Faculty of Philosophy Policy on GenAI usage

Introduction

This policy applies to work submitted for assessment in the Faculty of Philosophy, covering assessments offered for the Philosophy Tripos, the MPhil in Philosophy, and the PhD in Philosophy. "Assessment" covers both formative and summative assessment: that is, material submitted for supervision is considered to be "submitted for assessment". It supplements, but does not replace, the University's AI Policy Framework and the Faculty's policy on plagiarism. Breaches of this policy will be considered a form of academic misconduct and investigated accordingly.

This policy is maintained and updated by the Chair of Examiners and the MPhil Coordinator. The policy applies only to the *use* of AI-generated material; *mentioning* AI-generated material, e.g. for the purposes of philosophically analysing it, is generally permitted.

General Principles

There is a **blanket** prohibition against providing GenAI tools with material prepared by Faculty teaching staff: lecture slides, handouts, notes, etc. This is due to concerns around data protection, intellectual property, and copyright infringement.

The Faculty of Philosophy considers assistance from generative AI (GenAI) tools to be analogous to assistance from another person: a level of assistance that would be inappropriate if received from another person will also be inappropriate if received from GenAI.[1] As such, this policy distinguishes five categories into which the use of GenAI tools may be divided, and determines whether they are permitted or not on the basis of whether the analogous activity with another person would be permitted or prohibited. It then sorts the activities listed (and numbered) in the University's AI Policy Framework into one of these five categories.[2]

The mere fact that an activity is permitted does **not** mean that it is recommended. In most cases, students will learn best not by using GenAI tools, but instead by carrying out the task themselves. For further guidance, students should consult their Director of Studies.

[1] This principle has been drawn from the Department of History and Philosophy of Science's policy on AI usage; thanks to Dr Harriet Fagerberg for sharing that policy.
[2] Many thanks to Dr Claire Benn and Dr John Burden of the Leverhulme Centre for the Future of Intelligence for developing that list of activities.

Categories of GenAI tool usage

The five categories of usage employed in this policy are as follows:

Description	Analogous activity	Status
Using GenAI tools to support learning, but without retaining material retained beyond that session.	Conversation with another person.	Permitted, but risks should be borne in mind.
Use of GenAI tools to generate materials that are retained, but will not be submitted for assessment.	Receiving materials from another person.	Permitted, but risks should be borne in mind.
Use of GenAI tools to assist in preparing material that will be submitted for assessment.	Receiving assistance from another person in preparing material that will be submitted for assessment.	Permitted, but significant caution should be exercised. The assistance received should be described and acknowledged.
Use of GenAI tools to receive feedback or guidance on material that will be submitted for assessment.	Receiving feedback or guidance from another person on material that will be submitted for assessment.	Permitted, but significant caution should be exercised. The assistance received should be described and acknowledged.
Use of GenAI tools to generate material that will be submitted for assessment.	Submitting another person's work as your own.	Prohibited, and considered a form of academic misconduct.

The remainder of this document goes through each category and indicates how examples of activities involving GenAI might be expected to be distributed between the categories. This classification of examples is only indicative, and may vary depending on the details of the case. For example, the use of GenAI to generate worked solutions to mathematical problems would be permitted (though not necessarily recommended) for a student preparing for the exam in Part II Mathematical Logic, but would be prohibited if those solutions were to be used in Mathematical Logic extended essays.

Where a decision needs to be made as to what category a given use of GenAI falls into, the decision should be guided by whether that use undermines the Faculty's ability to assess whether the learning outcomes for the relevant course have been achieved. The learning outcomes for the Philosophy Tripos and the MPhil in Philosophy may be found in the programme specifications on the CamDATA website: https://www.camdata.admin.cam.ac.uk/programme-specification-archive.

