

Yong Pung How School of Law

The Responsible Use of Generative AI: A Student Guide

(LLB · JD)

AI tools will form part and parcel of your academic and legal training. However, they must be used appropriately.

“If ChatGPT can generate the first draft, how will people ever learn not just to write that first draft, but to evaluate writing? We know that when you just read what others have written, it is not the same as writing it out yourself. How many of us have had the experience of having a good idea, but realise it needs more tweaking when we actually have to write it? It changes the way you think, and this is an important skill we cannot lose.”¹

This guide concerns the responsible use of AI during law school, including for your coursework. Read it alongside your course instructions, which always take precedence.

1. What AI can do (and cannot do)

Generative AI responses are probabilistic: they calculate the *statistically most likely continuation of the prompt*,² rather than having the “right” or “correct” answer at hand for the user.

At the same time, AI output tends to sound authoritative and certain, whether or not it is correct. But the absence of uncertainty in an AI's output is not evidence of accuracy. An AI response that comes off as confident and well-structured may still contain invented case names, false quotations, inaccurate law, or poor reasoning.³

This is especially problematic for law students, who are expected to be accurate and precise in every part of their reasoning and analysis. As such, you must independently verify every claim, analysis, and reference.

Further, becoming a good law student (and lawyer) is not about producing the one “right” answer:⁴ it is about developing the ability to locate, understand, organise, evaluate, and synthesize information, and apply it to various situations. It is also about doing so under pressure, and in increasingly complex situations. These are skills that can only be built through hard work and practice. AI can support parts of that process, but it cannot replace the thinking and learning.

TL;DR: if you use AI to skip the hard parts now, you will not know how to do the hard parts when they really matter and you can't use AI to help.

For instance: during law school examinations; answering questions from a professor during a presentation; responding to a judge during oral arguments; or negotiating with counterparties in contract discussions.

¹ <https://lawtech.asia/an-interview-with-professor-david-b-wilkins-lester-kissel-professor-of-law-vice-dean-for-global-initiatives-on-the-legal-profession-faculty-director-of-the-center-on-the-legal-profession-harvard/>.

² See, e.g., https://www.mlaw.gov.sg/files/Guide_for_using_Generative_AI_in_the_Legal_Sector_Published_on_6_Mar_2026_.pdf at [5].

³ See, e.g., https://www.mlaw.gov.sg/files/Guide_for_using_Generative_AI_in_the_Legal_Sector_Published_on_6_Mar_2026_.pdf at [8].

⁴ In fact, one of the first things you will learn in law school is that the answer is often: “it depends”.

2. How to use AI appropriately

✓ You should	✗ You should not
✓ Use AI as a learning tool only, not as a means to get the “right” answer. ✓ Ensure that all arguments submitted are your own. ✓ Critically evaluate AI output – treat it as a <i>starting point</i>, not a conclusion. ✓ Verify every AI-generated reference before relying on it (including what the judgment, statute or article actually says). ✓ Check your course instructions on AI usage before each assignment. ✓ Declare your AI use clearly and honestly in every submission where you have used it.	✗ Assume that the AI output is accurate. ✗ Submit text wholly or largely generated by AI as your own analysis, even if edited. ✗ Cite any source (including cases, statutes, and articles) without independently confirming they exist and say what you claim. ✗ Use AI in any assignment designated as “no AI”. ✗ Assume that AI use is permitted in one course because it was permitted in another course.

This guide is focused on the appropriate use of AI in law school, including your coursework. However, do note that in legal practice, use of AI will raise further concerns such as client confidentiality and data protection.⁵ In any event, final responsibility for your output (whether created by generative AI or not) will rest with you both as the lawyer and the law student.⁶

In your school assignments, a hallucinated citation is a breach of the SMU Code of Conduct. It is an academic integrity issue which must be disclosed when you apply to be called to the Bar, and may therefore affect your future admission to practice.

In your future work as a lawyer, it is cause for sanctions and other professional penalties.

3. General principles for studying law with the *help* of AI

Law school is a formative period for developing critical thinking, legal reasoning, and legal writing skills. These skills are built through careful reading, deep thinking, and repeated practice. Over-reliance on AI can weaken the very abilities you are meant to develop.⁷

Golden Rule: first attempt the legal reasoning or writing task *yourself* before using AI.

✓ You must	✓ You may (where allowed)	✗ You cannot
✓ First read the case <i>yourself</i>, identify the relevant points, and only then use AI to check or test your understanding. ✓ Always <i>verify</i> any AI-generated summary against the case itself. This is especially important in your first few years of law	✓ Ask AI to critique (but not revise) your original draft. ✓ Ask AI to identify possible counterarguments in your paper (but do the actual rewriting <i>yourself</i>). ✓ Ask AI to identify where your original draft has flaws in clarity or grammar, and to suggest possible ways of rectifying them (but do the	✗ Do not use AI to bypass essential learning steps: • reading and understanding cases; • identifying issues; • outlining arguments; • drafting and writing; • checking sources; and • evaluating competing arguments.

