

Guidelines for the Documentation and Disclosure of AI Tools



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1 Introduction

At Paderborn University, the responsible use of AI-powered tools is becoming increasingly important. The use of these technologies is always voluntary and intended only as support. Different approaches are currently being tested across various units to document the use of generative AI in academic workflows in a transparent and traceable manner. A binding, cross-disciplinary standard for the disclosure of such use does not currently exist.

The guidelines on the use of Artificial Intelligence published by Paderborn University¹ call for transparent disclosure of AI use. This requirement is in line with current discussions in education and research policy, as well as with initial institutional regulations. This paper addresses the existing need for guidance and presents practical options for disclosing the use of AI tools in academic writing and research processes. The recommendations are based on established citation styles and illustrate, through concrete examples, a reflective and responsible approach to the use of generative AI. When generative AI is used in the writing process, its use should be documented from the outset to ensure that it can later be disclosed in a transparent and traceable manner. To this end, it is advisable to work with AI tools that allow chat histories to be saved and exported, so that interactions can be fully disclosed if required.

In preparing this paper, existing recommendations and guidelines addressing the use and citation of generative AI tools in academic work were taken into account. In particular, guidance was drawn from "Handreichung zur Zitation von KI-Tools" (Guidelines for Citing AI Tools) by Berlin Universities Publishing², the publication "Möglichkeiten zur Dokumentation und Kennzeichnung der Nutzung von generativen KI-Technologien in Schreib- und Forschungsprozess" (Options for Documenting and Disclosing the Use of Generative AI Technologies in Writing and Research Processes) by the University of Graz³, and the guides "Aus KI zitieren – Umgang mit KI-basierten Tools im Studium" (Citing from AI – The Use of AI-based Tools in Higher Education) published by the University of Basel⁴, as well as "KI und Facharbeiten – Ein Leitfaden für den Unterricht" (AI and Term Papers – A Guide for Teaching) by the Virtual Competence Centre: Teaching and Learning Writing with Artificial Intelligence⁵. In addition, this paper, prepared by Anja Westermann as part of the project "[KI und Open Source LLM: Innovative KI-Lösungen für die Lehre an der Universität Paderborn](#)" (AI and Open-Source LLMs: Innovative AI Solutions for Teaching at Paderborn University), was presented to various committees at Paderborn University, discussed and finalised through several rounds of feedback.

These guidelines are intended for both students and instructors. Students may use them as a basis for appropriately documenting and transparently acknowledging the use of AI tools in their work. However, the application of these recommendations is always subject to the requirements set by the responsible instructor.

Instructors, in turn, will find guidance here to support their decisions when formulating their own requirements regarding the use of AI in courses and examinations. This document helps to establish clear expectations for the documentation and acknowledgment of generative AI.

This means that both students and instructors may use this document as a shared basis for negotiation regarding the documentation and acknowledgment of AI tools in academic work.

¹ The guidelines on the use of text-generating AI tools in studies and teaching at Paderborn University can be found here: https://www.uni-paderborn.de/fileadmin/lehre/Digitale_Lehre_2023/Leitlinie_Einsatz_texterstellender_KI-Werkzeuge_2024-02.pdf

² <https://www.berlin-universities-publishing.de/media/policies/ki-handreichung.pdf>

³ https://static.uni-graz.at/fileadmin/files/project_sites/lehren-und-lernen-mit-ki/Handreichung_Dokumentation_und_Kennzeichnung_der_KI-Nutzung.pdf

⁴ https://www.unibas.ch/dam/jcr:e46db904-bf0f-475a-98bc-94ef4d16ad2e/Leitfaden-KI-zitieren_v2.2.pdf

⁵ <https://zenodo.org/records/14846569>

Instructors independently decide whether and to what extent the use of AI as a tool is permitted or prohibited in their courses. Students should, in all cases, inform themselves in advance about the applicable regulations.

2 Principles for the Disclosure of AI Use

When using AI tools in academic work, several fundamental aspects should be considered. The following guidelines are intended to support reflection on the use of AI, as well as appropriate and discipline-specific documentation.

AI-generated texts are not academic sources

Although generative AI systems can produce content based on academic information, their outputs do not constitute independent, citable academic sources. They are generally not subject to established quality assurance processes and should therefore be treated with caution. Functionally, they are more comparable to results from an internet search. In some disciplines, citing AI-generated content (see Chapter 4) is treated similarly to citing Wikipedia and is considered inadmissible.

