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.

CONTENTS:

DOs and DON'Ts

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 recommended[1] 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 advice[2] 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 proposal[3]. 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 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 (EMBO-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. <u>To provide transparency, applicants are requested to disclose whether AI tools were used in preparing their applications, and for what purpose</u> (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](#)

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 at the end of your list of references. It should state what tool(s) you used and for what purpose.

Annex 4: HFSP Long-term and Cross-disciplinary Fellowships

Currently, the guidelines state:

Where applicants use generative AI and AI-assisted technologies in the writing process, these technologies should only be used to improve readability and language of the application, not for creating content. Authors are requested to disclose their use of AI and AI-assisted technologies in the application. HFSPO reserves the right to check the use of AI tools with appropriate software and to take the outcome into consideration in the evaluation of applications.

It is not specific about where, but you must include a statement on what tool(s) you used (if any) and for what purpose.

See also:

- LTF Guidelines
- CDF Guidelines

Annex 5: WWTF

As of 2025, the WWTF includes the following statements:

WWTF recognizes that the use of genAI tools is pervasive and can facilitate proposal writing, for example in relation to improving written language. However, substantial use of genAI must be declared as such for the sake of transparency.

> ⓘ "Substantial use" is defined in line with the European Commission's definition: "[...] using generative AI as a basic author support tool is not a substantial use. However, interpreting data analysis, carrying out a literature review, identifying research gaps, formulating research aims, developing hypotheses, etc. could have a substantial impact." (EC 2024: Living Guidelines on the responsible use of generative AI in research.)

This mainly concerns critical parts of scientific relevance, such as hypothesis formulation and the scientific project plan. Applicants will be required to provide statements on the use of generative AIs at both the short and full proposal stages. WWTF emphasizes the importance of human responsibility for the content submitted at all stages of the application process.

> ⓘ For your information, WWTF does not allow the use of genAI in the evaluation process.

This came from the 2025 ICT call, but the same/similar statements appear in other calls.

Though you are not required to state if AI tools were used to help with language, in the interest of transparency, we recommend you state all use of AI tools in the application.