

Student Guide: Ethical and Effective Use of AI in Higher Education

1. Understanding AI in Academia

AI tools, including generative AI like ChatGPT, can assist with tasks such as summarising information, brainstorming ideas, and enhancing writing. However, their use must align with the Cairnmillar's academic integrity policies. Always ensure that your use of AI:

- Complies with institutional guidelines;
- Maintains academic honesty; and
- Acknowledges AI contributions.

2. Appropriate Uses of AI Tools

AI can be a valuable educational aid when used responsibly. Appropriate uses include:

- **Generating ideas.** For example:
 - Brainstorming subtopics—if the topic is on the impact of social media on self-esteem, it could help identify subtopics such as positive and negative social media use; addiction; social comparison orientation; etc.
 - Identifying theoretical lenses—if the topic were on causes of Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, AI could help include different lenses that are used in modern discourse such as cognitive theories, behavioural theories, neuropsychological and neurobiological theories, etc.
 - Suggesting relevant variables—if the topic were on emotion regulation, AI could help with identification of relevant independent variables for studies such as mindfulness use, stress, and dependent variables such as psychological measures like the DERS or the AAQ-7
 - Highlighting case examples—e.g., for an essay on OCD, highlighting possible ways that OCD presents and how that relates to context.
 - Coming up with some prompts—e.g., for a broad essay topic such as emotion regulation, generating sub-questions like “How does Gross’ model explain suppression vs. reappraisal?”, “How does emotion regulation change across the lifespan?”, “How does emotion regulation play a role in different psychological disorders such as OCD and post-traumatic stress disorder?”, etc.
- **Assisting with planning the structure of assignments;** such as by providing for a literature review on obsessive compulsive disorder—what is OCD, why is it important, what are the

common theoretical lenses, what treatments are available, and what is the evidence for the treatments being effective.

- **Providing language support**; such as suggesting the rephrasing of “people control emotions in different ways” to “individuals employ varied strategies to regulate their emotional responses.” It is important to be aware that AI can lead to changes of meaning, particularly in technical writing, and that scientific writing can often be quite “dry” whereas AI may suggest quite verbose or “flowery” writing (it is based on statistical models of what words associate). It is important to think “while this sounds good, does it actually mean anything!”
- **Aiding study**—AI can quite effectively provide quick summaries ahead of exams or quizzes; give practice questions of the type you may encounter; demonstrate quick Q&A flashcards; help clarify differences between constructs if these aren’t clear from explanations given.

Note: Always critically evaluate AI-generated content for accuracy and relevance.

3. Inappropriate Uses of AI Tools

Misuse of AI can constitute academic misconduct. Inappropriate uses include:

- Plagiarism—copying blocks of AI generated words into your work without rewriting, citing, or engaging with the information.
- Bypassing Learning—asking AI to generate a case report for you on a case study instead of learning the skills yourself.
- Using AI tools to meet Unit or task learning outcomes—e.g., having AI generate a reflective journal entry when the task is designed to help you develop your ULO of learning self-reflective and critical skills.
- Unauthorised Use—Using GenAI when it has been explicitly prohibited by the Unit Coordinator Using GenAI when it has been explicitly prohibited by the Unit Coordinator (this is indicated on assignment coversheets).
- Ethics non-compliance - Using AI when it is inconsistent with ethical approval or participant consent—E.g., uploading participant data (qualitative or quantitative) to GenAI when it is noted in your HREC application that data will not be made publicly available. This is a major ethical breach and will trigger academic integrity and progress committee procedures.

Remember: Misuse can lead to disciplinary actions as per the Cairnmillar Institute academic integrity policies.

4. Citing AI Contributions

When AI tools contribute to your work, transparency is key. Guidelines for citation include:

- Acknowledgment—stating if you have used AI, and for what purpose (see #2 above).

- Citation Style—follow the required referencing style, such as APA 7th. For example, “OpenAI. (2025). *ChatGPT* [Large language model]. <https://chat.openai.com/>”
- Specificity—be clear about what aspect of the work was contributed to via AI.

Example: *"I declare that this assessment task is my own original work. Where I have used generative AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Grammarly, Microsoft Copilot, etc.), I have clearly identified and acknowledged the specific sections influenced or generated by such tools, including the nature of the assistance and the date of use, as per the guidelines provided."*

Appendix A: Example of an Acceptable Declaration with Highlighted Use of AI Tools

Student Name: Jane Student

Assessment Title: Reflective Essay on Therapeutic Boundaries

Submission Date: 5 April 2026

Declaration:

I declare that this work is my own. I used Grammarly on 2 April 2026 to improve sentence structure and grammar in the second paragraph. I used ChatGPT (accessed 3 April 2026) to help rephrase a segment of the fourth paragraph for clarity and tone. All ideas and analysis are my own.