Choose an appropriate form of documentation

There are various ways to acknowledge the use of AI in academic work, such as through a methodological note, in the acknowledgements, or by providing specific references. It is advisable to carefully weigh the respective advantages and disadvantages and select a documentation format that is appropriate one's own working process. If the instructor does not specify binding requirements for documentation, the chosen approach should be agreed upon with them early in the process.

Take discipline-specific conventions into account

In many academic units, standards for documenting AI are currently still evolving. Unlike citations from established publications (e.g., journal articles, monographs), for which clear citation guidelines exist, there are as yet no uniform regulations governing the use of AI-generated content. This makes it all the more important to discuss the chosen form of documentation within the relevant disciplinary context.

AI as an object of academic inquiry

If AI is not only used as a tool but is itself the subject of research, different standards apply. In such cases—for example, when AI-generated content is systematically analysed—these materials may serve as *primary sources*. In a sociological study, this might involve analysing AI-generated texts with regard to gender stereotypes. For instance, a sociology paper could examine AI-generated texts in relation to gender stereotypes. In an education studies paper, the quality of AI feedback on school essays could be analysed. In such cases, the methodological approach should be explained in the methods section, and the generated data should be documented in accordance with the standards of the respective discipline.

3 Documentation of the Use of AI

The following section outlines how the use of AI should be documented within the main body of the work (3.1) and in the appendix (3.2).

3.1 Description of the Use of AI Within the Paper

The use of generative AI can be described directly in the body of the work, for example in the introduction, the methods section, or in footnotes. In cases of more extensive use, it may also be appropriate to include a separate section on the use of AI in order to ensure transparency. This makes it possible to clearly document, for each phase of the research and writing process, how an AI tool was used, as well as the purpose it served or the outcome it produced. This may include, among other things, idea generation, literature research, drafting text passages, or language editing.

Examples

"ChatGPT and DeepL Write were used as supporting tools for language editing in this paper. The authors alone are responsible for the content and its presentation."

"ChatGPT (version 4.0) was used to finalise the research question, providing suggestions for refining the topic. The exchange helped me focus my work on... (see prompt protocol in the appendix)."

"The initial phase of the literature review was exploratory. The AI-based literature search tool ResearchRabbit was used to visualise connections between the core foundational texts by X and Y (see screenshot in the appendix). This visualisation helped to derive key concepts from different strands of discussion for further literature research."

Advantages

- The use of generative AI can be described precisely, including its purpose, procedure, and outcomes. Prompts can be summarised, and their impact on the research and writing process can be described in a transparent and traceable manner.
- The approach is flexible and can be applied at various stages of the work process, not just for text production.
- The level of detail can be adapted to type of text and discipline-specific requirements.
- Reflecting on the use of AI promotes a better understanding of one's own writing process and strengthens writing skills.
- The description can be supplemented by a prompt protocol in the appendix to ensure full transparency of the interactions.

Disadvantages

- If the description is too brief, the actual impact of AI on the research and writing process may remain unclear.
- In cases of extensive AI use, it may be difficult to present all steps clearly and coherently within the main body of the text. In such instances, documenting AI use in a separate section of the paper may be advisable.
- The volume of documented AI interactions may far exceed the length of the main text.

3.2 Description of the Use of AI in the Appendix to the Paper

Another transparent and traceable way of disclosing the use of AI tools is to document it in the appendix to the paper.

Presentation in the Appendix as Continuous Text or through Screenshots

This form of presentation facilitates the systematic disclosure of the role of AI in one's research and writing process. For each stage of the work – such as idea generation, literature research, text production, or revision – it can be specified how an AI tool was used and what outcomes resulted from it. This can be done, for example, by:

- describing the prompts used and their results;
- documenting the entire interaction with an AI tool, for instance as text or via a publicly accessible link (it should be ensured that the link remains accessible in the long term);
- including screenshots of AI use;
- keeping regular reflective notes on AI use throughout the research and writing process in the form of a research journal;
- presenting AI use based on targeted reflection questions.

Advantages

- Detailed traceability: The use of generative AI can be documented comprehensively, including the prompts employed and their impact on individual steps of the work process.
- High flexibility: This approach is suitable for all phases of academic work, not just text production (e.g. also for research, structuring, or revision).
- Encourages reflection on writing: Describing AI use actively promotes reflection on its role in the writing process.
- Adaptability: The form of presentation can be adjusted to the respective type of text (e.g., essay, term paper, thesis) and to discipline-specific conventions.

