

Declaration of Originality for Examinations - A guideline for use with special focus on the possible use of AI tools

Translation¹ from the Original 'Eigenständigkeitserklärung für Prüfungen – eine Handreichung zur Verwendung mit besonderem Fokus auf den möglichen Einsatz von KI-Tools'



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1. Implications of Generative AI Tools for Examinations

For examinations conducted without supervision, it is desirable that students demonstrate they have completed the examination independently. For many examination formats, the examination regulations already expressly stipulate that students must attach a declaration of originality at the end, in which the examinees sign that they have prepared the work without further assistance.

With the proliferation of apps and tools that use generative AI (GenAI), all stakeholders face new challenges regarding academic work, copyright issues, and the definition of independence in the context of examinations. When GenAI tools are used in academic work, working processes change and increasingly take place (automatically) in the background, meaning the writer sometimes has less influence on the outcome. For subject-specific AI-based tools used in academic work, for example to support data analysis, individual regulations should be established within the framework of examinations. Such systems are not the subject of this guideline.

What is Generative AI (GenAI)?

In contrast to AI-based systems whose task is, for example, classification ("Does the image show a cat or a dog?") or making recommendations ("Since you haven't passed the last 2 tests, I recommend the following exercises."), generative AI tools - as the name suggests - are designed to generate something. For examinations at HS KL, those that generate text in natural language or code are predominantly relevant. However, there are also image- or music-generating tools.

These tools are capable of producing well-sounding texts on virtually any topic. However, they are language systems, not knowledge systems. Their rhetorical sophistication often obscures the fact that readers cannot trust the truth content of the produced text. In most cases, they have a very user-friendly interface and are easy to use: After entering the question or desired keywords on the topic, the so-called prompt, one receives a result within seconds. Prompting by spoken language is also increasingly possible.

Currently, we are in a transitional phase in which GenAI tools are changing academic work, but both the tools are still in their infancy and as well our handling of them. Accordingly, the use of such tools should be adapted to the competencies being assessed in the examination. A general ban on GenAI is not advisable due to their ubiquity. However, certain (academic) skills must be acquired before students are allowed to use GenAI tools to support their work - similar to how pupils must learn (mental) arithmetic before using a calculator for the first time. Furthermore, competencies in dealing with GenAI tools must be acquired. In any case, it must be determined whether and to what extent these competencies are part of the examination.

To increase transparency in the examination process for all parties involved, clear regulations help (cf. Tobor, 2024), enabling review and evaluation based on transparently communicated conditions and criteria:

Lecturers are required before the examination to:

- decide whether and how GenAI is permitted in the examination
- enter into a reasoned dialogue with students about the choice of approach - ideally at the beginning of the course
- clarify which conditions apply when using GenAI

Students are required during the examination to:

- take responsibility for fulfilling the conditions for the permitted use of GenAI as an aid
- create transparency, e.g., through a reflected methods section, listing the prompts used, or marking the AI
- output
- assure through the signed declaration of originality that they have complied with the conditions

The following recommendations for designing the framework conditions of examinations in the age of GenAI are now presented. The starting point is the adapted declaration of originality (cf. also Salden & Leschke, 2023) as well as considerations regarding permitted GenAI-based aids.

2. The Declaration of Originality

a. Declaration of Originality as an Instrument

As mentioned at the outset, a declaration of originality is an important signal to students for unsupervised – mostly written - examinations. It represents a binding commitment to adhere to requirements regarding labeling and transparency. The framework conditions are aligned by the responsible lecturers to the specific examination requirements. Thus, there are various options or scenarios that students and lecturers can agree upon. With their signature, students declare that they recognize the respective applicable conditions. They simultaneously bear responsibility for the consequences of non-compliance with these conditions. This awareness of the significance of this declaration - especially against the background of good scientific practice - should be sharpened among students at the latest at the beginning of the processing time.

Excursion: Good Scientific Practice

Scientific work involves various principles that must be observed independently of the use of GenAI tools. The German Research Foundation refers to the necessity of considering the current state of science, documenting results, consistently questioning all findings oneself, and maintaining strict honesty regarding the contributions of potential partners, competitors, and predecessors (DFG, 2013).

Lehmann additionally states that "independence in the sense of originality of the scientific work" refers to the following points:

- "own paths in data collection and substantiation of claims,
- presenting what has been found, the results achieved, and the methodological information gain, and
- determining the terms used" (2022, p. 6)

When students confirm their independent scientific work with their signature, this also includes the methodological approach and its reflection, thus closing the circle to working with GenAI as an aid.

b. Adapting the Wording of the Declaration of Originality

We recommend adding the following wording to the declaration of originality in the future:

"If I have used AI-generated outputs, I have marked them according to the specifications of the examiner(s)."

