WIN-Guidelines for Generative AI in Bachelor/Master Theses and Seminars

--- Version 1.0 [13 Nov 2026] ---

These guidelines provide recommendations for actions and set clear expectations for the responsible use of generative AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude, GitHub Copilot, Grammarly, and DeepL) throughout the thesis process for bachelor/master theses and seminars at the Institute for Information Systems (WIN) and its research groups. The guidelines are in accordance with and concretize more general guidelines from the KIT Department of Business and Economics and KIT. The guidelines were inspired by Kane & Tarafdar (2026).

1. General Principles

- **Learning Your Craft** – GenAI does not replace the need to learn how to conduct quality research. You should develop the relevant research skills before using generative AI to augment your work.
- **Transparency with Provenance** – Be transparent about your use of generative AI. Disclose which tools you used, for which tasks, and document substantive AI use in your thesis. We provide tables at the end how to do this. Following the rules of the KIT department of business and economics, undocumented use of generative AI counts as an attempt to deceive.
- **Accountability** – You remain fully responsible for the originality, correctness, and academic integrity of your work. Critically evaluate and verify AI-generated outputs. Errors made by generative AI are your errors.
- **Privacy and Confidentiality** – Do not upload confidential, personal, copyrighted or unpublished research materials to public or unapproved AI services. Respect intellectual property. Where available, use approved university services such as the KIT AI Toolbox. Take into account whether a model runs locally (internal models) or is hosted by an external provider, as this determines where your data is processed. Local hosting does not by itself authorize the use of personal, confidential, copyrighted, or unpublished material. Use only approved services and check the applicable consent, data protection requirements, and usage rights before uploading such material.
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2. Using Generative AI Throughout the Thesis Process

2.1 Literature Search and Review

Permitted Uses

- Generate keywords or search terms for literature searches.
- Clarify concepts or organize information from papers you have read.
- Compare or synthesize literature with the support of generative AI.

Your Responsibilities

- Read the original sources and critically evaluate them yourself.
- Verify AI-generated summaries, interpretations, and references against the original sources.
- Ensure that the final synthesis reflects your own understanding.

Prohibited Uses

- Using AI-generated summaries or paraphrases as a substitute for reading the original sources.
- Citing fabricated references or references that you have not verified against the original sources.

2.2 Formulating Research Questions and Study Design

Permitted Uses: Your ideas and input first

- Brainstorm or refine research questions, hypotheses, or study ideas that you have developed yourself.
- Explore possible research methods and study designs. The initial ideas should always come from yourself. It is important that you learn to conceptualize and to be creative.
- Generate suggestions for study materials, such as interview questions, survey items, or experimental tasks. Here again, generate your ideas first and then discuss.

Your Responsibilities

- Be able to explain and justify how your research questions, methods, and study design address your research objective.
- Check AI-suggested methods, measures, or scales against the original academic sources before using them.
- Review and adapt AI-generated study materials (e.g., interview questions, survey items, or experimental tasks) for relevance, clarity, bias, and suitability for your study. Carefully consider, for example, items from established questionnaires and whether they really fit your purpose.

Prohibited Uses

- Using fabricated or unverifiable methodological information or references generated by AI.
- Presenting AI-generated or modified measures, scales, or other research instruments as established or validated when they are not.

2.3 Programming Support

Permitted Uses

- Code generation, code completion, and debugging suggestions.
- Explanation of error messages.

Your Responsibilities

- Understand, verify, and take responsibility for any AI-assisted code used in your thesis project.
- Be able to explain and justify your design and implementation decisions as well as how you tested and evaluated your code.
- If you decide against major use of AI for generating code, please talk to your supervisor because your own share of the programming may carry more weight in the assessment.

2.4 Data Analysis, Results, and Interpretation

Permitted Uses

- Explain statistical methods, analysis procedures, or statistical outputs.
- Assist with analysis code, debugging, or data visualization.
- Suggest ways to organize or present results.
- Assist with qualitative coding, provided that you check the coding against the source material and explain your own interpretive decisions.