Category 1: outputs not retained

The first category comprises the use of GenAI tools to support learning, but without generating material that is retained beyond the session. This is considered analogous to conversation with another person. These uses are generally permitted, although students should be mindful of the risks involved and use best practice to mitigate those risks. Examples of activities in this category might include:

Activity	**Description**	**Example**	**Risks**	**Best Practice**
1. Personal Reflection	Encourage structured reflection of learning, teaching, or research.	Seek reflective prompts, questions, or guidance and use them to inform personal development.	Use of GenAI may limit personal insight and might lose depth or become formulaic.	Maintain privacy when considering personal reflections and discuss regularly without AI assistance.
2. Time Management and Planning	Support the planning and organisation of assignments, deadlines and priorities.	Generate schedules, break down complex tasks, and prioritise tasks based on deadlines.	Schedules may not accurately reflect real-work constraints or suit what works best for you.	Treat suggestions as guides and apply your own workflow whilst regularly reassessing to ensure accuracy.
3. Topic Selection	Assist in identifying potential research or project topics.	Suggest relevant areas of focus based on brief descriptions or assignment briefs.	Topics may be too broad, irrelevant, or not aligned with your specific goals or learning outcomes.	Use suggested topics as inspiration and refine based on personal interests and task parameters. Refer to own literature reviews and expert input to better identify your approach.

Activity	Description	Example	Risks	Best Practice
4. Understanding Key Concepts	Explain key concepts in more appropriate language and further expand relationships between ideas.	Reinterpret reading materials to supplement learning and wider discussion with peers.	Potential breach of copyright restrictions. Generated explanations may over-simplify or be inaccurate. You may risk reducing engagement and more critical understanding of key materials.	Ensure that copyright conditions permit provision of material to GenAI tools. Always verify explanations against trusted sources and follow up with reflection or discussion with colleagues.
5. Literature and Information Location	Identify relevant sources or datasets based on a provided area of interest or topic.	Suggest searching strategies, link to useful online resources and help to streamline research processes.	Suggested sources may be incomplete, inaccurate, and of variable quality. You may overlook important material if the search is ineffective.	Use AI as a guide, not a substitute for thorough research. Verify the quality and credibility of the suggested sources.
6. Identifying Trends in Literature	Identify gaps in research, support further strategic planning, and help to further contextualise research.	Analyse collections of literature or research to highlight recurring themes and emerging areas of interest.	AI may overemphasise superficial trends or overlook more subtle patterns. There is high risk of misinterpretation.	Critically evaluate outputs against original sources and treat identified trends as indicative and not definitive.
7. Idea Generation	Provide suggestions, prompts, or examples to stimulate ideas for projects and research.	Propose research methodologies, areas of investigation, or new lines of inquiry.	There is a risk of reducing originality and critical engagement, and for AI to provide generic and unhelpful suggestions.	Treat the suggestions as inspiration, not finished outputs. Critique and combine outputs with personal ideas and those of peers and experts.

Activity	Description	Example	Risks	Best Practice
8. Idea Interrogation	Evaluate, challenge and refine ideas to develop stronger arguments and develop reasoning.	Generate questions that test your current understanding, highlight assumptions and suggest alternative perspectives.	Questions and feedback may be superficial or misleading, this could reduce personal skills in critical thinking and evaluation.	Consider the questions as prompts for further thinking, use them in discussions with peers, and verify broader perspectives with additional research.
9. Expanding Critical Thinking and Problem Solving	Support the analysis of complex problems and encourage the exploration of differing perspectives.	Suggest alternative approaches, common misunderstandings or assumptions, and challenge your reasoning.	Suggestions may oversimplify complex reasoning and introduce bias into your research.	Evaluate assumptions and reasoning critically, validate additional sources, and combine outputs with discussion and peers review to test ideas.

