



M.Sc. Bioinformatics Programme

Policy on the Responsible Use of Artificial Intelligence in Learning and Assessment

Version 2026.07-2

Status	Approved by BoS
Applies to	Undergraduate and postgraduate study-units and assessments delivered within the Bioinformatics Programme (starting from 2026 intake)
Policy owner	Course Coordinator, M.Sc. Bioinformatics Programme (Prof. Jean-Paul Ebejer, jean.p.ebejer@um.edu.mt)
Review	At least annually, and earlier where University policy or relevant technology changes

1 Scope and core principle

This policy applies to all forms of learning and assessed work, including assignments, reports, programming exercises, practical work, presentations, projects, examinations and dissertations.

For this policy, AI tools include generative AI systems and AI-enabled assistants capable of producing, analysing, transforming or modifying text, code, images, data, visualisations, audio, video or other content.

AI tools may support learning, but must not replace the student's own intellectual, analytical, methodological or scholarly work. Every submission must demonstrate the student's own understanding, judgement and contribution, and must satisfy the intended learning outcomes of the assessment.

The student retains full academic responsibility for every element submitted, irrespective of whether an AI tool contributed to its development.

2 Assessment-specific permission model

The study-unit coordinator or lecturer must state the permitted level of AI use in each assessment brief. Assessment-specific instructions take precedence over the general permissions in this policy.

Category	Meaning	Typical application
A. Prohibited	AI tools must not be used to complete the assessment.	Invigilated examinations, class tests, viva-voce examinations, or tasks intended to demonstrate unaided knowledge or skills. Formally approved accessibility tools remain permitted.
B. Assistive	AI may support the work, but must not produce the substantive intellectual contribution being assessed.	Planning, explanation, language refinement, debugging suggestions or other limited support, subject to disclosure and the specific assessment instructions.
C. Integral	AI use is permitted or required as an explicit part of the task.	Assessments that evaluate the selection, prompting, critical evaluation, validation or ethical use of AI. The brief must specify tools, limits, evidence and marking criteria.

Where an assessment brief is silent, students may use AI for private learning and preparatory activities, but must not use it to generate or materially alter content submitted for marks unless written permission is obtained from the lecturer or study-unit coordinator.

No student should be required to purchase access to an AI tool unless equivalent access or a reasonable alternative is provided by the University or the study-unit.

3 Acceptable and unacceptable uses

3.1 Uses that may be acceptable when permitted

- Explaining concepts, methods, statistical procedures or code;
- Brainstorming, refining ideas, preparing an outline or organising work;
- Identifying potentially relevant literature, provided that the original sources are located, read and cited directly;
- Improving grammar, clarity, readability or presentation without changing the student's substantive meaning;
- Suggesting approaches to debugging, testing or documenting code;
- Summarising the student's own notes or generating examples and practice questions; and
- assisting with routine or repetitive tasks that are not themselves an assessed learning outcome.

3.2 Uses that are prohibited unless explicitly required by the assessment

- Submitting AI-generated work, reasoning or code as the student's own;
- Using AI to write substantial parts of an assignment, literature review, report or dissertation;
- Allowing AI to perform the core analysis, scientific interpretation, critical evaluation or formulation of conclusions;
- Submitting AI-generated code that the student does not understand, cannot explain or has not appropriately tested;
- Generating, altering or inventing research data, results, images or figures without explicit authorisation and clear labelling;
- Fabricating references, quotations, evidence, data, results or experimental procedures;
- Using AI-generated summaries as a substitute for reading and citing original sources;
- Concealing, misrepresenting or providing a false declaration of AI use; or
- Using AI during an examination, class test or viva unless expressly permitted.

Practical boundary: if it would be inappropriate to ask another person to complete a particular part of an assessment, it will normally also be inappropriate to ask an AI system to complete it.

4 Understanding, verification and scholarly responsibility

Students must understand and critically evaluate all AI-assisted material before using it. They remain responsible for its accuracy, reliability, relevance, originality, ethical acceptability and legal use.

- Factual claims, quotations and references must be checked against reliable original sources.
- References suggested by AI must be verified as genuine, accurate and relevant.
- AI-assisted code must be understood, appropriately documented and tested. Unit tests or other validation evidence should be retained and submitted where appropriate.
- AI-generated or simulated data must be clearly identified as synthetic and may only be used where the assessment or research design permits it.
- Analyses and figures must have a traceable data source and a reproducible method.
- Outputs must be checked for errors, bias, inappropriate assumptions, stereotypes, plagiarism and possible copyright infringement.
- AI systems must not be cited as authoritative evidence in place of the original scholarly, clinical, legal or technical source.

5 Transparency and AI Usage Declaration

Any AI use that materially contributes to assessed work must be disclosed in an AI Usage Declaration included with the submission or placed in an appendix. The declaration must be sufficiently specific for an assessor to understand how AI influenced the work.

- The AI tool, provider and model or version, where available;
- The date or period of use;
- The sections, code components, figures or tasks assisted;
- The purpose and nature of the assistance;
- All substantive prompts or queries that materially influenced the submitted work, presented in chronological order;
- How the output was evaluated, modified and incorporated;
- How its accuracy, suitability and limitations were assessed; and
- A brief reflection on the contribution and limitations of the AI assistance.

