

Charter for the Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence Systems in Academic Works at UMONS

Since 2022, generative artificial intelligence (AI) systems (such as ChatGPT), capable of simulating certain aspects of human intelligence, have been made widely available to the general public. All sectors of society are questioning the potential of generative AI systems and their grey areas. The University of Mons is equally engaged in reflection on this topic.

This charter outlines a set of principles intended to guide students and teachers in the pedagogical and responsible use of AI within our institution. It aims to promote a use of AI that is not only beneficial for learning and research, but also in line with the ethical principles and academic values of our university.

The present Charter for the Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence Systems in Academic Works at UMONS aims to establish a clear distinction between practices that are authorised and those that are not in the academic context, encompassing courses, assignments, examinations, reports and other forms of production relating to learning. This charter, which reflects current technological developments and the new practices associated with them, is likely to be developed, adjusted and enriched by the contributions of all concerned.

Pedagogical Use of AI

AI is potentially integrated into UMONS training programmes to support pedagogical objectives, encouraging the development of critical thinking, improved analytical skills and creativity. AI training aims to prepare our students for the challenges and opportunities of the future job market, providing them with the skills needed to navigate an environment that embraces advanced technologies. UMONS encourages reasoned collaborative initiatives between students and AI, seeing AI as a collaborative learning and creative tool, enriching the educational experience.

Responsible Use of AI

Students are fully responsible for the academic assignments they submit, even when AI has been used in some capacity. It is essential to distinguish between authorised and unauthorised uses of AI in academia, and these will be outlined below.

Authorised uses

Apart from different instructions given by the teacher and the prohibited uses described below, the use of AI is authorised in assignments freely and without specific mention when it plays the role of an assistant:

- Linguistic: AI can be used as a linguistic assistance tool, offering support in formulating, formatting, translating, etc., texts that have already been written, in the same way as existing writing and translation assistance tools and other spelling and grammar checkers.
- Information retrieval: AI can also be used as an aid to information retrieval, similar to search engines, by facilitating access to specific knowledge.

Unauthorised Use

It is forbidden to present AI-generated content (text, images, code, music, etc.) as its own creation, since:

- This is a case of undue appropriation of other people's ideas, or, at the very least, a lack of knowledge of the sources that contributed to the result obtained. Indeed, when AI produces “original” content, it draws on pre-existing resources, the authors of which must be identified and cited. It is imperative to acknowledge any external contribution in an academic work by providing the bibliographic references of the original sources.
- A production that is an integral part of a training programme is delegated to the AI, which amounts to depriving oneself of a learning opportunity.
- There is an inability for teachers to accurately assess the knowledge and skills acquired in the assignment submitted. The use of AI to paraphrase the content of others is seen as a form of plagiarism. It makes it difficult to identify the personal contribution and is therefore a form of concealment.

Students who intend to use AI systems to carry out all or part of their academic assignments are liable to the sanctions outlined in the UMONS General Study Regulations and the Assessment Panel Policy and Examination Regulations (Annexe 0 to the General Study Regulations). Teachers can use AI detection tools to identify violations of academic integrity. They can ask students to explain how certain sections of particular works came about, initiate additional checks or organise oral examinations. If a student has any doubts about the appropriate use of AI in an academic work, it is strongly recommended that the teacher be consulted.

While the indiscriminate use of AI systems can compromise learning, their judicious use can enrich it. It is therefore beneficial that, during their university studies, students learn to use these advanced technologies, respecting the principles set out above, as well as the specific guidelines of their teachers. Nevertheless, it is expected that the students' work will be distinguished by a quality of argumentation, justification, precision and critical analysis superior to that of AI productions.

Critical use of AI

The outputs of AI appear plausible but may differ from the original sources, sometimes incorporating significant errors of fact or interpretation. In addition, the training data for various generative AI tools is sometimes old (prior to 2021) and built on the basis of dominant opinions expressed on the internet, so it is likely to favour opinions and stereotypes. Furthermore, the language of the majority of training data for these AI tools is English, which constitutes a major bias, with responses potentially reflecting a single culture and world view. It is therefore essential for users, as guarantors of the quality of the information, ideas and analyses in their work, to exercise rigorous control, verify the information, and enrich and apply critical analysis to the AI output, as an academic would with any source consulted. Furthermore, insofar as AI processes available data without necessarily checking its accuracy, its output may reflect stereotypes and biases. The use of generative AI should always be accompanied by an independent analysis phase.

Transparent use of AI

For any work submitted, the teacher must be able to identify the student's contribution. The student must therefore be able to account for this in a transparent manner. When a piece of work incorporates elements generated by AI (texts, images, codes, etc.), these must be duly cited in accordance with the appropriate bibliographic standards. In addition to explicitly citing the AI, the teacher may request a more detailed explanation of the use of the AI, through a dedicated “Method” section, an annexe, or a supplementary document, explaining how and why it was used. It is advisable to keep evidence of this interaction with AI. If there is any doubt as to the extent of this duty of transparency, it is advisable to contact the teacher responsible for the course concerned, the dissertation/thesis supervisor, etc.

Sources

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