



Generative Artificial Intelligence Use Policy for Ph.D. Comprehensive Exams

Broadly, the purpose of the comprehensive exam is to ensure that students can demonstrate: 1) their understanding of scholarly literature and research findings in the higher education field, 2) their ability to synthesize and critically evaluate that literature, and 3) their critical thinking and communication skills. Students who independently complete the comprehensive exam demonstrate their readiness to enter the independent research phase of the Ph.D. program through their content expertise and skillful appraisal of scholarly literature. However, if students outsource reading, thinking, writing, and analysis to generative artificial intelligence—machine learning technology applied to large data collections that produces outputs (e.g., text, images) usually requiring human thinking—to complete their comprehensive exam, they are, in effect, communicating to their committee that they are unable or unwilling to demonstrate these competencies on their own. Furthermore, the information supplied by AI is not guaranteed to be current, accurate, trustworthy, or comprehensive. If students rely on this information to inform their assessments about the state of research on a topic, they might draw incorrect conclusions or make claims that do not hold up to expert review. Finally, if students incorporate AI generated text without attribution, they risk violating University of Arkansas's academic integrity policy and failing their exam.

Given these learning and academic integrity risks, the Higher Education Program has adopted the following guidelines for generative AI use in comprehensive exams:

Prohibited:

The use of generative AI to create some or part of your written comprehensive exam and submit it as your own work is a violation of academic integrity and prohibited. This includes:

1) generating an outline for your writing, 2) using AI to edit or revise your writing, 3) prompting AI to develop ideas for you, and 4) using it to convert your ideas into text or text structure.

Examples of prohibited prompts:

Prohibited Use case	Example prompt
Generating text	"Draft a paragraph that synthesizes the key findings of these three articles." "Here is an outline of my literature review, can you convert it into academic text with APA citations?" "Summarize the main takeaways of this article for me using this note structure."

Generating ideas	“Read these articles and synthesize the disagreements the authors have about the mechanisms underpinning academic disengagement.” “Explain how this study builds on prior understandings in the field.” “What’s the best way to summarize this research’s study’s methodology and limitations?”
Generating text structure	“Create an outline of a systematic literature review for me.” “What are three subheadings I could use to organize the main findings from this group of articles?”
Editing and revising text	“Please read this draft and edit it for tone, grammar, and concision.” “Can you revise this paragraph to improve the paragraph structure and language choice?”

Permissible:

Permissible uses of generative AI on your comprehensive exams are as follows:

- 1) To brainstorm ideas, 2) clarify concepts, or 3) gather information about journals or sources.

Examples of permissible generative AI and prompts:

Permissible Use case	Example prompt
Self-assessment and process guidance	“Ask me a set of four questions to help assess my understanding of the journal article I just read.” “I am reading a lot of articles on a similar topic. What are three strategies I should consider for organizing my sources and notes?” “I found a key article on my topic. How can I figure out which other articles have cited this article?”
Clarify concepts	“A study I am reading uses data from the Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study. Can you provide a brief summary of this survey’s history, structure, dissemination, outcomes of interest, and sample size?” “What share of U.S. colleges and universities are classified as for-profit private colleges?” “Can you remind me what are common validity threats in natural experiments?”
Gather information	“What education journals most commonly publish research on self-efficacy? Please provide impact factors and relative prestige along with your sources” “I found an article that mentions Bronfrenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory. When did he first publish this theory and which seminal piece of his do authors most cite most?”

Disclosure and Detection:

Any permissible uses of AI must be disclosed on your exam. At the end of your exam, please explain which AI tool(s) you used, what prompts you entered, and how you incorporated the AI-generated output into your exam. The use of content generated by AI, without proper citation, will be considered academic dishonesty. Failure to disclose permissible use of AI can constitute a violation of academic integrity.

Students should write their comprehensive exams using Google Docs and share the full editing permission with the academic advisor upon submission. Students will save a version of the exam as a Word document and submit it in Blackboard, where the comprehensive exams will be assessed for AI-generated text using Turnitin.

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