

Generative AI (GenAI) Guidelines for SDSU

*Last updated: **April 2025** - These guidelines will be updated as new laws, policies and regulations are enacted*

Introduction

San Diego State University has a principled, agile and data-informed generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) strategy that supports responsible and ethical adoption among university students, faculty and staff. This foundation enables SDSU to leverage GenAI, and the following guidelines center on supporting human intelligence and capabilities rather than replacing them. Indeed, at SDSU, we each have a responsibility to ensure that the power of GenAI is accessible and used to amplify the potential of employees and students from diverse backgrounds and areas of expertise.

SDSU students, faculty and staff should follow important considerations in adopting any GenAI tools related to information security, data and personal privacy, compliance, copyright and protecting proprietary information, accuracy, and academic integrity. GenAI tools are known to “hallucinate” or fabricate references for which sources do not exist. This guidance is essential, as some GenAI systems may pose weaknesses and risks when utilized. Independent unit-level guidelines should not be produced in tandem with or to replace these approved guidelines.

SDSU does not guide the personal use of GenAI tools. While these guidelines are specific to educational and professional work conducted at SDSU, they may, however, also apply and be useful to adopting GenAI for personal use.

Strategic Communications and Public Affairs (StratComm) at SDSU, in partnership with members within the Information Technology Division, the Center for Human Resources, Academic Affairs, Student Affairs and Campus Diversity, and the California State University (CSU) system, among other units, has compiled the following guidelines regarding the appropriate use of GenAI in their professional roles.

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How to Adopt Guidance

This guidance is designed to aid students, faculty and staff in maintaining integrity, accuracy and compliance with legal and ethical standards. Adoption of AI is voluntary and based on a person's needs.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- SDSU recognizes that GenAI should be implemented with a strong ethical foundation aligned with institutional values, fairness and social responsibility.
- We have a responsibility to stay informed and proactively adapt to the rapid evolution of GenAI, as ignoring or not addressing the tool prevents us from being able to set boundaries and standards to ensure its ethical and effective use.
- AI should complement or augment human expertise rather than replace it; human oversight, creativity and decision-making should remain central to ensure accuracy and accountability.
- GenAI adoption should respect privacy rights by securing personal data, complying with legal and ethical standards, and ensuring that GenAI tools do not inadvertently expose sensitive information.
- GenAI tools should support, not undermine, academic integrity, originality and intellectual honesty.
- GenAI technology is never to be used to deceive, spread misinformation, privilege any specific group or make claims that human sources have not substantiated.
- GenAI should enhance efficiency and effectiveness without diminishing the value of human expertise.
- Training and upskilling opportunities are essential for all students, faculty and staff using GenAI tools, and [online training](#) is provided by SDSU.

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If you have a question about these guidelines, email StratComm at stratcomm@sdsu.edu. If you have questions about [ChatGPT Edu](#), [Microsoft Copilot](#) or any other tools and training available to students, faculty and staff, contact the Information Technology Division via [ServiceNow](#) or (live online M-F during regular business hours) at the [ITS Virtual Support Center](#).

DEFINITIONS

Under the umbrella of AI, generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) is an emergent technology that powers tools and are also sometimes integrated into other software and online platforms. They include [ChatGPT Edu](#), [Microsoft Copilot](#), Claude, Gemini, Perplexity, DALL-E, GitHub, Midjourney and many others. These platforms and applications are evolving rapidly, pushing the boundaries of what is possible with digital technologies. Utilizing a prompt, individuals can use GenAI systems to produce messages, images (photos and video), and audio content that may appear to be created and performed by humans. As GenAI is newly adopted and evolving quickly, however, the information generated from such systems is not always entirely accurate or free from bias, requiring human engagement, editing and verification.

GENAI ADOPTION AT SDSU

SDSU students, faculty and staff interested in utilizing GenAI are encouraged to adopt GenAI tools appropriately and ethically. Such tools should augment or support original work and not be autonomous, and SDSU professionals should strictly follow the guidelines below. Further, care should be taken to use [professional versions of GenAI tools](#). At SDSU, [ChatGPT Edu](#), [Google Gemini](#) and [Microsoft Copilot](#) are recommended. These are commercially licensed tools that protect individual and institutional information and data (prompt and output are neither saved nor used to train the associated Large Language Model).

