



Artificial Intelligence Policy

Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan

February 2026.

What is Artificial Intelligence (AI)

An AI system is a machine-based system that, for explicit or implicit objectives, infers from the input it receives from the user, how to generate output such as predictions, recommendations, decisions and content. AI is embedded in a wide range of routine daily activities e.g., predictive text messaging / navigation apps.

Generative AI (GenAI) is perhaps the best known and pertinent model of AI. This system is used to generate content such as text, images, code, audio, video etc. based on user input. Examples of GenAI systems include, *ChatGPT*, *Microsoft CoPilot* and *Google Gemini*.

GenAI is now widely accessible, poised to become increasingly sophisticated, and presents significant challenges and unique opportunities for education.

Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan recognises the transformative power of AI in shaping the future of education and aims to harness its capabilities responsibly, ethically and in alignment with our schools' overall mission and goals.

The key general principle of '*Humans in the Loop*' in AI will apply forthwith, and represents the overarching principle that guides AI use in our school setting. This idea asserts that AI systems **will not** operate autonomously without human oversight and control thus ensuring that the fundamental human values of creativity, well-being, dignity and equity are preserved.

All AI intended for classroom and/or school management use will be diligently assessed before being employed. AI tools will only be utilised where they are deemed to optimise opportunities for learning and teaching, and school leadership. All tools will be reviewed regularly to ensure outputs are accurate, appropriate and reliable.

Artificial Intelligence for Students

Roles and Responsibilities

- All students must exhibit responsible behaviour in their use of AI.
- Improper use of AI to generate inappropriate material will be dealt with in line with our Code of Behaviour and/or Bi Cinealta policies and, where deemed appropriate, instances of misuse may be referred to An Garda Siochana.
- Examples of improper use may include – Offensive Content Generation (Images etc.), Harassment / Bullying, Spreading Misinformation, Plagiarism. This list is not exhaustive.
- AI tools should **not** be used to generate class, home or coursework content. However, such tools may, provided their use is clearly documented and acknowledged, be employed to support a student in their work, i.e. Brainstorming, Research etc.

When using AI, students must:

- Respect the rights, privacy and intellectual property of others.
- Avoid misuse that could lead to harmful, dangerous or illegal outcomes.
- Adhere to school policies on the using of AI, technology and appropriate levels of assistance.

When using AI, students must **not**:

- Copy or paraphrase whole sections of AI generated material to a point at which the student's work could not be considered their own.
- Fail to acknowledge the use of AI tools when submitting work.

Rules for the Use of AI in SEC Examination Coursework

The following instructions are extracted from the State Examinations Commission's Coursework Rules & Procedures 2025-2026. This document is available to view in full at: <https://www.examinations.ie/docs/viewer.php?q=f6aceaad84e313de562fc03dc827478372eaad9>.

Where Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools (including software and applications) are used in State examination coursework, it must be conducted in a responsible and ethical manner. This is essential to maintain academic integrity and ensure that candidates' work reflects their own understanding and efforts. AI tools should not be used to generate coursework content. However, AI tools may assist in generating ideas, conducting research, or enhancing clarity, provided its use is clearly documented, in the same manner that all research sources are treated in coursework.

These rules set out the acceptable use and appropriate acknowledgment of AI tools in coursework.

1. Ensuring the Authenticity of Candidates' work

Authentic and individual work

- Candidates are required to sign the Authentication Form P.2 confirming that all submitted coursework is their own authentic and individual work and is free from any unacknowledged AI tool assistance.
- The use of AI tools should only be used to enhance the candidate's own learning process and not to replace the candidate's role in creating the coursework.
- Candidates should discuss the proposed use of any AI tools with their class teacher before they undertake their coursework.

Class Teacher oversight

Class teachers play a critical role in guiding candidates on the responsible use of AI tools in State examination coursework. Through the coursework authentication process, teachers confirm that the coursework was completed in accordance with these rules and can verify that an AI tool has not been used to produce uncredited material.

Consequences for misuse of AI tools

The misuse of AI tools, including their use to generate unacknowledged content, is plagiarism and constitutes a breach of regulations. Penalties for misuse will apply and may include loss of the marks for the coursework, loss of the subject, loss of the entire examination in all subjects, or being debarred from the certificate examinations in subsequent years.

2. Permissible uses of AI tools in coursework

AI tools may be used for specific purposes in coursework, such as:

- Gathering background information on a topic from credible sources.
- Structuring coursework plans.
- Clarifying research material.

Candidates must be able to critically evaluate any AI generated output for accuracy, bias, and reliability including hallucinations. (a response / output from AI resulting from faulty code that generates credible but factually incorrect, invented or logically flawed information).

3. Prohibited use of AI tools in coursework

Candidate's coursework must reflect their own knowledge, skills and understanding of a subject.

The inappropriate use of AI tools may undermine this outcome, and result in the coursework not being marked.

Prohibited uses include but are not limited to:

- Using one or more AI tools to generate coursework content, responses, or creative elements directly.
- Copying or paraphrasing AI generated material. Any ideas, prompts, or suggestions derived from the use of AI tools must be explicitly acknowledged; however, candidates remain responsible for expressing these ideas in their own words and developing their own original work.

