



Use of AI and other forms of Assistance in Assignments and Research Activity

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Use of AI and other forms of Assistance in Assignments and Research Activity

Introduction

1. The purpose of this document is to state Spurgeon's College (the College) policy on the acceptable assistance with assignments and research activity using generative AI, proofreading, editing assistance and language-enhancement applications (LEAs). This policy should be read in conjunction with:
 - a. Academic Malpractice Policy and Procedure
 - b. Academic Malpractice Policy for CPCAB Counselling Students.
2. It applies to all programmes awarded by the College¹.

What is AI?

3. Artificial Intelligence (AI) is the ability of machines to perform tasks that are typically associated with human intelligence, such as learning and problem-solving. 'It refers to the development of computer systems that can perform tasks that typically require human intelligence, such as visual perception, speech recognition, decision-making, and language translation. AI involves the creation of algorithms and models that enable machines to learn from data, recognise patterns, and make decisions or predictions based on that information. There are various subfields within AI, including machine learning, natural language processing, computer vision, robotics, and more.'²
4. The boundary between AI and other technologies is blurry and constantly changing as AI is increasingly being incorporated into digital systems in ways that are neither visible nor obvious to the user.
5. The College's position on AI is that when used appropriately, AI tools have the potential to enhance teaching and learning and can support inclusivity and accessibility.

Key Principles of this Policy

6. The College values a culture of honesty and mutual trust in its academic endeavours (academic integrity) and expects all members of the College, staff and students, to respect and uphold these core values. Students at the College are part of an academic community that values integrity, honesty, fairness, respect and trust and are expected to take personal responsibility for their work and its academic integrity. The College takes seriously its responsibilities to develop students' skills - including communication skills (spoken and written) and wider digital skills and capabilities.

¹ Partner institutions may have their own policies on Malpractice and the use of AI and other forms of assistance.

² This definition was generated by the free version of ChatGPT-3.5 in response to the question what is AI asked 8 March 2023.

7. When completing assignments at Spurgeon's College, there is a fundamental expectation that the student has produced the work independently. Students are considered the authors of their work and are responsible for the content they submit. Producing work independently does not, however, mean working in isolation. Students are encouraged to seek assistance for their studies, which is provided by their tutors and professional staff. Students may seek assistance from other third parties (whether involving human or software input) but only to the extent that doing so adheres to the principles set out in this document. Students are expected to be transparent about the sources of information used by:
 - a. providing appropriate references which comply with the College's [Referencing Guidelines](#) and
 - b. by acknowledging the assistance received by answering honestly the questions posed on the [Assignment Cover Sheet](#). This information must be declared and clearly explained by students.
8. Students who do not adhere to these principles may be in danger of committing plagiarism, false authorship, collusion or impersonation as defined in the College's Academic Malpractice Policies³.

External Assistance

9. Students sometimes choose to access a variety of forms of external assistance when completing assessments or research. These include:
 - a. **Generative AI:** Artificial intelligence tools which can understand and respond to human natural language and multimedia input. Such tools are likely to assist students in a wide range of tasks e.g., finding relevant resources or spelling and grammar checks.
 - b. **Informal assistance:** Friends and family checking a student's work, providing an audience's reaction, commenting on drafts, proofreading etc. in order to improve the work prior to submission.
 - c. **Professional proofreader:** An external, paid person or company employed by the student to proofread their work prior to submission.
 - d. **Language-enhancement applications (LEAs):** Applications such as Grammarly, Pro Writing Aid and integrated spelling and grammar checkers can highlight issues and offer suggestions for improvements in various areas of writing, e.g. with grammatical errors, alternative vocabulary and sentence rephrasing.
10. The above tools, services, and assistance mechanisms are only permitted if used in line with the policy below.

Permissible proofreading and editing assistance⁴

11. The College's Academic Malpractice Policy and Procedure states that, 'While using proof-reading and copyediting services, paid or unpaid, or the use of Language Enhancement Applications may not always constitute a form of cheating, it depends on the scale of the work undertaken. For example, major changes by a third party or

³ [Academic Malpractice Policy](#) and Academic Malpractice Policy for CPCAB Students.

⁴ Students with recognised educational needs, as identified by DSA, may be granted specific and clearly defined exemptions to this policy.

software application which lead to students submitting work which is substantially different from what they originally wrote is not legitimate. While students may ask someone to read through their work or use a software application to suggest changes, such changes must be reviewed and implemented by the student to ensure that the submitted work is the student's own.

12. Students who use AI (including software packages like Grammarly) as a form of proof-reading service, should do so in relation to small sections of their assignment rather than to the whole text. Students should pass their own work through a proof-reading service on one single occasion only; repeated proof-reading submissions will result in a text that contravenes the College's Malpractice Policy because the result will be text that is "substantially different from what they originally wrote."
13. The only assistance from a third party that is appropriate for students is the identification of errors related to:
 - a. Word usage (excluding specific terminology) e.g., using 'an' instead of 'and'.
 - b. Spelling, punctuation, capitalisation, italics, abbreviations, headings, quotations, metrification, numbering, citations, referencing, tables, illustrations, footnotes and appendices (typographical errors).
 - c. Grammar and syntax.
 - d. Clarity of expression.
 - e. Voice and tone.
 - f. Issues with logical sequencing and linkage between sentences and paragraphs.
 - g. Ambiguity.
 - h. Repetition.
14. Where corrections are identified by a third party (human or software), students MUST review and correct these issues themselves. In the case of language enhancement applications, the software usually provides feedback in the form of suggested edits for the author to choose - the selection of these options is permissible and subject to the judgement of the student.

