

Excellence in Research (EIR) Program 2025-2026

Guidance on the Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

This guidance outlines appropriate and inappropriate uses of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools (e.g., generative AI, large language models, coding assistants) within EIR activities to ensure academic integrity, transparency, and skill development.

Guiding Principles

The Excellence in Research (EIR) Program recognizes that AI tools may be useful in certain research contexts. **The use of AI is permitted at the discretion of the Principal Investigator (PI)/faculty mentor. Students must follow the specific guidance provided by their PI.**

Regardless of permitted AI use during the research process, the final paper and all required EIR tasks must represent the student's own original work, thinking, analysis, and writing, and may not be AI-generated.

Permitted Uses of AI

Permitted uses of AI are determined by the PI/faculty mentor and may vary by lab, discipline, or project. When allowed by the PI, AI tools may be used to support the research process in limited and appropriate ways, such as:

- Idea clarification or brainstorming under PI guidance
- Editing for grammar, clarity, or organization (without altering intellectual content)
- Summarizing background material to *support* understanding (with verification from primary sources)
- Coding assistance (e.g., debugging or explanation), provided the student understands and can explain the final code
- Formatting assistance (e.g., citations, tables, or outlines)

All AI use must remain supportive and must not replace the student's independent intellectual contribution.

Prohibited Uses of AI

The following uses of AI are not permitted in the EIR Program, regardless of discipline:

- Submitting AI-generated writing as a final research paper and/or poster
- Using AI to write substantial portions of the final research paper or to replace the student's own analysis
- Using AI to generate or interpret data, results, or conclusions in place of the student's reasoning

- Fabricating sources, citations, data, or research findings using AI
- Submitting AI-assisted work that the student does not fully understand or cannot explain
- Any AI use that conflicts with PI, departmental, or lab policies

Responsibility & Verification

Students are fully responsible for:

- The accuracy, originality, and integrity of all submitted work
- Verifying information produced by AI using credible academic sources
- Being able to explain and defend all aspects of their research without AI assistance

Faculty Mentor Authority

Faculty mentors may set stricter guidelines regarding AI use in their labs or research groups.

Consequences of Misuse

Improper use of AI may be treated as a violation of academic integrity and will result in:

- Removal from the EIR Program
- Referral to the UCI's Office of Academic Integrity and Student Conduct
- Loss of eligibility for program recognition

Best Practices for Ethical AI Use

- Use AI as a tool, not a substitute for learning
- Keep drafts and notes to document your research process
- When in doubt, ask your faculty mentor or EIR staff before using AI