

THE APA GUIDELINES EXPLAINED: GENERATIVE AI

Version 2.0

Dutch APA Working Group of Universities of Applied Sciences

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INTRODUCTION

On September 9, 2025, the APA Style Experts set out provisional guidelines in three blog posts (McAdoo et al., 2025a, 2025b, 2025c). These form the basis for this updated guide and, like the first version, are designed to be practical for use in publications by both students and assessors.

Following the publication of Version 1.0 of this guide (May 2024), the Dutch APA Working Group of Universities of Applied Sciences was regularly asked why the APA guidelines should address AI tools. The argument put forward was that these tools are not sources of information but merely 'tools', comparable to Word, Excel, SPSS or a calculator; widely recognised tools whose use can be taken for granted and for which citation is not required.

In addition to widely used tools such as ChatGPT, Gemini, and Claude, there are now thousands of AI tools. It can be said of all these tools that their nature differs fundamentally from the aforementioned aids. The output of GenAI tools is almost always different from what a user would produce themselves, and it is often used to generate 'better' or different content. In contrast, a text written by hand or in Word has no impact, and calculations performed on a calculator or in Excel yield the same result.

This is why it is important to cite sources when using AI. It is not a tool like Word or Excel, but AI tools do provide substantive input.

Furthermore, transparency is ensured regarding the role that GenAI tools play in the creation of a work, and it enables a careful assessment of the author's own contribution.

The following terms are used in the guide:

- AI tool = A digital tool based on artificial intelligence.
- GenAI = Generative AI, artificial intelligence which, unlike traditional AI, independently creates new content.
- Prompt = The command given to an AI tool.
- Chat = The communication between the user and the AI tool.

Developments in AI are happening at breakneck speed. The guidelines set out in this handbook may be less applicable in the future. Bear in mind that it must always be

clear to the reader of a text whether and how AI has been used in the creation of the publication.

Always check with your own university or school to find out what the rules are regarding the use of AI.

Dutch APA Working Group of Universities of Applied Sciences, May 2026

1 IN THE TEXT

When using an AI tool for a report, it can be referenced in the text in two ways:

- A general reference, which simply states which AI tool was used and how.
- An extended reference, which includes the AI tool, the prompt, and/or the generated text, image, etc.

1.1 General reference

If GenAI is used to support the report or provide inspiration, but not to write text or generate images, it is sufficient to include a brief explanation and a reference to the source in the text. Examples include checking the spelling of a text, creating a summary, shortening a report or producing a translation. The name of the company that developed the AI tool and the year must always be stated.

Examples

Spelling

Spelling was checked using *ChatGPT* (OpenAI, 2026).

Summary

The summary was generated using *Copilot* (Microsoft, 2026).

Abbreviation

As the original report exceeded the maximum word count, the text was shortened using *Mistral Medium* (Mistral AI SAS, 2026).

Translation

For the literature review, three articles were translated from Korean into English using *DeepL Write* (DeepL, 2026).

Data analysis

The data from the research were analysed using *Claude* (Anthropic, 2026).

The reference to the AI tool may be placed in the introduction but may also be included elsewhere in the report if its use relates only to a specific chapter or section. The name of the AI tool is italicised only on the first mention.

The AI tool must be listed in the reference list; see section 2.1.

1.2 Extended reference

When texts are generated using GenAI for inclusion in the report, the recommendation is to state the prompt alongside the reference to the AI tool, possibly in conjunction with the full chat or a link to the chat. When using AI as a research tool, it is recommended to refer to the prompt and the chat or to include them in the report.

Example text – reference AI-tool

To formulate the research question “How is quality management implemented in higher education, and which models are most commonly used in this context?” *ChatGPT* (OpenAI, 2026) was used with the following prompt: “Formulate a research question for a literature review on quality management in higher education”. The chat is included in Appendix A.

Instead of including the entire chat in the appendix, the text and list of sources may also refer to the chat in the AI tool (see also section 2.2).

Example text – reference chat

When formulating the research question “How is quality management implemented in higher education, and which models are most commonly used in this context?” *ChatGPT* was used; see the full chat for details OpenAI (2026).

OpenAI. (2026, June 24). *Research question ideas* [Generative AI chat]. ChatGPT. <https://chatgpt.com/c/6a3be13b-6db8-83eb-a738-8e8514bd52b7>

If an existing file (an image, text, audio file, etc.) is uploaded as part of the prompt, please also reference that file in the list of sources as follows: *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (American Psychological Association, 2020).

Example text and pdf – reference chat and infographic

When formulating the research question “How is quality management implemented in higher education, and which models are most commonly used in this context?” the infographic has been used *How do we achieve effective remote teaching and learning?* (Inspectorate of Education, 2021) and from ChatGPT; for the full chat, see OpenAI (2026).

Inspectorate of Education. (2021). *How do we achieve effective remote teaching and learning?* [Infographic]. Retrieved June 24, 2026, from

<https://english.onderwijsinspectie.nl/documents/2021/03/31/effective-remote-teaching-and-learning>

OpenAI. (2026, June 24). *Research question ideas* [Generative AI chat]. ChatGPT. <https://chatgpt.com/c/6a3be3c8-ecf8-83eb-bc36-e8c9b16b9cb0>

Please bear in mind that the chat must remain accessible to readers and that, if the report is published – for example, in a repository – the chat will be visible to everyone and may be reused.

1.3 Image

The referencing guidelines for images, distinguish between tables and figures, are largely consistent with those for images taken from existing publications or original images.

1.3.1 Figures and tables

For figures and tables, include a reference in the text, for example (see Table 1), or: Figure 2 shows that ...