Disadvantages

- Lack of visibility in the main text: If AI use is documented exclusively in the appendix, it initially remains invisible to readers of the main body.
- Discomfort in sharing work-in-progress insights: Providing insight into the working process may be perceived as uncomfortable, as prompt protocols or reflections often contain early ideas or unfinished text fragments that may be considered too personal to share.
- High documentation effort in cases of intensive use: The more extensive the use of AI, the more complex it becomes to present it in a clear and structured way.
- Reduced readability due to lengthy sections: Extensive appendices with numerous prompts or descriptions may appear unwieldy, making it harder to follow key decisions in the writing process.
- Complex cross-referencing to protocols: For references to prompt protocols to be fully traceable, page numbers or specific markers might be required, adding to the workload for writers.
- Additional workload for instructors reviewing the documentation.

Documentation tables

Another way to provide a transparent and traceable account of AI use in the appendix of an academic work is through documentation tables. These are tabular overviews that list tools, their use, and other relevant aspects, and are included as an appendix. They allow the use of AI applications to be documented by phase

(e.g. idea generation, literature research, outlining and structuring, text production, formatting, or language correction). Within such a table, both the tools used and their specific applications can be recorded. Reflective elements may be included either within the table itself or as a separate paragraph.

Advantages

- Detailed traceability: The use of AI tools can be documented comprehensively, including how and for what purpose they were used. Summarised prompts and their impact on the research and writing process can also be described transparently.
- High flexibility: This format is suitable not only for AI-supported text production, but also for other stages of the process such as research, structuring, or reflection.
- Promotion of reflective writing: Conscious engagement with one's own use of AI supports the development of a reflective academic writing practice.

Disadvantages

- No direct visibility in the main text: Without explicit references in the main text, the use of AI in the working process initially remains hidden from readers.
- Limited clarity in cases of extensive use: With extensive or diverse AI usage, it may be difficult to document all steps in a concise and traceable manner.
- Reduced accessibility due to lengthy descriptions: Detailed descriptions in the appendix may make access more difficult for readers, particularly if it is not clearly apparent how specific decisions in the research process came about.

Example of a Documentation Table with Reflection

Work Step	Tool	Use	Comments on Use/Outcome	Reflection
Conceptualisation	ChatGPT (version 4.1 mini)	Dialogue with ChatGPT to refine the research question and generate ideas (see prompt log in the appendix).	Decision on how to narrow down the topic, followed by more in-depth literature research.	
Introduction	ChatGPT (version 5 Thinking)	Generation of an introduction draft by ChatGPT based on a list of key points (see prompt log in the appendix).	The generated introduction was too general and not suitable for the subject, but it served as a guide for the structural layout. The final text was formulated independently.	ChatGPT was mainly used to explore the typical structure of an introduction in order to develop a basic framework for one's own text. It was only partially helpful in this regard.
Research	ResearchRabbit	Visualisation of thematic connections between key found	The visualisation helped identify key concepts from various dis-	

		dational texts by X and Y (see screenshot in the appendix).	cussion strands for further literature research.	
Final revision	DeepL Write	Grammatical and orthographic review of the complete paper.	Most suggestions were adopted.	

Example of Documentation: Tools and Their Use

AI Tool	Use
Perplexity	• Researching content • Direct display of images or videos in search results
DeepL Write	• Improving writing style
DeepL Translate	• Translating text passages
Elicit	• AI-assisted literature research • Support with citation • Summarising abstracts
OpenAI ChatGPT 4.0	• Generating a suitable title for the paper • Paraphrasing text passages • Expanding bullet points into full text • Generating ideas for possible solutions • Providing alternative phrasings

Reflection on the use of AI can be included in a separate section of the academic work. The aim is to critically analyse one's own decision-making processes, challenges, and insights in working with AI-supported tools.⁶

4 Citation of AI According to Common Citation Systems

As a general principle, it should be noted that AI tools cannot be considered authors in a legal or academic sense. Consequently, they cannot be cited in the classical sense, as is the case with human authors. Although many established citation systems have by now developed guidelines for dealing with generative AI—which can serve as a point of reference for indicating AI-generated content as direct or indirect quotations—the citation of AI-generated content is viewed critically in some disciplines and may even be regarded as a serious academic error.

An example following APA style is provided below. The choice of citation style depends on the conventions of the respective discipline.

AI should only be used as a primary source if it is itself the object of academic inquiry. The acceptance of citing AI varies considerably across disciplines. To avoid serious errors, students are advised to consult their instructor in advance regarding the applicable requirements for the use of AI tools.