⁵ See, e.g., https://www.mlaw.gov.sg/files/Guide_for_using_Generative_AI_in_the_Legal_Sector_Published_on_6_Mar_2026_.pdf at [13]-[20] (listing out “key principles and practical steps legal professionals should take when using GenAI in legal work”).

⁶ See https://www.mlaw.gov.sg/files/Guide_for_using_Generative_AI_in_the_Legal_Sector_Published_on_6_Mar_2026_.pdf at [15]; Civil Litigation Update (2026) CLU 1 (“An officer of the court has a fundamental duty to ensure that the authorities he presents to the court are accurate” including explaining to the Court “the output produced by a Generative AI tool”).

⁷ Indeed, a number of studies have suggested that over-reliance on AI negatively impacts critical thinking abilities due to increased cognitive offloading. See, e.g., Gerlich, M., “AI Tools in Society: Impacts on Cognitive Offloading and the Future of Critical Thinking” (2025) 15(1) Societies 6.

school, when case reading techniques are new to you.	actual rewriting <i>yourself</i>). <i>Note: the AI-provided suggestions may still be incorrect or misleading. Use with caution and always verify the information provided.</i>	
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Even when using AI to assist with stylistic revisions, think of it as a peer providing feedback, rather than as an editor who will make the amendments for you.

- Review any suggestions carefully – do they actually help achieve the aim of your assignment? Of whatever point you were trying to make? If not, think through what alternatives might work.
- After you have thought it through – do the actual revisions yourself.

4. How to approach your law school assignments

Here is some general guidance on two common law school assignments: legal memoranda and research papers.

A. Legal memoranda

A legal memorandum asks you to apply law to a set of facts and reach a reasoned conclusion. The tasks of *identifying* the legal issues and authorities, *selecting* and *applying* the applicable rules, *constructing* the arguments, and *writing* them out in a clear, concise, yet accurate manner: that very process involves the legal skills you need to have. It is exactly what you will be tested on, and exactly what you will be paid to do as a lawyer.

Thus **AI should not be used to originate work for this type of assignment, e.g. generate ideas or arguments**. You need to build these skills yourself. These skills will not magically transfer from AI to you if, for instance, you ask AI to generate a first draft and you edit the output.

You may, however, use AI to *critique* your work. Thus, if you wish *and are allowed to* use AI to assist you in writing a legal memorandum, treat it as a peer who can challenge you at appropriate steps in the process.

Examples:

- After doing your initial research and analysis, you write a roadmap paragraph and a skeletal (outline) for your memorandum. You could then ask AI to identify gaps in your coverage, so that you can decide what areas you should do further work on.
- After you have written out your complete memorandum and thought through gaps in your analysis, you could ask AI to raise further counterarguments that you could address.

But as always, whatever suggestions AI provides: consider them carefully, in the context of your assignment and your own goals for the assignment. Do your own independent research on the suggestions as well. The final output must still be the result of your own **independent critical evaluation**.

For further guidance, refer to the example in the next section on B. Research papers, some of which can be applied to legal memoranda with suitable modifications.

B. Research papers

A research paper requires you to *survey* a (legal) field, *identify* the issues worth examining, *locate*, *read* and *analyse* primary and secondary sources, and *construct* and *write out* valid arguments, in a clear and precise manner. AI can assist in this process, but it cannot do the readings for you, and it cannot produce the analysis or writing.

An appropriate research paper workflow (with aid of AI)

1 Analyse/Cogitate Before using AI, work through the question <u>on your own</u>. Ask yourself: What is the scope? What are the key legal issues? What arguments can be made? Do not outsource this critical analysis to AI. This is the thinking that develops the judgement and reasoning skills you need as a future legal adviser.	2 Conduct Research A good starting point is to map out the general landscape of your topic, including possible authorities or arguments. While many of the research tools available to you incorporate AI, don't simply off-load your thinking to them. <u>Actively engage</u> with the process. For instance: are the research questions you are asking helpful? Should you broaden your search? Narrow your search? Are you using the right keywords?	3 Read Read every authority <u>yourself</u>: textbooks, cases, statutes, articles. The reading is where you actually learn. You cannot skip this step. You may use AI to generate summaries of the authorities,⁸ but these should be used only to help cross-check your own understanding of the authorities. Further, do not assume that these summaries are correct or complete.
4 Write Write your paper <u>yourself</u>. The writing is where the thinking and synthesis happen.	5 Consider Gaps Think about angles or weaknesses you may have missed. Consider: possible counterarguments raised by other writers; what would your peers argue against your position? And yes, you can use AI to help you identify gaps in your reasoning, or further arguments you can use. But only <u>after</u> completing the previous steps. Otherwise, you cannot meaningfully evaluate the output.	6 Verify Trace every source, information and argument AI provides to the actual document. Do not use or cite anything you have not read <u>yourself</u>.

Example: You are writing a research paper on the regulation of AI-generated content under Singapore's defamation law.

