AI and authorship

What does it mean to write texts in times of AI? We answer the most important questions on authorship in this handout.

Authorship and copyright

Authorship is linked to copyright. Authors are "always **natural persons**. Through creating the work, they also have the **right** to independently decide on the **exploitation** of their work ..." (AI Guidelines of the University of Vienna, 2023, 36).

What does this mean in practice?

If you have submitted a seminar paper, as a student you have certain **rights and obligations** as author:

- You have to be asked whether you **consent** or do not consent to the (further) processing of your seminar paper by an AI tool. You may have given such a consent when agreeing to a plagiarism check by Turnitin.
- You take **responsibility** for the advancement of academic knowledge in compliance with good academic practice. This also means that you should indicate the use of generative AI during the writing process.

Due to the current interpretation of the legal situation by the University of Vienna, the results of generative AI cannot be equated with human creativity and are therefore **not protected by copyright** (ibid., 37). This is due to the **functional principles** of AI. Generative AI tools are language models with no consciousness. They are based on linguistic data and generate texts by predicting the probability of word sequences (ibid., 36). The basis of this prediction is a training data set, which is also why generated texts contain the biases (ibid., 17) inherent in the data set. Probability **as a criterion is not sufficient** when it comes to the generation of academic knowledge and the reasoning of a line of argument. AI-generated contents may contain mistakes and their basis is not clear. Therefore, it is of great importance that you **check** the **output of text-generative AI tools**, such as ChatGPT.

Despite these critical points, generative **AI systems foster** text and **knowledge development**. In order to unlock the potential of AI, the University of Vienna encourages the use of AI systems as an aid: "Where generative AI systems become **real assistants** in the daily lives of people, they represent **interaction partners** having real effects and are thus **part of human communication communities**." (ibid., 18)

Such an interaction with machines can be integrated into your research-based studying practice in a beneficial and meaningful way, without overlooking the risks of the use of AI.

What should I consider and which decisions do I have to take?

Specify the **use of generative AI systems** during the writing process in a **transparent** way:

- **The requirements of the course apply:** The teacher decides on (non-)permitted materials in the course. Everything that is not explicitly permitted is forbidden. **Check** if you are allowed to use AI in the course and, in case of doubt, ask your teacher about the proper use of AI.
- **Document** the use of AI during your writing process:
  - Write a research journal (PDF in German) to be able to provide proof of the development of your argumentation on request.
  - Indicate the use of generative AI in the written academic paper:
    - by explaining the tools used in the **methods section;**
    - by providing prompts or AI-generated text elements as an **attachment**.
- **Disclose the use of AI:** You are **not** allowed to present AI-written texts as your own.

Clarify how and when you have to indicate the use of AI tools. **Cite** the tools used, for example, according to the APA 7 Citation Guide.

- **You are responsible for your decisions:** You have to decide whether you want to use generative tools or not. Ultimately, you are responsible for your texts.
- **Acquire a new competence:** The ability to understand and to use AI is a competence that you can learn. Therefore, you have to engage in continuous learning to ensure the best possible use of this technology.