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University of Padova Policy Guidelines for the Responsible Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence in Teaching and Research

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Introduction

Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) technology is reshaping the fields of academic teaching and scientific research, offering fresh opportunities to enhance educational experience and build new tools that expand the boundaries of science. However, with this potential come serious risks and issues that mean GenAI needs to be used carefully and responsibly, as its output may be inaccurate, distorted, unverified and/or unverifiable. Consequently, its usage must always comply with current legislation on privacy, intellectual property, copyright and academic integrity.

The University of Padova intends both to foster the responsible adoption of GenAI tools so that they contribute to enhancing the effectiveness of teaching and scientific innovation, and to safeguard the quality of its teaching, the value of original intellectual work, and the reliability of scientific output.

Objectives

These guidelines are designed to govern the University of Padova's use of GenAI for teaching, learning and research in a bid to foster a culture of transparency, responsibility and integrity.

The objective is to provide the University's academic community with a framework so that GenAI can be conscientiously integrated into its teaching and research. Simultaneously, the University will be disseminating practices that abide by its institutional values and the principles of academic freedom and responsibility.

Subsequently, it will publish more comprehensive bespoke guidelines—drawn up by the University Teaching Committee and University Scientific Committee—on how GenAI should be used for teaching, writing dissertations and theses, and conducting research.

Target audience

These policy guidelines are targeted at all members of the University's academic community involved in education, training and research, including students, lecturers, teaching assistants, research and technical-support staff. They do not cover administrative procedures, which will be governed by a separate set of bespoke regulations.

Principles

GenAI tools are to be considered as enablers of the critical and creative skills employed in learning processes and scientific production, not as their replacement. They can be used to support free autonomous thought, as well as to facilitate the original processing of content, both in educational and research settings.

Every member of the University's academic community is responsible for ensuring that GenAI tools are employed under the principles of transparency and fairness in compliance with the current regulations governing each individual situation. All output must be critically assessed to ensure that it is reliable and appropriate in the related academic and scientific setting.

Special care should be taken to protect personal data and confidential information, which must not be entered into GenAI tools unless the University provides its explicit authorisation. It is also essential to ensure observance of intellectual-property and copyright laws, which prohibit a range of actions, including the reproduction, distribution, communication to the public, transformation and unauthorised use, either wholly or partly, of protected works, such as intellectual property, patents, trademarks and industrial designs.

GenAI-created content must not undermine the scientific and methodological quality of results, nor replace an author's critical and creative responsibility. Within the field of research, use of GenAI must align with the principles of scientific integrity and internationally recognised good practice.

Use of GenAI

GenAI can be used for teaching and research in a variety of ways. It can make a major contribution to producing the results of individual or group work, e.g. dissertations, theses, assignments and research products. Alternatively, it can be confined to a supporting role, e.g. for correcting language, enhancing writing style, gathering initial sources or general information. In all of these cases, a conscientious, responsible approach is required if distortions or undue appropriation are to be avoided.

Any GenAI usage must always be clearly acknowledged, regardless of how much it impacts the content of a paper or research, with tools and methods being referenced in order to ensure transparency and traceability.

In any setting, GenAI must be used solely to leverage the critical and creative skills of students and researchers, and not to replace human contribution. GenAI-created content must be thoroughly assessed and used within the scope of the related academic activity and principles of scientific quality.

Any usage of GenAI that impacts learning or assessment processes, even when minor, must be declared and, when required, authorised by academic staff. GenAI may not be used to generate content that will be assessed or included as part of a thesis, unless it is acknowledged and authorised by academic staff.

The University's responsibility

The University of Padova is committed to promoting the conscientious and ethical use of GenAI in its teaching and research.

The University provides tools that comply with current legislation, ensures data security, organises training for students, academic staff and researchers, and encourages the dissemination of good practices. Its guidelines will be updated from time-to-time to keep up with developments in technology and legislation. The University also advocates the introduction of teaching activities and final assessments that are 'AI-proof', i.e. designed so that they cannot simply be

delegated to a chatbot. To achieve this, it provides academic staff with support in designing courses and assessments that combine a range of interaction methods, e.g. progressive tests with intermediate stages, supervised discussions, oral explanations and interconnected assignments.

The University is committed to ensuring that GenAI usage for learning and research does not entail any additional financial burden for students, thus promoting its inclusive, fair and sustainable use.

Finally, it encourages a critical, unwavering review of GenAI usage and fosters discussion within the academic community, all while monitoring new practices and their potential impact on the University's scientific and educational life.

Individual responsibilities

Teaching

Academic staff are responsible for clearly stating in their syllabi and at the start of each course how students may and may not use GenAI for learning and assessments. Academic staff are always responsible for thoroughly reviewing student work and ensuring that their final evaluations reflect whether said work is the result of critical human thinking. Monitoring AI usage, however, is not their only task, as they must also take a proactive role in designing innovative teaching activities and assessments. This involves rethinking examinations so that they test not only the ability to provide answers, but also the thought process and reasoning behind them.

Students have a duty to use GenAI ethically and transparently. They must observe the instructions provided by academic staff and these policy guidelines, reviewing GenAI output critically and acknowledging its use. GenAI must not be used to generate work for assessments, dissertations or theses without explicit acknowledgement and authorisation from a member of academic staff. GenAI can be employed in a number of ways: instrumental (correcting language, rephrasing), cognitive (brainstorming, organising information), and productive (generating texts, code or images). All usage, at any level, that impacts a learning process or finished work must always be disclosed. Methods and restrictions will be set by lecturers and then adapted to align with future guidelines.

Research

University of Padova researchers are responsible for ensuring that their work aligns with the principles of scientific integrity. GenAI usage must therefore be clearly acknowledged in research products and publications, in accordance with best editorial practices and the policies of publishers, funding bodies and evaluation boards. Further details will be issued in specific guidelines to ensure consistency across fields and with international editorial policies.

Under no circumstances may GenAI be considered the author or co-author of scientific publications. Authors—and authors alone—are responsible for the accuracy, originality and methodological quality of their research content.

Finally, the University states unequivocally that GenAI must not be used to evaluate academic papers, individuals, research projects or products, e.g. in peer reviews, as such processes require critical human judgement that cannot be delegated to a machine.

Conclusions

The University of Padova pledges to keep these and subsequent guidelines up-to-date. Future issues will continue to feature the operational methods for applying the general principles set out herein so that they benefit and benefit the principles of academic quality, integrity and responsibility that are the hallmarks of the University of Padova's educational and scientific mission.

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