

Generative AI Guiding Principles

A framework for students and colleagues

These six principles apply to every member of the University community, including students, academic colleagues, professional services, and other technical colleagues. Each principle is stated in full below, accompanied by contextual notes explaining its effective use across various roles.

This document sets out the University's principles in accessible form; the AI Policy sets out the related legal and governance requirements, and the Student Guidance shows what these principles mean in practice for a student's studies.

The principles are intended to be a living framework. They will be reviewed at least annually, informed by evidence from practice and by ongoing input from students and colleagues, including through the training mentioned under Principle 5.

Glossary of Terms Used Throughout This Document

Genuine purpose or operational purpose

A genuine purpose is one where AI is helping you do something you couldn't do as well, or as efficiently, without it. This might include understanding a concept, checking your reasoning or drafting a first pass you'll then rework. It is not a genuine purpose to use AI simply to avoid doing the thinking yourself. For example, asking AI to explain a concept you're stuck on is a genuine purpose; asking it to write the work you then submit is not.

Substantive

AI involvement is substantive when it shapes the content, structure, or conclusions of what you're submitting or presenting. For example, generating text you then use largely as it was written by an AI, producing an argument or analysis you adopt, or creating an image or design element that appears in a final piece of work. It is not substantive when AI played a minor, mechanical role, such as checking spelling and grammar on text you wrote yourself.

Critical engagement

Evaluating what an AI tool produces, rather than accepting it at face value. Checking it's accurate, relevant, and fits the purpose, and being able to explain or defend it as if it were entirely your own reasoning. The key test is - could you explain, justify, and stand behind this output yourself?

The Six Principles

1. **Use AI Responsibly and Critically.** AI should be used where it serves a genuine educational, professional, or operational purpose, not to avoid demonstrating your own learning, judgement, or expertise. Its use should always involve critical engagement, including understanding what the tool is doing, why you are using it, and its limitations.
2. **Be Honest and Transparent About AI Use.** All members of the University community should be open about when and how AI has contributed to their work, teaching, or decisions, including what was used and how. Concealing substantive AI involvement in the development of an output constitutes misrepresentation.
3. **Remain Responsible for Your Work and Your Judgements.** AI does not take responsibility. Whatever AI contributes to a piece of work, a decision, or a teaching activity, the human who uses it remains fully accountable for the outcome. AI output must always be

critically evaluated, not simply accepted.

4. **Act with Fairness and Consider Wider Impact.** AI use should not create unfair conditions, including those arising from unequal access to paid and free AI tools and from differing levels of confidence and experience among students and colleagues. The University and its community should also consider the broader social, economic, environmental, data privacy, and intellectual property impacts of their AI choices. The university will keep the baseline access it provides under review.
5. **Support Institutional Learning and Adaptability.** The University's approach to AI should be subject to regular, at least annual review, informed by evidence from practice, and open to revision. This applies to guidance and support for all colleagues, including academic, professional services, and other technical colleagues, as well as students. Everyone should have meaningful input into the evolution of policy and guidance, including through structured training and development.
6. **Protect and Develop Human Capabilities, Including Creative and Intellectual Originality.** AI use in education should not erode the skills, knowledge, and capabilities that higher education exists to cultivate. This includes critical and analytical thinking, creative and original thought, the ability to evaluate evidence and argument, and the confidence to keep developing throughout a career. In some disciplines, the act of making, interpreting, or arguing is itself the major capability being developed; in those contexts, the question of what AI displaces requires particular care.

What Each Principle Means in Practice for Different Stakeholders

The notes below set out how each principle applies from different perspectives. They are guidance, not exhaustive rules. Where your discipline or role raises a question not covered here, raise it within your school or department in the first instance so that the guidance itself can improve.

Principle 1 - Use AI Responsibly and Critically

For Students

Before using an AI tool, ask yourself what it adds to your work and your learning. Using AI to generate an answer you could work out yourself may undermine your development. Using it to explore ideas, get feedback on a draft, or deepen understanding of a concept can be genuinely valuable. The question is not whether you used AI, but whether you used it thoughtfully, in ways that deepened your grasp, and whether you can take ownership, accountability, and responsibility for the final output(s) derived from your work with AI. The reference to 'Operational purpose' within Principle 1 does not extend to using AI simply to complete an assessment more easily or to avoid demonstrating your own learning. That is not a purpose this principle protects. For example, asking AI to explain a concept you're stuck on is a genuine purpose, but asking it to draft an essay which you then submit as your own work is not.)

For colleagues involved with learning, teaching and assessment

When integrating AI into teaching or assessment design, consider whether its use develops students' capabilities or substitutes for them. There may be contexts, particularly in early learning or skills development, where AI use is less appropriate, and others where embedding it is essential to prepare students for professional practice. Your role is to make that judgement explicit at the point of designing the task, not to leave students to determine it for themselves. Wherever possible, this should be done at the course team level rather than by individuals in isolation. A shared approach to AI across a course will assist students more effectively than potentially very different decisions taken module by module.

