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UFS

University of the Free State AI Position Statement

University of the Free State position statement of AI

The UFS understands **Artificial intelligence (AI)** to be the simulation of human intelligence in machines that are programmed to think, learn, and/or respond like humans, enabling them to perform tasks that typically require human intelligence and problem-solving abilities (UKZN, 2025). Within this statement, AI includes both generative and assistive AI technologies in the completion of a wide range of teaching and learning, research, and administrative tasks. The University of the Free State (UFS) remains committed to ensure academic integrity and quality learning and teaching, research, and academic support.

Informed by the goals of *Vision 130* the UFS does not impose a blanket restriction on the use of AI as it believes that by using new and emerging technologies the quality of learning, teaching, research, and business processes could be enhanced. A thorough consideration of and balance between the advantages and disadvantages, and implications of the use of AI need to be unpacked in the different spheres of the UFS.

The UFS commits itself to five inter-dependent guiding principles for the use of AI tools in learning and teaching, research, and academic support services:

- **Human-centred AI (HCAI) approach**: The UFS wishes to prioritise the well-being, autonomy, voice, and dignity of staff, students, and stakeholders in all AI applications. AI systems should serve human needs, values and experiences in an ethical manner rather than replacing or diminishing them.

- **Use of technology to innovate and advance knowledge:** AI is a pervasive technology and should be harnessed to enhance efficiency, streamline processes, and transform/innovate traditional educational and research methodologies. Staff, students and stakeholders should show their respect to the knowledge economy by contributing to it and guarding it, as well as by choosing not to exploit it.

- **Academic rigour, integrity and honesty:** In embracing the potentials of AI, it is imperative to uphold the fundamental principles of academic integrity and ethical conduct in higher education. The integration of AI should, therefore, not undermine the core values of academic rigour, integrity, ethics, and honesty.

- **Build capacity and support:** AI literacy and skills should be developed as part of the digital competencies across all levels within the UFS. Students, staff, and stakeholders should be supported to use AI tools effectively and responsibly. AI literacy and skills must go hand in hand to cultivate human critical thinking, creativity and agency to ensure that technology enhances, rather than replaces, the essential role of human judgement and intellect in academia.

- **Respect and awareness:** Ensure the use of AI tools to respect individuals' privacy, and data security, and to mitigate and raise awareness of potential social and environmental harm.

The UFS commits to being research-led and evidence based in the integration of AI at different levels in the institution given the rapidly changing landscape of AI. This includes a thorough review and alignment of the implications of the appropriate and inappropriate use of these technologies in policies and procedures of the UFS. To ensure the implementation of these policies and procedures, the necessary training, development, and digital infrastructure will be made available to staff, students, and stakeholders.