Artificial Intelligence Policy

Context:

The University Strategy 2030 highlights the University of Edinburgh's commitment to value creativity, curiosity and to pursue knowledge. As one of the first universities to teach and research the field of Artificial Intelligence (AI), it remains our ambition to be a global leader in AI with integrity. This includes making use of new AI technologies where they can benefit our research, teaching, and wider business operations.

Generative AI (also called GenAI) is a new technology that can be used by anyone to generate text, imagery and other types of data for a very broad range of purposes. GenAI systems are able to perform an impressive range of tasks that can be useful at the University and IASH, but they also introduce several new risks that need to be considered. This policy assists applicants and Fellows in the use of GenAI in responsible, safe, and ethical ways while maximising opportunities to create benefits for researchers. Please note, guidance on acceptable uses of GenAI does not preclude the use of AI tools where they are being used in the context of a reasonable adjustment.

Applicant and Fellow responsibilities:

IASH recognises the value of GenAI and its potential to help applicants in the process of creating a Fellowship proposal. The Institute welcomes developments in this area to enhance opportunities for, among others, brainstorming ideas through prompts; obtaining background information or proofreading; structuring and editing draft documents; getting explanations of difficult ideas, questions and concepts; self-tutoring through conversation with the GenAI tool; organising and summarising your work notes; summarising a text, article or book (check first that the copyright owner permits use of GenAI for this purpose); helping to improve your grammar, spelling, and writing; translation of texts from or into other languages; overcoming writer's block through dialogue with the GenAI tool; help with structuring, writing, and de-bugging code; planning and organising your work schedule.

While these opportunities can be transformative, they are unable to replicate human creative and critical thinking. Our policy on the use of AI technology has therefore been developed to help applicants to make good judgements about the ethical use of such technology. In using GenAI tools for their work, applicants to IASH, and our Fellows, are asked to adhere to the following guiding principles:

Verification. Applicants and Fellows are advised to verify the correctness of the generated output, paying attention to original sources of evidence when using GenAI tools, as these tools currently give no guarantees about the accuracy of their outputs.

Transparency. Applicants and Fellows should ensure they are transparent with readers, the general public, funders and colleagues about their use of GenAI, and follow the requirements set out by IASH and other relevant organisations in this regard.

Respect for intellectual property (IP), confidential information and personal data. Applicants and Fellows must respect copyrighted material and confidential information (including unprotected IP) and not import it into GenAI tools unless they have the right to use the material for that purpose, and otherwise comply with all copyright rules and license terms for any materials uploaded. If the output is considered to have infringed the intellectual property of a third party, this may result in a claim for infringement of copyright. Legal responsibility for copyright infringement is likely to lie with the user, not the GenAI tool. Once at IASH, Fellows are encouraged to use the University's secure AI

platform, ELM, as this retains data within the University. Applicants and Fellows should avoid uploading personal data (theirs or anyone else's) to a GenAI platform, unless using ELM and complying in all respects with the University's Data Protection Policy and the University Computing Acceptable Use Policy. Beyond copyright and IP issues, there are risks around how GenAI might be exploiting the work of scholars without appropriate compensation, and risks around how future systems may present and profile their work.

Understand and Explore. The University encourages academic visitors such as IASH Fellows to understand AI and to explore where it can benefit their research. It is important to be familiar with new technologies to improve our understanding of them and to leverage their capabilities for our work and personal lives.

Responsibility. Take responsibility for your use of GenAI and exercise professional judgement in assessing and mitigating any risks that may arise from its use. GenAI systems also consume a massive amount of computing power to train and employ at scale, as well as significant impacts on other environmental resources. The environmental costs and sustainability of GenAI use must be considered alongside their benefits.

When to disclose Gen AI usage:

We recognise that GenAI assisted writing has become more common as the technology becomes more accessible. GenAI tools that make suggestions to improve or enhance your own work, such as tools to improve language, grammar or structure, are considered assistive AI tools and do not require disclosure by applicants. However, applicants are responsible for ensuring their submission is accurate and meets the standards for rigorous scholarship.

The use of GenAI tools that can produce content such as generating references, text, images or any other form of content must be disclosed when used by applicants. Applicants should cite original sources, rather than GenAI tools as primary sources within the references. If your submission was primarily or partially generated using GenAI, this must be disclosed upon submission so the selection panel can evaluate the content generated.

Applicants are required to:

- Clearly indicate the use of language models in the proposal, including details of the tool, the version used and the date when the output was created, as systems may undergo ongoing modifications by their owners. It is advisable to keep a record of interactions with the tool separately in case a full trail of provenance is required (you do not need to send this to IASH unless specifically requested). Applicants should always be able to explain and justify the ways in which they have used GenAI tools in their work.
- Verify the accuracy, validity, and appropriateness of the content and any citations generated by language models and correct any errors, biases or inconsistencies. Large numbers of fabricated citations have been found in several recent IASH applications, leading to rejection of the whole proposal.
- Be conscious of the potential for plagiarism where the LLM may have reproduced substantial text from other sources. Check the original sources to be sure you are not plagiarising someone else's work.

- Be conscious of the potential for fabrication where the LLM may have generated false content, including getting facts wrong, or generating citations that don't exist. Ensure you have verified all claims in your proposal prior to submission.

While applications will not be rejected because of the disclosed use of GenAI, if the Director becomes aware that GenAI was inappropriately used in the preparation of an application without disclosure, the Director reserves the right to reject the application at any time during the selection process, up to and including appointment as a Fellow. Inappropriate use of Generative AI includes the generation of incorrect text or content, plagiarism or inappropriate attribution to prior sources.

Assessor responsibilities

Our expert assessors are selected for their expertise and experience in their field. We seek their knowledge and judgement of an application in relation to the assessment criteria, and value their unique perspectives. To that end, GenAI must not be used in peer review, in line with UKRI guidance. The release of confidential material into GenAI tools constitutes a breach of confidentiality and integrity.

IASH assessors, including shortlisting partners and panellists, must:

- Not use GenAI tools as part of their assessment activities.
- Comply with relevant intellectual property and data protection legislation.

Professor Lesley McAra

October 2025