UMONS
Université de Mons

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

Since 2022, generative artificial intelligence (AI) systems, capable of simulating certain aspects of human intelligence by producing different types of content, 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 (inspired by the ULiège Charter for the use of generative artificial intelligence in academic works) 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 in line with the ethical principles and academic values of our university and which takes advantage of these new tools for learning and research.

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.

It also advocates the educational use of AI, which 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.

As a reflection of current technological developments and the new practices associated with them, this charter is likely to be developed, adjusted and enriched by the contributions of all concerned. It is also contextualised by the measures adopted by the Faculties and by teachers' own recommendations.

Responsible Use of AI

All authors, teachers, students and researchers are responsible for the academic content they submit or distribute, including any use of AI systems. It is essential to distinguish between authorised and unauthorised uses of AI in academia, and these will be outlined below.

Authorised Uses

Apart from the provisions of the Faculties, specific instructions from teachers and the prohibited uses described below, artificial intelligence may be used freely and without special mention in assignments when it plays the instrumental role of an assistant and does not produce the work that was the subject of the exercise and/or assessment.

- Linguistic assistance: as a linguistic assistance tool, AI can offer 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 information retrieval tool, similar to search engines, by facilitating access to specific knowledge.

Regardless of these uses, it is quite clear that AI products must be treated and used with the utmost caution and a critical mind, and that all authors remain responsible for the content they propose.

Apart from the provisions of the Faculties, specific instructions from teachers and the prohibited uses described below, any other use of AI-generated content (text, images, code, music, etc.) is authorised for assignments, provided that the elements produced by the AI are clearly explained.

Unauthorised Use

It is forbidden to present AI-generated content (text, images, code, music, etc.) as the user's own creation in the following circumstances:

- When the user wrongfully steals the ideas of others or, at the very least, fails to recognise the sources that contributed to the result obtained. Indeed, when AI produces "original" content, it produces a statically coherent set of words, with no guarantee of reliability, and generally no indication of authorship. It is imperative to acknowledge any external contribution in an academic work by providing the bibliographic references of the original sources.

- When the user entrusts the AI with a task that is an integral part of a training programme, which amounts to foregoing a learning opportunity.

- When teachers are unable 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, as well as ask them to carry out 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.

Critical use of AI

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.

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 and built on the basis of documents of varying quality, mainly from the Internet which are 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 critically analyse 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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