

**St Mary’s Policy on Artificial Intelligence (AI)**

**1.Introduction**

The rise of artificial intelligence (AI) raises a number of important issues for universities like St Mary’s. Whilst recognising that opportunities to enhance learning and teaching may emerge from the use of these new technologies[[1]](#footnote-1), there are also concerns in the sector about the potential negative impacts of AI on the student learning, and the integrity of the University degree awards. However, whilst not overlooking the building of academic skills, we recognise the importance of adding AI tools to the portfolio of digital skills that will prepare our students for the world of work. The Policy ensures that there is greater clarity in terms of the University’s ‘position’ visa vie artificial intelligence, and how and when AI tools may be used. Section A of the Policy relates to students. Section B relates to staff.

**2.Key principles**

The principles that underpin this Policy are:

* There is no ‘ban’ on the use of AI tools at St Mary’s.
* The University embraces the opportunities that new AI tools bring with them to enhance student learning and will support students and staff to become AI-literate.
* The permissible use of AI tools is not subject to a ‘one size fits all’ rubric – instead, each programme team will agree and communicate a clear set of rules on the permissible use of AI tools for their students.
* Staff will be provided with training to support their students to use generative AI tools effectively and appropriately.
* The University will support is staff to adapt their teaching and assessment to incorporate the ethical use of generative AI and support equal access.
* The University will ensure academic rigour and integrity is upheld.
* The University will work collaboratively with its students and the SMSU to share best practice as the technology and its application in education evolves.

**3.What is AI?**

Most AI applications today are built on machine learning. AI tools commonly generate ‘outputs’ (e.g. code, text, images) in response to human ‘prompts’ or questions. Sometimes it can be difficult or impossible to easily tell the difference between a piece of text or an image produced by a human and one produced by AI. AI tools are programmed to provide a response based on relevance, whether or not it is based on accurate data. They do not engage with information the way humans do, and they do not operate according to moral or ethical principles. This means any ‘product’ they produce has to be treated with extreme caution.

**4.Who does this Policy apply to?**

The Policy applies to all staff engaged in teaching or supporting student learning, and to all students on taught undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes (i.e. Masters).

The Policy applies to activities relating to teaching and learning – that is to student learning and assessment, and the approaches taken by staff to the delivery of taught programmes within the University, including those taught in collaborative partners on ‘franchise’ programmes.

**5. Who does this Policy not apply to?**

The Policy does not apply to the following:

* Students studying on MRes, MPhil, EdD and PhD programmes. Use of AI tools by post-graduate research (PGR) students will be governed by a separate, bespoke Policy developed by the Director of Research.
* Students studying on short courses
* Students studying on non-accredited courses/modules – the Services/Faculties concerned may wish to consider whether to adapt/adopt this Policy for modules or this kind.
* Students studying on ‘validated’ UG or PG programmes in collaborative partners. These students are subject to the Policies of the collaborative partner. However, if the partner has no AI policy in place, they will be strongly encouraged to adapt or adapt ours.
* Staff engaged in the delivery of MRes, MPhil, EdD and PhD programmes. Use of AI tools will governed by a separate, bespoke Policy developed by the Director of Research.

**SECTION A: STUDENTS**

**6.Avoid use of AI tools to gain an unfair advantage**

AI tools should not be used to gain an unfair advantage. This would include for example:

* If you ‘cut-and-paste’ any AI generated text or other materials into an assessment without proper acknowledgement of referencing – this constitutes academic misconduct.
* If you hide something and aren't transparent about your approach – e.g. you haven’t been explicit in how you have used AI tools to inform an assessment, or have ‘pasted’ text from an AI tool into an assessment.
* If you have deviated from the rules on permissible use of AI tools communicated to you by the programme team in your programme and module Moodle sites.
* If you fail to clearly cite materials/evidence drawn from an AI tool. Information taken from ANY source or AI tools must be properly acknowledged in the form of properly configured references, foot notes, etc, irrespective of whether the information concerned relates to text, images, computer code, music, or ideas.

**7.Use AI tools ethically**

Ethical use of AI tools means ensuring that you use them in accordance with the strict rules and guidance set out by your programme team. Deviation from these rules set-out by your programme team could result in unethical use of AI which could result in you commiting an academic offence or infringing the [regulations on Academic Misconduct](https://www.stmarys.ac.uk/registry/policies/academic-misconduct.aspx) and may result in penalties set out in these regulations. Using generative AI tools to substantially complete an assignment or exam (e.g. by entering exam or assignment questions) is not permitted unless students are specifically empowered or tasked to do so by their Module Convenor(s). Students should always use AI tools in accordance with the rules or requirements set out by their Programmes or Module Convenors.

