice or workshops.
- If you require further information about training and support, please visit the GenAI Staff Hub in Moodle/Blackboard. Specific queries can be emailed to: genai@setu.ie

8. Continuous Review

These guidelines will be reviewed annually in line with advancements in GenAI technologies and feedback from staff and students.

9. Selected Reading/Resources

All European Academies (ALLEA) (2023) [European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity](#)

Department of Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation (2025) [Guidelines for the Responsible Use of Artificial Intelligence in the Public Service](#)

European Commission (2025) [EU Living Guidelines on the Responsible Use of Gen AI in Research](#)

European Digital Education Hub (2025) [Explainable AI in education: Fostering human oversight and shared responsibility](#)

Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI) (2025) [Student Generative AI Survey 2025](#)

Maynooth University (2025) [Maynooth University Staff Guidelines for GenAI](#)

National Academic Integrity Network (NAIN) <https://www.qqi.ie/national-academic-integrity-network>

National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (2025) [Ten Considerations for Generative Artificial Intelligence Adoption in Irish Higher Education](#)

N-TUTORR [Assessment Redesign Framework](#)

Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) <https://www.qqi.ie/>

SETU (2025) Generative AI and Prompt Literacy: A comprehensive guide for students – section: [Citing and Referencing GenAI](#)

TCD (2024) [Generative AI Library Guide](#)

Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) [GenAI Knowledge Hub](#)

UNESCO (2022) [Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence](#)

UNESCO (2025) [Piloting the Ethical Impact Assessment \(EIA\) in Latin America](#)

University of Sydney (2025) [The Sydney Assessment Framework](#)

10. Related SETU Policies

- Academic Integrity Policy (forthcoming)
- [Code of Conduct for Responsible Practice of Research](#)
- [Data Protection Policy](#)
- [Intellectual Property Policy](#)
- Student Guidelines on the Use of GenAI (see GenAI Hub on Moodle and Blackboard)
- [Student Academic Misconduct Policy and Disciplinary Procedure](#)

This document has been prepared by members of the SETU GenAI Steering Committee and approved by Academic Council in June 2025.