Generative AI (GenAI) Guidelines for SDSU

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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 employees. 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 from diverse backgrounds and areas of expertise.

SDSU employees should follow important considerations in adopting any GenAI tools related to information security, data and personal privacy, compliance, copyright and protecting proprietary information, and accuracy and academic integrity. GenAI tools are known to "hallucinate" or fabricate references for which sources do not exist. This guidance is especially important, 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. If you have any questions, contact StratComm at stratcomm@sdsu.edu.

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How to Adopt Guidance

This guidance is designed to aid employees in maintaining transparency, integrity, accuracy and compliance with legal and ethical standards, including diversity, equity and inclusion standards. These guidelines are to be used in official capacities as university officials for any staff member who has opted to use GenAI tools. Adoption is voluntary and based on a department's needs.

SDSU does not guide the personal use of GenAI. However, while these guidelines are specific to professional work conducted at SDSU, they may also apply to adopting GenAI for personal use.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. AI technologies should augment existing work.
2. Care should be taken to use only professional versions of GenAI tools.
3. Any adoption of GenAI-generated material must be carefully reviewed, fact-checked, edited, approved and managed by a human author. All work is to remain human-led.
4. Ensuring accuracy and accurate representation is a core priority. GenAI technology is never to be used to deceive, spread misinformation, privilege any specific group or make claims that human sources have not substantiated.
5. Understanding that GenAI has the potential to capture copyrighted materials, a human editor must ensure that any final piece of content (whether written or in the form of a video or photo) has been carefully reviewed.
6. Because transparency about the adoption of GenAI is important to maintaining the trust of our community members and audiences, the use of GenAI must be cited.

As GenAI is a rapidly changing technology, skills development (SDSU offers online training for employees) and adherence to guidelines and best practices are strongly encouraged.

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If you have a question about these guidelines, email StratComm at stratcomm@sdsu.edu. If you have questions about Microsoft Copilot, contact the Information Technology Division via ServiceNow or (live online M-F during regular business hours) at the ITS Virtual Support Center.

DEFINITIONS

Generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) is an emergent technology that powers tools including Microsoft Copilot, ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, Perplexity, DALL-E, GitHub and Midjourney. 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 that may appear to be created by a human. As GenAI is newly adopted and evolving quickly, however, the information generated from such systems is not always entirely accurate or free from bias.

UNESCO has identified GenAI and the broader classification of artificial intelligence as having the potential to "address some of the biggest challenges in education today, [to] innovate teaching and learning practices, and accelerate progress." It also calls for a human-centered approach to responding to equity issues.

GENERATIVE AI ADOPTION AT SDSU, MICROSOFT COPILOT

SDSU professionals are encouraged to adopt GenAI tools appropriately and ethically. Such tools should augment work and not be autonomous, and SDSU professionals should strictly follow the guidelines below. Further, care should be taken to use only professional versions of GenAI tools.

At SDSU, Microsoft Copilot is recommended. Microsoft Copilot is a commercially licensed tool that protects data (prompt and output are neither saved nor used to train the associated Large Language Model).

If you are unsure whether a GenAI tool or source may be used, contact StratComm at stratcomm@sdsu.edu for guidance.

GenAI tools can support SDSU professionals in many ways during several phases of their work:

- Pre-writing or pre-production: Before creating content, content producers may use GenAI tools to brainstorm ideas and concepts, research topics, collect samples or examples, develop outlines, identify themes, or organize calendars and plans.

- Drafting content: Some GenAI tools support generating and edit 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 aid content producers in identifying and altering style/tone, spelling, punctuation, and grammar, and can also provide a check for inclusive language and implicit bias, but should not supersede SDSU's editorial guidelines (for marketing and communications professionals).

- Search engine optimization (SEO): GenAI tools may assist with keyword research to improve content readability, keyword usage, and word relevancy, thus improving webpage 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 augment 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.

Regardless of the tool adopted or phase of work, initial drafts should never be presented as a final product in the creation of emails, articles, general messaging, marketing materials (e.g., brochures and 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 approved by university professional team members (including but not limited to marketing and communications professionals) 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 <u>Academic Applications of AI (AAAI) Micro-Credential</u> 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. Because the activities associated with the micro-credential are geared toward faculty, other staff members may choose to audit the content and skip the activities if they are not interested in obtaining the digital badge. Providing work-related responses to the activity prompts is perfectly 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.

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 expressed 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 include GenAI visuals in any context in which reality is implied; do not use GenAI visuals to falsify or fabricate a reality.
- 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 cutline indicating that the content is GenAI-generated. Also, to preserve journalistic integrity, do not share any GenAI-generated images with members of the media for publishing as part of news content. Here, professionals should apply similar best practices as those utilized for Photoshop.

Prohibited while using GenAI tools:

- Fully GenAI-generated content is prohibited at this time, and all generated content must be reviewed and fact-checked by a human editor.

- GenAI tools should not be used in ways that violate existing university standards, policies or guidelines.

- Do not enter private, protected or proprietary data into GenAI tools. Do not enter private or proprietary data about university students, employees, patients, or others. This could 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). Information to avoid adding to such tools includes social security numbers, banking information, research information under embargo and other personally identifiable information.

Additional guidelines are indicated below.

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

- GenAI tools are not to be used to produce bylined or complete website content as original source material for SDSU. Such tools will not be used to create entire pieces of content, whether in written or visual form.

- 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.

- Whenever possible, cite the use of content that is GenAI generated (citation examples include adding information to a cutline or an Editor's Note).

- Do not post GenAI-generated or edited photo or video content to news sites and news-related channels, to include NewsCenter, unless used as an example and containing a specific cutline indicating that the content is GenAI-generated.

To preserve journalistic integrity, do not share any GenAI-generated images with members of the media for publishing as part of news content. Here, professionals should apply similar best practices as those utilized for Photoshop.

Communications professionals, in working with members of the media, should be aware of any GenAI introduced by the Society of Professional Journalists to help ensure that content provided to reporters does not conflict with journalistic standards.

For the OneIT 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 others 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 that one adds to a GenAI tool may become public and part of a public knowledge base, as certain AI tools make search results publicly accessible. SDSU encourages university-supported tools, such as 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 and 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 generative GenAI technologies, professionals should disclose the use of AI-generated content when relevant.

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.

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.