

# International

## EPQ (9695)

### Notes and guidance: Artificial intelligence (AI) guidance

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# Introduction

This support document provides information and advice regarding the valid and unacceptable use of artificial intelligence (AI). It includes the steps to take if you suspect AI misuse.

The overriding principle remains that Centre Coordinators/Supervisors must only accept work for project work which is the learners' own.

AI tools are becoming more developed in their capabilities and are prevalent within operating systems and software, so it is important to consider the use of these tools in the context of this component.

**Learners may not receive direct credit for the AI content itself. They must demonstrate evidence of decision making, interpretation and reflection on the output of the AI tool.**

## Valid use of AI in Project qualifications

The lists of suppliers of AI-related products are for information purposes only and do not constitute an endorsement by AQA. It is each centre's or individual's responsibility to investigate and verify any suppliers they use, including any terms and conditions which govern the sale or use of the supplier's products. The lists provided are not exhaustive.

AI may be legitimately used by learners for Project qualifications. For example:

- Idea generation for questions, approaches or topics.
- During preliminary research, for example, a student must decide whether adequate reliable research material will be available to them to enable evidence-based conclusions to be drawn for any chosen topic. Asking suitable questions of an AI tool may enable them to discern if a certain topic is suitable or unsuitable for the EPQ.
- To summarise a long article, to help them decide whether the article is relevant for their research.
- To generate background information to aid the learner's understanding of a concept or to explore techniques or concepts.
- Language simplification, explaining difficult concepts in simpler terms.
- To help with project planning and time management. Creating draft interview or survey questions (learners must review and justify the final questions used, however).
- To sort and display data.
- To analyse large data sets that a learner undertaking a Project Qualification would not have time to analyse themselves. The learner will not receive credit for the output of the AI tool, but will receive credit for the interpretation of the data analysis.
- Use one or more AI tools during the initial design and prototype stages of an artefact project; AI tools might produce mood boards or design ideas, for example, which can then be considered by the learner.

AI may be legitimately used by supervisors, for example:

- As an opportunity to teach students that AI tools are not infallible, that they may contain inherent and reprehensible bias, that they have great potential to help with research, but AI responses should always be considered with caution.
- To prepare suitable coaching questions to pose at review meetings.

If a learner chooses to use AI to do any of these things they should refer to their use of AI within their Production log. They must not copy and paste from AI generated content without clear reference. Learners may not receive direct credit for the AI content itself but may still choose to use AI if, for example, it enables the learner to save time or analyse and evaluate data more effectively. Learners must evidence all the questions/prompts, together with the exact responses provided by the AI. Thoughtful and transparent use of AI tools may enhance the project process and support the development of higher-level skills.

Where learners use AI, they must acknowledge its use and show clearly how they have used it in order that supervisors can acknowledge this use, check that it is valid use and recognise it when applying the assessment criteria during marking and moderation.

Referenced use of AI tools can contribute to valid assessment evidence. For example, good decision-making in terms of use of AI can contribute to AO3, such as asking AI to suggest some appropriate sources for a learner to evaluate. An example of poor decision-making using AI tools would be to use all sources suggested by AI without evaluating each source themselves. Time saved by asking an AI tool to complete tasks offers opportunities to learners to use their EPQ time developing their own skills to a higher level.

## Unacceptable use of AI in Project qualifications

The final submission must be the product of the learners' own independent work and independent thought.

AI misuse is where a learner has used one or more AI tools but has not appropriately acknowledged this use and/or has submitted work for assessment when it is not their own.