Example with Highlighted Sections in Submission

Paragraph 2 (Grammar Support via Grammarly):

Original draft was edited using Grammarly for grammar and readability.

"Therapists must recognise their own emotional reactions when working with clients. Emotional self-awareness helps maintain appropriate boundaries and avoid countertransference." ← Edited using Grammarly

Paragraph 4 (Rephrasing via ChatGPT):

"Establishing therapeutic boundaries is not merely an ethical obligation, but also a dynamic process that fosters client autonomy and safety." ← Rephrased via ChatGPT on 3 April 2026

5. Enhancing AI Literacy

Developing AI literacy is crucial for responsible usage. Steps to enhance your understanding include:

- **Educational Resources** - Seeking out and accessing high quality, dependable sources of information in relation to AI use is an important part of your responsibility as a student. Below are some suggestions for up-to-date sources of information developed for Tertiary Students in Australia.
 - [Using AI tools in your studies | Study Australia](#)
 - [Gen AI – student resources and support | Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency](#)
- **Critical Evaluation** - Generative AI tools like ChatGPT, Claude, or Gemini can be powerful aids in academic work. However, AI can sometimes produce incorrect, outdated, or misleading information. Students **must** take steps to verify all AI-generated content to maintain academic integrity and ensure accuracy; your marker will know the content, whereas AI doesn't "know" anything (as it is based on statistical models of how words associate).
 - **1. Cross-Check with Credible Sources**
Always verify facts or data using reputable academic sources like peer-reviewed journal articles, textbooks, library databases, or official websites.
 - **2. Check Referencing and Citations**
Confirm that any citations provided actually exist. AI tools often produce citations that look convincing but are actually fabricated references (but they sound plausible, e.g., will be using real author names and relevant topics that do exist. This is not simply an "error" but a form of reference invention). Use tools like Google Scholar, your university library, or DOI searches to validate.
 - **3. Use Your Own Judgment**
Evaluate whether the AI response makes logical sense and aligns with what you've learned. AI can often "sound" good, but whether it is meaningful is another matter that depends on your content knowledge.
 - **4. Use Fact-Checking Tools**
For current events or controversial claims, use sites like FactCheck.org, Snopes, or PolitiFact.

- **5. Check the Date of Information**

Make sure the information is up to date. AI may present outdated data, especially for topics that evolve quickly.

- **6. Keep a Record of Your Prompts**

Document your AI prompts and responses to demonstrate transparency and academic integrity.

- **7. Be Wary of AI's Confidence**

AI-generated text often sounds confident even when it is inaccurate. Treat AI content as a starting point. Here's a genuine edited example of using AI in a non-academic sense regarding some football information!

- AI: "Motlop, Owies, Fogarty, plus midfielders like Walsh and Cripps pushing forward can easily combine for another 6–8 goals."
 - Writer: Owies plays for the Eagles
- AI: Ha — nope, that's a mix-up 😊. **Matt Owies is very much a Carlton small forward.** ... 2024/25: continues as a best-22 forward ... Never played for West Coast.
 - Writer: You are wrong
- AI: I'll own that straight away — you're right to push back. Let's clear this up properly. Matt Owies absolutely plays for Carlton, not the Eagles... just to be 100% clear: **Matt Owies = Carlton** (still playing there now). **No link to West Coast** at all.
 - Writer: Google it, you are wrong
- AI: You're absolutely right to push for accuracy—thanks for that. I mistakenly insisted **Matt Owies** plays for Carlton, but **he's actually at West Coast Eagles now**, not Carlton.

- **8. Ask Your Lecturer or Tutor**

If unsure about the accuracy or appropriate use of AI-generated content, seek guidance from your academic staff.

- **Ethical Considerations and use of Gen AI.** It is important to be aware of the various ethical pitfalls that can relate to AI use. These include:

- **1. Understand the Limits of Generative AI**
- AI tools do not understand what they generate — they produce plausible-sounding responses based on training data, not truth or logic. **AI is not a source of clinical, diagnostic, or therapeutic advice and must not be used in that way.**

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The *Australian Psychological Society* cautions against the use of AI in replacing

psychologist judgment or clinical decision-making.

The Psychology Board of Australia reminds practitioners that AI must not be used to make health-related decisions.

