



University at Buffalo

School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences

Policy on Artificial Intelligence (AI) Use in Graduate Theses, Dissertations, and Capstones

Purpose and Scope

This policy establishes expectations for the responsible, transparent, and discipline-appropriate use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools in MS and PhD theses, dissertations, and capstone projects at the University at Buffalo School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences (UB SPPS). The policy applies to all UB SPPS graduate programs (MS and PhD) requiring a thesis, dissertation, or capstone. This policy is intended to (1) protect academic integrity, (2) ensure students produce **independent, original scholarly work**, and (3) enable appropriate, discipline-relevant use of AI as a research support tool. This policy does not replace or supersede UB's Academic Integrity Policies (<https://www.buffalo.edu/academic-integrity/policies.html>) or other applicable UB policies (e.g., research compliance - <https://www.buffalo.edu/research/research-services/compliance.html>)

Definitions

AI tools: Systems that generate or transform content (text, images, code, audio), summarize, translate, classify, extract, or provide recommendations (e.g., large language models, code assistants, transcription/summarization tools).

Student work product: Any text, tables, figures, analyses, code, or other materials submitted as part of the culminating work.

Disclosure: A written description of whether and how AI tools were used, sufficient for reviewers to understand the role of AI.

Policy:

The student remains fully responsible for the accuracy, originality, rigor, and integrity of the student work product, including verifying any AI-assisted outputs. AI use must not replace the student's intellectual contribution, scholarly argumentation, methodological competence, or interpretation. No restricted, proprietary, or sensitive data shall be entered into third-party AI systems unless explicitly approved and compliant with all governing requirements (IRB, data use agreements, HIPAA where applicable, sponsor terms, etc.). Any Human Subjects Research involving AI must be disclosed during the Institutional Review Board approval process. Students must submit and receive approval prior to AI use (Tiered guidance examples listed in Appendix 1). Any use of AI must be approved by the relevant program contact (e.g., project advisor) prior to use. Approvals must be documented (Appendix 2) and submitted with the final student work product. Students are



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required to keep an AI use Log (Appendix 2) that details the use of AI tools throughout the project. This log must be submitted with the AI approvals with the final student work product. Other approvals and disclosures may be required by sponsor agencies or journal publication requirements and should also be followed.

Programs may impose stricter limits or prohibit AI use for specific projects based on methodology, data sensitivity, or sponsor requirements. Always check with your program and gain approval prior to AI use.

Violation of this policy

Violations of the above-mentioned policy may constitute breaches of SPPS and University Academic Integrity policies (<https://pharmacy.buffalo.edu/information-for-students/grad-policy-library.html> and <https://www.buffalo.edu/academic-integrity/policies.html>).



Appendix 1: Tiered Framework for AI Use

Below are some guidance examples to guide faculty and students. **These are not intended to be prescriptive but give a general overview of things that may or may not be permitted for use. All AI use in any tier must be pre-approved and documented using the longitudinal log** (Appendix 2).

Tier 1 — Likely Permitted

Low risk uses that do not involve sensitive, proprietary, or evaluative content. Some examples and additional detail (not exhaustive) are outlined below.

- **Collaboration boundaries**
 - Students may use AI for grammar, clarity, or organization *only* on work they personally authored or on group work where **all contributors** have explicitly agreed to AI use.
 - AI tools may not be used to rewrite or “improve” another person’s contribution without their consent.
- **Literature and scientific content**
 - AI may be used to organize or summarize *publicly available* literature, but not:
 - Manuscripts under review.
 - Internal slide decks or unpublished teaching materials without written consent.
- **Coding and data work**
 - Code debugging conducted by uploading proposed code is allowed only when the code does not contain:
 - Proprietary algorithms that are explicitly protected or with explicit prohibitions on sharing in the public domain
 - Code that actively accesses or downloads restricted/non-public data from other repositories
- **Clinical or research data**



- No clinical vignettes, SOAP notes, or case descriptions where the patient could be reidentified through context.

Tier 2 — Restricted / Limited Approval

Moderate risk uses because they involve methodological reasoning, data structures, or early stage research design.

- **Statistical and analytic support**

- AI may help conceptualize statistical approaches, but:
 - It cannot be used to interpret results from restricted datasets that would require upload to a non-secure or publicly shared model.
 - It cannot be used to validate or “check” statistical conclusions without human oversight.

- **Draft analysis code**

- AI may help generate *template* code, but:
 - No actual research data (even deidentified) may be uploaded to public or open models. With appropriate approvals, limited use may be possible.
 - No non-publicly available code containing proprietary algorithms or sponsor restricted methods may be uploaded to a publicly facing AI model.

- **Qualitative coding**

- AI may assist with codebook development or theme exploration, but:
 - Raw transcripts, interviews, or focus group data cannot be uploaded unless fully deidentified *and* approved.
 - Sensitive topics (substance use, mental health, stigmatized conditions) require heightened scrutiny even when deidentified.

- **Collaborative research**

- AI use must be disclosed to all research team members.
- AI cannot be used to process or store:
 - Industry sponsored data unless explicitly permitted by the sponsoring entity.



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- Data governed by MTAs, NDAs, or IRB restrictions where sharing is explicitly prohibited.
- Prepublication findings or grant funded intellectual property

Tier 3 — Prohibited

High risk uses that compromise privacy, research integrity, or academic honesty.

- **Clinical and patient data**
 - No identifiable patient health information (PHI) data may be entered into AI tools unless explicitly allowed by an IRB or REB protocol.
 - Even “deidentified” data is prohibited if it is not explicitly mentioned in the IRB submission that is subsequently IRB approved or given IRB exemption (as well as any other relevant required submissions and approvals).
- **Research data and intellectual property (IP) unless as part of a research project that explicitly incorporates the use of AI to manage the data or IP (i.e., non-open LLM). Examples of unapproved uses could include:**
 - Unpublished data, including:
 - PK/PD datasets
 - Omics data
 - Assay results
 - Novel compound structures
 - Proprietary formulations
 - Grant applications, manuscripts in progress, or confidential peer review materials.
- **Scholarly integrity**
 - AI cannot be used to generate the following unless explicitly acknowledged and stated by the student:
 - Core scholarly arguments
 - Data interpretations
 - Clinical recommendations



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- The researcher/student will be responsible for AI fabricated citations, data, or evidence.
- **Undisclosed AI use**
 - Any use of AI that is not transparently disclosed when required by the assignment, committee, or journal is prohibited.
- **Collaborative harm**
 - Uploading another person's work (student, faculty, collaborator, preceptor) without explicit permission is prohibited, regardless of intent.



Appendix 2: AI Required Documentation

AI Use Approval/Disclosure Template – must be completed for every AI tool/application used. Duplicate as needed.

Approval for each AI use must be attained prior to AI use. Each approval must be documented and submitted with the final student work product submission.

AI Tool(s) to be used:

Purpose of Use:

Sections Affected:

Human Verification Steps to be Performed:

Confirmation that no restricted or identifiable data will be used:

Program Contact approval

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Student AI log – to be completed longitudinally through the student work product creation. Each column should have a corresponding approval documented using the template above. Add columns as needed. May be moved into an Excel if needed.

Date used			
AI Tool Name			
Prompt description			
Output type (outline, grammar edits, code snippet, etc.)			
Section where AI output was incorporated			
Human verification steps performed			