UNIVERSITY OF THE
WITWATERSRAND,
JOHANNESBURG

POLICY DOCUMENT

Name of Policy

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)

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Policy Title	**AI (Artificial Intelligence)**
Policy Officer	Registrar/ Deputy Vice Chancellor Research & Innovation
Date Approved by Council	4 June 2026
Date Effective From	4 June 2026

This Policy is to be read in conjunction with the Wits.POPIA Policy.

1. CONTEXT / BACKGROUND

Guided by its Strategic Plan for Research (2023 – 2027) (Wits, 2022a), Strategic Plan for Postgraduate Research Training (2023 – 2027) (Wits, 2022b) and Wits Learning and Teaching Strategic Plan for 2025-2029 (Wits, 2024), the University aims to produce increasing amounts of translational, and innovation-based research with impact, encourage and facilitate the development of socially engaged postgraduate thinkers, researchers and innovators equipped to use knowledge for change in the country, in Africa and across the world, and prepare our staff and students for the changing world of work. In pursuing research, learning and teaching and assessment "for good", the University is providing opportunities for our staff and students to prepare themselves for the changing world of work. As an object, instrument and outcome of research, teaching and knowledge, technology represents a significant enabler of these overall aims. The global emergence of a range of such technologies in the form of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools over recent years offers new opportunities for reflecting on how and in what ways these can and should be used to advance the goals and aspirations of the University as a committed research-intensive institution. Given the unprecedented pace of change in the form, functions, and capacity of AI recently witnessed, the University recognises that any approach to the relationship between AI and its overall academic programme needs to be responsive, agile and adaptive. As such, this policy represents a living document that will be updated to reflect the dynamically shifting terrain created as AI continues to shape and be shaped by the global academic landscape, technological developments, geopolitical issues and global governance frameworks.

2. DEFINITIONS

Policy and Guideline	Policy and Guideline means this AI Policy and Guideline – AI Policies - Wits University, may be amended and/or supplemented by the Registrar's Office from time to time.
AI	"Artificial Intelligence (AI) refers to computational methods and systems that can perform tasks typically requiring human intelligence, such as learning, reasoning, and decision making." (NIST, 2023). "Coined by Stanford University Professor John McCarthy in 1956, AI refers to building machines that are capable of tasks typically associated with intelligent behaviour, such as problem-solving, decision-making, pattern recognition, natural language processing, and perception. The core of modern AI is driven by machine learning (ML), where algorithms learn from data to improve their performance over time." (Wits MIND, 2024, n.p) AI forms the outermost layer of a rapidly evolving ecosystem that encompasses machine learning, neural networks, deep learning and generative AI (GAI). This ecosystem can be harnessed to produce tools, which are software programmes that perform, solve tasks, communicate, interact, or act logically in ways that mimic human cognitive functions (Goyanes, de Zúñiga & Durotoye, 2023).
Generative AI (GAI)	Generative Artificial Intelligence (GAI) refers to "ML [Machine Learning] models that can create new content, such as text, images, audio, video, [music] or code, by learning enough about the structure of the data used to train it to produce new examples [by learning from patterns in existing data]. Instead of simply following pre-programmed instructions, GAI tools can generate what appears to be original material in response to prompts, simulating human-like creativity and communication]. These models, like ChatGPT (OpenAI's Generative Pretrained Transformer chatbot), use deep learning techniques to generate content that mimics human-like creativity. ChatGPT has been trained on hundreds of gigabytes of text scraped from the internet, which gives it a good enough understanding of human text to respond to prompts it has never seen before." (Wits MIND, 2024, n.p)

Use of AI	Any interaction with an AI system, including the framing of prompts, provision of input data, configuration of the tool, and the subsequent application, storage, or dissemination of its output (Russel & Norvig,2020).
Disclosure	A formal, explicit declaration, made at the level of a specific assignment (or for a series of assignments), publication, or project, that reports if, how and to what extent AI was used. (Bekker, 2024; University of Sydney, 2025)
AI Hallucination	The phenomenon where an AI model generates outputs that are factually incorrect, nonsensical, or not grounded in its training data, presenting them as factual (Ji, 2023).

3. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide academic and professional and support staff (staff), and students with contextually valued practices regarding the fair and productive use of AI in advancing research, innovation, learning, teaching, course design and assessment of student learning at the University. The policy relies on a framework, https://www.wits.ac.za/ai-policies/ which has been developed to support staff and students at the University to engage with AI in each of these critical practices of the academic programme. In keeping with the Wits Framework for Academic Integrity (Wits, 2022c) and the University's statutes, rules, regulations, policies, procedures and standing orders, academic integrity is upheld through fair, transparent and productive participation across all academic practices. As found in the Wits Framework for Academic Integrity, "the Third Edition of the ICAI's Fundamental Values of Academic Integrity (2021), ICAI defines academic integrity as a commitment to six fundamental values: honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility, and courage. By embracing these fundamental values, instructors, students, staff, and administrators create effective scholarly communities where integrity is a touchstone. Without them, the work of teachers, learners, and researchers loses value and credibility. More than merely abstract principles, the fundamental values serve to inform and improve ethical decision-making capacities and behaviour. They enable academic communities to translate ideals into action. Scholarly communities flourish when community members "live" the fundamental values. To do this, these communities must invoke them, regularly inviting staff, students, faculty, and administrators to consider and discuss the role of ethical values and their ability to inform and improve various aspects of life on and off campus" which includes teaching, learning and research.

4. PRINCIPLES

The University has established six broad principles that provide a common framework for the ethical use of AI, ensuring that academic integrity and research ethics are upheld. These principles are embedded in faculty specific guidelines across the university. Staff and students should therefore consult their faculty-specific guidelines for work undertaken within those faculties.

4.1. Foster AI Literacy

All staff and students should be enabled to develop a foundational understanding of how AI tools work, including their capabilities, inherent limitations (e.g., bias, inaccuracy, hallucinations), and the ethical considerations of their use – acknowledging that AI access is not equitable in our context. This literacy will support an awareness of when to avoid AI and when it may be useful to use such tools (understanding their role in the academic landscape), as well as how to use it and how to evaluate AI-generated content (critical use).

Efforts to enhance AI literacy are underway. Faculties have workshops and seminars on AI, including the Faculty of Humanities position paper and subsequent workshops titled "*Demystifying AI for the Humanities: Promoting Responsible Engagement with AI Matters in Teaching and Learning*". Its purpose is to advance the academic mission within the Humanities by clarifying the concept of AI, thereby steering clear extreme attitudes such as excessive enthusiasm or fear of technology. Faculties, ICT, CLTD and others will continue to offer guidance and develop training opportunities for all staff and students.

Both the Strategic Plan for Research (2023 – 2027) and the Strategic Plan for Postgraduate Research Training (2023 – 2027) commit to providing cutting-edge equipment and digital resources to the University's researchers. However, the procurement of AI tools to enable research productivity must be twinned with a commensurate understanding of the promises and limitations of them. The library, The Centre for Learning, Teaching and Development (CLTD) and the Educational Technologies Committee continue to be partners in both screening and evaluating the tools on offer and providing training for their fair and productive use, enabling meaningful AI literacy across the University.

4.2. Uphold Unwavering Academic Integrity and Personal Accountability.

The University underscores that the individual scholar (or human team) remains fully responsible for the originality, accuracy, and integrity of their work. The use of AI must be transparently

disclosed and appropriately acknowledged in line with university policy. The use of a tool does not absolve the user of responsibility for any academic misconduct, including but not limited to plagiarism, falsification, fabrication or improper attribution. In line with good research practice, researchers should commit to describing their use of AI tools transparently to facilitate the reproducibility of their methods and findings in dedicated sections in the final write up of the study as a matter of course (University of Oxford, 2025), remembering that AI cannot be an author on any work.