**8.Familiarise yourself with AI technology**

All student on taught programmes are encouraged to familiarise themselves with AI tools, and develop their insights into how they work, their potential and pitfalls, and how they might be applied and utilised constructively and ethically, and in accordance with the rules set-out by your programme team.

**9.Acknowledge use of AI tools explicitly**

Where the use of AI had been permitted, students should acknowledge the use of AI tools. Information on how to cite or reference AI tools will be provided in accompanying student Guidance on AI.

**10.Join in conversations about AI**

Students are encouraged to join in meaningful conversations with their peers and their lecturers about the practical and ethical considerations of emerging AI technologies. It is important to share ideas and insights as a community.

**11.Give your lecturers feedback on AI**

Students are encouraged to provide constructive feedback on how AI was discussed, used, or deployed in their modules as an aid to learning. Students are encouraged to offer suggestions, for example, about how AI tools might usefully inform new learning activities or types of assessment (for example), and are free to highlight these via Students Reps in Staff-Student Liaison Forums discussions and in their mid module and end of module evaluations.

**12.Avoid over-reliance on AI tools**

Students should use AI tools discriminately, prudently and ethically. Over-reliance on AI tools will reduce opportunities to develop autonomy as a learner, and to hone writing, critical thinking and evaluation skills. Students should, as a rule, seek to ‘critique outputs’ from AI tools, interrogate and question them, and make judgements about whether what they produce is actually credible – and also how they can be improved by prompts (e.g. ‘prompt engineering’[[2]](#footnote-2)) and applying their own subject knowledge.

**13.Permissable use of AI tools by students**

Permissible use of AI tools will be agreed by each programme team, so as to ensure (as far as is possible) a consistent set of rules that students can follow. If a specific module has to deviates from the programme team’s agreed rules, the rules that apply to said module must be clearly and explicitly communicated to students in both the programme and module Moodle sites.

**SECTION B: STAFF**

**14.Scope**

This Policy will apply to practice on all taught programmes from Level 3 UG, to Level 7 (Masters).

**15.Equality of opportunity**

Students will almost certainly need to be able to use AI tools in their future professional lives. Not understanding them or how they can be used ethically would place them at a disadvantage. For this reason all students on undergraduate and postgraduate taught programmes at SMU – irrespective of the subject or the Faculty in which they are located/based – should be given opportunities at the level of their programme to engage with AI tools in the same way as any other digital tools.

**16.Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) exemptions**

The requirements of PSRBs always take precedence. If a Programme team believe that the Policy contradicts the requirements of a PSRB, then the requirements of the PSRB must be met and will supersede the relevant provisions of this Policy.

**17.Flexibility**

The Policy does not seek or aim to impose a ‘one size fits all’ solution. Instead, each programme team is tasked with agreeing a set of ‘rules’ on the permissible use of AI for students on their programme. These rules should – as far as is possible – be consistent for all modules on the programme to avoid confusion.

**18.Can restrictions on the use of AI tools vary?**

Yes. Each programme team is tasked with agreeing a set of ‘rules’ on the permissible use of AI for students on their programme. This may include very specific restrictions on what AI tools students are permitted to use legitimately, and specific restrictions on how students use them.

**19.Specify conditions for the use of generative AI**

There are four options for specifying how AI can be used within a module (e.g. in relation to assessment):

1. Restrict *all use* of generative AI for an assessment task
2. Restrict*types* of  generative AI tools for assessment
3. Restrict *ways* of using generative AI tools for assessment
4. N*o restrictions on* *use* of generative AI for an assessment task

Restriction on the use of generative AI for a task should be based on educational reasoning, the nature of the task and its function in generating particular evidence of student learning. A programme team could, for example permit the use on one AI tool (e.g. ChatGPT) but only allow the students to use it for a very specific task – e.g. finding definitions or explanations of key technical terms used in the subject.

For further details on which Options programme leads may wish to adopt, see [Staff Guidance](https://www.stmarys.ac.uk/policies/docs/staff-guidance-on-ai-september-2023.pdf) on the Use of AI.

**20.Agreeing a team stance on the use of AI tools**

Each programme team must ensure that they have a shared and agreed understanding of the permissible use of AI tools at programme level.