For colleagues involved with service provision, administration and management

This applies just as much to operational and administrative uses of AI, including triaging enquiries, drafting standard communications, or supporting system troubleshooting, as it does to teaching or assessment. Use AI only when it has a clear, genuine purpose, and understand what the tool is doing and its limitations, particularly when its output feeds into decisions that directly affect students or colleagues.

Principle 2 - Be Honest and Transparent About AI Use

For Students

If you have used an AI tool in a way that contributed substantially to your assessed work, e.g. drafting, structuring, generating ideas, checking your arguments, you must declare this in the way set out in the [University's Guidance on the use of Generative AI for students](#), describing what you used, how, and why, rather than a simple yes/no answer. Failing to declare it as required constitutes academic misconduct. Using AI in permitted ways and declaring that use honestly will not, in itself, result in a lower mark. You will be assessed on the quality of your work, not on the fact that you used AI. If the assessment brief says AI use is not permitted, do not use it. AI-generated search engine summaries you happen to see do not require a declaration.

For colleagues involved with learning, teaching and assessment

Be clear with students, at the point of each assessment, about whether AI use is permitted, restricted, or prohibited, and why. If you use AI to support your own teaching, e.g. for generating materials, providing draft feedback, summarising student work, then be open about that use with your students. You should also be open with the institution about how AI is shaping your practice, so that policy and support can develop in response to real experience.

Do not enter confidential student, HR, or commercially sensitive information into any AI tool not approved by the University

For colleagues involved with service provision, administration and management

If AI has shaped advice, a decision, or a communication you've given to a student or colleague, for example, a drafted response, a recommended action, or a process outcome, be open about that. This matters most where AI has meaningfully shaped the substance of what you're presenting, not for routine productivity use, such as AI tidying the grammar or tone of a message you wrote yourself. Concealing AI's role in something you've presented as your own advice or judgement is a form of misrepresentation, whatever your role.

Where AI is involved in handling confidential student, staff, or commercially sensitive information, follow the University's data protection requirements as set out in the [AI Policy](#). Do not enter such information into any AI tool that has not been approved for that purpose.

Principle 3 - Remain Responsible for Your Work and Your Judgements

For Students

Submitting AI-generated content as your own work, without critical engagement or disclosure, is academic misconduct. More broadly, if you rely on AI output without checking it, you risk submitting work that is factually wrong, poorly reasoned, or unsuitable for your context. Your name goes on the work; the responsibility is yours.

For colleagues involved with learning, teaching and assessment

If you use AI to support aspects of marking, such as the refinement of feedback, the preparation of teaching materials, or administrative judgements, you remain responsible for the work you do and the judgements you make. AI can support your thinking but cannot replace your professional expertise. This applies especially in areas involving student well-being, academic misconduct, or

significant academic decisions. With respect to key academic decisions in assessment, whilst AI can help generate feedback, it must **not** be used to mark student work. Any final mark must be yours and defensible by you.

For colleagues involved with service provision, administration and management

Where AI supports an operational or administrative decision, e.g. flagging a case for review, drafting a response, or informing a recommendation, responsibility for the outcome sits with the person making or acting on it, not the tool. This matters most in decisions touching a student's or colleague's standing, well-being, or rights.

Principle 4 - Act with Fairness and Consider Wider Impact

For Students

Access to AI tools is not equal, and paid tools are often materially more capable than free ones. In addition, confidence and experience vary widely. If you have significantly better access to AI tools or greater experience using them than your peers, be aware that this may create unfair conditions in collaborative or competitive contexts. The University provides all students with access to some AI tools. The set of tools provided will be kept under review, and the university will listen to student feedback on this baseline provision. AI use also has a broader environmental cost as each query draws on significant computing power, energy, and water. This is a legitimate factor to weigh when deciding whether AI genuinely adds value to a task, alongside the 'genuine purpose' test in Principle 1, rather than defaulting to it.

For colleagues involved with learning, teaching and assessment

Assumptions about uniform student access to AI tools, or uniform confidence in using them, are likely to be wrong. Assessment development and support provision should account for this variation, including the practical reality that some students will have access to more capable, paid tools than others. At an institutional level, procurement decisions about AI tools do weigh environmental, social, data privacy, and intellectual property impacts, including suppliers' labour practices, data handling, and environmental commitments, alongside cost and functionality. Commitments made by suppliers should be proportionate to their scale and genuinely verifiable, not simply aspirational statements.

For colleagues involved with service provision, administration and management

You're often best placed to see where AI creates unequal outcomes in practice, including uneven access, or systems that work less well for some users than others. Some of you may also frequently hold real influence over which AI tools the University procures and provides. Flagging fairness or access concerns you observe, and factoring equity into system and tool choices, are direct ways to put this principle into practice. If you have such a concern, email genai@westminster.ac.uk in the first instance.