AI outputs do not normally need to be reproduced unless required by the assessment brief or examiner. Routine non-generative spellchecking need not be declared. Tools that generate, translate, substantially rewrite or restructure content must be declared. When uncertain, students should disclose the use and consult the lecturer or supervisor.

6 Data protection, confidentiality, intellectual property and ethics

Students must not enter the following material into public or unauthorised AI services:

- Personal, clinical, genomic or other sensitive data;
- Confidential, proprietary or commercially sensitive information;
- Unpublished research findings or restricted datasets;
- Material belonging to research participants, collaborators or external partners;
- Assessment material that has not been authorised for external processing; or
- Copyrighted material where such use is not permitted.

Restricted material may be processed using an AI tool only where this has been expressly authorised by the lecturer or supervisor and is consistent with ethical approval, participant consent, data-protection obligations, confidentiality agreements, licensing terms and University policy.

Students should consider the wider ethical consequences of their AI use, including fairness, bias, environmental cost, accessibility and the potential effect on research participants, patients or communities.

7 Authorship, assessment and academic integrity

Students must be able to explain and defend every part of their submission, including AI-assisted text, code, analyses, figures, interpretations and methodological decisions.

Assessors may ask a student to explain or reproduce reasoning, code or analytical steps; provide drafts, notebooks, prompt records or version-control history; demonstrate how results were obtained; or attend an oral examination to establish authorship and understanding.

For dissertations, the viva-voce examination serves, among its other purposes, to verify authorship, understanding, methodological decisions and the student's independent scholarly contribution, including any work supported by AI. AI tools may not be used during the viva unless expressly authorised.

Failure to disclose material AI assistance, use of AI beyond the permission stated in the assessment brief, or presentation of AI-generated material as the student's own may constitute plagiarism, cheating or submission of work that is not truly the student's own. Such cases may be investigated under the applicable University of Malta regulations and procedures.

Students should retain drafts, research notes, computational notebooks, prompt records, source-code history and other evidence showing how their work developed.

8 Precedence, support and review

University of Malta statutes, regulations and University-level policies take precedence over this document. Assessment-specific instructions may impose stricter or more detailed requirements.

Students who are uncertain about whether a proposed use is permitted should seek written guidance from the lecturer, study-unit coordinator or dissertation supervisor before using the tool in assessed work.

This policy will be reviewed regularly in response to changes in University policy, educational practice and AI technology.

9 Suggested AI Usage Declaration

Complete this declaration whenever AI has materially contributed to assessed work. Additional rows or a separate prompt log may be attached where necessary.

Assessment	
AI tool, provider and version	
Date or period used	
Sections or components assisted	
Purpose and nature of assistance	
Prompts or queries used	Attach a chronological prompt log where required.
How outputs were evaluated, modified and incorporated	
How accuracy and suitability were verified	
Data or material supplied to the tool	
Reflection on contribution and limitations	

Student affirmation

I confirm that I understand and take full academic responsibility for all content submitted. I have disclosed all material AI assistance and have complied with the assessment instructions, this programme policy and the applicable University of Malta regulations and policies.

Student name:	Student ID:
Signature:	Date:

10 Suggested assessment-brief statement

Each assessment brief should include a short statement in the following form:

AI use category: [A. Prohibited / B. Assistive / C. Integral]

Permitted uses: [specify]

Prohibited uses or limits: [specify]

Required declaration or evidence: [specify]

Any approved tools, data restrictions or special instructions: [specify]

11 Sources and acknowledgements

This policy is an adapted programme-level document. It retains the core principles of the original MMB5010 dissertation policy, incorporates the detailed comments supplied during review, and benefits significantly from the valuable discussions and insights shared by Prof. Matthew Montebello. It also draws substantially on two University of Malta departmental or faculty documents, as described below.

1. Assessment Policy on the Use of Generative AI Tools, Department of Artificial Intelligence, Faculty of ICT, University of Malta. Adapted substantially: transparency fields, alignment with learning outcomes, critical thinking, acceptable use across assessment types, academic integrity, implementation and data privacy.
2. Guidelines for ICT Students on the Responsible Use of Generative AI, Faculty of ICT, University of Malta (Second Draft). Adapted substantially: the principle that AI supports rather than replaces learning, acceptable and unacceptable uses, prompt logs, synthetic-data labelling, code testing, oral verification, privacy and ethical responsibilities.

The assessment-category model, assessment-specific permissions and declaration template were also informed by current guidance from other universities. These sources were consulted for comparison and adaptation, not adopted verbatim:

3. [University College London, Three categories of GenAI use in assessment.](#) (accessed 16 July 2026).
4. [University of Oxford, AI use in summative assessment.](#) (accessed 16 July 2026).
5. [University of Cambridge, Template declaration of the use of generative artificial intelligence.](#) (accessed 16 July 2026).
6. [University of Malta, Written Assignments FAQs.](#) (accessed 16 July 2026).
7. [University of Malta, Guidelines for Academic Staff on the use of Generative AI Tools in Class and in Assessments.](#) (accessed 16 July 2026).
8. [University of Malta, University Assessment Regulations, 2009.](#) (accessed 16 July 2026).

University of Malta regulations and University-level policy take precedence over this programme document.