

Guidance for Postgraduate Research Students and Supervisors on Declaring and Reporting Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (Gen AI) Tools

Document version: 13/06/2025

Context

The Graduate Research Studies Board (GRSB) has approved the inclusion of the following wording in the Academic Regulations for Postgraduate Degrees by Research and Thesis for 2025-2026:

“For all thesis types, any Generative AI tools used, and the purpose for which they were used, must be declared in the thesis and in the relevant Postgraduate Research (PGR) Form.”

In the Regulations, the following item will be added to the list of items that a thesis must include:

“Include a list of Gen AI tools and the purpose for which they have been used.”

Furthermore, the required “declaration” in the thesis will be revised to include the wording:

“I confirm that I have conformed to the regulations on the use and declaration of Gen AI”

This declaration will be replicated in the PGR7 form (Thesis Access Consent and Declaration) and the PGR12 (E-Thesis Submission Declaration Form).

Given the requirement for declaring use of Gen AI tools, it is necessary to provide guidance to both students and supervisors on this change.

Timing

The regulation will be active from September 1st, 2025. However, students who are already registered will not have had notice of the need to record their use of Gen AI. While the regulation will be active from the start of the coming academic year, and will apply to all students, some flexibility will be necessary for those who are currently registered, especially for those in Years 3 or higher who may already have collected data and used Gen AI tools without recording such use in detail.

Supervisors and students should have regular discussion about the use of Gen AI and how best to record usage both retrospectively (within reason) and going forward. Students should do their best to record what tools they have already used and for what purpose and commence accurate recording from now onwards.

Proposed Reporting Framework

It is increasingly expected that use of Gen AI tools in research is reported transparently. To learn more, students and supervisors should first read the document [“Guidance for Candidates and](#)

[Supervisors on Responsible Use of Generative AI in Doctoral/Master's Research](#)" (login required).

Note that in this guidance and in DCU's Position Statement on the Use of Artificial Intelligence Tools, only four Gen AI tools are currently sanctioned for use by DCU staff and Students : MS Co-Pilot (not the version of Co-Pilot in MS 365), Google's Gemini, NotebookLM, and Zoom's AI Companion. As the field of Gen AI advances, this list may change and the corresponding guidance will be updated. For now, postgraduate research students should use only these whitelisted tools for any work related to their PhD research at DCU. Use of tools that have not been whitelisted runs the risk of compromising data security and privacy, which is especially problematic if personal data has been collected and shared openly using these tools. Furthermore, the essential aspect of 'originality of the research' for doctoral research could be compromised.

Generally speaking, reporting should include the following:

- What tool was used?
- What version?
- For what purpose?
- With what outcomes?

Non-use

If Gen AI has not been used while conducting postgraduate research, the student should explicitly declare that there has been no such use in both the thesis and relevant Postgraduate Research Form. If this applies to you, the following line should be added to the end of the standard Declaration required by 9.4.4 (b) of the Academic Regulations for Postgraduate Degrees by Research and Thesis:

"I hereby certify that no Generative Artificial Intelligence (Gen AI) tools have been used in the creation of the thesis."

Disciplinary factors

Some disciplines and research projects might involve extensive use of Gen AI tools when, for example, the topic itself has to do with Large Language Models or machine learning. In such circumstances, it is still expected that a declaration on Gen AI use is made. However, it is not expected in these circumstances that students should declare every version, every prompt, every iteration or output, since such information should be incorporated in a methodology and/or results chapter. The guidance below proposes brief declarations and use of examples by those whose topic is embedded in the Gen AI space.

Specific reporting framework

There are many ways in which reporting could be structured. Dr Dónal Mulligan (DCU's School of Communications) has proposed a framework, called [TOPIC](#), for taught assessments, which is proposed here as the framework for PGR students.

TOPIC stands for **Tools, Outputs, Prompts, Iterations, and Critical Reflection**.

Tools:

Clearly indicate the tool name and model (or version) you used and the date(s) of use. If you used a tool multiple times, provide the range of dates over which the tool was used and the model/versions used.

Example: Google Gemini, 2.0 Flash, used between 08/01/2025 and 25/03/2025

Outputs:

Specify what tool outputs were generated and used by you and for what purpose. Brief outputs and prompt examples may be included in an appendix with commentary. Extensive or iterative use should be summarised in the main text, with illustrative examples in an appendix.

Example: I used this tool to summarise multiple articles so that I could ascertain whether or not they were highly relevant to my research. This allowed me to triage those articles into high priority, medium priority, low priority and irrelevant for further reading and deeper analysis.

Prompts:

As with outputs, provide a record of the prompts you used. Again, consider whether these can be succinctly recorded in an appendix or provide examples and a commentary on your use of prompts.

Example: I asked Gemini to “Summarise this article for me highlighting the most important points”. The summary was then used to categorise the articles according to the categories mentioned above.