Category 2: outputs retained, but not submitted

The second category comprises the use of GenAI tools to generate material that is retained, but is not submitted for assessment. This is considered analogous to being provided with materials by another person. These uses are permitted, although students should be mindful of the risks involved and use best practice to mitigate those risks. If students use GenAI tools for these purposes, they are responsible for ensuring that no material generated for this purpose is submitted for assessment (whether inadvertently or not). Examples of activities in this category might include:

Activity	**Description**	**Example**	**Risks**	**Best Practice**
10. Content Design	Assist in planning, designing and creating materials (that will not be submitted for assessment).	Generate resources, handouts, activities, and research questions to support broader outcomes.	Outputs may not fully align with your intended outcomes, disciplinary standards or institutional policies.	Treat outputs as inspiration and not final design, check alignment with relevant standards and discuss with peers and consult with experts to validate.
16. Translating the Writing of Others	Translate content by others for understanding, review, or analysis.	Broadening research to consider perspectives from other languages and cultures.	Accuracy and context of original sources may be compromised and could lead to ethical concerns.	Verify translations or use trusted sources and maintain appropriate attribution and ethical use of translated content.
17. Summarising Notes and Reading Materials	Condense longs texts into concise summaries to engage with wider materials.	Summarising own lecture notes, highlighting key points, providing concise abstracts of reading lists.	Summaries may omit important information or misrepresent ideas. Over reliance can reduce engagement with the original source materials.	Use summaries as a starting point, not a replacement for engaging with the text yourself. Reflect on identified highlights and patterns to deepen understanding.

19. Mathematical Problems	Support understanding of complex processes, mathematical concepts, and check understanding.	Provide worked examples, solutions, or step-by-step guidance for mathematical tasks.	AI solutions may be incorrect, incomplete, or mislead through improper explanation or reasoning. AI often describes common methods despite not using them in its approach.	Verify solutions independently and with expert input, understand the reasoning behind AI generated results and use AI to support your own working, not replace it.

Category 3: assistance with preparing submitted materials

Third, there are uses of GenAI to assist with preparing materials that will be submitted for assessment, but only to a minor degree or in a manner that does not undermine the Faculty's ability to assess whether the relevant learning outcomes have been met. These uses are permitted, although caution is advised: you are responsible for ensuring that your use of GenAI tools does not stray into the prohibited category below. Students may find it more straightforward to simply avoid the use of GenAI in preparing assessed material, but if GenAI is used for these purposes, it should be described and acknowledged. Examples of activities in this category might include:

Activity	**Description**	**Example**	**Risks**	**Best Practice**
18. Data Analysis	Assist with organising, summarising and identifying patterns in qualitative and quantitative data.	Provide insights, highlight trends, suggest visualisations, and provide additional sources to validate or challenge findings.	Analyses may misinterpret data, overlook contexts, or produce biased results.	Always cross-check AI outputs with standard analytical methods and ensure the context and parameters or analysis are understood.
20. Code Generation	Support learning, prototyping and experimentation in a variety of programming languages.	Provide code snippets, templates, or suggestions for programming-based tasks.	Generated code may contain errors or not work within your context. It may contain security vulnerabilities or inefficient solutions.	Always test and debug generated code thoroughly, understand the logic of the code before use.
21. Interpret Images	Identify patterns, trends or key features within imagery, graphs and visual representations.	Analyse or describe visual data, highlight key information from graphs and charts and interpret visual imagery for meaning and context.	Interpretation may miss important details, misread data, lack wider context and nuance of the subject or research focus.	Verify all observations against the original data, combine AI insights with your own expertise and discuss with peers and seek expert input.

22. Image Generation	Create visual content such as diagrams, infographics, and conceptual images,	Generate visual materials for presentations, for embedding within essays or academic reports or to supplement case studies.	Images often contain inaccuracies, misleading representation, and many copyright issues.	Seek imagery from trusted open-source or royalty-free sources, ensure proper attribution where used, and only use AI for visual generation if meaningful to the task at hand.
26. Typesetting	Assist in formatting documents according to institutional or publication standards.	Arrange headings, figures, tables, and format references to meet required standards.	Automated formatting may not fully comply, misinterpret expectations and result in errors or altered content.	Avoid automated formatting and seek suggestions to improve or highlighted errors for review. Verify changes against trusted sources.

