Università
della
Svizzera
italiana

Generative AI in education

Recommendations for USI teaching staff

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1. General considerations[1]

USI **encourages the creative, critical and responsible use of generative Artificial Intelligence (Gen AI) tools** by members of its academic community, promoting experimentation, critical thinking and open discussions with and about these tools in teaching, research, knowledge transfer and other areas of USI's activities (to follow the activities on the subject, see: https://www.desk.usi.ch/en/node/13584).

Recognising that the ability to use AI tools effectively and responsibly is a fundamental skill for operating successfully in the 'digital society', **USI encourages its teaching staff and student community to learn and master these tools,** promoting a **critical thinking** approach that also considers their limitations.

The following general principles apply to the use of Gen AI tools by USI teaching staff:

1. The use of Gen AI is encouraged, unless for specific activities where it is explicitly prohibited.
2. It is the responsibility of the teachers and the students to explicitly agree on the conditions of use of Gen AI within courses and for writing dissertations, papers, etc.
3. The use of Gen AI tools for drafting texts for examination papers, final papers, dissertations, etc. must always be declared.
4. Gen AI must be used critically, competently and responsibly, paying particular attention to the trustworthiness of the answers provided, data protection, environmental sustainability aspects, and ensuring that confidential documents and sensitive data are not shared.
5. The responsibility for output produced using Gen AI tools must be assumed by an individual: those who use Gen AI assume responsibility for the resulting content, which cannot be attributed to a technical tool.
6. Course content produced and made available to students – including content generated by Gen AI – must correspond to the most up-to-date and accurate knowledge available.

USI has **extensive expertise in Gen AI**; among its other activities, it has an **inter-faculty working group**[2], which offers training and consulting services and can be contacted for contributions, suggestions, questions and requests regarding the use of Gen AI.

[1] This document expands and replaces previous communications ("ChatGPT & Generative AI @ USI", dated June 2023; and "Artificial intelligence tools and platforms", dated January 2023). This document is to be considered a working document and is subject to continuous updates.
[2] https://www.desk.usi.ch/en/node/13584

2. Directions for responsible use of Gen AI in teaching

In general, USI encourages teaching staff to integrate Gen AI creatively into their teaching activities, where – in the teacher's judgement – this may constitute added value. This can take place at different stages: in the course design, in the preparation of teaching materials and assessments, during the course, and in assessment activities.

2.1. Using Gen AI in course design

During the planning and preparation phase of a course, Gen AI can be used as a tool for reviewing documents, assisting in the formulation of learning objectives, developing specific scenarios or tasks, and more.

The appendix provides some examples of how Gen AI can be used to prepare slides (Example 1), generate examples and case studies for use in teaching (Example 2), prepare quiz questions (Example 6), and generate ideas for course (re)planning and the formulation of learning objectives (Example 3).

2.2. Use of Gen AI during the course

In general, teaching staff are encouraged to integrate Gen AI skilfully and creatively into their courses and to promote critical reflection and informed, competent and responsible use among students (see the Recommendations for the student community). As central figures in the educational process, teachers also have a responsibility to learn about and keep up to date with generative technologies, particularly Gen AI, in order to guide students in the critical and responsible use of these tools.

The appendix contains some examples of prompts that can be used during lessons, to obtain definitions of complex concepts to be discussed critically in class with students (Example 4), to assign tasks to students to be carried out with Gen AI, which can then be discussed in class (Example 5), to create quiz questions to be used as review activities for students (for example, through Wooflash – Example 6).

Teachers are advised to clearly communicate at the beginning and during the course what students should /can /cannot do with Gen AI tools for learning activities related to their course. For this purpose, it is recommended to include a section in the course syllabus summarising the relevant information so that students always have a reference available (Example 7). In this regard, we provide a checklist that teachers can consult to better structure their course planning (Appendix 2).

2.3. Use of Gen AI during exams (quizzes, exams with open-questions)

In general, we recommend that teaching staff communicate very clearly during the course and at the beginning of the examination what students should / can / cannot do with the Gen AI tools during the examination. We also encourage faculty to design assessments in which the use of Gen AI does not influence the outcome, both in terms of the type of questions and the format of the assessment.

If courses provide for assessment on the basis of papers that are produced by distance learners, we refer to the considerations in the next section (2.4).