- The *Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia (PACFA)* has released good practice guidelines for integration of generative AI in counselling and psychotherapy ([Integrating Artificial Intelligence in Counselling and Psychotherapy - New Good Practice Guideline - Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia](#))
- **2. Always Acknowledge AI Use**
- If you use AI to generate, edit, brainstorm, or summarise content, clearly state when, where, and how you used it. Never submit AI-generated work as your own without disclosure — this is a serious breach of academic integrity.
- **3. Don't Use AI in Restricted Contexts**
- Some assignments (e.g., client formulations, treatment plans, reflective journals) prohibit AI use to ensure fairness. All coversheets will indicate permitted use of AI (if in doubt, check with staff).
- **4. Respect Client and Participant Privacy**
- **NEVER** input personal, client, or sensitive data into AI tools, except where these are explicitly designed for this purpose and have been screened as appropriate with regards to relevant ethical codes and privacy legislation (e.g., many practices now use purpose-built AI systems to generate client notes – WITH individual client consent). This includes names, case notes, or assessment data. **Even anonymised data may be risky, as AI tools may store your input.**
 - AHPRA Code of Conduct: Emphasises the duty of confidentiality.
 - Psychology Board: Reminds registrants of privacy law obligations
 - APS: Advises against entering clinical data into third-party tools.
- **5. Avoid Bias and Misinformation**
- AI can reflect and amplify societal biases or generate false information. You are responsible for fact-checking and ensuring ethical framing of any content used.

- **6. Use AI as a Learning Tool, Not a Substitute**
- AI should enhance your learning, not replace it. Use it to brainstorm ideas or summarise articles (but read the original). Do not use AI to write entire assignments or generate false references.
- **7. Maintain Professional and Academic Standards**
- Psychology and counselling are regulated professions. Integrity during training is critical. Misusing AI can have implications for placement, internships, or registration.

AHPRA and the Psychology Board consider professional conduct across training and education.

- **Summary Table: Do's and Don'ts**

☒ Do

☐ Don't

Use AI in allowable ways (see #2 and your assignment guides)	Use AI to write assessments without disclosure
Declare AI use clearly	Use AI for things such as case formulation or clinical scenarios without permission
Verify all facts	Enter personal or clinical data into AI tools. Even when the information is deidentified
Read original sources	Assume AI outputs are correct
Engage in critical thinking	Use AI to avoid doing the work yourself

- **Key References**

- AHPRA Code of Conduct: <https://www.ahpra.gov.au/Resources/Code-of-conduct.aspx>
- Psychology Board of Australia: <https://www.psychologyboard.gov.au/>
- APS Ethical Guidelines on Digital Technology: <https://psychology.org.au>
- TEQSA AI Guidance: <https://www.teqsa.gov.au>

-PACFA Good Practice Guidelines: [Good Practice Guidelines - Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia](#)

6. Seeking Guidance

Tip: Engage with resources from reputable institutions to stay informed about best practices. If you're uncertain about the appropriate use of AI tools:

- Consult Unit Coordinator/Tutor etc.
Academic Support Services
- Peer Discussions

Remember: When in doubt, **it is always best to seek clarification** to avoid unintentional misconduct.

As AI continues to evolve, staying informed about its ethical use in academia is essential. Regularly review the institution's policies and participate in educational opportunities to ensure your use of AI enhances your learning experience responsibly.

7. AI Use Within Cairnmillar Institute Policies

Cairnmillar Institute recognises the increasing presence and utility of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) technologies within tertiary education. The use of GenAI tools is supported **only where it aligns with institutional policy and academic integrity expectations**. Students should be aware that AI usage is not governed by a single, standalone policy, but rather integrated across several key institutional documents, including:

1. AI Operations Policy

The *AI Operations Policy* when approved by Council, will provide the overarching institutional framework for the use of AI at Cairnmillar. This policy outlines both the **opportunities and the risks** associated with AI tools and specifies how the Institute will manage AI integration in learning, teaching, research, and administration.

For students, the policy highlights:

- AI tools must not be used to undermine learning outcomes.
- Use of AI should support skill development, not replace it.

- Confidential or sensitive data (e.g., personal information, such as participant data, client or placement information) must never be entered into AI tools.
- Ethical, transparent use of AI is expected at all times, including proper disclosure.

Note: This guide will be updated with a link to the policy once approved by the Cairnmillar Council in 2026.

2. Academic Integrity Policy

AI use intersects closely with the *Academic Integrity Policy*. Improper use of GenAI—such as submitting AI-generated work as original, failing to disclose AI use, or using AI to fabricate references—may constitute **academic misconduct**.

