

University of Maine School of Forest Resources Policy on the Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Graduate Research and Comprehensive Exams

Version: 11/1/24

The University of Maine School of Forest Resources acknowledges the potential of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools in enhancing research productivity and innovation. As these tools become more integrated into research methodologies, it is essential to establish clear guidelines to ensure ethical, transparent, and academically rigorous use.

This AI policy seeks to foster an innovative research environment while upholding the highest standards of academic integrity and ethical responsibility. The policy applies to all graduate students in the School of Forest Resources and pertains to the use of AI tools for any component of academic research, including, but not limited to, data analysis, writing, simulation, and presentation.

1. Ethical Use and Academic Integrity

- **Transparency:** Any use of AI tools in research must be clearly disclosed in the research documentation, including theses, dissertations, and published papers. This includes specifying the type of AI tools used, the purpose they served, and the extent of their contribution.
- **Originality:** Graduate students must ensure that AI-generated content does not compromise the originality of their research. Proper attribution and acknowledgment are required for any AI-assisted work, in accordance with academic integrity guidelines.

2. Research Methodology and Analysis

- **Validity and Reliability:** Students must critically evaluate the outputs of AI tools for accuracy and appropriateness. AI should not replace rigorous scientific analysis or data interpretation. The final responsibility for research quality remains with the graduate student.
- **AI in Data Processing:** When using AI for data analysis, students must ensure the methods are transparent, reproducible, and subject to peer review standards. Documentation of AI models, parameters, and datasets must be included in the research appendices.

3. Writing and Authorship

- **AI in Writing Assistance:** The use of AI for grammar checks, language refinement, or initial drafts must be acknowledged. Students are advised to consult with their advisors on acceptable levels of AI use in writing.
- **Authorship Standards:** AI cannot be listed as an author on any research document. Graduate students must use AI writing tools responsibly, ensuring that AI does not generate substantive content that misrepresents authorship or the student's own academic contributions.

4. Data Privacy and Ethical Considerations

- **Data Security:** Students must not input sensitive or proprietary research data into AI platforms that could compromise privacy or data confidentiality.
- **Ethical Considerations:** When employing AI tools, ethical implications for research subjects and broader societal impacts must be considered and documented in research ethics applications, as applicable.

5. Advisory and Review Process

- Graduate students are encouraged to engage with their advisors early when considering AI use in research. Regular reviews should be conducted to align AI application with ethical research standards and the School's academic expectations.

6. Comprehensive Exams

- **Prohibition on AI Use:** The use of AI tools is strictly prohibited in the preparation, writing, or completion of any part of a SFR PhD comprehensive exam. These exams must represent the student's unaided knowledge, understanding, and analytical abilities. Violations of this policy will be treated as breaches of academic integrity and will be subject to disciplinary action.

7. Coursework and Assignments

- Graduate students must follow course policies included in course syllabi for using AI in their coursework, including assignments and exams.

SFR graduate students and advisors should seek clarification from the Graduate Committee if they are uncertain about a particular use of AI in research and thesis writing.