It is now the responsibility of the lecturers to make the specifications transparent accordingly. Various options are conceivable, which are explained below.

c. Options for Specifications

There are four different options in total, which can be distinguished according to the type of learning objective: Especially at the beginning of studies, it will likely be examined primarily whether **(1) basic subject competencies** are present. Since these may be taken over by AI tools, their use should rather be prohibited in such examinations. Usually, the focus of written examinations without supervision is to prove that one can **(2) write scientifically independently**. To be able to examine precisely scientific formulation, text-generating tools should be avoided in such examinations. When the **(3) competenc in dealing with GenAI tools** is explicitly the subject of the examination, these must also be used by the students. Here, it may need to be restricted which tools may/should be used to process the task. Since in the future **(4) part of professional scientific work** will be to facilitate this through GenAI, this should already be part of examinations such as final theses in studies.

In the last two scenarios, students should explicitly state which GenAI tools were used for what purpose. Explanations of the different scenarios see Figure 1.

The same specifications should apply to all students who are to achieve the same learning objective. For simplicity, these can be handed out to the students along with other (formal) specifications for written work.

Learning Outcome	Recommendation	Justification
Acquiring subject competency	Initially do not permit AI tools and emphasize the importance of professionally verified and relevant sources	Students must anchor basic concepts and technical terms of their subject in long-term memory. These must be professionally verified and come from scientific sources. The fact that a statement appears most frequently on the internet and is therefore most likely generated by an AI is not sufficient for this purpose.
Being able to write scientifically independently	Initially do not permit AI tools; possible exceptions, e.g., DeepL for translations	Independent formulation serves to understand and develop thoughts from others. Students should learn to communicate their own thoughts and results of scientific analyses in writing. This is a skill that can only be acquired through their own doing and practicing.
Learning outcomes regarding AI tools, e.g., assessing & comparing AI tools (methodological competency)	Depending on the task or the lecturer's needs (what they want to see or correct). Additionally: 1. Documentation template for use 2. List of permitted aids (see below)	If students are to demonstrate the acquisition of competencies in dealing with AI tools, they must also be able to use them in the examination. However, it is advisable to specify as precisely as possible which tools students should/may use at all and how exactly the use is to be documented.
Using AI tools professionally, among other things for writing final theses	The students' basic subject, writing, and tool competencies are already present in this scenario. The work is evaluated as a result of using different methods and independent thinking.	To encourage independent scientific work, students should be free to choose which AI tools they use. Here too, the use should be documented, possibly even in connection with an explanation to understand the students' approach.

Table 1: Use of AI Tools based on learning outcomes (own representation)

3. Permitted Aids

Since the number of tools and thus the possibilities offered by GenAI is growing almost daily (cf. <https://www.futurepedia.io/>), it should be recorded which AI-based tools are permitted within the framework of the examination. This depends, as explained above, on which learning objective is being pursued or which competencies are being assessed.

When the use of GenAI-based tools is permitted or even required, lecturers should decide on one of the following scenarios before the examination, ideally at the beginning of the semester and possibly with the participation of the students, and communicate this:

1. All tools are permitted.

[or]

2. There is a restricted, express enumeration of tools that may be used; all others are not permitted.

[or]

3. There is an express enumeration of prohibited tools. All other tools are permitted.

The third scenario is recommended to be avoided. It is problematic because lecturers cannot know all tools, so a tool with similar functionality to a prohibited tool may be permitted. In the second scenario, each examiner must answer the question for themselves whether the central subject of independence is the development of an idea or the formulation of it - or both. The answer to this question is usually determined by the learning objective defined at the beginning and to be assessed, and is then reflected in the selection of permitted aids.

The use of permitted aids must be documented by the students. It should be noted that successful documentation takes quite some time. Since it is currently not possible to clearly prove the use of GenAI tools², it also harbors potential for misuse. The following extremes should be considered in university practice: When a student uses GenAI tools reflectively and documents this, a high time investment is involved. Good results can only be achieved with detailed prompts and iterative procedures, which is correspondingly elaborate and extensive to document despite a copy-and-paste approach³. At the other end of the scale are students who either use GenAI tools half-heartedly or do not indicate their use (as mentioned, misuse is difficult to prove). In contrast to the use of specialist literature, good or bad results can be achieved with the use of GenAI tools - regardless of whether the use is stated or not. Especially for examination formats such as a final thesis, in which competencies in dealing with AI tools are only part of the examination performance, this tightrope walk poses a challenge. Since GenAI tools are aids, the documentation of their use should not take too much time.

As a solution, it is recommended to find a good middle ground in documentation: All tools used are documented in the appendix with reference to the version number. It is listed in which chapters, pages, or paragraphs these were used and for what purpose. Especially when competencies in dealing with GenAI tools are being assessed, a justification for the use should also be required. In this scenario, a more detailed documentation of all prompts or prompt sequences (and possibly their results) may also be necessary. A more specific solution is reflection on the approach in the methods section. Especially for final theses, not only is the subject-specific method presented (i.e., the description of an experimental setup, the procedure for statistical surveys, etc.), but also how GenAI systems were used to produce the scientific work. It should be noted that this involves

² Given the technology currently in use, it is also rather unlikely that this will ever be the case.

