



Responsible Use of Generative AI in Grant Applications

This document provides a brief guide for the use of generative AI tools while preparing grant applications at ISTA. It summarizes the most essential DOs and DON'Ts that scientists should keep in mind when using generative AI tools to support the writing of grant proposals. This is a living document, so always check to make sure you have the latest version. If you have questions, comments, or concerns, please contact the Ethics Officer (ethicsofficer@ist.ac.at) and/or the Grant Office (grants@ist.ac.at).

Preamble

This document is based on the suggestions stated in the [Living Guidelines on the Responsible Use of Generative AI in Research](#) from the European Commission.

The ERC Scientific Council emphasizes that use of external help in preparing a proposal does not relieve the author from taking full and sole authorship responsibility with regard to properly crediting sources, avoiding plagiarism, and following the practices of good scientific and professional conduct ([Current position of the ERC Scientific Council on Artificial Intelligence](#)). Therefore, the individuals using generative AI tools as support in the preparation of their grant applications are expected to take full responsibility for the content and can be held accountable for any derived consequences.

In the [European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity](#), hiding the use of AI or automated tools in the creation of content or drafting publications is listed as “Research Misconduct and other Unacceptable Practices”.

Please always refer to the funding agency guidelines for grant-specific requirements. In the Annexes, we have included the guidelines for some of the common schemes. We will add more schemes as guidelines are published.



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DOs –

- If you use generative AI tools for content creation, **you are expected to take full responsibility for the AI-generated output incorporated into your proposal.**
- When using AI-based tools to generate content for your grant application, **be transparent** about it. It is recommended¹ to explain the context and state for which content generative AI tools were used in the project proposal.
- **Check the factuality and correctness of the outputs** before incorporating them into your grant application. Generative AI tools occasionally provide unsubstantiated and incoherent responses to the prompts submitted ('hallucinations').
- **Be aware of the risk of plagiarism** when an AI tool fails to correctly cite or omits the original sources in the content they generate.
- Check whether the content, citations, and publications suggested by generative AI tools are accurate/relevant to the topic.
- Check whether the content suggested by generative AI tools is appropriate to your research level and skills, as well as to the resources available to you. **You are responsible for the content of the proposal** and performing the research proposed therein.
- **Critically reflect on AI-generated output** as generative AI tools are known for inadvertently promoting existing biases leading to discrimination and stigmatization of certain societal groups.
- Keep in mind that **there are limitations and gaps in the knowledge of generative AI tools.**

DON'Ts –

- Don't use generative AI tools in situations where their usage would compromise scientific or academic integrity.
- Don't submit a grant application that includes AI-generated content without thoroughly vetting it for correctness and relevancy.
- Don't assume that the suggestions and information provided by generative AI tools are always factual and accurate.
- Don't intentionally hide the use of generative AI tools.
- **NEVER submit any private data or any other sensitive/non-anonymized information as prompts in publicly accessible generative AI tools.** This includes (but is not limited to) names, email addresses, and other personal information, but also intellectual property and unpublished data—yours and everyone else's.

Recommended reading

- [Living Guidelines on the Responsible Use of Generative AI in Research](#)

¹ Note: for the MSCA postdoctoral fellowship, it is required. Please see the annex.



Annex 1: MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships

Current MSCA-PF guidelines on the use of AI tools

According to the [MSCA-PF guidelines](#):

*When considering the use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools for the preparation of the proposal, it is imperative to exercise caution and careful consideration. The AI-generated content should be thoroughly reviewed and validated by the applicants to ensure its appropriateness and accuracy, as well as its compliance with intellectual property regulations. **Applicants are fully responsible for the content of the proposal (even those parts produced by the AI tool)** and must be transparent in disclosing which AI tools were used and how they were utilized.*

Specifically, applicants are required to:

- 1. Verify the accuracy, validity, and appropriateness of the content and any citations generated by the AI tool and correct any errors or inconsistencies.*
- 2. Provide a list of sources used to generate content and citations, including those generated by the AI tool. Double-check citations to ensure they are accurate and properly referenced.*
- 3. Be conscious of the potential for plagiarism where the AI tool may have reproduced substantial text from other sources. Check the original sources to be sure you are not plagiarizing someone else's work.*
- 4. Acknowledge the limitations of the AI tool in the proposal preparation, including the potential for bias, errors, and gaps in knowledge.*

Advice from the FFG

The Austrian Research Promotion Agency (*Österreichische Forschungsförderungsgesellschaft*; FFG) offers the following advice² when using generative AI tools in your MSCA-PF application:

- AI-generated content should be **thoroughly validated by the applicants** to ensure its appropriateness and accuracy, as well as its compliance with intellectual property regulations.
- **Applicants are fully responsible** for the content of the proposal and must be **transparent in disclosing which AI tools were used** and how they were utilized.
- The use of AI does not exempt you from complying with rules regarding plagiarism and intellectual property.

² From the 2024 FFG MSCA Academy Training Webinars



- You need to **be specific in describing your project** – copy/paste runs a high risk of lowering your score. (Also checked by the Research Executive Agency.)
- If awarded, Part B (i.e. your scientific proposal) becomes an integral part of the grant agreement, so **you must carry out what is described in the application**.