Iterations:

Provide some commentary on the number and type of iterations. This can be linked to your report on prompts and outputs above.

Critical Reflection:

Critical reflection forms the essence of a postgraduate research project. The use of Gen AI to support research equally requires critical reflection. Such reflection should be made evident in the report on use of Gen AI or, if use is extensive, in the methodology and results chapters.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the purpose of making a declaration on the use of Gen AI?

The purpose of declaring Gen AI use is to demonstrate that you have used it within the limits of responsible use, which are explained in DCU’s [Guidance for Candidates and Supervisors on Responsible Use of Generative AI in Doctoral/Master’s Research](#) (login required). You are demonstrating to your examiners and all other readers of your work that the postgraduate research is an original work of scholarship created by you and not by a tool and that you take full responsibility for the content.

How should I record this information?

Discuss with your supervisors how best to record the information. It is suggested that you keep a log file consisting of the TOPIC headings and record your use as you progress in your research. It's important to keep this updated.

Where should I put this information in my thesis?

Lengthier information and examples of prompts, information about iterations and outputs could be included in an appendix. Otherwise, the template below (Appendix A) can be used and placed immediately after the Declaration Page in the thesis. Please refer to Section 9 of the Academic Regulations for Postgraduate Degrees by Research and Thesis for further information on the layout of the thesis.

How much information do I have to include?

Discuss with your supervisors how much information should be included both in your brief report on Gen AI tool use and, where relevant, in your appendices. You should aim for transparency while not over-burdening your examiners and readers.

Guidance for Examiners and Chairs of Vivas

Examiners are requested to familiarise themselves with DCU's [Guidance for Candidates and Supervisors on Responsible Use of Generative AI in Doctoral/Master's Research](#) (login required). A copy of this document should be provided by DCU Registry on distribution of the thesis for examination.

Examiners should review the student's reporting of use on Gen AI in the thesis.

It is DCU's position that the student must be responsible for the authoring of their thesis content. Work conducted and submitted for examination must be the students' own intellectual work. This does not preclude the responsible use of Gen AI tools for searching, grammar checking or proofreading, for example.

Examiners must not upload any part of the thesis to a Gen AI tool or use a tool for the detection of use of Gen AI.

If an examiner has any concern about the use of Gen AI, they should raise it confidentially with the chairperson in advance of the viva. No concerns should be raised with the other examiner(s) or the supervisor(s) or the student in advance of the viva.

The chairperson can record the concerns and advise that they should be raised during normal questioning during the viva.

If concerns remain following the viva, there are several ways in which these can be addressed. Concerns about the use of Gen AI and the student's response to questions on this matter can be recorded on the PGR6 form. This may inform the outcome of the examination, which is also recorded on the PGR6 form and the request for revisions. Note that students have the [right to appeal](#) the outcome of a viva on specific grounds. If there is evidence of a serious breach in academic integrity, then DCU's standard process for breaches in academic integrity applies.

As is normal practice the chairperson should send their report on the viva (Section E.1 of the PGR6 form) to the Head of School.

Appendix A – Template for Reporting of Gen AI Tool Use in Research Theses

Notes on the use of this template:

1. The template does not have to be included in the thesis if the student declares in the PGR7 and PGR12 forms that no Gen AI tools have been used in the creation of the thesis.
2. If Gen AI tools have been used, this template should be included immediately after the Declaration Page. Please refer to Section 9 of the Academic Regulations for Postgraduate Degrees by Research and Thesis for further information on the layout of the thesis.
3. The template should be used as a guideline. Students and supervisors should discuss exactly where the details best fit. At a minimum, if Gen AI tools have been used a brief outline of the Tools, Outputs, Prompts and Iterations should be included here. Critical reflection on the use of the tools may be included here briefly, or elsewhere in the thesis as deemed appropriate by the supervisor and student.

Tools:

Clearly indicate the tool name and model (or version) you used and the date(s) of use. If you used a tool multiple times, provide the range of dates over which the tool was used and the model/versions used.

Example: Google Gemini, 2.0 Flash, used between 08/01/2025 and 25/03/2025

Outputs:

Specify what tool outputs were generated and used by you and for what purpose.

Example: I used (tool name) to create summaries of articles in order to ascertain their relevance for further inclusion in my reading list and literature review.

Prompts:

Provide a record of the prompts you used here or link to an appendix where the prompts used are listed.

Example: I asked Gemini to “Summarise this article for me highlighting the most important points”. The summary was then used to categorise the articles according to the categories mentioned above.

Iterations:

Provide some commentary on the number and type of iterations. This can be linked to your report on prompts and outputs above.

Critical Reflection:

If Gen AI tools have been used minimally, a very brief critical reflection on its role in the research submitted for examination can be included here. Otherwise, specify the parts of the thesis where critical reflection on the use and role of Gen AI tools is included.