Language-enhancement applications

15. LEAs are intended to assist and support students with their writing, but not to produce text for students. If used in an appropriate way, and if permitted in assignments, the use of online LEAs is not considered academic misconduct and can be beneficial during the programme of study. It is important to distinguish online LEAs from other methods used to improve writing. Using automated paraphrasing tools, for example, can result in work of false authorship being submitted (as well as often poor paraphrasing!) and means that a student is not applying the skills that they are intended to learn.
16. *Examples of good and/or acceptable use of LEAs in assignments:*
 - a. **Vocabulary enrichment:** using LEAs in a considered way to expand and enrich vocabulary, aiding in the selection of appropriate and precise words for academic expression.
 - b. **Grammar and language improvement:** utilising LEAs to improve grammar, syntax and punctuation, to enhance the clarity and coherence of academic writing.

- c. **Identify problems:** point out typographical errors, and poor grammar and phrases. Identified problems must be reviewed and corrected by the student.
- d. **Enhance - not mislead:** LEAs should be used in a manner that still preserves and reflects a student's natural ability and competency in English. Enhancements should maintain a student's voice and style.

17. *Examples of poor and/or unacceptable use of LEAs in assignments:*

- a. **Uncritical acceptance:** accepting suggestions without critical evaluation, careful review, or consideration of accuracy, context or appropriateness.
- b. **Excessive dependency:** if an assignment submission has substitutions which appear to be that of a third party and not a student's own work, it will be deemed false authorship. Excessively depending on LEAs can hinder a student's active engagement in learning and ability to independently craft well-written academic work.
- c. **Enhancement far beyond unsupported ability:** The College expects the work a student produces to reflect the fact that they are a student, and that they are able to learn from their mistakes; this is a natural part of a student's development in education. Depending on the student, producing work which is consistently grammatically flawless and highly cohesive may suggest false authorship, particularly when similar work cannot be produced under conditions where the student would not have LEAs or other tools available to them.

Unacceptable Assistance

18. It is not appropriate for a third party (human or AI) to offer, or for a student to use a third party to provide, services which result in false authorship. False authorship results from the following activities:

- a. Prompting generative AI tools to fully or partially respond to assignment questions and submitting that response fully or partially in assignments.
- b. Using translation tools or services to translate text in whole or significant sections (oral or written), which is then submitted as summative work.
- c. Generating or re-writing (including shortening or summarising) any of the student's sentences or sections of work.
- d. Rearranging or paraphrasing passages of text, or sections of other material for the student.
- e. Reformatting the material for the student.
- f. Generating or contributing additional material to the original.
- g. Generating, labelling or relabelling figures or diagrams.

19. It is unacceptable to use generative AI to generate text which will form part of an assignment submission. *Examples of this include:*

- a. **Requesting direct answers or responses:** asking generative AI assignment questions or titles, and then using the generated response in assessed work without approval or attribution.
- b. **Submitting chunks of unedited text generated by AI:** submitting academic work that is partly or entirely generated using AI, without any personal review, understanding, or modification, will be deemed false authorship.

- c. **Over-reliance:** if a student submits an assignment that has indicators of generative AI they may be found to have committed false authorship. It is essential that students understand that depending on AI can hinder their learning and misrepresent their genuine academic ability.
- d. **Uncritical acceptance:** accepting suggestions without critical evaluation, careful review, or consideration of accuracy, context or appropriateness will likely not only lead to a case of misconduct but also increase a student's chances of receiving a low grade.

Acceptable Assistance

20. In addition to assistance with editing or proofreading, students may legitimately use AI to:
- a. **Find relevant resources** (e.g., by using a prompt like “find me articles on the subject of the authorship of Hebrews” – the key principle here is that the student themselves should consult the resources recommended by AI, and they should not refer to resources simply on the basis of the AI's summary of those resources).
 - b. **For certain types of research activity** – for example, to grasp a quick understanding of a topic or basic information (like using an online or hardcopy dictionary or encyclopaedia). For example, you might use prompts like these: What does penal substitution mean? Who was Tertullian? How many churches belong to the Baptist Union? This is like making legitimate use of a search engine like Google.
21. Students should not re-use the answers provided by AI without checking its content meticulously and expressing it in their own words. If, in rare cases, a student decides to quote an answer provided by an AI tool, the words should be in quotation marks and the footnote should state (for instance) 'ChatGPT's answer to the question "What does penal substitution mean?" on 31/03/2023'.
22. AI gathers together wide-ranging material with varied quality, origins, dates and value. It is incapable of intelligent discrimination and cannot evaluate or measure worth. Therefore, for in-depth study and up-to-date information on a topic, such as might be expected at degree level, students are advised to use mainstream textbooks and articles which present coherent arguments and evaluate them in depth. Students are reminded that assignments should bear evidence of their own independent reflection on topics; originality and evidence of independent critical thinking is what marks out excellent work.

Approval and acknowledgement of assistance

23. If a student receives assistance with an assignment, whether paid or not, they must acknowledge this fully by completing the coversheet for each summative assignment submitted for marking. Students must declare the type of assistance they have utilised, the way they have used it and the extent of the usage.

Have you used an artificial intelligence (AI) resource (e.g., ChatGPT, Dall E, Runway, Tome or similar text tool) in the production of this piece of work?

YES **NO**

Please delete as applicable

If, yes, please indicate how you have used this tool:

Have you used a proof-reader or a proof-reading programme (e.g., ChatGPT, Grammarly etc.) in the production of this piece of work?:

YES **NO**

Please delete as applicable

If yes, please state in what ways and to what extent such tools have been used:

24. Students are not required to acknowledge the use of standard spelling and grammar checking tools like those provided by MS Word or Google Docs. The student should also accept full responsibility for the authorship and standard of the submitted work.

25. If a tutor suspects that work has been created by an undisclosed AI tool, it will always be referred to the Academic Malpractice Officer in line with the College's Academic Malpractice Policy.