Ecology & Evolution Program-Wide AI Policy
Version 2025.1

The broad availability of generative AI tools is already driving changes in how both research and education are done. However, fundamental values of both education and research (such as promoting individual growth and mastery, honesty and responsibility, and reproducibility) will not change. The purpose of this policy is to articulate how the Ecology & Evolution graduate program expects students and faculty to uphold those values.

The graduate program in Ecology and Evolution is charged with overseeing the intellectual development of its students. To accomplish that goal, graduate program faculty must be able to identify and evaluate the students' own intellectual work. Thus, while the program believes that the use of large language model generative AI tools may be acceptable in certain cases, the program also requires clear description of AI use, as with any tool. When their use is permitted, generative AIs are to be treated as tools, just like any tool used to do science. That means the use of an AI tool must always be disclosed, and any presentation of output from an AI tool be clearly labeled as such, to distinguish it from the human contribution. If students use AI in any product used for assessment of their work in Ecology & Evolution, they are required to explain what permitted AI content-generation tool was used, the dates it was accessed, and the prompts (or types of prompts) used to generate the content, according to an appropriate style guide (for example, https://style.mla.org/citing-generative-ai/). Also, students should be cognizant of what types of restrictions or disclosures are used by journals, so they can adequately document use of large language models and generative AI to disciplinary standards prior to publication. Whether and how use of generative AI is permitted in coursework should be clearly articulated by the faculty responsible. Finally, individual faculty may have more restrictive policies on AI use for their research groups and courses than the policy set forth in this statement.

Community members are responsible for ethical scholarship, and AI output does not necessarily meet that standard. Any shortcoming of AI output becomes shortcomings of the user's scholarly work if not corrected. The user is always responsible for evaluating AI output and identifying any errors of fact. The user is always responsible to address any shortcomings of AI outputs, such as the lack of citations to original sources. Not ensuring proper citation of sources and other appropriate recognition of prior work means that the user is committing not only poor scholarship but plagiarism, not the AI.

Unauthorized use of generative AIs is a breach of academic honesty and may also constitute research misconduct (such as plagiarism). We also highlight that the ability to detect AI generated content and writing will likely improve over time, and if students rely on undisclosed LLM generative AI for important milestones (such as in the proposal or dissertation), the graduate executive committee reserves the right to submit retroactive academic integrity violations. Reliance on AI may also limit the user's personal learning and intellectual growth and thus future opportunities.