The use of AI in grant proposal evaluation
Guidelines for ERC panel members and remote reviewers

The position of the ERC Scientific Council on the use of AI in grant proposal evaluation is based on two key principles:

(1) non-delegation of the evaluation task, and

(2) privacy and confidentiality.

It follows that certain uses of AI in the evaluation are incompatible with these principles, while others are acceptable.

The non-delegation principle is violated wherever the AI system is tasked with understanding or evaluating a project proposal. For example, reviewers may **not** use an AI system to:

- summarise the proposal to avoid reading it in full ,
- provide any form of assessment, explicit or implicit, of the merit of the proposal.

The privacy and confidentiality principle is violated wherever the proposal is transmitted to an external AI system. For example, reviewers may not

- upload a proposal, or part of it, to an online AI tool such as ChatGPT.

Neither principle is violated where reviewers use an AI system solely to access information or improve language. For example, reviewers may use an AI system to

- polish the language or to check grammar and formulation of their reviews,
- search for information on the topic of a proposal.

Questions and answers

Q1: Can I upload a proposal, or parts of it, to online AI tools such as ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini etc. to get assistance?

A1: No. This constitutes a violation of confidentiality. Uploading text to these platforms discloses the content to a third party (the platform owner) which breaches data protection rules and the confidentiality of the proposal. It may also expose you to commercial liability.

Q2: If I run an AI model locally on my own computer (ensuring that no data are disclosed), can I ask it to summarise the proposal to save time?

A2: No. This violates the principle of non-delegation. Understanding the proposal in its entirety is a core task of a reviewer. Using an AI-generated summary instead of the whole proposal prevents you from evaluating the work as described by the applicant.

Q3: Can I use an AI tool that does not disclose the content of the proposal to a third party to evaluate the scientific methodology or determine the novelty of the proposal?

A3: No. Assessing scientific merit and forming judgment are human responsibilities. These are the core evaluative tasks that cannot be delegated to an algorithm, regardless of data privacy settings.

Q4: Can I use AI tools to improve the grammar and flow of my review report or the style? Can I use AI tools to translate my review into English?

A4: Yes, conditionally. You may use AI tools to polish your language or translate your review, provided that:

      a)   you do not disclose personal information to a third party (data protection)
      b)   you do not disclose parts of the proposal to the AI tool (confidentiality) and
      c)   you do not ask the AI to generate arguments for you (non-delegation).

Q5: I have drafted my main ideas in bullet points. Can I ask an AI tool to expand these into full paragraphs for the final review report?

A5: Only if the tool is secure and there is no risk of disclosing personal data or content of proposals to a third party. If the AI tool is local and secure, this is acceptable, provided that the resulting text reflects your original ideas and does not add new judgements or interpretations. It is preferable, however, to leave the report in its original form, since the content of the report is more important than its presentation.

Q6: Can I use AI to check if the bibliography in the proposal is up-to-date or to find similar papers?

A6: You may not input the text of the proposal, including the bibliography, into an external AI search tool due to confidentiality. However, you may use AI tools to search for information on the topic of the proposal. As with any other sources, you are expected to verify the results.

Q7. Can I use an AI tool to generate a first draft of my review, which I then edit and finalise myself?

A7. No. Generating a draft review involves evaluative judgement and constitutes a delegation of the evaluation task, even if the reviewer later revises the text.

Q8. Can I use an AI tool to check whether my review is missing important points?

A8. No. Determining what is important or relevant in a review is part of the evaluator's judgement and cannot be delegated to an AI tool.

Q9. Can I upload a proposal to an AI system running on my university's internal computer system?

A9. Only if the AI system is deployed under contractual agreements that ensure data security and privacy protection, including no storage by the provider, no use for training purposes and no access by unauthorised persons or systems. All principles of non-delegation still apply.

See also: [Position of the ERC Scientific Council on the use of AI in preparing grant proposals](#)