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GenAI tools can support SDSU students, faculty and staff in many ways during several phases of their work:

- **Brainstorming ideas and planning:** Before creating content, GenAI may be used to brainstorm topics, questions, ideas and concepts, and also to collect examples, develop outlines, identify themes or organize plans.
- **Drafting content:** Some GenAI tools support generating and editing content based on prompts, including initial and draft versions of scripts, letters, translations into multiple languages, descriptions, and social media posts.
- **Revising:** After original content is generated, many GenAI tools can aid in enhancing clarity, structure and grammar in writing (while ensuring original thought and citation). GenAI can also help check for inclusive language and implicit bias. GenAI writing styles should not supersede SDSU's [editorial guidelines](#) (for marketing and communications professionals).
- **Time management & organization:** GenAI tools can help create study schedules and help organize notes.
- **Communications & Reports:** To complement your work, GenAI can assist in drafting internal memos or refining emails.
- **Search engine optimization (SEO):** GenAI tools may assist with keyword research to improve content readability, keyword usage, and word relevancy, thus improving web page quality and performance.
- **Content testing:** GenAI tools can help anticipate potential questions or concerns.
- **Aiding efficiency or productivity:** GenAI tools can assist with and/or streamline tasks such as generating summaries, drafting outlines, interpreting data, and generating transcripts.
- **Improve code quality:** Some GenAI tools can improve computer code's overall quality and consistency, aiding debugging.

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Regardless of the tool adopted or phase of work, initial drafts should never be presented as a final product in the creation of class assignments, proposals, emails, articles, research presentations, brochures, flyers, fact sheets, media releases, or other information, whether for an internal or external audience. Data, facts, and other information must continue to be rigorously reviewed and validated before being published or shared.

Do the following:

- Remain informed on any university guidelines or industry best practices and continue to learn how to responsibly and ethically use GenAI tools, including generating quality prompts to help ensure accurate results free of error and implicit bias. At SDSU, the [Academic Applications of AI \(AAAI\) Micro-Credential](#) is a freely accessible training. Faculty and staff who intend to use GenAI tools are also encouraged to complete the program. The micro-credential prepares employees to apply GenAI technology efficiently, effectively and ethically. Community members may choose to audit the content and skip the ‘required’ activities if they are not interested in obtaining the digital badge. Providing work-related responses to the activity prompts is acceptable for staff interested in obtaining the digital badge.
- Adopt appropriate and ethical use of GenAI to increase productivity.
- Use GenAI to support and improve workflows.

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Do not do the following:

- Never upload confidential, proprietary or embargoed information or data to public GenAI tools (e.g., data from Canvas, my.SDSU and other examples provided in this document's Human Oversight and Review section).
- Never use existing copyrighted works – including existing scripts, messages, chapters, articles and similar content – to be edited and/or modified with GenAI without the owner's express permission.
- Do not use GenAI in confidential or sensitive meetings, including materials for documenting information outside approved university systems. California is a “two-party consent” state, meaning it is illegal to record a private conversation unless all parties consent to the recording, including digital recordings and transcripts, which specific GenAI tools can generate.
- Do not rely on GenAI to generate finished images for publication or distribution without appropriate review and approval, including consultation with requirements for image attribution by platform.
- Do not use GenAI to identify sources or citations without individually checking and validating each source. Authenticity and accuracy are essential in academic research and academic settings.
- Do not publish anything created with GenAI without review for accuracy, SDSU editorial style, and brand voice.
- Do not post GenAI-generated or edited photo or video content to news sites and news-related channels, including unit-level news sites and NewsCenter, unless used as an example and containing a specific caption indicating that the content is GenAI-generated or edited. Also, to preserve journalistic integrity, do not share any GenAI-generated images with members of the media for publishing as part of news content. If such images are requested, be sure to explain that the content is GenAI generated or edited.

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Prohibited while using GenAI tools:

- GenAI tools should not be used in ways that violate existing university standards, policies or guidelines.
- Do not enter private, protected or proprietary data about university students, employees, patients or others (such as social security numbers, banking information, research information under embargo and other personally identifiable information) into GenAI tools. Doing so may be a breach of California State University system or SDSU policies, or state or federal privacy laws, including HIPAA (related to health and medical records) and FERPA (related to student educational records).
- Users should be careful not to present a false narrative that AI-generated visuals are actual or true-life photographs, documentary footage or authentic images of actual events, individuals or locations if a person had not captured the actual photo or video content live themselves.
- AI-generated visuals should not be used in journalism, official reports or documentation that requires factual accuracy, unless explicitly labeled as illustrative.
- The creation of AI-generated visuals designed to impersonate real individuals, to alter reality or fabricate events (such as deepfake) is strictly prohibited.

ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE

For university faculty and researchers

Because these guidelines are not university policy, do not govern academics and research, and are designed more broadly for university staff, they may not address all your questions or needs. If you have questions about GenAI adoption, including those related to instruction or research, contact the Information Technology Division via the [Faculty Instructional Technology \(FIT\) Center](#). All faculty are encouraged to complete the [Academic Applications of AI \(AAAI\) Micro-Credential](#).

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For communications and marketing professionals

Using GenAI tools to create false communications or to spam, engage in phishing, manipulate data and/or create a deceitful impression is not permitted. Reminder: Always report phishing to fraud@sdsu.edu.

When using Gen-AI generated images for news stories on university news sites, and when possible and appropriate for clarity, cite the use of Gen-AI generated content (citation examples include adding information to a cutline or an Editor's Note). Such content may be posted to university news sites as part of content about AI or as an illustration (with a credit indicating that the image is an illustration).

To preserve journalistic integrity, do not share any AI-generated images with members of the media for publishing as part of news content. Communications professionals, in working with members of the media, should only share official university photo and video content. Communications professionals should also be aware of any GenAI-specific guidelines introduced by the Society of Professional Journalists to help ensure that content provided to reporters does not conflict with [journalistic standards](#).

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For the OnelT Community

Information technology professionals should be aware of the Association of Research Libraries GenAI [guiding principles](#), which indicate that professionals should aim to democratize access to artificial intelligence tools and technology. In doing so, we can help foster digital literacy among all members of our community.

Through micro-credentialing offered at SDSU, campus events and other opportunities for active engagement with faculty, staff and students, SDSU will increase the level of AI literacy in its community. This is essential to helping people to thrive in a world increasingly reliant on artificial intelligence, and these principles underscore SDSU's commitment to inclusivity, knowledge dissemination, and the empowerment of individuals.

Human Oversight and Review

While GenAI can streamline content creation processes and result in efficiencies and cost savings, poor use of GenAI could have the opposite effect, including the development of substandard materials.

Further, information to some GenAI tools may become public and part of a public knowledge base, as certain AI tools make search results publicly accessible. For this reason, SDSU encourages university-supported tools, such as [ChatGPT Edu](#). The university also recommends [Google Gemini](#) and [Microsoft Copilot](#).

Examples of protected information include personally identifiable information, such as a person's name and details related to their educational or professional records, personal identification numbers, and medical or counseling records. Confidential university information and information related to academic research and integrity—including research-related information held under embargo or under review—also should not be added to GenAI tools as prompts.

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Accuracy and Authenticity

The accuracy, quality and authenticity of content produced by GenAI tools vary widely. SDSU professionals must ensure that GenAI-generated content is accurate, authentic and aligns with the SDSU's [brand guidelines](#), including those related to university values and [messaging](#). SDSU professionals should exercise caution to prevent disseminating misleading, biased or false information.

Transparency and Disclosure

When utilizing GenAI technologies, professionals should disclose the use of such generated content when relevant or necessary for clarity.

Data Privacy and Security

All SDSU employees must adhere to strict data privacy and security protocols when using GenAI technologies, and should only use data obtained ethically and in compliance with applicable laws and regulations, such as the [California Consumer Privacy Act](#) (CCPA).

Intellectual Property Rights

SDSU professionals should respect intellectual property rights when creating and using GenAI-generated content and must not infringe upon copyrights, trademarks or any other legal protections held by third parties. Never use existing copyrighted works to be modified with GenAI without the express permission of the owner of said content.

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Ethical Considerations

Consider the ethical implications of using GenAI. Avoid creating content that perpetuates hurtful or harmful stereotypes, discriminates against individuals or groups of people based on their backgrounds and experiences, or promotes unethical or illegal behaviors. If you have questions and need support, contact StratComm at stratcomm@sdsu.edu.

Ongoing Professional Development

Given the rapidly changing landscape of GenAI, employees should stay informed about advancements in GenAI technologies and best practices for their ethical and responsible use, to include regular training and knowledge-sharing. All employees at SDSU are encouraged to complete the [Academic Applications of AI \(AAAI\) Micro-Credential](#) and regularly seek additional skills development opportunities elsewhere.