2.4. Use of Gen AI for dissertation work, final papers, delivery of exam papers, etc.

In general, it is recommended that students working on their dissertation or final paper be clearly informed of whether and how they may use Gen AI tools in their work and, in cases where the use of Gen AI tools is at least partially permitted, how students must acknowledge this in their work (see the Recommendations for USI Student Community).

Examples:

- *The use of Gen AI tools for translation (e.g. Deepl, Grammarly) is allowed/forbidden*
- *The use of Gen AI tools to obtain ideas on how to structure the dissertation is permitted / prohibited*
- *The use of Gen AI tools for drafting the text is prohibited*
- *The use of Gen AI tools for grammatical and stylistic corrections, etc. is permitted / prohibited.*
- *The use of Gen AI tools must be explicitly stated in an appropriate section of the paper, specifying which tools were used and for which activities or parts of the paper*

Remember that the use of Gen AI tools, if allowed by the individual teacher, must always be declared ("I used it / how I used it" - see USI Student Community Guidelines).

Currently, it is impossible to prove with certainty that students have used Gen AI tools, so it is essential to try to prevent the misuse of such tools through clear communication. However, it is strongly discouraged to rely on tools designed to detect text generated with the help of Gen AI (e.g. ChatGPTzero and similar). These tools are still unreliable and of little use, as they only provide a statistical estimate without offering any definite proof of the actual use of such tools. In the event of suspected misuse of Gen AI by students, the normal procedures for dealing with misconduct as defined in the Study Regulations of the various Faculties must be followed.

3. Appendices

3.1. Appendix 1 - Examples

Example 1: creating slides with Gen AI

Tools such as Copilot, ChatGPT, Google Gemini and DALL-E can be useful to support the creation of slides, correct content and improve the overall appearance of presentations. The key to effective use is to formulate the right prompt. Here are some practical examples of how these tools can be used:

Creating a table of contents or index for a presentation

Prompt: *"Create a summary for a 10-slide presentation on the topic of generative artificial intelligence, dividing the topic into key sections such as definition, applications, benefits, ethical challenges and future."*

Expected result:

A list of clear and concise sections, which may help in the design of the slides. The choice of sections is the sole responsibility of the teacher, as is certifying that they are complete and correct.

Creating a diagram or chart

Prompt: *"Generate a simple diagram showing the difference between generative AI and traditional AI in terms of the ability to create original content."*

Expected result:

A diagram highlighting the differences, such as:

- Traditional AI: Analyses and answers questions.
- Generative AI: Create new content (text, images, etc.).

Please note: before using the slides produced by Gen AI, it is recommended that you review them, personalise them and adapt them to your own needs and teaching philosophy.

Example 2: Generating examples and case studies for a 'Civil Law' course

AI can generate practical examples, case studies and legal issues to stimulate classroom discussion and further understanding of legal concepts.

Course: Civil Law - Contracts and Obligations

Course objective:

- The course focuses on civil law, in particular on the regulation of contracts and obligations, providing students with the necessary knowledge to analyse and apply legal regulations in practical situations.
- To obtain the best results from the use of generative AI during a course, it is crucial to provide clear instructions on what is expected and what is to be avoided, so as to direct the AI to generate relevant and accurate content.

Prompt for Gen AI (ChatGPT):

"Create a practical example of a sales contract in which the parties involved are two individuals. The contract must comply with the main provisions of the Swiss Civil Code, and must include clauses on delivery, payment and product warranty."

Please note: before using the case produced by Gen AI, it is recommended that you review them, personalise them and adapt them to your own needs and teaching philosophy.

Example 3: Redesigning an advanced programming course

Topic: Code writing and debugging

a. The students have already learnt the fundamentals of programming, and the related languages and codes.
b. In the advanced course
    i. Generative AI tools (e.g. ChatGPT) are used to suggest solutions to code problems or to identify errors quickly.
    ii. Course redesign can shift the emphasis to understanding the errors proposed by the AI and interpreting the results, reducing the time spent on manual debugging.

In this way, some repetitive debugging exercises can be reduced in favour of critical analysis and code optimisation activities.

Example 4: Prompt for definitions of complex concepts

Purpose of exercise: Understand and discuss complex concepts. Use an AI tool to obtain definitions of complex concepts, critically analyse them and further understanding through guided discussions.

