



# Guidance for Learners on the Use of Generative AI

To support candidates undertaking IBMS qualifications

## Purpose of this guidance

This guidance is intended **for learners** completing IBMS qualifications. It is intentionally high-level and principle-based so that it can be applied across qualifications and remain relevant as generative AI (GenAI) tools continue to evolve. It focuses on underlying principles rather than specific tools, thresholds or technologies.

The guidance emphasises the safe, ethical and transparent use of AI that is required to protect our professional standards, learner development and patient safety.

## Professional and regulatory responsibilities

Supporting appropriate AI use is part of wider professional responsibility. There is a requirement for all HCPC registrants to:

- comply with the HCPC Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics
- take reasonable steps to reduce risk of harm
- ensure that you are competent in your practice

The guidance in this document is underpinned by the following key documents:

### **HCPC Standards of conduct, performance and ethics**

<https://www.hcpc-uk.org/standards/standards-of-conduct-performance-and-ethics/>

**6.1** - *You must take all reasonable steps to reduce the risk of harm to service users, carers and colleagues, as far as possible.*

**6.2** - *You must not do anything, or allow someone else to do anything, which could put the health or safety of a service user, carer or colleague at unacceptable risk.*

**9.2** - *You must be honest about your experience, qualifications and skills.*

### **Joint statement from statutory regulators of health and care professionals - Using Artificial Intelligence (AI) in health and care professional education**

<https://www.hcpc-uk.org/globalassets/hubs/education-providers/final-joint-reg-statement-ai-in-education.pdf>

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## 1. Why AI matters in IBMS qualifications

GenAI tools such as ChatGPT, Copilot, Gemini and are now a routine part of many learners' digital practice. You may already be using them to support and refine writing, reflection, study and your ongoing professional development.

From an IBMS perspective, the key consideration is not whether these tools exist or how they work, but whether the work you submit:

- reflects your own knowledge, understanding, competence and experience
- can be clearly explained and justified by you in your own words
- meets professional and regulatory expectations
- does not compromise patient or service user safety

Across all IBMS qualifications, you are expected to demonstrate your own competence, judgement and integrity. Any use of AI that undermines these principles calls into question the validity of your assessment and, ultimately, may pose a risk to patient safety. You remain fully responsible for the integrity of the work you submit, and you must be able to discuss and defend your submission orally.

### 2. Academic integrity

You are expected to be open and transparent about your use of generative AI in your work.

Insufficient transparency regarding your use of GenAI will be viewed as plagiarism. Plagiarism is using someone else's words and/or ideas and incorporating them into your own work without appropriate referencing or acknowledgement. Plagiarism is academic misconduct. Any evidence of plagiarism may result in work being failed. If you are associated with a university, for example as an integrated student, sandwich placement student or apprentice, you may also be subject to disciplinary action from your university. Where multiple policies/guidelines apply, you should adhere to the most restrictive to ensure that your work meets all regulatory, professional and organisational standards.

In practice, being transparent may mean including a declarative statement within your work, if requested, confirming whether AI has been used and, if so, how. If this is required you should name the tool(s) used, give a brief description of their purpose in your work, and ensure it is clear how you have developed or adapted GenAI content yourself. You may be asked to outline prompts used and show iterative drafts of your work.

If you are unsure whether your use of GenAI in an assessment or piece of portfolio evidence is acceptable, please seek clarification from your training team and/or mentor. Where no specific guidance is provided, assume that GenAI may be used in an assistive capacity only (see Section 6), and that your final submission must remain clearly, substantially and defensibly your own work.

### 3. Meaningful learning

Safe practice requires you to question, verify and apply knowledge, rather than relying on AI-generated content without critical evaluation. AI outputs can sound convincing while being incorrect, and gaps or biases in training data may affect reliability, particularly in less common topic areas.

Learning is an active process that requires you to:

- make connections between knowledge
- critically evaluate information
- experience challenges and exercise professional judgement

Over-reliance on generative AI reduces your ability to develop these skills and may impact your competence and readiness for safe professional practice.

### 4. Data privacy

GenAI tools should never be used with identifiable or recognisable patient data, as this risks breaching UK GDPR and the duty of confidentiality. Similarly, you should ensure that sensitive information such as internal documentation is protected and never uploaded to GenAI tools without agreement from your employer or placement provider.

You remain fully responsible for how you share data with GenAI tools.

### 5. Professional dialogue

Verbal discussion is a normal part of developing and assessing evidence. You may be asked to talk through your work to explain what you did, why you did it and how it relates to your practice. This helps to confirm that the work reflects your own understanding and supports safe, competent professional practice.

## 6. Acceptable and unacceptable use of AI

Some use of AI may be acceptable where it supports learning rather than replaces it.

Potentially acceptable use:	Unacceptable use includes:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>organising ideas or structuring an initial draft</li> <li>improving clarity, spelling or grammar</li> <li>supporting reflection through guided prompts</li> <li>helping to identify areas for further reading</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>generating content wholesale</li> <li>filling gaps in knowledge or correcting factual errors you do not understand</li> <li>adding content that you could not reasonably produce independently and that you cannot explain or defend verbally</li> </ul>

Acceptable use depends on three conditions:

1. You are transparent about how GenAI has been used
2. The final work reflects your own knowledge, understanding and reasoning
3. You can explain and defend the content verbally

### Example A

*You are tasked with writing a reflection on a quality incident review that you participated in.*

Acceptable use	Unacceptable use
<p>You use your own notes that you have made and ask MS Copilot to create a set of questions that your reflection should answer. The notes do not contain patient identifiable data. You use the questions created by Copilot to guide you to write your reflection in your own words.</p> <p>You ask Copilot to spell check your final work without changing any of your wording.</p>	<p>You ask ChatGPT to write a reflection based on your uploaded notes.</p> <p>You copy and paste the output from ChatGPT into a document, change some of the text and submit it as your own work.</p>

### Example B

*You are tasked with creating an annotated flow chart that explains the lab's specimen rejection process.*

Acceptable use	Unacceptable use
<p>You do not know where to start on this task and would like help organising and structuring your ideas. You create a draft diagram and ask Gemini to review it and suggest improvements without adding new content.</p> <p>You review the suggestions and check these against the local SoP (which you have not uploaded). You then add some additional annotations to the flowchart.</p>	<p>You upload the local internal SoP into Gemini. You ask Gemini to read the SoP and create a draft flowchart. You quickly review the flowchart.</p> <p>You ask Gemini if you need to include anything else based on the uploaded SoP. It makes some suggestions which you accept and include without checking them or being able to explain.</p>

## Key messages

- AI tools should be used to support your learning, not replace it
- You are expected to be transparent in how you have used GenAI tools
- Everything submitted must be your own work which you understand and can defend



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