⁶ Possible guiding questions for structured reflection can be found in the guidelines "KI in Seminar- und Abschlussarbeiten" (AI in Seminar Papers and Theses": https://www.uni-paderborn.de/fileadmin/lehre/DigitalLehre_2023/KI-Talks/KI_in_Seminar-_und_Abschlussarbeiten_Eine_Handreichung_fuer_Lehrende.neu.pdf

Advantages

- Suitable when AI is the object of study: When AI-generated content is itself analysed, quotations allow relevant passages to be selected and documented in a targeted manner.
- Clear source attribution: The AI system used (including, where applicable, the provider) is documented in the reference list, including version information, thereby enhancing traceability.
- Context disclosure: Quotations can be combined with a complete prompt protocol in the appendix. Alternatively, links to the full chat history may be provided if their long-term accessibility is ensured.
- Clear identification: Direct textual borrowings can be marked as quotations and properly referenced, particularly when the interaction is fully documented.

Disadvantages

- **Lack of conventional citability:** AI-generated texts are not considered academic sources. Their outputs are quasi-unique, cannot be reproduced exactly, and therefore cannot be consulted in the same way as traditional quotations. **As a result, AI-generated content should only be cited in exceptional cases, namely when AI itself is the object of study (see above).**
- Indirect quotation is difficult to implement: Paraphrasing AI-generated content is difficult to attribute clearly, as no reliable original source exists.
- Revised AI outputs are not citable: If AI-generated text is subsequently edited, it becomes unclear which parts originate from the model and which from the human author. Proper citation is therefore hardly possible.
- Non-textual AI use is difficult to document: Inputs such as topic suggestions, structural ideas, or research strategies cannot meaningfully be referenced as quotations.
- No context without a prompt protocol: Without documentation of the interaction (e.g. in the appendix), it remains unclear which prompt produced the text and to what extent human input influenced the result.
- Quotations alone are insufficient for reflection: Citation documents only the output, not the process of engaging with AI. A critical reflection on its use must therefore be provided in addition.
- Citation is meaningful only with public access: Only publicly accessible AI systems can be cited in a traceable manner. For self-developed AI tools, additional technical documentation may be required.

Example (APA)

According to the recommendations of the American Psychological Association (APA), the use of generative AI tools should be documented transparently, in particular with regard to how and for what purpose the tool was used. In academic work, this documentation is ideally included in the methods section. In shorter formats, such as essays or literature reviews, it is advisable to address this already in the introduction. If AI-generated content is reproduced in the text, both the prompt used and the relevant portions of the AI-generated response should be clearly indicated.⁷

Example from the field of German language pedagogy, provided by Prof. Dr. Sara Rezat:

As part of a master's thesis, the text production of students who received feedback on their writing from the AI tool Fiete was investigated. These revisions can be attributed to the feedback provided by Fiete. However, the student only implemented parts of this feedback. For illustration, the feedback from Fiete is reproduced below:

⁷ <https://apastyle.apa.org/blog/how-to-cite-chatgpt>; see also the updated APA guidelines: <https://www.apa.org/pubs/journals/resources/publishing-policies?tab=3>

"You consistently write in the present tense and maintain an appropriate instructional tone — good. However, the required use of the imperative is missing; you rely predominantly on passive constructions. Reformulate the steps using clear imperative forms, for example: "Cut the thread to 50 cm; Thread the needle; Secure the button ...". Alternatively, you may present the steps as bullet points using verb-initial imperative sentences.' (Fiete, 2025)"

In the following, the student's revised texts are cited, and the quality of the AI feedback, as well as its impact on the student's text development, is analysed.

Example reference list entry:"

Fiete.AI. (2025, 03 November). FelloFish <https://app.fello.fish/student/new/submission/cmhka1k2l2b6vln01ricpz4id>

Recommendations (Chicago)

According to the guidelines of the Chicago Manual of Style (CMoS), an entry in the reference list should only be included if both the prompt and the AI-generated response are accessible via a unique, publicly available link. If this is not the case, it is recommended to reproduce the AI-generated response either in the main text or in a footnote or endnote.

Details:

<https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/qanda/data/faq/topics/Documentation/faq0422.html>

Recommendations (MLA)

The Modern Language Association (MLA) likewise recommends indicating both paraphrased and directly quoted content from AI applications with an in-text citation.

Details:

<https://style.mla.org/citing-generative-ai/>

Appendix: Examples of Disclosing AI Use in Academic Papers

Shafiee (2023) – International Journal of Surgery

Full reference	Arman Shafiee (2023). "Matters arising: authors of research papers must cautiously use ChatGPT for scientific writing." International Journal of Surgery. DOI: 10.1097/JS9.0000000000000515
Discipline / academic unit	Medical sciences
Use of AI	ChatGPT was used to assist in drafting the manuscript.
Location and form of disclosure	The use is disclosed in the main text and in the acknowledgements; in addition, a chat protocol is included in the appendix.

