

Guidelines for the Use of AI in Graduate Research, Theses, and Dissertations¹

1. Purpose and Scope

These guidelines outline the responsible use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) assisted tools in theses and dissertations and research proposals. They apply to all aspects of graduate research for thesis bound master's and doctoral students at FIU.

While the University Graduate School (UGS) provides overarching expectations, **individual programs, schools, and departments may establish additional discipline-specific standards.** Students are responsible for understanding and adhering to both sets of requirements.

As AI technologies evolve, these guidelines may be updated to reflect emerging best practices.

2. Core Principles of Responsible AI Use

Graduate education aims to cultivate the critical-thinking skills required to conduct independent research - reviewing literature, generating research questions, designing methodologies, collecting and analyzing data, interpreting findings, and communicating results.

AI tools may support research and writing, but they do not replace scholarly judgment, expertise, or ethical decision-making.

Responsible AI use upholds the core values of Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR), including:

- Transparency
- Reproducibility
- Attribution
- Ethical and informed decision-making

As independent scholarly products, theses and dissertations must meet all RCR standards, including those governing attribution, authorship, research integrity, and originality.

¹ Portions of these guidelines draw on published policies and guidance from peer institutions, including Georgia Institute of Technology, University of Alabama, Illinois State University, and Texas A&M University. Special thanks to the members of the Focus Group on the Use of AI in Graduate Research, Theses, and Dissertations for their insight and review and to Dr. Mark Finlayson for the content presented during the "Responsible Conduct of Research in the Age of AI" workshop on November 18, 2025.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

3.1 Graduate Students must:

- Use AI tools responsibly and in accordance with the principles of responsible conduct of research.
- Understand that AI tools often produce confabulations (or hallucinations) which are false, nonsensical, or incorrect information.
- Disclose all AI use in research, writing, data analysis including coding, graph making, figure creation and in exam preparation.
- Preserve original unedited drafts of your work.
- Ensure all work submitted is original, accurate, and adheres to the standards of the discipline.
- Consult faculty mentors when uncertain about acceptable AI use.

3.2 Faculty Mentors and Committees must:

- Clearly communicate acceptable and unacceptable uses of AI in thesis and dissertation work.
- Create a syllabus for thesis and dissertation courses that communicates expectations for the semester including acceptable and unacceptable uses of AI tools (see the Appendix).
- Guide students in maintaining research integrity and verifying AI-generated or assisted work.
- Review and approve students' AI use as part of proposal, dissertation/ thesis evaluation.
- Attest to the authenticity and originality of committee-approved work

3.3 Graduate Programs Must:

- Establish program-specific expectations for AI use in accordance with disciplinary best practices and authorship guidelines and include them in the graduate program handbook.
- Ensure students receive consistent information regarding permissible AI practices.

3.4 University Graduate School Must:

- Provide institution-level guidelines on AI use.
- Incorporate AI use disclosure requirements into formal thesis/dissertation format guidelines.
- Offer resources and training to support responsible use of AI for graduate students.

4. Examples of Acceptable and Unacceptable Uses of AI (All acceptable uses of AI must be disclosed in accordance with the disclosure requirements outlined in this document)

Acceptable Uses	Unacceptable Uses
Grammar and minor editorial corrections. Students are strongly advised to preserve the original unedited drafts of all writing.	Using AI to generate or re-write substantive portions of proposals, theses, dissertations, or exam responses.

Acceptable Uses	Unacceptable Uses
Assistance with organizing ideas, outlining, or clarifying writing.	Fabricating data, results, citations, literature summaries, or arguments.
Generating code, data visualizations or images if approved by the committee or faculty advisor.	Uploading proprietary, confidential, identifiable, or sensitive data
Supporting data analysis with proper oversight.	Representing AI-generated output as one's own original work.
Explaining concepts or methods to aid learning.	Relying on AI outputs without verification, analysis, or scholarly oversight.

Using AI improperly may constitute academic misconduct. According to the [FIU Student Conduct and Honor Code](#):

“The submission of any work authored by another person or generated by an automated tool without proper acknowledgement of the source, whether that material is paraphrased or copied in verbatim or near-verbatim” constitutes plagiarism.

Using AI without proper attribution may also constitute research misconduct. According to the [FIU Research Misconduct Policy](#):

“Research misconduct may occur when the fabrication, falsification or plagiarism is committed by an individual or if it was committed by an individual’s use or assistance of other persons, entities, or tools including artificial intelligence (AI)-based tools.”

“Plagiarism may include work that has been generated by an automated tool without proper acknowledgement of the source.”

