Department of Geography/Geoecology – University of Bayreuth: Guidelines for the use of AI-based tools and writing examination papers[1]

This document provides guidance on issues relating to the use of generative AI-based tools in the study programmes in Geography and Geoecology at the University of Bayreuth, with a particular focus on academic writing. Lecturers may deviate from the guidelines at any time and/or make subject-specific adjustments.

Background

In the last years, numerous so-called 'generative AI tools' have emerged. This refers to generative AI systems that are capable of autonomously creating novel, previously non-existent, original contents, on request and in dialogue with users. This includes chatbots (ChatGPT, Gemini, etc.), applications for research, writing and translation (elicit, languagetool.org, DeepL, etc.), speech-to.text applications (f4X), etc.) and text-to-image applications (DALL·E, etc.). These are computer programmes that use 'artificial intelligence (AI)' to produce text, images, videos or code based on user input ('prompts').[2] The quality of these tools has improved significantly since 2022. AI-based generative technologies such as chatbots or picture and multimedia creation programmes are now capable of generating academically relevant products. New tools for increasingly specialised tasks, that are part of study and teaching (summaries, data analysis, creation of visualizations) are being developed and published on an ongoing basis. The outputs of these tools are often surprisingly good. Nevertheless, generative tools have clear weaknesses; especially as they often make factual mistakes or make up alleged facts, including bibliographical references. They are also often problematic when it comes to **copyright** and **data protection**, the **ecological footprint**, the **political economy of knowledge architecture** and regarding effects relating to **learning psychology** and **cognition** connected to intense usage.

Are AI-based tools permitted for use in your studies in Geography/Geoecology?

In principle, the university doesn't prohibit it. Students should learn the sensible and responsible approach to the new tools. This includes the awareness ('Critical AI Literacy') of the strengths, weaknesses and risks of AI-tools for scientific integrity, legal framework and ecological, economic and study-related dimensions of AI-tools. Learning academic and scientific writing cannot be dispensed: in order to be able to critically assess and adapt the results of the use of AI-tools, there are comprehensive professional, methodological and writing competencies required. As teaching staff in Geography and Geoecology, we see our special responsibility in encouraging critical AI literacy.

[1] Adapted from models by the Universities of Basel, Frankfurt am Main and Hohenheim as well as Merseburg University. This guideline was enacted by the Department of Geography in July 2026 and will be implemented starting from the winter semester 2026/27. Version 1.1 (17.09.2026).

[2] https://www.hs-merseburg.de/hochschule/projekte/sl2/service-fuer-studium-lehre/ki-tools/ (17.09.2026).

Attachment "independent academic work"

The meaning of independent academic work: The research, analysis and computer-assisted management (e.g. Citavi, Zotero, Mendely etc.) of literature, identification of research gaps, generation of research questions, theses, hypotheses and argumentation, the creation of a research design, the production and structuring of a coherent and logically consistent text ("writing is thinking") are fundamental and inescapable research procedures, ***that must not be delegated to AI-tools***. AI-tools merely simplify certain parts and procedures of academic work, but by no means replace independent academic work. Please document your use of AI tools enclosed and transparently show where the work steps allowed by in the Geography/Geoecology programmes might have been supported by it.

I hereby confirm that I have produced this written work independently and without the use of other sources and resources (including professional writing services) than those stated. All passages taken from other works, whether verbatim or in essence, have been clearly indicated by citing the sources in the text. I have not yet used this work – not even in part – as part of my coursework or examination in any other degree programme or in a different module within the same degree programme. I further declare the following regarding the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) as part of my work:

☐ I have not used AI-tools.

When creating this work, I have used the following AI-based systems[3]:

1. ....
2. ....
3. Further:.....

I further declare that I
☐ have used text-generating AI tools merely as aids in writing this paper and my creative input predominates. I confirm that I have not used any AI writing tools whose use has been explicitly prohibited by the examiner,
☐ have actively informed myself about the capabilities and limitations of the aforementioned AI systems,
☐ have identified the passages taken from the AI systems listed above,
☐ have verified that the content generated using the aforementioned AI systems and incorporated by me is factually correct,
☐ am aware that, as the author of this work, I bear responsibility for the information and statements contained therein,
☐ am able to provide reference files (PDFs and/or files from reference management programme used in the preparation of this work) upon request.

I have used the AI systems mentioned above as described in the following. Generating ideas and devising the structure of the paper, as well as producing body text to be incorporated into the paper, are not permitted.

[3] If you are unsure whether an AI system used must be reported talk to your instructor/examiner.

Work step	Example: deployed AI system(s)	Example: Explanation of the manner of use
Translation of texts	AI-Y	Spanish planning documents have been translated to German with AI-Y.
Selection and usage of methods and models	AI-Y, AI-Z	1. AI-Y has been asked for appropriate analytical methods for a certain kind of data. Based on the responses from AI-Y, a search for real-life application examples of a method was carried out.
Data analysis, calculations, programming, coding, etc.	AI-X	The R-codes of my analysis have been verified by AI-X.
Data visualisation, the creation of graphical representations and illustrations	AI-X	AI-X has been asked in what tabular input-form my data has to be provided for the creation of an XYZ-illustration.
Formatting of references[4]	AI-Y	Converting references in various formats to APA format using AI-Y.
Editing / Proofreading of the text	AI-D	The text was proofread by AI-D regarding spelling, style and grammar. 'AI-rewrite' functions have only been used selectively.

Sign here (with place and date):

---

[4] This has become common practice but is itself prone to hallucinations. This option cannot replace the use of a reference management programme (Citavi, Zotero).