Your Responsibilities

- Verify all analyses, statistical outputs, and visualizations against the original data and analysis code.
- Be able to independently explain and justify your analysis and interpretation of the results.
- Understand the statistical methods you apply. You should be able to explain why you chose a particular method and how it works, for instance when asked about it in your presentation.
- Understand your analysis pipeline from the raw data through all transformation steps to the final results, and describe its central steps in your thesis.
- Submit your analysis code and relevant prompts together with your thesis to an access-restricted GitLab repository agreed with your supervisor (see Section 3). Include raw data only where consent, confidentiality agreements, and data protection requirements permit this. Otherwise, agree on a protected way to make the analysis verifiable. Your supervisors may spot-check the code and may ask you about your analysis in your presentation.

2.5 Writing and Language Support

Permitted Uses

- Correct grammar and spelling, and improve clarity, style, or conciseness.
- Translate text that you have written yourself.
- Suggest improvements to the structure or organization of your writing.
- Provide feedback on the clarity, coherence, or strength of arguments in text that you have written.

Your Responsibilities

- Ensure that the final text accurately reflects your own understanding, arguments, and intended meaning.
- Review and revise AI-generated language suggestions before including them in your thesis.

Prohibited Uses

- Using AI-generated text as a substitute for your own academic writing and intellectual contribution.

2.6 Preparing Presentations

Permitted Uses

- Generate ideas for presentation structure, slide content, or visual design.
- Generate potential questions to prepare for the presentation.
- Explain complex concepts in clearer language.
- Generate illustrative images or visuals.

Your Responsibilities

- You must fully understand and be able to independently explain all content presented on your slides, including AI-assisted material.
- Review AI-generated content and visuals for accuracy and suitability, and adapt them where necessary.
- Clearly disclose AI-generated images or illustrations.
- Make sure that your presentation meets the standards of a scientific talk, which differ from those of a business presentation. AI-assisted graphics are assessed against the same standards and must be comprehensible, clear, and well structured. Be aware that AI tends to create very complex graphics with superficial and overladed content.
- Include a slide with the AI usage documentation for your presentation in your slide deck (see Section 3).

3. Required Documentation of Generative AI Use

Document your use of generative AI in the “Generative AI Usage Documentation” at the end of the thesis document. Use one row per tool and type of use, not per interaction. Routine spelling, grammar, and translation support may be grouped in a single row per tool. Conventional literature searches without generative AI do not require an entry. For your presentation, add a separate table in your slide set that documents the AI use for the presentation itself. Both tables should include:

- The stage of the thesis process or the element of the presentation.
- The purpose and where AI was used (thesis chapter or slide(s)).
- Which AI tools or models were used (e.g., ChatGPT, Gemini, GitHub Copilot, Grammarly), including the version and whether they run locally (at your own server or at KIT servers – see KIT toolbox) or are hosted externally.
- How the AI-generated output was reviewed, adapted, or verified (e.g., manual verification, comparison with original sources).
- For AI-assisted data analysis, identify the file containing the prompts relevant to the analysis decisions and code generation. Submit it with the analysis code and interim results, subject to the data access restrictions in Section 2.4. Reproducibility means that the submitted code and documented settings allow the analysis to be rerun on the same data; it does not mean that repeating a prompt must produce the same AI output. For qualitative analysis, document how

you checked AI-assisted coding against the source material and how you reached your interpretations.
- Consult with your supervisor whether further documentation of AI use is needed

Use the two tables below as templates. The entries are only examples. Section 2 lists the permitted uses for each stage. In your thesis table, include a row for each stage of the thesis process. In your presentation table, include a row for each element shown in the template. State “No AI use” where applicable. This allows your supervisors to see at which stage and for which tasks AI contributed to your work, and to assess your own contribution accordingly.

AI Usage Documentation for the Thesis Document (Example)

Stage	Purpose (Sections)	GenAI Tool / Model	Review and Verification	Extent of AI contribution (none / minor / substantial)	Prompt File and code [only needed for data analysis]
Literature Search and Review	Generating search terms for the database search (Related Work)	ChatGPT / [model, version], hosted externally	Search terms checked and extended manually. All cited sources read and verified.	Minor	n/a
Research Questions and Study Design	No AI use except for research question	Claude, hosted externally	First initial own research question discussed with Claude.	Minor	n/a
Programming	Code completion for the prototype (Implementation)	GitHub Copilot / [model], hosted externally	Suggestions reviewed, understood, and tested before use. Design decisions made and justified independently.	Substantial: Code suggestions used almost unchanged	n/a
Data Analysis	Code for data cleaning and visualization (Method, Results)	Mistral [model, version], internal KIT model	Code reviewed and verified against the raw data. Statistical methods chosen and justified independently.	Substantial: Code suggestions used almost unchanged	analysis.txt
Writing and Language	Grammar and style refinement (all sections)	Grammarly, hosted externally	Suggestions manually reviewed and selectively incorporated.	Minor: Words and half-sentences changed here and there.	n/a
Writing and Language	Translation of own text (Introduction)	DeepL, hosted externally	Translation manually reviewed and revised where necessary.	Minor: my own German text was translated and used with few words changed.	n/a