Assignment:

- Preparation: Use Gen AI to generate definitions of a complex concept, e.g. 'generative artificial intelligence'.
    - Prompt for Gen AI: *"Define 'generative artificial intelligence' in simple terms and in depth, including benefits, ethical challenges and key applications."*

Classroom activities:

- Step 1: Students read the definition obtained with Gen AI and compare it with any definitions they already know.
- Step 2: In small groups, discuss the following questions:
    - What are the strengths of the definition provided by Gen AI?
    - Is there anything missing or something that could be better explained?
    - What ethical implications or real-life applications do you find particularly relevant?
- Step 3: Each group shares their ideas with the class and the teacher offers feedback.

Critical reflection:

Conclude the session by asking students to individually answer a reflection question:

"How can we use AI-generated definitions to support our learning and when might it be important to supplement it with other sources?"

Example 5: Gen AI to stimulate debate on controversial topics

Purpose of exercise: Use ChatGPT (or an alternative tool) to stimulate discussion on complex and controversial topics. Reflect on the use of prompt techniques and the optimisation of requests to artificial intelligence models.

Assignment:

1. Choose a complex topic related to the course (e.g. 'The ethical implications of using artificial intelligence in medical decision-making').
    - Prompt: *'Explain in depth the ethical implications of using artificial intelligence in medical decision-making. Focus on the main benefits, risks and ethical dilemmas."*
2. Use ChatGPT or an alternative tool to:
- Request an in-depth explanation of the topic.
- Identify the main points of debate or controversy related to the topic.
- Generate a list of possible solutions or approaches to deal with disputes.
    - Prompt: *"What are the main points of debate or ethical controversies related to the use of artificial intelligence to support doctors in diagnosis or treatment choices?"*
3. Create a list of the prompts you used to obtain this information.
4. Bring the list and the answers obtained to class.

Classroom reflection:

1. In groups of 3-4 people compare and discuss the information obtained from each:
- What are the common points in the answers obtained?
- Are there significant differences? If so, how could they be explained?
2. Identify together:
- The strong points of the answers generated by Gen AI.
- Areas where Gen AI may have provided incomplete or incorrect information.
3. In plenary, each group shares the results of its discussion.

Final question for reflection:

How has the use of AI enriched your understanding of the subject? What limitations have you encountered?

Example 6: Generation of quiz questions

Purpose of exercise: To help students review key concepts from the Intercultural Communication course using Gen AI-based tools to create quizzes, flashcards and reflection activities.

Assignment:

Use Wooflash (or a similar Gen AI tool) to create review activities on the main concepts of the course, such as theories of intercultural communication, conflict dynamics and managing cultural diversity. Reflect on the advantages of using AI for revision and independent learning.

Prompts for ChatGPT, Google Gemini or similar (for Wooflash no prompt is required):

1. Prompt for creating flashcards:
    - *"Create a set of flashcards for the Intercultural Communication course, including concepts such as 'cultural other', 'high and low context communication', 'cultural bias', 'cultural iceberg theory', and 'intercultural mediation'. Each flashcard should contain a clear definition of the term and a practical example."*
2. Prompt for creating review quiz questions:
    - *"Generate a 10-question multiple-choice quiz on theories of intercultural communication, focusing on common causes of intercultural conflict, the benefits of cross-cultural communication, and best practices in mediating conflict between cultures. Each question must have three options, with one correct answer clearly marked."*
3. Prompt to generate thought-provoking activities:
    - *"Create a set of thought-provoking questions that students can use to evaluate how to apply intercultural communication techniques in everyday or work situations. Include at least five questions that stimulate self-reflection and critical analysis'.*

Activities as classwork or assigned as homework:

1. Phase 1: Review by flashcard
    - Students use the set of flashcards generated by Wooflash to review key concepts. Each flashcard includes a definition and a practical example to help clarify the concept. Students can use the quiz or challenge mode to better memorise the concepts.
2. Phase 2: Review quiz
    - Students complete the quiz created by Gen AI on Wooflash. The quiz contains questions on the main topics of the course and allows them to test their understanding.
3. Phase 3: Group discussion
    - After completing the quiz, students are divided into small groups and respond to thought-provoking questions created by Gen AI. Each group discusses their answers and shares their thoughts with the class.
4. Step 4: Feedback and improvement
    - Students provide feedback on the quiz and flashcards, discussing whether and how the use of Gen AI has improved their revision skills. The teacher collects the feedback and uses it to improve or define further activities.

