



## Policy on AI Use

### Preamble

This policy outlines the stance of *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad* (*Frontiers*) on responsible, transparent, and ethical use of artificial intelligence (AI) in scholarly research and publication.

As use of AI, especially generative AI, becomes more appealing in research and academic settings, *Frontiers* carefully recognizes AI's potential to support human intellectual labor but strictly maintains that the former cannot replace the latter.

This policy establishes boundaries for prohibited and permissible AI use for publications in *Frontiers* while reaffirming that authorship and full responsibility and accountability remain with human researchers and authors. The policy provides that the demanding labor of critique, interpretation, reflexivity and/or creativity involved in doing research is essential, indispensable to *human* intellectual advancement.

Grounded in principles of academic integrity and transparency, the policy guides authors, reviewers, and editors across all stages of the research and publication process. It emphasizes the importance of disclosing AI use, ensuring ethical research and review practices, and maintaining critical reflection about the potential biases, limitations, and broader societal impacts associated with AI use. In launching this policy, which will be updated regularly, *Frontiers* aims to uphold principles of research excellence amidst a rapidly evolving AI landscape.

**1. Scope of Reference:** For the purposes of this policy, 'AI use', alternatively 'use of AI', refers to the utilization of any artificial intelligence tool in the ideation, design, implementation, refinement, written or visual reporting or any other element of the research and publication process.

**1.1.** AI tools include, but are not limited to, Microsoft Copilot, Scopus AI, ScienceDirect AI, Scholar Labs, Elicit, Consensus, Scite.ai, Claude, ChatGPT, Mistral, and Perplexity, etc.

**1.1.1.** AI tools are not limited to Generative AI tools.

**1.1.2.** Data collection and analysis software like Qualtrics and NVivo are not generally considered AI tools for the purposes of this policy; however, where specific functions of this software explicitly use AI, e.g., Lumivero AI Assistant in NVivo, they are covered by this policy and shall be considered like the AI tools listed in §1.1.

**1.2.** ‘Research’ is defined broadly here, including empirical research and any intellectual work of a non-empirical nature submitted for publication, e.g., conceptual essays, methodological briefs, and any work of similar scholarly substance.

**2. Guiding Principles:** AI tools can be legitimate means of aiding researchers at different, even all, stages of research, but they cannot replace researchers at any stage.

**2.1.** Ownership of and responsibility and accountability for the research and publication lie fully and exclusively with the human agents leading the research and listed as authors on the work submitted for publication.

**2.1.1.** Manuscripts listing any AI tools as co-authors or contributors shall be desk-rejected.

**2.1.2.** Authors are reminded that AI-generated content may sometimes involve plagiarism, for which responsibility shall be fully with the authors.

**2.2.** Any AI use, as permissible, during the process of manuscript revision or preparation for publication should be disclosed as clarified in the “Scope of AI Use” section below.

**2.3.** Authors are prohibited from using any AI-generated visual materials, e.g., images, graphs, etc., in their submitted work. This provision shall be valid for as long as U.S. copyright law is unclear about the copyrightability of AI-generated visual materials.

**2.4.** Authors, reviewers, and editors shall be mindful of the potential cognitive, cultural, and linguistic biases reflected by AI tools ([learn more](#)). They are reminded these potential biases may contribute to undermining, rather than promoting, epistemological diversity of and cross-cultural debate and dialogue through academic scholarship. Authors, reviewers, and editors are further reminded of *Frontiers’ policy on voice*, which welcomes diversity in authors’ expression of their research orientations and linguacultural backgrounds.

**2.5.** Authors, reviewers, and editors should be mindful of the potential impact of AI use on the environment and human well-being ([learn more](#)). This means that any use of AI should be well worth the environmental and human well-being consequences it entails. Authors, reviewers, and editors should carefully consider whether the use of AI tools is necessary or merited in this context.

**2.6.** Where authors have not used any AI tools at any stage of the research or writing process, they should include in their manuscript at the time of submission and again at the time of publication a statement declaring non-use.

**3. AI Use in Review and Editorial Processes:** Peer reviewers and editors are strictly prohibited from uploading manuscripts, in whole or in part, to any AI tools. If reviewers or editors utilize AI to inform, influence, or produce any part of their comments, feedback, or decisions, they must include in their review report a full and transparent account of their AI use, which shall be accessible to both authors and editorial peers.

**3.1.** Where AI use is disclosed in a manuscript (see Section 4), peer reviewers and editors shall assess the reported use similarly as they evaluate the merit of methods, critique, and reflexivity in any research manuscripts.

**3.2.** Reviewers' evaluation of AI use may, for example, focus on whether an author's report of their AI use is clear and sufficient; whether their reported prompts to the used AI tool seem appropriate; and/or how effective the reported engagement with AI outputs is, considering the given research purpose, design, and argument.

**4. Scope of AI Use:** The following list illustrates where AI use is permissible and shall not be viewed as exclusive or exhaustive nor shall it be interpreted as absolving researchers or authors from their responsibility for documenting and disclosing, fully and transparently, any and all utilization of AI tools. Throughout the list, 'AI Appendix' refers to an appendix that should be included in manuscripts where all use of AI that is reported in the work is explained and justified.

**4.1.** Learning: permissible and need not to be disclosed so long as AI use is for the purpose of learning how to do research rather than for the purpose of doing research. As an illustrative example, an author who uses AI tools to learn how to use new data analysis software or how to approach a literature review may do so and does not have to disclose it.

**4.2.** Research ideation: permissible on the dual condition that authors both disclose it in the introduction of submitted work and explain and justify it in the AI Appendix. For

example, authors may share the prompts given to AI tools in the introduction and explain how they used, adapted or otherwise responded to the outputs.

**4.3. Literature search:** permissible on the dual condition that authors both disclose it in the literature review part of submitted work and explain and justify it in the AI Appendix. For example, authors should explain in the AI Appendix what additional steps, if any, they took to ensure the accuracy, relevance, and diversity of the sources found with the help of AI tools.

**4.3.1.** Authors are reminded that using AI tools to identify sources may yield vague, unsubstantial, and/or inaccurate results. If authors use AI tools for literature search, they should report their use as outlined above.

**4.4. Literature review:** prohibited, except for checking for language accuracy. Authors cannot use AI tools to review the literature or report their literature review.

**4.5. Methodology:** permissible on the dual condition that authors both disclose it in the methodology part of submitted work and explain and justify it in the AI Appendix. For example, authors may use AI tools for identifying appropriate methods or adjudicating the comparative plausibility of different methodological approaches, procedures, and techniques, so long as this use is disclosed in the methodology section and the actions taken following this use are explained and justified in the AI Appendix.

**4.5.1.** Authors are prohibited from using AI tools for qualitative data analysis, including when AI tools are embedded in qualitative analysis software like NVivo (see §1.1.2; [learn more](#)).

**4.5.2.** Authors are prohibited from uploading to any AI tools any data (qualitative or quantitative) where this AI use may involve violating ethical guidelines on anonymity, privacy, and confidentiality, unless explicit approval of this use has been granted by an institutional review board.

**4.5. Results:** prohibited, except for checking language accuracy. Authors cannot use AI tools to do their quantitative or qualitative analysis.

**4.6. Discussion and conclusion:** Authors cannot use AI in these sections. The discussion and conclusion sections must reflect the author's own intellectual judgment, interpretation of results, and understanding of their real world implications. Authors remain fully responsible for meaning making and for the conclusions drawn and the ethical or contextual judgments expressed in these sections.