Wording of the disclosure	"During the preparation of this work the author used ChatGPT in order to prepare the manuscript. All sentences generated from the AI tool have been reviewed by the author."
Link	https://www.researchgate.net/publication/371010917_Matters_arising_authors_of_research_papers_must_cautiously_use_ChatGPT_for_scientific_writing

Likoglu (2023) – Bachelor's thesis, University of Twente

Full reference	Cagri Likoglu (2023). "The effect of AI on the role of human auditors." Bachelorarbeit, University of Twente.
Discipline / academic unit	Accounting
Use of AI	ChatGPT was used for linguistic refinement.
Location and form of disclosure	Declared at the end of the front matter
Wording of the disclosure	"During the preparation of this work, the author used ChatGPT in order to refine the text and takes full responsibility for the content of the work."
Link	Bachelorarbeit (PDF) (date of last access March 2025)

Chan (2025) – Journal of Professional Nursing

Full reference	Vidya C. Chan (2025). "Integrating generative artificial intelligence in a writing intensive course for undergraduate nursing students." <i>Journal of Professional Nursing</i> 57(2): 85–91. DOI: 10.1016/j.profnurs.2025.01.003
Discipline / academic unit	Nursing pedagogy
Use of AI	ChatGPT was used to check grammar and improve the style.
Location and form of disclosure	The use is disclosed in the acknowledgements section.
Wording of the disclosure	"During the preparation of this work the author used ChatGPT to check for grammatical errors and refine writing. After using this tool/service, the author reviewed and edited the content as needed and takes full responsibility for the content of the publication."
Link	https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S8755722325000109?via%3Di-hub

Nehrer et al. (2024) – Arthroscopy

Full reference	Siegfried Nehrer, Kuan Chen, Rok Ljuhar et al. (2024). "Chance und Risiken von künstlicher Intelligenz und Machine Learning in der bildgebenden Diagnostik." <i>Arthroscopie</i> 37(2): 159–164. DOI: 10.1007/s00142-024-00669-8
Discipline / academic unit	Medical science
Use of AI	ChatGPT 3.5 was used to improve readability and to identify suitable synonyms.
Location and form of disclosure	Disclosed in the section 'Remarks and Disclosure'
Wording of the disclosure	"During the preparation of this work, the authors used ChatGPT 3.5 by OpenAI to enhance readability and identify appropriate synonyms. The authors subsequently reviewed and revised the content as necessary."
Link	https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s00142-024-00669-8

Fröhlich, Hemmer (2025) – Unchained Intellect Press

Full reference	Markus C. Hemmer, Torsten Fröhlich (2025). <i>The Art of Thesis Writing: From Understanding Research to Writing Success</i> . Unchained Intellect Press. DOI: 10.61065/nknhhv50
Field	Academic writing
Use of AI	Assistance in various aspects of preparing the book.
Location and form of disclosure	In the main text and in the generated figures
Wording of the disclosure	„The authors used various tools, including ChatGPT, to assist them during the development of this book. They used these tools ethically, ensuring that the final product reflected their original ideas and voice while benefiting from these tools' assistance.“; „Infographic produced with ChatGPT 4o with the prompt 'an infographic explaining a neural network in great detail'.“
Link	https://omp.unchained-press.com/mybooks/catalog/view/3/4/13

The following example would not be permissible in Germany, as under German copyright law (UrhG) only human beings (natural persons) can be authors of works. The example is included to illustrate that different rules may apply in other countries. The link also contains critical commentary on listing chatbots as authors.

O'Connor & ChatGPT (2023) – Nurse Education in Practice

Full reference	Siobhán O'Connor & ChatGPT (2023). "Open artificial intelligence platforms in nursing education: Tools for academic progress or abuse?" <i>Nurse Education in Practice</i> 66: 103537. DOI: 10.1016/j.nepr.2022.103537
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Discipline / academic unit	Nursing Education
Use of AI	ChatGPT was used with prompts to generate sections of an opinion article.
Location and form of disclosure	ChatGPT is listed as a co-author, with details provided in the acknowledgements and the author contributions section.
Wording of the disclosure	"The human author conceptualised this article, drafting and revising the final manuscript. The ChatGPT tool (from OpenAI) was used to generate sections of writing."
Link	https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/36549229/

This translation was assisted by AI and has been reviewed for accuracy.