Example 7: Possible information to be included in the course Syllabus

This course gives you the freedom to use generative AI tools for any type of task. This includes, for example, brainstorming and idea development, content organisation, writing and editing, as well as other applications.

3.2. Appendix 2 - Checklist for Teaching Staff

Checklist with information to be communicated at the beginning of a course, especially recommended for courses that involve writing assignments:

❑	**Type or list of Gen AI-based tools**: specify which tools are permitted or prohibited in your course. You can define an approval process for tools not included in the list.
❑	**Categorisation of tasks for the use of Gen AI**: subdivide the tasks in which the use of Gen AI is permitted and those in which it is prohibited. Teachers must carefully consider in which tasks to encourage the use of Gen AI, e.g. summarising, code generation, visualisations, data analysis, feedback, language review, editing, quiz completion and answering questions in the classroom.
❑	**Rules for disclosing the use of these tools**: explain the rules for documenting and citing images and texts generated by Gen AI, including the statement of originality.
❑	**Accountability**: define the responsibilities that students assume, for example in the event of inaccuracies, bias or plagiarism in their work.
❑	**Use of Gen AI in exams**: addressing questions such as: will the use of Gen AI be permitted during exams? Can material copied and pasted from Gen AI be used in exam papers?
❑	**Privacy and copyright regulations**: specify what information or materials participants are authorised to upload to Gen's AI systems during the course.
❑	**Putting it all together**: Put all the information you've given into a document that students can always check, such as the course syllabus (Example 7).

3.3. Appendix 3 - Benchmarking with other Swiss universities

These guidelines are also based on a benchmark analysis made on the recommendations published by other Swiss universities and polytechnics. The following table shows the reference links (updated 11.06.2025).

University	Description	Link
ETH Zurich	The ETHZ takes a proactive approach to the use of generative AI in the educational context, promoting responsible use among students and teachers.	https://ethz.ch/en/the-eth-zurich/education/ai-in-education.html
University of Zurich	The University of Zurich publishes its seven guiding principles with respect to artificial intelligence in research and teaching, with a recommendation with respect to Generative AI.	https://www.uzh.ch/en/explore/basics/ai.html https://www.uzh.ch/en/explore/basics/ai/recommendations.html
EPFL	EPFL encourages the use of generative AI across their range of activities in an informed, responsible and transparent manner. It introduces the key principle: always remember to remain critical when using these tools.	https://www.epfl.ch/about/vice-presidencies/vice-presidency-for-academic-affairs-vpa/tips-for-the-use-of-generative-ai-in-research-and-education/
University of Geneva	The University of Geneva recognises and encourages the use of Generative AI, remembering that it is the responsibility of all members of the university community to make informed, critical and responsible use of these tools.	https://www.unige.ch/en/university/politique-generale/use-generative-artificial-intelligence-unige/ https://www.unige.ch/en/university/politique-generale/statement-ai/
University of Basel	Guidelines on the use of Generative AI in teaching and research.	https://www.unibas.ch/en/Studies/Learning-and-Teaching/AI-in-learning-and-teaching.html
University of Freiburg	Guidelines for introducing Generative AI in the context of research and teaching.	https://www.unifr.ch/uni/fr/assets/public/files/portrait/encdrement_ia_generative_enseignement_fr.pdf https://www.unifr.ch/it/fr/assets/public/documents/MaterielsLogiciels/AlternativesOutilsDetection_Final.pdf
University of Lucerne	The University of Lucerne defines what is prohibited and what is permitted.	https://www.unilu.ch/fileadmin/fakultaeten/wf/institute/hrm/dok/St

		udium/ENG_Merkblatt_KI_20231019_EV.pdf
University of Bern	The University of Bern encourages the use of Generative AI on the basis of three main principles: transparency, comprehensibility and reproducibility.	https://www.unibe.ch/unibe/portal/content/e1133/e1396721/e1539599/e1539602/Guidelines_ResearchonandwithAI2024_ger.pdf

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