AI Tools in Research: Strategies, Ethics, and Policies for Mishkah Students

Section I. AI is a Powerful Tool

Artificial Intelligence (AI) provides powerful tools for research. AI tools can enhance information gathering, expedite the search for primary and secondary sources, and help students make connections between ideas in ways that may not have readily occurred to them.

AI has dangers too. AI tools draw from many sources without genuine understanding. Those tools can "hallucinate" false facts and false connections and make patently false claims. For students of Islamic Studies, AI tools may present certain ideas as Islamic teachings that are actually contrary to Islam. Therefore, AI tools must be used with the utmost caution.

AI tools and their outputs are not primary, secondary, or even tertiary sources. You cannot quote an AI tool or its output as a source. AI tools are merely a means to generate information and ideas very quickly, as well to efficiently organize information in coherent ways for structuring sections of composition.

AI tools can be used more effectively when the student is already informed on their topic and has very specific questions relating to sub-topics and details that come under the broader research project, as opposed to asking for output on the general topic itself. It is also advantageous to ask the same question many times and with different wordings to get varied results and to help identify possible contradictions, inaccuracies and "hallucinations".

Section II. Ethics of Using AI

The information and compositions produced by an AI tool are based on the work, opinions, and language use of countless human beings, but the tool's output is not the work of any one person or team of people working together. Also, **no matter how effective your use of prompts may be, the outputs of the AI are not your own work**. Those outputs are merely generated material that you are given to work with. It is not yours until and unless you extensively verify every piece of information you receive, critique it based on your own direct engagement with the original human-authored sources and develop it through your own considerable efforts.

It is not sufficient to rephrase AI output in your own words. You need to do the following:

[1] **Verify each piece of information, each data point, and each claim made**. You do this by directly consulting the primary and secondary sources from their original human authors. You must read those sources critically and verify what they say. If you use the information from those sources, you must quote and cite those sources and their authors directly.

[2] If the AI tool brings ideas together or composes a coherent train of thought, **you must not merely re-write the passages in your own words**, but you must critically engage with the thoughts and ideas the AI tool has suggested. You must exercise your judgement and determine your own stance on the sequences of thoughts, claims, value judgements, and ideas presented by the AI output. What your own words must express are not a paraphrase of the AI output, but rather the conclusions that you have personally arrived at, even though the AI tool has helped you to get there.

Section III. Policies for Using AI in Essays and Research Papers

[1] Passages, compositions, and sequences of ideas taken from the output of AI tools **do not become your own work.**

[2] Copying any AI generated text, or paraphrasing that AI output in your own words, or even summarizing the AI output's content, general ideas and broader concepts is dishonest and, since its ultimate source is the work of others, it is akin to theft. **It will be treated the same as conventional plagiarism.**

[3] **AI output is not a source and cannot be quoted as a source**. The student must go back to the original sources for all information, ideas and claims taken from the output of AI tools. Failure to do so will be treated the same as conventional plagiarism.

[4] Disclosure: At the end of each research paper and essay**, students must disclose all the AI tools they have used and describe how they have used them**.

[4.1] If the students fully disclose their use of AI tools and have used the tools correctly (as described in Section II) and have not plagiarized from the output of the tools (as described in Section III.2 and III.3) then the student will be clear from any repercussions for their use of those AI tools and their work will be graded accordingly.

[4.2] Disclosure will not protect the students **if they misused AI tools** (as described in section II) or **plagiarized from the output of the AI tools** (as described in section III.2 and III.3).

[4.3] If the students have used the tools correctly (as described in section II) and have not plagiarized from the output of the tools (as described in section III.2 and III.3), but nevertheless fail to fully disclose their use of AI tools in their disclosure statement, they will be blameworthy and their **failure at full disclosure will be treated the same as conventional plagiarism.**

For more information on Mishkah University's policies on plagiarism and academic dishonesty, please refer to the academic guide or contact the administration at support@mishkahu.com.