

GenAI & Academic Writing: A Student Guide

What Is GenAI?

GenAI (Generative Artificial Intelligence) refers to AI tools that can generate new content like text, images, or code based on prompts you give them. In academic writing, popular GenAI tools (like ChatGPT, Gemini, or Copilot) can help brainstorm ideas, clarify concepts, understand sources, or check your grammar.

GenAI and Academic Writing

It's perfectly okay to use GenAI tools like ChatGPT to support your academic writing as long as you use them fairly and responsibly. These tools can help you brainstorm, clarify ideas, or improve your expression, but they shouldn't replace your own thinking or writing.

Being transparent and thoughtful about how you use GenAI helps you stay on the right side of academic integrity while making the most of the support these tools can offer. You can rely on Arden University's [Statement on the use of AI](#) to understand the guidelines and expectations around AI use.

⚠ Think of GenAI as a smart assistant, not a replacement for your critical thinking or academic voice.

GenAI tools can be helpful when used thoughtfully during the academic writing process, but it's important to know what kinds of use are acceptable and what could lead to problems.

The tables below show examples of appropriate and inappropriate ways to use GenAI, along with brief explanations to help you maintain academic integrity.

DOs: Use GenAI Ethically & Effectively

What You Can Do	Examples
Brainstorm ideas or essay outlines	"Give me three possible arguments for a paper on climate change policy."
Ask for clarification of academic concepts	"Explain the difference between quantitative and qualitative research in simple terms."
Check grammar or clarity in your own writing	"Can you highlight the grammar issues in this paragraph and suggest corrections?"
Suggest frameworks to structure your work	"What reflection models can I use to structure my experience during a group project?"
Refine your own understanding of a topic	"Explain the concept of market segmentation and why it matters for small businesses."
Generate questions or tests to help you check your knowledge	"Can you create five multiple-choice questions to test my understanding of supply and demand?"
Generate example content for inspiration only	"Write a sample introduction for an essay on a random topic and highlight its features."
Get formative feedback on your own work	"Here's my draft paragraph. Can you suggest how I could make it clearer or more academic?"

DON'Ts: Avoid Misuse & Academic Misconduct

What You Shouldn't Do	Why It's a Problem
Copy-paste GenAI-generated text into your assignments without attribution	This counts as plagiarism. The ideas or wording are not your own.
Ask GenAI to write your whole essay/report	You're not learning or developing your own skills, and it's against university policy.
Use fake or unverified citations from GenAI	GenAI sometimes <i>hallucinates</i> , so it may give you made-up references! You should also be finding academic sources in credible places, like the Arden Library.
Claim AI-generated ideas as your original thinking	Academic writing values <i>your</i> interpretation, not just content reprocessed by a machine.
Skip proofreading just because GenAI <i>helped</i>	AI tools can make errors. Your final work must be accurate, clear, and human-checked.
Use GenAI to summarise, critique, or paraphrase sources	You're not doing the thinking yourself, and the tool may misrepresent or oversimplify the source.
Use AI to generate an argument or point of view, then present it as your own	It's not your original thinking, which can mislead readers and breach <i>academic integrity</i> .
Use <i>online translators</i> to translate full sentences, paragraphs, or assignments	They often distort meaning, and overuse may count as <i>unauthorised help</i> .

Example: Ethical vs. Unethical Use

Your Task: Write a paragraph explaining the pros and cons of remote work.

✓ Ethical Use:

You ask ChatGPT: *"What are three pros and three cons of remote work?"*
You read the suggestions, think about them, add examples from your course, go to the Arden Library to conduct further research using credible sources (added as citations in the work), and write your own paragraph in your own words.

✗ Unethical Use:

You ask ChatGPT: *"Write a paragraph about the pros and cons of remote work."*
You copy it word-for-word and submit it as your assignment.

Final Tips

- If you use GenAI in your process, be transparent. Arden University's [referencing guidelines](#) clearly show how you can cite GenAI tools.
- Treat GenAI as a learning tool, not a shortcut. If it's doing the research, reading, or writing for you, you might be using it in an unfair way.
- Always double-check content and references. Even if you've used GenAI to reorganise your content and references, make sure sure that they comply with the assignment brief and the referencing guidelines.
- When in doubt, ask your lecturers / Academic Skills Tutors or check Arden University's [Statement on the use of AI](#).

Where can I get more support with GenAI use in writing?

Explore the Learning Success Hub for helpful workshops, videos, and resources. For questions about GenAI tools, contact AcademicSkills@arden.ac.uk or book a one-to-one with an Academic Skills Tutor via the Hub: <https://learningsuccess.arden.ac.uk/>

Scan this code to visit the Learning Success Hub's Artificial Intelligence webpage.

