## Department of English Policy on Generative AI and Graduate Studies (March 2025)

**CONTEXT:** Literary and textual studies is a discipline predicated on the analysis of linguistic creation, where form is indivisible from content. Disciplinary practices are thus focused on not just what is presented but also how and with what implications, given the complex interplay of author, reader, text, paratext, context, and theory. A practitioner of the discipline—be their work creative or critical in orientation—must be attentive to the nuances of textual mode (e.g. written, visual, digital, aural; prose, verse), of language itself as it shifts over time, and of details pertaining to choice of diction, sentence structure, perspective and narrative point of view. The ability to engage with irony, complexity, contradiction, and multiple interpretative possibilities requires independent, creative thought. This same mastery of language, nuance, scholarly context, and compositional skill is required for the creation and dissemination of research, artistic, and scholarly work in this field.

As a department committed to rigorous academic training in the Humanities, our analysis of generative AI itself leads to a series of concerns. We note inaccuracies and errors in AI-generated material. We note the biases implicit in word processing programs, where default spelling suggestions, standardized grammar options, and autocompletion of phrases may change a writer’s own intentions. We question the extent to which AI enables accessibility in our discipline, given its demonstrated effect on undermining difference and individual voice. We question the ethics of a technology that is proving environmentally unsustainable and that is negatively affecting global regions differentially. We question a view of generative AI as an alternative to individualist property ownership, as it models the extractive approach that decolonization and Indigenization work against, particularly in the context of culturally specific knowledge and ways of knowing.

**DEFINITION:** Generative AI is a type of artificial intelligence that “learns” from large datasets such as Wikipedia, books, or artwork, and finds patterns in these to generate statistically probable, human-like content based upon a user’s prompt. Examples of generative artificial intelligence tools or applications include but are not limited to ChatGPT (which generates text), DALL-E (which generates images), Open AI’s “deep research” tool, Gemini, Claude, and Microsoft Copilot. Grammarly is also a generative AI tool. While Grammarly can be used to “Review suggestions” in a way similar to that of Microsoft Word’s grammar checker, following specific rules to generate suggestions (e.g. “double check that you’re sticking to singular or plural”), it offers the option to “Write with generative AI” in order to generate new content.

**PURPOSE OF DOCUMENT:** In order to provide clear and discipline-specific standards, this document outlines principles and guidelines regarding the use of AI in graduate studies in the Department of English.

**PRINCIPLES**: The Department of English requires all students to be personally accountable for the accuracy and originality of their work, and to ensure that all sources are appropriately acknowledged, cited, and referenced. As the author, the student must be prepared to articulate, explain, and defend their choices in conducting scholarship and research, and in their written and artistic work.

Student use of generative AI is prohibited in completing assessments, assignments, and graduate program requirements, as described below. In certain circumstances, the use of generative AI may be permitted so long as its use and place are clearly acknowledged and explained with an appropriate rationale. Students who seek to use generative AI in their graduate work must have unambiguous approval in advance and in writing from their Supervisor(s) and Advisory Committee.

In those cases where the use of generative AI has been approved by a course instructor or by the Supervisor and Advisory Committee, the AI must be cited and its contribution to resulting content must be explicitly disclosed, including an indication of how as well as where generative AI tools were used.

**POLICY STATEMENT:** The depth and breadth of language skills required for graduate-level work in the discipline of literary and textual studies, both creative and critical, require sophisticated attention to texts, contexts, and critical approaches, as well as to the act of writing and revision through which original contributions to scholarly and artistic work are made. The competencies students must demonstrate to be awarded a graduate degree from the University of Saskatchewan’s Department of English—whether at the Master’s or Doctoral level—cannot be developed or met through reliance on generative AI. Students must demonstrate their ability to independently research, develop, structure, draft, edit, and (where applicable) defend any and all work that they produce as writers, researchers, and teachers.

**GUIDELINES**

The Department of English acknowledges that **citation management software** (e.g. Mendeley, Zotero, ProCite) **may be used** in the creation of applications, presentations, essays, theses, and dissertations. The Department notes, however, that such software should not replace a thorough and demonstrated understanding of the practices of quoting and paraphrasing, or a detailed comprehension of relevant citation style. These will remain core skills to be supported through our degree programs.

The Department of English acknowledges that the acts of writing and of disseminating research may involve **word processing programs that include the ability to adjust spelling, grammar, and sentence structure**. The department makes a distinction between these integrated elements of, for example, Microsoft and Adobe programs, which—like format or design suggestions through PowerPoint—are permitted, and the use of prohibited editing software, such as Grammarly, which has greater potential to replace careful, thoughtful, individual writing practices.

NOTE: This distinction will require ongoing discussion within the department, especially with regard to the increasing impact of autofill or autocompletion prompts.