Declaring the use of AI tools

According to the MSCA guidelines, you must disclose **all** uses of generative AI in the preparation of your proposal³. This includes acknowledging a tool whenever you incorporate text (either directly or paraphrased) or images generated by it in your proposal. Moreover, you should acknowledge the sources the AI tool used to generate the content incorporated in the proposal (after checking that these citations are real and accurate). You should also disclose functional uses (e.g. for translation, style, length, etc.) of AI tools.

How and where to declare the use of AI tools in the MSCA-PF proposal

We recommend adding a short text as a footnote at the end of Part B1. Briefly state what tools you used and in what capacity (e.g. help with language/style, brainstorming, etc.). Alternatively, if you have a list of references, you can include a short statement at the end of this list.

See also

- [MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowship Guidelines](#)

³ For AI tools in your *research*, there is a separate section in Part A, Section 4 (“Ethics Issues Table”), Question 8. In addition, in part B.1, subsection 1.2, applicants should address any AI tools they intend to use and/or develop in their research. Reviewers will assess these in terms of “robustness” (an umbrella term that includes [all the major concerns related to AI use](#)).



Annex 2: European Molecular Biology Organization

Postdoctoral Fellowships (PF)

Current EMBO-PF guidelines on the use of AI tools

The [EMBO-PF guidelines](#) state:

Use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools

EMBO acknowledges the value of using Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools, as well as human feedback, in the preparation of funding applications. Applicants are fully and solely responsible for the originality and accuracy of their applications. To provide transparency, applicants are requested to disclose whether AI tools were used in preparing their applications, and for what purpose (e.g., chatGPT was used to improve language style). EMBO will continue following the developments in generative AI and adapt this policy as required.

How and where to declare the use of AI tools in the EMBO-PF proposal

The EMBO will soon introduce a field to enter this information. For now, a short note at the end of your project description suffices, explaining how and for what purpose AI was used.

See also

- [EMBO-PF guidelines](#)

Young Investigator Projects (YIP)

Entire statement on the use of AI tools, as it appears in the guidelines:

EMBO acknowledges the value of using Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools, as well as human feedback, in the preparation of funding applications. Applicants are fully and solely responsible for the originality and accuracy of their applications.

EMBO will continue following the developments in generative AI and adapt this policy as required.

How and where to declare use of AI tools in the EMBO-YIP proposal

Note that for this scheme, EMBO does not state that applicants must declare the use of AI tools. However, in the interest of scientific integrity and transparency, we recommend adding a very brief statement at the end of the research description. It should state what tool(s) you used and for what purpose.

See also

- [EMBO-YIP guidelines](#)



Annex 3: Doctoral Fellowship Programme of the Austrian Academy of Sciences (ÖAW-DOC)

Current ÖAW-DOC guidelines

Currently, the ÖAW does not provide any specific guidelines of the use of generative AI or on declaring the use of generative AI. However, you should follow the general recommendations above.

How and where to declare use of AI tools in the ÖAW-DOC proposal

In the interest of scientific integrity and transparency, we recommend adding a brief statement in the ethics section. It should state what tool(s) you used and for what purpose.



Annex 4: Austrian Research Promotion Agency (FFG)

The Austrian Research Promotion Agency (Österreichische Forschungsförderungsgesellschaft, FFG) has put out a [general statement](#) (in German) on the use of AI for grant proposals to their schemes.

They have two main points:

1) The use of generative AI/AI tools *is allowed* in the preparation of grant proposals.

At this time, they see no reason to forbid or limit the use of these tools. However, they remind all grant applicants that *it is the **applicant's responsibility to write funding applications in accordance with the required (legal) standards and to be factually correct.***

2) The FFG does *not* require applicants to declare the use of AI in their proposals.

For the time being, the FFG does not require applicants to disclose the use of generative AI applications when preparing funding applications. If there are legal obligations on the part of FFG applicants (e.g. due to terms of use of the providers of generative AI applications) that require disclosure of the use of generative AI applications, these must be fulfilled independently by the applicants.

Applicants themselves are responsible for both the lawful use of AI applications and the lawful use of the results (output) of these applications. The risk of using the AI applications lies exclusively with the applicant.

See also

- [FFG's statement on the use of GenAI](#) (German only)



Annex 5: ERC Frontier Grants

The ERC Scientific Council has a [brief statement](#) on the use of AI technologies.

The Council recognizes that these tools will bring profound change and that researchers already use generative AI tools for a variety of tasks. They emphasize that the...

“...use of external help in preparing a proposal does not relieve the author from taking full and sole authorship responsibilities with regard to acknowledgements, plagiarism and the practice of good scientific and professional conduct.”

How and where to declare use of AI tools in an ERC Frontier Grant proposal

The Scientific Council makes no statement about declaring the use of AI in the preparation of proposals. However, in the interest of scientific integrity and transparency, we recommend adding a very brief statement in your B2. It should state what tool(s) you used and for what purpose.

See also

- [Statement of the Scientific Council on the use of GenAI](#)



Annex the Last: Other funding schemes with no guidelines

Many funding organizations do not provide any rules or guidance on the (declaration of the) use of generative AI tools. If this is the case, and you make use of generative AI tools, we recommend including a brief statement in your project description that describes what tool(s) were used and for what purpose.

Since GenAI tools are **not** considered authors and the output is not considered a citable source, and because the author of the proposal remains solely responsible for the content, the statement should **not** be included in the list of references.