Just as you would cite a book, article, or dataset, acknowledging AI tools respects intellectual property and gives credit to the sources that contributed to your work. Further, when AI is used, it's crucial that the author understands the content and can take responsibility for it. Declaring AI use helps educators and reviewers assess whether the student or researcher truly grasps the material. Such declarations are to be made to the University through the comprehensive template provided as in appendix 1 attached hereto. Finally, openly discussing AI use encourages conversations about its role in academia, helping us to further refine policies and better understand how staff and students learn how to use these tools effectively and ethically.

4.3. Adapt Research, Pedagogical and Assessment Practices

Research, teaching, learning, and assessment methods must be strategically adapted to the AI landscape to create valid and reliable learning outcomes and / or research outputs to protect the reputation of the University.

This may involve redesigning curricula, learning outcomes and assessments accordingly; to consider whether and how AI tools and capabilities may be used to enhance educational goals while clearly defining the permissible and impermissible uses of AI within specific academic tasks without compromising outcomes or the development of key skills that are considered a hallmark of a University graduate. To assist staff in this design the The Centre for Learning, Teaching and Development (CLTD) offers a "*Digital Tools for Assessment*" workshop which covers how to use assessment tools on the learning management system, Ulwazi and how to grade assessments using AI such as *SpeedGrader* and others.

Learning outcomes and assessments may need to be designed to prioritise originality, critical thinking, and staff and student engagement in an environment where AI is present. Assessment structures may need to be rebalanced to reduce opportunities for misuse of AI

(see the University's Student Academic Misconduct Policy) and thus academic misconduct, while encouraging transparent and reflective use where appropriate.

Faculties, Schools, Departments and Institutes should compile best-practice guides for AI-resilient assessment and AI-empowered assessment ideas, customisable rubric language, and successful case studies. The University encourages assessments that mirror real-world professional tasks and are inherently difficult for AI to complete generically.

4.4. Prioritise Human Oversight and Augmentative Use

AI should be positioned and used as an augmentative and consultative tool that supports human intellect, not as a substitute for it, if the quality and integrity of a university degree is to be maintained. The final judgment, critical interpretation, creative insight, and ethical decision-making must remain in the hands of the human user, who should use the tool to enhance, not supersede, their academic responsibilities.

The Wits Learning and Teaching Strategic Plan (2025-2029) empowers students to take control of their learning journeys and success within a supportive teaching environment. The focus is on equipping students with key academic skills, including digital literacy, self-regulation, and metacognitive abilities, along with qualities that support their success at university and in their future careers. Encouraging student agency empowers learners to critically engage with AI tools, making informed decisions about their use in academic and personal contexts. By fostering ethical awareness and responsible practices, students can harness AI to enhance learning while upholding integrity and accountability.

4.5. Manage Institutional Risks and Promote Responsible Implementation

The University community must proactively engage with the broader risks of AI, including data security, user privacy, and intellectual property rights. This requires providing clear guidance and training to equip staff and students to safeguard sensitive data and use these tools in a manner that aligns with institutional values and legal standards.

Staff and students engaging with AI must be mindful of the risks relating to data security, confidentiality, privacy, and intellectual property. Sensitive and / or personal data should not be entered into public AI systems, as this may compromise research participants, or intellectual property. Disclosure of confidential data may also destroy novelty or originality, placing intellectual

property in the public domain.

The Protection of Personal Information Act No. 04 of 2013 (POPIA) imposes obligations regarding the collection and processing of personal information, including informed consent, minimal data collection, and lawful, specific purposes. Use of AI with identifiable sensitive and / or personal data, without anonymisation or pseudonymisation, may result in non-compliance with POPIA.

Content generated entirely by AI, without meaningful human creative input, will not attract copyright protection. Where AI is used as an assistive tool, the human contributor must exercise genuine creative judgment and skill for copyright to vest which would fall under the Copyright Act No. 98 of 1978 in which protection applies only to original works authored by natural persons.

For any research or major administrative task/s where AI has played a meaningful role, it is required that staff and students make an honest declaration by recording how and where AI was used. This "decision provenance" helps ensure transparency and accountability in the process. Examples of such declarations are available in Faculty documents and can be accessed at AI Policies - Wits University

4.6. Equitable, Inclusive and Socially Just AI practices

The University is committed to ensuring that the integration of AI into teaching and learning, research, and administration promotes fairness and inclusivity. The implementation of AI must, as far as is reasonably possible, avoid reinforcing or worsening existing social, economic, and / or educational inequalities.