- After you have first had a good think about the question yourself, conduct the research using the approved legal research tools.
- First: what is the current doctrinal framework (key issues); what have other jurisdictions done; what are the open questions? As a starting point, you can look at relevant textbooks for an overview. You can then search for the relevant caselaw, statutes and academic commentary, using the appropriate research tools.
- Actively engage with the research process: ***what else don't you know? what else do you need to ask?*** Don't just go with the first responses you get.
- After that: read every case, statute, and commentary yourself. If certain cases or commentaries are especially confusing, you can use AI-generated summaries to cross-check your understanding.
- Also by yourself: think about what arguments and counter-arguments are made by the authorities, which positions are adequately supported and which are not, and whether you agree or not with these arguments and positions.
- Write up your paper yourself.
- After that: consider what you may have missed out. What have the other writers you've read said? What would your peers argue? After you've thought about it yourself, you could then use

⁸ This should be restricted to materials available in public domains. In general, materials that are accessible only through subscribed databases should not be uploaded on to AI platforms as that may constitute a breach of the terms of subscription.

AI to point out anything else you may be missing.

- Revise your paper yourself based on the points raised.
- Do not forget to verify all citations and sources that you use. You cannot cite to something you have not personally read and reviewed.

5. How much and what type of AI use is allowed? It depends on your course.

SMU's Progressive Mastery Framework structures AI permissions around where you are in your studies and what skills a course is building.⁹ As you progress in your law school career, the amount and type of AI use allowed will change depending on each course and its learning goals for the students involved. Your instructor will tell you which level applies for each course and assessment.

Reminder: Always read your assignment instructions carefully. When in doubt about the AI usage allowed, ask your instructor.

6. How to declare your AI use

You are required to submit an AI use declaration with every assignment. The standard declaration is attached as an Appendix. Use this for every assignment submitted, unless your instructor says otherwise.

7. Remember:

Check your course instructions on AI usage.	<i>Not sure? Ask your instructor <u>before</u> starting work on your assignment, not after.</i>
No AI use policy mentioned in instructions?	Treat it as not permitted.
Any of these may constitute academic misconduct: - Unauthorised AI use (including AI usage outside of the assignment/course allowed parameters). - Presenting AI-generated output as your own work. - Failing to declare AI use honestly and fully.	SMU AI policy: https://cte.smu.edu.sg/ai SMU Policy and Procedures: https://voices.smu.edu.sg/policy-and-procedures

⁹ <https://cte.smu.edu.sg/ai/progressive-mastery-framework>.

Appendix

YPHSL Student AI Use Checklist

Student name

Student ID

Course

Date of
submissionAssignment
title

Was AI use allowed for this assignment?

- ☐ No.
- ☐ Yes - *[Instructor to fill in the course/assessment AI use policy here]*

Did you use AI for this assignment?

- ☐ No - I did not use any AI tools.
- ☐ Yes - I used AI tools, as allowed under the course instructions.

If AI use was allowed under the course instructions

- ☐ Not applicable because I chose not to use AI for this assignment.
- ☐ I checked all case citations against the original judgment(s).
- ☐ I verified factual or legal claims against authoritative sources, including the original judgment, statute or article as applicable.
- ☐ I carefully reviewed any AI-generated output, and discarded or amended AI output that was inaccurate or insufficiently specific to the question.
- ☐ I substantially rewrote or edited any AI-generated text (*note: use of AI to write or edit the assignment must first be specifically allowed under the course AI-usage instructions*).

[INSTRUCTORS CAN CHOOSE TO DELETE OR AMEND THIS SECTION]

Which tool(s)?

- ☐ Google Workspace for Education Plus
- ☐ Microsoft Copilot
- ☐ Claude
- ☐ ChatGPT
- ☐ Grammarly or similar
- ☐ Others: _____

[INSTRUCTORS CAN CHOOSE TO DELETE OR AMEND THIS SECTION]

How did you use it? (tick all that apply)

- ☐ Brainstorming / initial ideas
- ☐ Conducting research
- ☐ Summarising sources or cases
- ☐ Generating draft text (substantially rewritten)
- ☐ Rephrasing sentences I had originally written
- ☐ Grammar / language checks
- ☐ Formatting / citations
- ☐ Others: _____

[INSTRUCTORS CAN CHOOSE TO DELETE OR AMEND THIS SECTION] If you used an AI chat tool, paste the URLs for your chats here

[link]

Declaration: I confirm that (1) all substantive legal analysis and arguments are my own; (2) any AI-generated content was critically reviewed, independently verified, and substantially modified; (3) I have complied with my instructor's AI policy; and (4) I understand that submitting AI-generated work as my own or failing to declare AI use may constitute academic misconduct.

Note: If you are aware, or become aware, that you have used AI in a way that is not allowed under the YPHSL AI Usage Student Guide and your course instructions, you must inform your

instructor of this by email immediately. Submitting a false declaration will be considered an act of dishonesty and a further violation of the SMU Code of Academic Integrity.

Signature

Date