5. AI Use Disclosure Requirements

5.1 General Disclosure Expectations

- All use of AI assisted tools in proposals, theses and dissertations must be fully disclosed to the student’s committee.
- AI use must align with disciplinary standards as verified jointly by the student and the committee

5.2 Required Elements of AI Disclosure

Disclosure must specify:

- The specific AI assisted tools used
- The purpose and scope of their use
- The components of the work produced with the assistance of AI tools (e.g., coding, summarization, writing assistance, data visualization, creation of figures)

5.3 Placement of Disclosure

The AI Use Disclosure must appear in the preliminary pages (Acknowledgement section, Preface or other) of:

- All full research proposal drafts submitted for committee review
- All thesis/dissertation drafts submitted for committee review
- In the final ETD manuscript

Any use of AI tools included in the “Acceptable Uses” (see table above) needs to be disclosed in the preliminary pages of the Thesis/Dissertation. In addition, use of AI tools in data analysis should be included in the Methods section. AI tools used in data visualizations or other figures need to be properly cited and disclosed in the figure caption. Please check with your disciplinary publishing guidelines regarding citing AI.

Programs may provide additional placement requirements (e.g., description of methodology, etc.). Students are responsible for consulting and adhering to the disciplinary and publishing guidelines and style manuals, including cases in which the citation of AI tools is not allowed.

5.4 Example of AI Use Disclosure Statement

(Programs may modify according to disciplinary expectations.)

“Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools were utilized in the preparation of this thesis/dissertation. (List specific tools used) were used to (describe specific uses, such as generating data visualizations, assisting with coding, or suggesting revisions). (List specific tools used, if different) were used to assist with writing-related tasks limited to (e.g., grammar clarification, outline refinement). All AI use was reviewed and approved by my committee.”

6. Use of AI Detection Tools

Graduate programs will:

- Encourage responsible use
- Avoid defaulting to academic allegations without careful review with the student
- Ensure that student ownership of research and intellectual property is not compromised

Results from AI detection tools should not be used as the sole evidence of misconduct. Students should keep all original and revised drafts to support the originality of their work.

7. Risks and Limitations of Generative AI

Because of how Large Language Models (LLMs) are designed, certain risks are unavoidable:

- **Confabulations (or hallucinations):** Confidently presenting fabricated facts, citations, or data.
- **Plagiarism risks:** Outputs may mirror training data or reproduce text without clear attribution.

- **Bias:** LLMs are trained on large datasets that may not be diverse or representative and the resulting outputs may reproduce these biases.
- **Randomness:** Responses can vary by prompt or session.
- **Lack of common sense:** AI cannot rely on lived experience or contextual judgment.
- **Weak logical or mathematical reasoning:** Mistakes in calculations, proofs, or sequential logic.
- **No specialized expertise:** Knowledge comes from broad internet-level patterns, not deep disciplinary mastery.
- **Obsequiousness:** Tendency to agree, reinforce user assumptions, or provide overly confident answers.
- **Poor self-awareness:** The model does not know what it does not know.
- **Hidden guardrails:** System-level safety filters and content restrictions may affect completeness or accuracy.

8. Mitigation Strategies for Ethical AI Use

1. **Verify everything:** Check logic, citations, data, and assumptions. AI prompting is not a substitute for scholarly rigor.
2. **Conduct manual “sanity checks”:** Spot-check AI output against trusted scholarly sources.
3. **Use your disciplinary expertise:** AI may assist learning, but cannot replace foundational knowledge.
4. **Consult human experts:** Faculty mentors, librarians, statisticians, and colleagues remain essential.
5. **Fully disclose AI use:** Ensure transparency in manuscripts, proposals, assignments, and workflows.
6. **Use domain-specific models when possible:** Tools tailored to the field may reduce errors.
7. **Limit scope:** Define clear boundaries for what AI will and will not do in your research.

9. Data Privacy, Security, and Ethical Considerations

- Do **not** upload confidential, sensitive, identifiable, proprietary, or restricted data to public AI platforms.
- Ensure compliance with IRB, IACUC, IBC, HIPAA, FERPA, and other regulatory frameworks.
- Understand platform terms of service, data storage, and potential sharing of uploaded content.
- Consider whether the datasets used to train an AI model were collected ethically and with consent.
- Review the FIU list of prohibited technologies:
<https://security.fiu.edu/resources/prohibited-technologies/>
- Consider potential commercialization of intellectual property implications of your work before disclosing information in public or external platforms.

10. FIU Resources

- University Graduate School (UGS) — [Thesis and Dissertation Guidelines](#)
- [FIU Student Conduct and Honor Code](#)
- [FIU Research Misconduct Policy](#)

- FIU Libraries — [Artificial Intelligence Now: ChatGPT + AI Literacy Toolbox](#)
- Center for Advancement in Teaching – [Teaching and Learning with AI](#)
- [FIU AI Center for Excellence](#)
- [FIU Research Integrity / RCR](#)
- Division of Information Technology - [FIU + AI](#)

11. External Resources:

National Science Foundation (NSF) – [Notice to the Research Community on AI](#)
National Institutes of Health (NIH) – [NIH Notice on the Use of AI in Research \(NOT-OD-25-132\)](#)

Elsevier – [The Use of Generative AI and AI-Assisted Technologies in Writing](#)

Springer Nature – [Editorial Policies and AI Guidance](#)

Taylor & Francis – [AI Policy](#)

SAGE Publishing – [Artificial Intelligence Policy](#)

12. Future Updates

As AI technologies evolve, University Graduate School may issue additional guidance. Updated information will be posted on the UGS website and communicated through graduate programs.