1. **Applications for Admission to Graduate Programs:** Generative AI tools or apps (e.g. ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude, Microsoft Copilot) are strictly prohibited in applications for admission to graduate programs in the Department of English. All materials in an application package must be the original work of the applicant themself. Applicants are prohibited from using generative AI at any point in the research, organization, or writing of any element of the application package, including the Statement of Intent and Writing Sample.
2. **Applications for Funding and Ethics Approval:** In the preparation of applications for external scholarships, non-departmental internal scholarships, non-departmental research funds, or ethics approval, students must follow the rules of the agency or office with regard to generative AI use.
3. **Coursework:** Generative AI tools or apps (e.g. ChatGPT, OpenAI’s “deep research” tool, Gemini, Claude, Microsoft Copilot) may not be used to complete assignments or assessments. Students must demonstrate their competency in core scholarly processes: detailed, individual engagement with texts and extant criticism; independent comprehension of a field and its debates and concerns; development of an original approach and understanding of its stakes and contribution; organization and creation of extended communication forms such as the oral presentation and the essay as these reflect an independent scholarly voice; and ability to revise work for both grammar and style.

In support of such goals, individual instructors may choose to engage students in work that involves AI. In so doing they will clarify the parameters of AI use and citation requirements, and address issues of concern, including potential inaccuracies, perpetuation of biases, reductive and standardized approaches to texts and issues, disregard of cultural contextualization or protocols in the generation of material, and differentially experienced environmental effects.

1. **PhD Language Requirement:** In the development of linguistic competence through coursework, students must follow the rules of the unit, course, and/or instructor with regard to generative AI use. The Department of English does not permit the use of generative AI in the completion of a translation examination, which represents one of the options to fulfill the PhD Language Requirement.
2. **PhD Field Examination:** Generative AI tools or apps (e.g. ChatGPT, OpenAI’s “deep research” tool, Gemini, Claude, Microsoft Copilot) may not be used to complete either the written or oral portions of the PhD Field Examination. In researching, composing, and discussing responses to examination questions, the student must demonstrate their ability to engage independently with texts and relevant criticism, and to establish convincing stances, claims, and analyses.
3. **Thesis/Dissertation Work:** Generative AI tools or apps (e.g. ChatGPT, OpenAI’s “deep research” tool, Gemini, Claude, Microsoft Copilot) may not be used to complete the written or (where applicable) oral portions of the Master’s Project Paper, Master’s Thesis, or Doctoral Dissertation. Students must demonstrate their independent ability to develop, draft, and revise the Proposal, and to research, draft, revise, and (where applicable) defend the research project in order to meet the standard for the degree in question. Copyright of the Project Paper, Thesis, or Dissertation requires the student to be the author of the work in question, responsible for its accuracy and claims.

In some situations, graduate research projects may involve the reasonable, ethical use of generative AI, including in the creation of graphs and illustrations. Any use of generative AI in this regard requires review and the written approval of the Supervisor(s) and all members of the Advisory Committee, and must be stated and acknowledged in specific and unambiguous terms in the project itself. In granting approval for work that involves AI, the Advisory Committee will establish the parameters of AI use and citation practices, and address issues of concern, including potential inaccuracies, perpetuation of biases, reductive and standardized approaches to texts and issues, disregard of cultural contextualization or protocols in the generation of material, and differentially experienced environmental effects.

**Contravening these guidelines will constitute academic misconduct.**

**PUBLISHING**

In our discipline, students disseminate their scholarly work primarily but not exclusively in the following forms: monographs; novels, novellas, and plays; essay, poetry, and short story collections; poems, short stories, and articles published in peer-reviewed journals; chapters in essay collections and selected papers volumes; peer-reviewed conference presentations, including papers, seminars, posters, and digital demonstrations; public presentations and talks; public readings.

The current editorial rules of discipline-specific journals and publishers indicate that the author is solely responsible for the entirety of the Work being submitted under their name. AI and Large Language Models do not qualify as authors, since they lack legal standing, and thus the use of such tools is typically prohibited. Students, in consultation with their Supervisors, are responsible for keeping up to date with current editorial/publisher policies when they intend to publish research to ensure compliance with those policies.

Students may be engaged in reviewing for conferences, journals, and essay collections, as well as in reviewing books and other publications. While individual journals or publishers may provide regulations on the use of AI and related tools, the reviewer is considered solely responsible for the entirety of the Work being completed and reliance on AI is typically prohibited. In these situations, it is important to note that the use of AI is inappropriate: it is the reviewer’s individual expertise, perspective, and understanding that has identified them as suitable for the task itself.

**Failing to follow editorial rules with regard to publishing or peer review will constitute a violation of the University of Saskatchewan** [**Responsible Conduct of Research Policy**](https://policies.usask.ca/policies/research-and-scholarly-activities/responsible-conduct-of-research-policy.php)**.**

**TRAINING**

Students are responsible for understanding and further developing their expertise in researching, quoting, paraphrasing, and citing texts and researched materials. Further to explanations provided in graduate courses, and in addition to departmental resources such as *Requirements for Essays* and the University Library Department of English Research Guide, students are encouraged to enact and, where necessary, research academic integrity, including the critical evaluation of AI tools as these continue to affect independent thought, effective writing strategies, and productive scholarship. To this end, all students must complete GPS 960.0: Academic Integrity, which includes a module on Generative AI. Further resources include the [University Library Guide on Generative AI](https://libguides.usask.ca/gen_ai) and <https://teaching.usask.ca/learning-technology/gen-ai/overview.php#top>.