**21.Communication of the team stance**

Programme Leads and Module Convenors must clearly communicate programme or module level rules/restrictions on the use of AI to students both in class sessions, their programme Handbooks, and in their Programme and Module VLE sites.

**22.Teaching**

Academic staff are expected to explore, both individually and within their programme teams, ways in which AI tools may inform or enable new pedagogical approaches, and add value to the student experience. Use of AI should not be tokenistic but, instead, should be aimed at ‘modelling’ the positive use of AI and providing students with specific examples of how AI may enhance our understanding of the subject, improve professional practice or work with service users etc.

Use of AI tools for teaching and supporting student learning should, of course, be consistent with guidance and requirements set out by relevant PSRBs.

**23.Assessment**

Academic staff are encouraged to explore, both individually and within their programme teams, ways in which AI tools may help to re-think or re-design assessments. Staff should take full advantage of the annual programme review and module update processes to introduce changes to assessments that enable AI to be more effectively embedded in assessment regimes where appropriate.

**24.The Role of Subject/Programme Leads**

Subject or Programme Leads are encouraged to support this Policy by:

* Familiarising themselves with AI tools and developing insights into how they work, how to make use of these tools and or derive value from them.
* Developing a clear ‘shared position’ within your programme team(s) on the use of AI by students. This helps to ensure consistent messaging to students.
* Specifying the conditions for the use of AI at the start of the programme during Welcome Week, and repeatedly if thereafter.
* Explaining to students the conditions/restrictions relating to AI tools may vary between modules and between assignments for good pedagogical reasons.
* Explaining to students how they should acknowledge the use of generative AI in their assessments – this should be reinforced by Module Convenors.
* Pointing students to further guidance on using AI – in particular the [Student Guidance on the use of AI](https://www.stmarys.ac.uk/policies/docs/student-guidance-on-ai-september-2023.pdf) provided for them by the University. This should be reinforced by Module Convenors.
* Ensuring that Module Convenors and other staff involved in marking student work on your programmes utilise only authorised AI detection tools (i.e. Turnitin) supported by the University.
* Supporting Module teams to consider how AI tools can be integrated appropriately into pedagogical approaches, and into assessment design.

**25.The Role of Module Convenors**

Module Convenors are expected to support this Policy by:

* Familiarising themselves with AI tools and developing their insights into how they work, how to make use of these tools or derive value from them.
* Specifying the conditions for the use of generative AI at the start of the teaching on their module.
* Placing the conditions/restrictions relating to AI tools in the assignment description (Assessment Briefs) on their module Moodle site.
* Clarifying whether students are required to reflect on how they have utilised AI tools in their assessment(s) (e.g. in a short reflective paragraph) at the end of assessments.
* Explaining to students how they should acknowledge the use of generative AI in their assessments.
* Pointing students to further guidance on using AI – in particular the [Student Guidance on the Use of AI Tools](https://www.stmarys.ac.uk/policies/docs/student-guidance-on-ai-september-2023.pdf) provided for them by the University.
* Utilising during marking the AI detection tools (i.e. Turnitin) that are supported by the University.
* Considering how AI tools can be integrated appropriately into their pedagogical approaches, and into their module assessments.

**26.The Role of Heads of Department**

Heads of Department are expected to maintain oversight over the use of AI in the delivery of programmes, and in the assessment of students, ensuring that at departmental level programmes are compliant with this Policy, or – where deviations from it exist – that there is a sound reason for such deviance.

**27.The Role of Faculty Deans**

Faculty Deans are expected to maintain oversight over the use of AI in the delivery of programmes, and in the assessment of students at Faculty level, ensuring that the Faculty is compliant with this Policy, or – where deviations from it exist – that there is a sound reason for such deviance.

**28.Head of Student Experience**

The Head of Student Experience will maintain a watching brief with regard to compliance with the Policy across the University, and will identity, promote and share examples of good practice in terms of the use of AI for teaching purposes (i.e. as a pedagogical tool) and within assessment. The Head of Student Experience will share examples of good practice via the AI Forum and by producing an annual report to ADC (and its successor committee) on the use of AI Tools in the delivery of taught programmes, and their impact on the student experience.

1. JISC, (2021, updated 2022) *Artificial Intelligence in Tertiary Education*. See: <https://beta.jisc.ac.uk/reports/artificial-intelligence-in-tertiary-education> Hereafter referred to as JISC, *AI in Tertiary Education….* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Prompt engineering is the skill of using increasingly sophisticated questions or ‘prompts’ to generate increasingly sophisticated or insightful responses from an AI tool. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)