AI Usage Documentation for the Presentation (Example)

Element	Purpose and Slides	AI Tool / Model	Review and Verification
Structure and Slide Content	No AI use		
Visual Design and Graphics	Draft of the research model figure (slide 4)	ChatGPT / [model, version], hosted	Figure redrawn and checked for consistency with the thesis.
Images and Illustrations	Title image (slide 1)	[image model, version], hosted	Image labeled as AI-generated on the slide.
Preparation for Questions	Generating potential questions from the audience	ChatGPT / [model, version], hosted	Answers prepared independently and checked against the thesis.

4. Tool Options & Guides

Below, we offer a selection of tools that we find helpful as a starting point for your work. Please keep in mind that this list is not comprehensive and will be revised based on our and your experience as well as newly developed tools. It reflects the state of November 2026.

Start with the tools KIT provides. They run under KIT terms of use and data protection rules:

- **KIT KI-Toolbox**: chat access to several language models, open to all KIT students since the summer semester 2026. You get access after completing the KIT AI competence module. Personal data, for example interview transcripts, may only be processed with the models hosted locally at KIT. Information for students
- **Microsoft Copilot Chat**: log in with your KIT account so that enterprise data protection is active; chat content is then not used to train models. Since February 2026, access requires the KIT AI training on KOALA, and you must have agreed to the use of Microsoft cloud services in the SCC self-service portal. Do not enter sensitive or personal data. SCC information

Other tools we find helpful. Do not enter personal or confidential data into them:

- **General assistants:** ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini.
- **Checking literature:** KIT Library catalogue, Google Scholar and Semantic Scholar (non-AI tools). Use them to confirm that every reference a GenAI tool suggests exists and says what you cite it for.
- **Writing:** DeepL Write, Grammarly.
- **Programming:** GitHub Copilot, free for verified students through GitHub Education (Copilot Student plan).
- **Learning to use GenAI:** the ZML pages on generative AI and the KIT AI competence module.

5. Best Practices for Responsible Use

- Critically evaluate AI outputs and do not assume they are correct.
- Make sure that the academic contributions of your thesis are your own work.
- If you are unsure whether a particular use of AI is appropriate, ask your supervisor before proceeding.
- Follow the KIT guidelines on the use of generative AI.
- Take part in the AI literacy courses offered by KIT. The standards taught there are the standards against which your use of AI is assessed.
- Use AI deliberately. **Generative AI consumes considerable energy and resources.**

6. Consequences of Misuse

Misuse or insufficient disclosure of generative AI tools may constitute a violation of academic integrity and can make your work unacceptable.

7. Insert Declaration on the Use of AI Tools (below table in thesis)

> *I hereby declare that I have followed the WIN-Guidelines for the Use of Generative AI Tools in Theses. I remain fully responsible for the originality, accuracy, and academic integrity of my work.*

8. Concluding Remarks

In summary, we encourage you to work with GenAI to familiarize yourself with these tools and to improve the overall scientific findings. However, please do not blindly follow the output and verify the supposed facts generated by these tools.

"And most importantly, do not allow ChatGPT to squelch your creativity and deep thinking. Use it to expand your horizons, and spark new ideas!" (Buriak & Akinwande (2023))

References

Buriak JM, Akinwande D, et al. (2023). Best Practices for Using AI When Writing Scientific Manuscripts. ACS Nano 17(5), pp. 4091-4093. https://doi.org/10.1021/acsnano.3c01544

Kane, G. C., & Tarafdar, M. (2026). Writing an "A" Paper in the Age of GenAI: A Guide to Responsible Augmentation. Journal of the Association for Information Systems, 27(4), 831-845. https://doi.org/10.1080/07421222.2025.2487315