The University recognises that unequal access to digital infrastructure, affordable data, and reliable devices may disadvantage some members of our university community. To address this, the University will actively work to mitigate challenges associated with the digital divide, data costs, and accessibility. Where AI is permitted, equitable alternatives and pathways will be made available to students and staff who encounter barriers to access.

In addition, the University commits to a critical and ongoing examination of AI tools for inherent biases, including those related to race, gender, language, culture, and other markers of identity. The University will prioritise the responsible and ethical use of tools that are sensitive to the needs of our diverse, multilingual community that align with the University's broader transformation goals. By embedding equity into AI adoption, the University seeks to ensure that these technologies are

used in ways that expand opportunities, foster inclusion, and contribute positively to the academic and social environment.

An acknowledgement of an understanding of the above principles as they relate to the productive and fair use of AI for all academic work should be declared in all formal submissions for assessment at the University through the comprehensive template provided as in appendix 1 attached hereto.

5. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

It is the responsibility of all staff and students to:

- Uphold the principles of AI use as per this policy
- Follow the guidelines of ethical AI use in assessments and research as specified by the Faculties
- Adhere to this policy as well as related Standing Orders on Assessment, Plagiarism Policy, Academic Integrity Policy and other relevant University policies that guide learning, teaching and research.

It is the responsibility of the Senate and relevant Senate subcommittees to

- Provide strategic leadership for AI adoption in teaching, learning, and research.
- Approve frameworks, standards, and guidance arising from the AI policy.
- Ensure alignment with institutional mission, values, and external regulatory expectations.
- Sponsor ethical review structures and capability development initiatives.
- Monitor institutional risk, impact, and innovation outcomes related to AI.

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Wits MIND *Educational Explainer 2024* https://www.wits.ac.za/mind/educational-explainer/

Version History		
Version	**Description**	**Date**
V0.1	Foundational principles compiled by task team	Initial Draft
V0.2	Consultation with Research Office, Academic Affairs, Registrar's Office, Legal office	18 June 2025
V0.3	Consultation with ADRs, ADT&Ls, ADPGs, Wits MIND, PG Association, SRC, CLTD, PG Affairs, eResearch, RECs, ORI, Steve Biko Bioethics Center, CSAM, IDORI, ICT, ISPO, WIC, Wits Plus, Library etc. Including	20 July 2025 – 13 August 2025
V0.3	Presented at UR & IC (Plenary) and approved	28 July 2025
V1.1	Consolidation of inputs from all stakeholders	20 August 2025
V2.1	Draft Prepared for SET Retreat and presented at SET Retreat	25 August 2025 / 04 September 2025
V2.1	Update given to UR&IC	30 September 2025
V2.2	Presented at Fourth Senate Teaching and Learning Committee Meeting and approved	07 October 2025
V2.2	Presented at Exco of Convocation	09 October 2025
V2.2	Presented at SET, HOS & SMG Lekgotla	21 October 2025

Version History		
Version	**Description**	**Date**
V2.2	Presented at Council Strategic Planning Session	23 October 2025
V2.2	Presented at Senate	06 November 2025

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APPENDIX A:

DRAFT SAMPLE:

PLAGIARISM AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE DECLARATION

(TO BE AMENDED ACCORDING TO FACULTY GUIDELINES)

I, [Name and Surname], Student number: [Student number], declare that I understand and accept that plagiarism, improper Artificial Intelligence (AI) usage and other misconduct, as defined in the **University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg's Student Academic Misconduct Policy**, is a serious academic offence. Furthermore, I acknowledge the importance of ethical and transparent use of AI in academic work (including but not limited to research and / or innovation).
Accordingly, I confirm the following:

General Academic Integrity

- This assignment/essay/proposal/research report is **my own original work.**
- I am familiar with the **University's Student Academic Misconduct Policy** and its **Academic Integrity Framework** for **The Fair and Productive Use of AI,** and I understand the definitions and consequences of plagiarism and improper use of AI tools.
- I have **appropriately cited** and referenced all sources, whether human- or AI-generated, in accordance with the required specific referencing styles.
- I understand that using text, ideas, or outputs from any source—**including AI tools**—without proper attribution constitutes academic misconduct.
- I have not asked or paid any third party (human and / or AI service provider) to complete this work on my behalf.
- I have not allowed and will not allow anyone to copy my work or pass it off as their own.