4. Acknowledging the use of AI tools:

When to acknowledge the use of AI tools.

The use of AI tools must be acknowledged whenever it has contributed to the development of ideas, research, or other aspects of coursework. This includes summarising information, brainstorming ideas and conducting research.

Minimum acknowledgment requirements

The use of all AI tools must be documented in a dedicated section of the coursework, such as an appendix section. The following details must be included:

- The name and version of the AI tool used (e.g., ChatGPT-3.5 or Microsoft Copilot, version GPT-4 etc.).
- The developer or publisher of the AI tool (e.g., OpenAI or Microsoft).
- The date the AI output was generated.
- A brief description of how the AI tool was used (e.g., “Used to refine initial research notes” or “Summarised data findings”).

Referencing AI tools

Where applicable, candidates must include the prompt(s) used to generate the output from the AI tool. If the tool generates a shareable URL or session link, this should also be included in the appendix.

Marking material sourced from an AI tool

Any material generated by AI software will be treated in the same way as any other material that the candidate has not generated themselves. Including it without quoting it as the work of AI software will be considered plagiarism, which can result in the forfeit of all marks for the coursework component.

Where any material generated by AI software is included in a coursework submission and is properly quoted or referenced, no credit will be awarded for any of that material itself. Credit can only be awarded for the effective use of this material in the support or development of the candidate's own work. This is the established practice that already applies to the inclusion of quoted material, (whether that be text, images, or other forms of material,) created by human authors.

Examples of appropriate acknowledgement for the use of AI tools

An example of good practice for the candidate when acknowledging the use of AI tools, could include documenting the question posed and the response generated by the AI tool in a screenshot for preparatory and reference purposes.

Example of referencing AI use in coursework:

AI tool: Developer: ChatGPT-4 OpenAI

Date of Use: 14 February 2026

Purpose: Brainstorming. Used to suggest possible project themes during the brainstorming stage. No text was copied; final ideas were refined and developed independently. Clarifying information.

Artificial Intelligence for School Staff

AI applications may be used to support:

1. Teacher Planning and Preparation
2. Learning and Teaching
3. School Leadership and Management.

Before any AI technologies are implemented by staff at Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan they must firstly be considered under, and meet the requirements of, the framework for appropriate use as outlined below;

- A. **Purpose:** All technologies must be implemented with a clear purpose that directly supports teaching and learning and/or leadership and management. AI may be used to support human output and judgement **but it will never be used to replace it.**

- B. **Planning:** All technologies must align with, and reflect the priorities identified in our Digital Learning Plan. As part of the digital learning planning process, the following questions should assist if considering the use of AI.
 - How could AI improve teaching and learning or leadership and management in our school?
 - How could AI support school self-evaluation and digital learning goals?
 - How does our digital learning plan reflect the use of AI technologies?

- How will any changes to our digital learning plan align with whole school planning and teaching and learning approaches in the school generally?
- What specific learner outcomes or learner experiences could be enhanced using AI technologies?
- What specific leadership and management areas could be enhanced using AI technologies?
- What potential risks and challenges may arise from implementing AI in the school? How will these risks be identified, managed, and mitigated?
- What expertise or experience in using AI for teaching and learning or leadership and management is available in our school?
- What digital technology related advice, resources and support can we access?
- How will our AI usage integrate with existing systems?
- How will the ethical use of AI be approached, and how will we ensure that students understand and uphold ethical standards?
- How will parents and the wider school community be appropriately informed about the school's use of AI?
- How will we implement a structured process for ongoing monitoring and review of implementation?

C. **Policy Alignment:** All technologies must adhere to our school's Code of Behaviour, Bi Cinealta Policy, Child Protection Policy, Digital Learning Plan, Digital Citizenship Policy, Staff / Student Acceptable Usage Policy and Privacy and Data Protection Policy.

D. **Practice:** Before considering the use of AI, staff will consider the following key questions;

- How will the use of AI support the learning outcomes of the curriculum/subject specification?
- How will the use of AI align with the methodologies used to achieve the learning outcomes in the curriculum/subject specification?
- How will AI support inclusion and increase access to the curriculum for all students?
- How will I ensure that potential risks such as bias, inaccuracies, or overreliance on AI are mitigated?
- How will AI literacy be promoted in teaching and learning?
- What supports do students need to use AI effectively and critically in their learning?
- How can I support students to analyse content generated by AI tools?
- How can I help students understand the limitations of AI tools?
- How will human decision making when using AI be maintained?
- How will I ensure a critical stance when using AI?
- How will I ensure that AI use is reliable, fair, safe, and trustworthy?
- How will the impact of AI use be monitored and evaluated?
- How will I evaluate whether the use of AI has actually improved learning outcomes or classroom practice?

Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan shall review this policy every **2 years**.

Independent audits of compliance will be carried out by a licensed third party at longer intervals and / or where necessary.

Breaches of our AI Policy may be treated as a matter of discipline and, depending on the nature of the incident. Shall be dealt with by the Principal in accordance with all relevant policies and procedure.

Signed: *Garrett Farrell*

Signed: *Theresa Dunne*

Garrett Farrell (Secretary – BOM)

Theresa Dunne (Chairperson – BOM)

Date: **6th February 2026**

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