³ As systems that support prompts in the form of spoken language, images, videos, and other media become increasingly important, documentation is also becoming noticeably more complex.

reflection on the writing process, which has tended to play a rather secondary role in the academic culture thus far, especially in STEM fields.

a. Documentation of AI Tool Use in the Appendix

The following tabular documentation is recommended. This does not have to be in exactly this form, but the format should be determined before the processing time begins. It should be noted that despite sometimes very eloquent results from such tools, they are not authors under German copyright law, which is why this list is separate from the bibliography.

If part of the learning objective is also the reflective use of GenAI tools, a column for the justification of use can also be added.

AI-based Aid	Form of Use	Affected Part of the Work	Remarks
Dream (Wombo) https://dream.ai/ January 2024	Creation of visualizations	Fig. 2, p. 7; Fig. 9, p. 15	Fig.2, p.7: heavily revised, only visualization idea from Dream
DeepL Translator (DeepL SE) https://www.deepl.com/translator January to February 2024	Translation of text passages	Entire Work	
ChatGPT, Version GPT3 (OpenAI) https://chat.openai.com/ September to December 2024	Creation of text suggestions, marked in the text or in footnotes. ChatGPT was consulted on the topic of the work, the results compared with own research.	Chapter 1, p. 3, Section 2; Chapter 2, pp. 5-7; complete chat history in appendix	
...

Table 2: Overview based on the University of Basel Guideline

Based on the rules developed by the Modern Language Association of America (2023), the following guidelines can be given:

Students should:

1. Always refer to the GenAI tool when they directly apply, paraphrase, or incorporate the generated content (e.g., text, images, data, or other) into their own work.
2. List all uses of a tool (e.g., shortening or reformulating text or translating text passages).
3. Verify cited secondary sources. Especially tools intended for text production and without internet access invent evidence for their statements that does not exist in reality.

The exact procedure must also be determined individually before the examination begins. The following elements should be listed in each case (cf. University of Basel):

- **Name and version** of the tool
- **Provider** (company, organization, or person offering or programming the tool)
- **URL** of the tool
- **Date or period** of generation of the content

b. „Citation“ of AI Tools

If the acquisition of AI competencies is the focus of the examination or more detailed documentation is desired, in addition to the general overview, the detailed use of the respective tools should be indicated in a further overview or directly in the text. In addition to the details listed above, the following information should be provided for the respective processing step:

- **Prompt**, i.e., the user's input, as a title (For very long prompts, only the beginning can be given.)
- if technically given, **precise identification**, such as the link to the prompt or the seed number for Midjourney⁴

Examples of how the use of GenAI tools can be indicated directly are listed here:

Examples

Example 1: Verbatim reproduction of text

Geology can be defined as the science that "studies the upper layers of the Earth" ("What is Geology?" generated by ChatGPT, March 23, 2023)

Example 2: Paraphrase of text

As a geologist, Martina Musterfrau does not study the entire interior of our planet, but only its upper layers. (see „What is Geology?“ generated by ChatGPT, March 23, 2023)

Example 3: Translation

"Comme je descendais des fleuves impassibles" (Rimbaud). "As I drifted down unfeeling rivers" (translated by Mark Polizotti).
"As I traveled down the impassive rivers" (translated von DeepL. 04.03.2023)

Example 4: Picture



Picture 1 "An Ocean of Books", generated by Stable Diffusion, 28.03.2023.

Whether a form of short reference as in the examples can be used must be determined before the examination begins. For example, a reference to the tabular overview of the aids used in the appendix can be made, where the exact details (such as version number and provider) of the tools are listed.

4. Further Support

Please note that the subject of this guideline is a very dynamic topic subject to rapid changes. An attempt was made to keep the explanations as general as possible to ensure timeliness. If you have

⁴ Midjourney generates images based on a random number. If this number is not randomly selected by the system but is instead included as a parameter in the prompt, the results can be reconstructed with nearly 95% accuracy: <https://docs.midjourney.com/docs/seeds>

specific (or further general) questions, please contact hochschuldidaktik@hs-kl.de or the Staff Unit Legal Affairs for legal questions. In the OpenOlat course of the university didactics, further information on the use of AI in teaching-learning situations is compiled:



Figure 1: <https://olat.vcrp.de/auth/RepositoryEntry/3578724584/CourseNode/106528832956813>

If you plan to use GenAI tools on a larger scale in your degree program or if you want to give your degree program a new orientation, for example with regard to the various examination performances, you can also discuss this as part of a curriculum workshop. For this offer from the university didactics, which is currently in conception, you will find further information shortly in the OpenOlat course.

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