Category 4: feedback or guidance on submitted materials

Fourth, there are uses of GenAI tools to assist with preparing material for assessment, where the tool is used only to provide feedback or guidance that you will use to improve the material yourself. Again, these uses are permitted, but caution is advised: these uses may make it tempting to submit AI-generated material in place of your own work. Students may find it more straightforward to simply avoid such use of GenAI, but if GenAI is used for these purposes, it should be described and acknowledged. Examples of activities in this category might include:

Activity	Description	Example	Risks	Best Practice
24. Proofreading	Improve readability, highlight grammatical issues and suggest corrections.	Review written content for improvements on spelling, grammar, and punctuation.	Accepting changes without review or understanding may unintentionally alter meaning or context and reduce proficiency in effective writing.	Avoid accepting suggestions without first reviewing them and understanding the context in which they're suggested. Maintain awareness of style, tone, and disciplinary conventions.
25. Copy-Editing	Support the refinement of style, clarity and structure in written work.	Suggest rewording, sentence restructuring and improvements in flow based on desired outcomes.	AI may oversimplify complex ideas and there is high risk of losing authorial voice and nuance.	Evaluate and selectively apply suggestions and maintain alignment with disciplinary expectations.
27. Guidance on Citation and Referencing	Support adherence to academic standards by seeking advice on how to correctly reference sources.	Review existing citations and references for errors or inconsistencies and ask for advice on how to align with required standards.	Guidance may be outdated, incorrect or misinterpret style guides. Suggestions may not meet lesser-used standards and could affect your academic credibility.	Verify AI guidance against current style guides and standards, combine advice with personal understanding and seek advice from peers.

29. Guidance on Academic Writing	Help strengthen communications and academic presentation.	Offer advice on structure, clarity, argumentation and tone to improve academic writing.	Guidance may be generic, overlook disciplinary conventions, and relying solely on AI could reduce engagement with materials and limit skill development.	Critically evaluate suggestions to understand context and apply them appropriately. Use guidance to inform and enhance own writing skills and style, not replace.
30. Personalised Feedback	Provide targeted guidance for improvement and personal development.	Request feedback on drafts, completed activities, seek guidance on academic progress and suggest methods for improvement.	Feedback may be generic and lack subject nuance. Outputs will not appropriately relate to you, your experiences, and your course so will be less effective.	Consider AI feedback critically and as part of a whole rather than the sole source. Use AI feedback to inform reflection and discuss with peers and experts.

Category 5: outputs submitted for assessment

Finally, there are uses of GenAI to generate material that will be submitted for assessment. This is considered analogous to submitting another person's work as your own, and is **prohibited**. Examples of activities in this category might include:

Activity	**Description**	**Example**
11. Generating Examples or Case Studies	Provide illustrative examples or scenarios to test ideas, support research, and communicate findings.	Generate text or visual examples that help to communicate your work in various contexts.
12. Outline Creation	Support the structuring of projects, reports, and essays and begin with a clear foundation.	Generate writing frameworks, contents outlines, or suggested sequences.
13. Generating Text	Produce drafts of sections, paragraphs, or illustrative content for essays, reports, or presentations.	Summarising texts to draft introductions or conclusions, writing whole sections of an essay or populating slides.
14. Paraphrasing	Reword existing text whilst maintaining original meaning and aid in clarity.	Rewrite your own drafts more concisely or use to reinterpret source material to support engagement.
15. Translating Own Writing	Translate own written work to support multilingual communication.	Submitting work originally written in another language for assessment.
23. Presentation Generation	Consolidate thinking and use a structure to populate slides and layout for presentation.	Create slides, templates, layouts and structured content either as suggestions or directly into software.
28. Generating References and Citation	Automatically create formatted references and citations for identified sources.	Asking AI to review your work and produce the reference list and generate in-text citations according to the required standard.