Specific Use of AI

- Where I used **AI tools,** I confirm that I have done so **responsibly** and in accordance with the University's fair use framework and the instructions given for any academic task or assignment.
- All AI-generated content has been:
  - **i. Reviewed and critically assessed by me,**
  - **ii. Properly acknowledged and cited, and**
  - **iii. Clearly contextualised as part of my own scholarly work.**
- If AI was used in the **design, analysis, writing, or execution** of research or assignments, I have disclosed this usage in the relevant sections (e.g., methodology or acknowledgements) of my work
- I understand that I remain **fully accountable** for the academic integrity, accuracy, and originality of all submitted work, even if any AI tools were used.

Declaration of Use:

Please select one:

☐ I confirm that **I did not make use** of AI tools.

☐ I confirm that **I did make use** of AI tools as part of this work (please complete the section below):

AI Use in terms of Academic Activities Disclosure Table

Purpose of Use	**Tick (✓)**	**Tool(s) Used**	**Description of Use** *(How and why did you use it)*
Idea Generation (e.g., research problem, hypothesis etc.)	☐		
Sourcing Related Work, e.g., summarising, identifying literature etc.)	☐		
Method and Experiment Design	☐		
Data Analysis (e.g., coding, visualisation, interpretation etc.)	☐		
Theoretical Development (e.g., modelling, concept clarification etc.)	☐		
Code Development (e.g., writing or testing scripts etc.)	☐		
Presentation (e.g., graphics, visuals, layout etc.)	☐		
Editing (e.g., grammar, clarity, language)	☐		
Writing (e.g., generating or structural suggestions or rephrasing (vis-á-viz) or content suggestion or expansion etc.)	☐		
Citation Formatting (e.g., organising references etc.)	☐		

If applicable, describe how you ensured responsible use of AI:
If other uses were involved, please specify below:

AI Tool used (list all)	Used for?

If generative AI tools were used as an integral part of the experimental design or in the direct execution of my research, I confirm that details of this use are clearly outlined in the relevant experimental/methodology chapters of my thesis/dissertation/research report.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

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APPENDIX B:
ICT AI FRAMEWORK

Table of Contents

Focus Areas

The following table outlines the key focus areas guiding the strategic adoption and integration of AI across the university.

Focus Area	Key Elements
Research and Innovation	AI tools and infrastructure aligned to institutional standards; data management systems for storage, retrieval and analysis; support for transformative AI research in collaboration with research entities such as the Mind Institute.
Learning and Teaching	Support integration of AI into academic programmes; provide student access to AI tools; enable AI-driven learning analytics; develop smart classrooms for adaptive learning.
Operational Efficiency and Professional Services Enablement	AI-powered tools for administrative functions (HR, finance, student administration, ICT); process automation; data analytics for decision-making; enhanced communication and collaboration solutions
Digital Transformation	AI-enabled ICT infrastructure; support for hybrid and remote models; smart campus solutions including energy management and predictive maintenance
Strengthening AI Capabilities and Innovation	Internal skills development; partnerships for capability building; AI labs and sandbox environments; use of business intelligence to inform innovation

Table 1: Focus Areas

AI Governance Framework

The table below outlines the key structures and practices required to ensure the secure, ethical, and accountable adoption of AI across the university.