Some examples are:

- Copying or paraphrasing sections of AI-generated content so that the work submitted for assessment is no longer the learner's own.
- Copying or paraphrasing whole responses of AI-generated content.
- Using AI to complete or refine elements of the assessment so that the work does not reflect the learner's own skills, work, analysis, evaluation or calculations.
- Failing to acknowledge use of AI tools when they have been used as a source of information.
- Incomplete or poor acknowledgement of AI tool use.
- Using Grammarly or similar to generate writing that is not the learner's own is unacceptable. Grammarly has optional generative AI features that enable users to produce new content based on their inputs or prompts. These features are not turned on by default; they're available on-demand, and learners have full control over when and how to use them. (In Grammarly, select Account from the menu. From the Account menu, go to Settings and then select Feature Customisation from the menu. Toggle the generative AI functions to 'off.')
- Similarly improper use of tools such as Trinka and Paperpal is unacceptable. These AI tools are fine to use for plagiarism checking but it is unacceptable for learners to let an AI tool to make changes to their writing for them.
- Using DeepL or similar to translate learner's first language into English. Using AI translation means the final text isn't truly the student's own work. It is also important to note that AI translation often creates unnatural or overly polished language that doesn't match a student's usual writing level.

## Reducing the risk of AI misuse

The following suggestions could be applied by centres to reduce the risk of AI misuse.

Include valid use of AI within the Taught skills programme; actively encourage responsible use of AI to enhance both project management and research.

For example:

### **Time and project management skills**

It would be acceptable for learners to use a few different AI tools and compare the suggestions generated to make best use of the hours expected of independent learner work. AI tools for these skills include Notion or Taskade.

### **Research skills and evaluation of sources**

It would be acceptable for learners to use an AI tool such as Sourcely to suggest relevant sources, providing the learner then independently evaluates each source.

### **Ethical principles of research**

It would be acceptable for learners to ask an AI tool such as Perplexity to help them check that they have considered fully the ethical considerations related to their particular topic and proposed research. An AI tool can be used to check for bias or gaps in the research undertaken.

### **Health, safety and risk assessment related to research and project management**

It would be acceptable for learners to check, using an AI tool, to see if there are any risks or hazards related to their intended actions that they might have missed.

### **Report writing skills**

It would be acceptable for learners to use AI tools to suggest a report structure and suggest word lengths for each section of a report.

### **Referencing and bibliography creation**

It would be acceptable for learners to ask an AI tool for suggestions on the most appropriate form of referencing to use in their project's written report.

### **How to avoid plagiarism/inappropriate use of AI**

Stress to learners that correctly referenced use of appropriate AI tools may be credit-bearing, however unacknowledged use is malpractice.

### **Presentation skills**

It would be acceptable for learners to use AI tools such as Gamma to help create an engaging set of slides, but this use must be acknowledged. Learners may save themselves valuable time better used for other purposes, but they cannot gain credit for the slides themselves.

### **Reflection and evaluation**

Learners might ask an AI tool for prompts to help them understand the skills they have developed during completion of their project. Learners can also reflect specifically on their experience of using AI within their project and it could form part of their project review. Did anything surprise them about some of the AI responses? How did they decide whether to trust or ignore the AI suggestions? Were some uses of AI tools more valuable than others?

How did their use of AI tools develop and change during the project? From their project experience of using AI tools how might they use them in the future?

- Consider restricting access to online AI tools on centre provided internet and software.
- Set reasonable deadlines for submission of work and provide regular reminders.
- Allocate time for portions of work to be completed in class under direct supervision.
- Ascertain that the learner understands their work and that it reflects their own independent thought during the regular project reviews.
- Investigate in the case of a learner producing work which is different to their usual output.

## Reporting malpractice

If your suspicions are confirmed and the learner has not signed the declaration of authentication, your centre doesn't need to report the incident to OxfordAQA. You should follow the steps detailed in your centre's internal malpractice/plagiarism policy.

Centre Coordinators/Supervisors must not accept work which is not the learner's own. The Head of Centre has the responsibility for ensuring that learners do not submit inauthentic work.

If AI misuse is detected or suspected by the centre and the declaration of authentication has been signed, the case must be reported to OxfordAQA following the process detailed on [oxfordaqa-exams-administration-malpractice.pdf](#).