When assessing a new AI tool or use case, the risk classification set out in the AI Policy provides the relevant framework for determining the level of scrutiny required.

Principle 5 - Support Institutional Learning and Adaptability

For Students

Your experience of how AI guidance works in practice, including what is clear, what is confusing, what seems fair, and what does not, is valuable. The institution will create opportunities for you to share that experience and will take it seriously.

For colleagues involved with learning, teaching and assessment

Individual and collective experience of implementing AI guidance in specific disciplines and assessment contexts is essential evidence for institutional review. Share what is working and what is not. Where guidance feels impractical or generates unintended consequences, say so; the institution cannot develop good policy and guidance without hearing from those closest to practice. The University will establish regular forums for colleagues to share their experience of using AI within their disciplines, and will provide structured training, including as part of CPD, to support colleagues in implementing this guidance.

For colleagues involved with service provision, administration and management

This framework applies to you as much as to academic colleagues and students, and your expertise is central to making it work in practice, from keeping software and infrastructure current to supporting staff and students in using AI tools well to identifying access and fairness issues. The University will name a clear point of contact for AI-related technical and infrastructure support in each school/department and will include professional services and technical colleagues directly in the regular review of this guidance, rather than treating guidance as something developed for you rather than with you.

Principle 6 - Protect and Develop Human Capabilities, Including Creative and Intellectual Originality

For Students

Higher education is designed to develop capabilities that will serve you over a lifetime. If AI does your thinking, making, or arguing for you, you are not developing those capabilities, and in many cases, you will also be misrepresenting what the work is. The question to ask yourself is not just “did I use AI?” but “what did I contribute, and what did I learn?”

In disciplines where your voice, interpretation, creative vision, or line of argument is the substance of the work, for example, in the creative arts, media, communication, architecture, humanities, and social sciences, this question carries particular weight. An AI-generated poem, essay, or architectural concept is not exclusively your creative or intellectual work, even if you prompted it, selected it, or edited it. Using AI to explore possibilities, generate starting points, or get feedback on your own ideas can be entirely legitimate; using it to generate the substance of what you then submit as your own thinking is not. Your course and assessment briefs should make clear where that line falls in your specific context, and you should ask if it is not clear.

For colleagues involved with learning, teaching and assessment

The assessment design should ask whether the AI assistance you allow still requires students to demonstrate the capabilities your course is intended to develop. This question will take on different nuances depending on the discipline. This is not a case for penalising students who have already developed real skill and judgement in using AI well. That skill can itself be a legitimate capability worth recognising. The distinction that matters is whether a student can demonstrate their own thinking and judgement, not whether they used AI fluently to get there.

In creative, media and studio-based disciplines, and in areas that make innovative use of technology for assessment, the process of ‘making’ is often inseparable from the learning. Sketching, drafting, iterating, and making decisions through the act of making are beyond just a means to a final product; they are what develop creative capability and professional judgement. Questions about AI, such as who created something, whether it has been manipulated, and what producers owe their audiences are at the heart of the curriculum in many of these subject areas. Where AI is permitted or encouraged, consider whether it is being used to support or to replace that process, and whether assessment can capture evidence of the student's own creative thinking and judgement alongside, or instead of, the finished output.

In the humanities and social sciences, the intellectual contribution of a student's own reading, interpretation, synthesis, and argument is central to what you are assessing. AI can produce fluent,

plausible-sounding text which may be difficult to distinguish from original work. Consider how assessment design can make the student's own thinking more visible through process artefacts, oral examinations, reflective commentary, writing-tracking tools, or tasks that require engagement with specific materials, rather than trying to recognise AI-generated text after the fact. The intention is not to exclude AI from these disciplines, but to ensure it is used deliberately and transparently, aligned with the work's purpose.

Across all disciplines, where there is genuine uncertainty about where to draw the line, make that uncertainty explicit to students rather than leaving them to guess. A short discussion at the start of a project, covering what AI can legitimately help with in this context and where the student's own contribution should be visible, is more useful than any policy document.

For colleagues involved with service provision, administration and management

AI use ought not come at the cost of the skills and judgement people rely on you for. Learning Advisers, library staff, and others who directly support students' skills development share responsibility for ensuring that AI supports rather than substitutes for a student's growing capability in research, writing, or technical problem-solving, for example. The same principle applies to your own expertise. Where AI supports diagnostic, financial, or advisory work, guard against letting routine reliance on it erode the judgement that makes your role valuable in the first place.

Review Cycle

These principles and the guidance beneath them will be formally reviewed at least once a year, with lighter interim check-ins as needed. The method for gathering input, surveys, forums, or other means, will itself be co-designed with students and colleagues rather than fixed in advance.