The guide clarifies:

- Any permitted use of AI must be disclosed using the cover sheet checkbox and textbox.
- Where assessments do not permit AI, this must be strictly followed.
- All AI-generated outputs must be critically evaluated and adapted to reflect the student's own understanding and work.

3. Assessment Policies

Expectations around AI use may also appear in *unit guides*, *assignment briefs*, and *placement handbooks*. Unit Coordinators determine whether AI is permitted for specific tasks and will provide explicit guidance where needed. Students are responsible for checking this guidance before using AI in any assessment.

Student Instructions: Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Assignments

The Cairnmillar Institute supports the ethical and responsible use of generative AI tools in learning and academic work, where appropriate. However, use of AI must always align with academic integrity principles and the specific requirements set by your Unit Coordinator.

1. Read the Unit-Specific AI Guidance Carefully

- Each unit may have different requirements regarding the use of AI in assessments.
- **It is your responsibility** to review and follow the AI-related instructions provided by your Unit Coordinator for each assignment.
- If you are unsure, **seek clarification before submitting**.
- Staff may contact you if there are concerns or questions in relation to use of AI in your work.

2. Permitted Use of AI

You may be permitted to use generative AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Copilot, Gemini, Claude) in certain assessments for tasks such as:

- Brainstorming or exploring ideas
- Improving clarity of your own writing. Caution is still advised here. For example, some tools such as Grammarly may or may not constitute AI use depending on how they are used (e.g. fixing up a poor punctuation versus completely re-writing a paragraph in a specific style).
- Drafting or reviewing structure (e.g., headings, outlines)
- Clarifying academic concepts or language use

Note: If AI is used, you must ensure the final submission reflects your original critical thinking and analysis.

3. Prohibited Use of AI

You **must not** use AI tools for:

- Assignments that explicitly prohibit AI use (as stated by the Unit Coordinator).
- Clinical reflections, client case formulations, placement reports, or any assessment involving confidential or sensitive information, even if the details have been deidentified.

- Generating responses that are then submitted without significant revision or critical evaluation.
- Any task where the use of AI undermines professional standards.

4. Disclosure Requirements

If you use AI in your assignment, you **must**:

- Complete the academic integrity declaration using the method provided for the assessment task (e.g., assignment cover sheet, online form, or other designated mechanism).
- **Specify exactly how and when** AI was used in the provided textbox (e.g., “Used ChatGPT to suggest alternative sentence structures in introduction paragraph”)
- Ensure your use complies with the Unit Coordinator’s instructions and does not compromise academic integrity

Failure to disclose AI use or use it inappropriately may be treated as a **breach of academic integrity**.

5. How Academic Staff May Detect Inappropriate Use of Generative AI

Academic staff at the Institute use a range of methods to assess whether Generative AI (GenAI) tools have been used inappropriately or without proper disclosure in student assessments. While there is no single, foolproof method for detecting AI usage, staff are trained to consider multiple indicators, including:

- **AI Detection Tools in Turnitin:**
Some assignments submitted via Turnitin may be scanned using integrated AI detection algorithms. These tools may indicate whether a portion of a submission has characteristics similar to AI-generated text. Please note that these tools are **not conclusive** and are only used as part of a broader judgment.
- **Document Metadata Inspection:**
Staff may review the metadata of Word documents and other file formats submitted. This metadata can contain details such as:
 - Document creation and modification history
 - Editing software and author information

- Anomalies in writing/editing timelines
- **Stylistic or Voice Discrepancies:**
Sudden or unexplained changes in writing style, tone, grammar, or vocabulary compared to previous submissions may raise flags. This includes:
 - Uncharacteristically formal, polished, or technical writing
 - Inconsistent voice within the same document
 - Jargon or phrasing commonly seen in AI outputs (e.g., overly generic or vague elaborations)
 - Unexplained changes in font, including colour or style.
- **Lack of Personalisation or Critical Engagement:**
AI-generated text may lack personalised reflections, contextualisation, or references to class materials and readings. Staff may query assignments that appear overly generic or detached from unit-specific content.
- **Verification Through Student Dialogue:**
Staff may discuss submitted work with students during class, supervision, or via follow-up interviews if they suspect unacknowledged use of AI. This is an opportunity for clarification and learning—not a presumption of misconduct.

References and Further Resources

- TEQSA: <https://www.teqsa.gov.au/students/artificial-intelligence-advice-students>
- King's College London: <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/about/strategy/learning-and-teaching/ai-guidance/student-guidance>
- University of Bristol: <https://www.bristol.ac.uk/bilt/sharing-practice/guides/guidance-on-ai/>
- University of Edinburgh: <https://www.ed.ac.uk/ai/guidance>