APPENDIX



Example Ph.D. Dissertation Syllabus

Course Number: XXX 7980

Section:

In-Person meetings arranged

Term:

Course Meeting Information

Meetings will be arranged at a mutually agreeable time either in person or virtually. Meetings will be held at least bi-weekly and may change to weekly or more frequent as time progresses towards the oral defense date.

Course Prerequisites

Course prerequisites, if any, are listed below.

Course Description

The aim of this course is to instruct students on advanced data analysis and interpretation techniques, literature review and synthesis, research writing and communication practice culminating in a dissertation defense and written dissertation.

Textbook and Course Materials

No textbook required

Required/Recommended: No textbook required

Authors: No textbook required

Publisher: No textbook required

Publication Date: No textbook required

Copyright Date: No textbook required

ISBN 10: No textbook required | ISBN 13: No textbook required

Chapters/Pages: No textbook required

Readings, Materials, and Open Educational Resources (OER)

No materials are required for this course. Instructor will discuss readings with student as needed for preparation of the dissertation.

Course Goals

1) Preparation of written drafts of a dissertation culminating in a final version of the dissertation consistent with the college and [university guidelines and policies/procedure](#);

2) Prepare for and give an oral defense of the dissertation.

Student Learning Outcomes/Objectives

- Complete advanced data analysis and synthesis as applicable to dissertation topic under the guidance of the major professor and dissertation committee members.
- Synthesize dissertation research results in the context of the current research literature.
- Produce drafts of the dissertation in consultation with the major professor and dissertation committee, culminating into a final dissertation consistent with the college and university guidelines.
- Give an oral defense of the dissertation to the major professor and the committee members and address any questions of the dissertation research.

Expectations of the Course

- Engage in advanced data analysis, interpretation and presentation of results in both written and oral formats.
- Adhere to the highest standards of ethical conduct and responsible conduct of research in terms of data collection, storage and reporting and use of AI.
- Adhere to the University Graduate School "[Use of AI in Graduate Research, Theses, and Dissertations](#)" as well as any additional program requirements.
- Demonstrate professionalism in all interactions with the faculty and peers.
- Develop a realistic timeline for completing dissertation drafts and oral defense.

Assignments & Assessments

- Schedule regular meetings (at least bi-weekly) with the major professor throughout the semester.
- Discuss results of research and progress on drafts of chapters.
- Schedule meetings with the dissertation committee as needed.
- Provide drafts of chapters to be included in the dissertation, at least one chapter draft by the end of each semester.
- Prepare for the oral defense. Provide a draft slide deck of the oral defense by the end of the semester.

Grading

- **Grading for this course can be IP, U, P, or F.**
A grade of **IP (In Progress)** will be recorded until the dissertation is complete and the oral defense was completed successfully. A grade of IP indicates successful progress has been made during the semester towards completion of the dissertation.
- **The U (Unsatisfactory)** grade shall be given when progress towards completion of a dissertation does not meet the expectations of the faculty and/or committee for the semester as written in the Assignments/Assessments. The U grade does not interfere with the student's ability to continue working toward completion of their dissertation and allows the student to register for dissertation credits in the following semester.
- **The P (Passing)** grade cannot be given until the Dissertation or Thesis has been defended successfully. For successfully completed dissertations or thesis, all prior IP grades will convert to the final grade awarded, P (Passing).
- **The F (Failing)** grade is given when the dissertation and oral defense are considered unsuccessful. An F grade will impact the student's GPA and will result in a review by the major advisor and the Graduate Program Director of whether the student should remain

in the program.

Schedule of Topics

Chapter 1 Introduction of Dissertation
Chapter 2 Dissertation Topic 1
Chapter 3 Dissertation Topic 2
Chapter 4 Dissertation Topic 3
Chapter 5 Conclusion of Dissertation
References
Student Vita

Course Communication

Course communication will be conducted in both person and via email.
Dissertation defense will be held in person.

Policies & Resources

Before starting this course, please review the Policies & Resources Page in Canvas, which includes comprehensive information on various University and Course Level Policies such as:

- UGS "[Guidelines for the Use of AI in Graduate Research, Thesis, and Dissertations](#)
- University Policies
- Accessibility and Accommodations
- Online Etiquette
- Technical Requirements and Skills
- Computer & Digital Literacy Skills
- Course Technology Accessibility Statements and Privacy Policies
- Academic Integrity
- Copyright Statement
- Nondiscrimination Statement
- Panthers Care & Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)
- Fair Use Policy

Nondiscrimination Statement

The Office of Civil Rights Compliance and Accessibility (CRCA) is responsible for ensuring that FIU maintains a workplace and learning environment free from discrimination, where current and prospective faculty, staff, and students are treated equitably. If any student, employee, or applicant has a sincere and reasonable belief that they have been discriminated against or harassed based on age, color, disability, marital status, ethnic or national origin, race, religion, retaliation, sex, or any other protected category, they can report their concerns to the CRCA team through report.fiu.edu.