Section	Sub-Section	Description
Cybersecurity	**AI-Driven Security**	Implement AI-based solutions for threat detection, incident response, and vulnerability management.
	Data Privacy	Ensure robust data privacy protocols and compliance with national and international regulations.
	Continuous Monitoring	Establish continuous monitoring and assessment of the university's threat landscape to adapt to emerging threats.
	AI Cybersecurity Awareness	Promote ongoing awareness and training programmes for staff and students on AI-related cybersecurity risks, including safe use of AI tools, data protection practices, and emerging threat vectors.
Governance	**Policies, Frameworks, and Procedures**	Develop and implement comprehensive policies, frameworks, and procedures to guide the ethical and responsible use of AI. Supported by principles of fairness, transparency, inclusivity, and explainability.
	Governance and Decision-Making Structures	Establish clear governance and decision-making structures, including an AI ethics review mechanism in partnership with relevant university bodies, to ensure accountable oversight of AI initiatives.

Table 2: AI Governance Framework

Strategic ICT Risks

The table below provides a strategic high-level view of potential ICT related risks, their impact, likelihood, and strategic actions to address them, ensuring the university's AI initiatives are robust and sustainable.

Risk	Description	Proactive Strategic Actions
Technological Obsolescence	Risk of infrastructure and AI technologies becoming outdated.	Conduct regular reviews, audits and updates on the technology, using flexible systems that can easily adapt to new AI developments to prevent tools from becoming outdated.
Data Privacy	Risk of	Conduct ongoing reviews, audits and updates to the

Risk	Description	Proactive Strategic Actions
and Security Breaches	unauthorised access to sensitive data.	cybersecurity strategy, integrating advanced AI-driven security measures and compliance checks to protect against data breaches and unauthorised access.
Ethical Misuse of AI	Risk of AI applications causing unintended harm or bias.	Implement an AI governance policy and principles.
Regulatory Compliance Issues	Risk of non-compliance with national and international AI regulations.	Provide oversight over the university's compliance position through the Wits ICT Risk Management Committee.
Resistance to Change	Risk of faculty and staff resisting AI adoption.	Develop a comprehensive change management plan. Change management actions will be detailed in the operational rollout, in collaboration with communications and HR.
Resource Allocation	Risk of insufficient financial resources for AI initiatives.	Secure long-term funding through strategic partnerships and grants; prioritise high-impact projects.
Skill Gaps	Risk of internal staff not possessing the necessary AI expertise.	Launch an AI skills development program; collaborate with leading institutions for training.
Reputational Damage	Risk of public backlash, ethical breaches, or harmful AI outputs (e.g., biased chatbots or harmful content) without adequate oversight and multidisciplinary input.	Establish and implement AI monitoring systems for sentiment tracking and proactive response planning. Reputational risk mitigation protocols will be included in the operational implementation. Specific risks, such as AI chatbots exhibiting bias or causing harm, will be addressed through a multi-stakeholder engagement approach.
Operational Disruptions	Risk of disruptions to university operations due to AI system failures.	Develop a strategic AI risk mitigation plan to ensure system redundancy and resilience.

Risk	Description	Proactive Strategic Actions
Pedagogical Misalignment	Risk of staff and students using AI without pedagogical intent, driven instead by availability or popularity, leading to dependency on private sector platforms and a dilution of academic value.	Promote pedagogically driven AI use through academic policy, research and innovation guidelines, and curriculum integration; invest in institutionally governed AI tools and capacity building to reduce dependency on third-party platforms.

Table 3: Strategic Risks

References

i. Wits 2033 Strategic Framework https://www.wits.ac.za/media/wits-university/about-wits/documents/wits-2033-strategic-framework.pdf
ii. Wits Learning and Teaching Strategic Plan for 2025-2029 https://www.wits.ac.za/media/wits-university/learning-and-teaching/documents/WIts-Learning-and_Teaching-Strategic-Plan-2025-2029.pdf
iii. Wits AI Framework https://www.wits.ac.za/ai-policies/

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V0.1	17/06/2024	Initial Draft	Zethu Lubisi
	20/03/2025	Reviewed	Prof Bruce Bassett
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	25/06/2025	Reviewed	Prof Nicole De Wet-Billings
	06/08/2025	Reviewed	Prof. Brett Bowman
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