Please note that 'Table' and 'Figure' are capitalised.

This reference should also appear above the figure, in bold. Below this, leave a blank line, followed by the title of the figure, in italics.

A caption will appear below the figure; this may be written in a smaller font. This caption begins with 'Note', in italics. Provide a description of which source(s), including the tool, have been used. As with written texts, you may choose to name only the AI tool or to refer to the chat.

Unlike other existing images, AI-generated tables or figures do not include a copyright notice.

Examples

Table 1

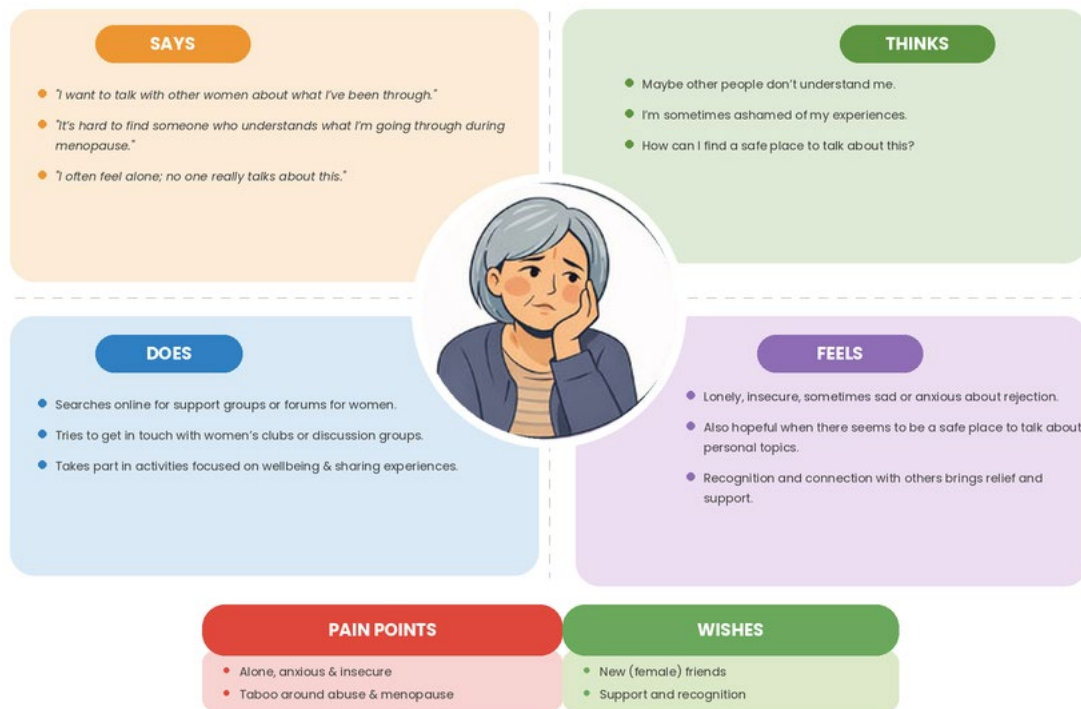
Search terms

Category	Quality management	Higher education	Interventions and models
Synonyms (3)	- Quality assurance - Quality control - Quality management	- Tertiary education - Post-secondary education - Academic education	- Approach methods - Treatment strategies - Methodological models
Related terms (3)	- Continuous improvement (CI) - Lean management - Performance management	- University programmes - University of Applied Sciences programmes - Student guidance	- Evidence-based practice (EBP) - Programme evaluation - Change management
Broader terms (3)	- Organisational management - Business operations - Governance	- Education system - Education and training - Lifelong learning	- Methodology - Systems theory - Professional development
Narrower terms (3)	- PDCA cycle - ISO standards - Audits & assessment	- Bachelor's education - Master's education - Associate degree	- SMART interventions - Logic models - Coaching models

Note. Search terms and table generated using *Copilot* (Microsoft, 2026).

Figure 1

Empathy map: Monique



Note. Image based on the Empathy Map, a model developed by the visual thinking company XPLANE (Osterwalder & Pigneur, 2010, pp. 130-133), and made with and made with *ChatGPT* (OpenAI, 2026).

In addition to ChatGPT, please include in the reference list for Figure 1 the book in which the model is described:

OpenAI. (2026). *ChatGPT* [Generative AI]. <https://chatgpt.com/>

Osterwalder, A., & Pigneur, Y. (2010). *Business Model Generation: A handbook for visionaries, game changers, and challengers*. John Wiley & Sons.

1.3.2 Image as illustration

If an image is used for illustrative purposes, for example on the cover of a report, it is sufficient to simply mention the AI tool. This can be done below the image, perhaps in a smaller font, or on a different page. It is sufficient to state only the developer and the year, although a more detailed explanation is also permitted.

Examples

Below the image

OpenAI, 2026.

Another page

Cover: image generated using *Claude* (Anthropic, 2026).

Include the AI tool in the list of sources; see also section 2.1.

2 LIST OF SOURCES

Chapter 1 describes how GenAI is referred to in the text:

- General reference: the AI tool only
- Extended reference: AI-tool with chat

This section discusses the inclusion of GenAI in the list of sources.

2.1 AI-tool

AI company name. (year). *Name AI tool* [Generative AI]. <https://xxxx>

The description states that the tool consists of five components:

1. **AI company name** The name of the company that offers GenAI.
2. **Year** The year shown by the tool. If this is missing, please state the current year.
3. **Name** The name of the AI tool in *italics*.
4. **Description** The description in square brackets: [Generative AI].
5. **URL** URL of the tool, without the retrieval date.

Examples

Anthropic. (2026). *Claude 4 Sonnet* [Generative AI]. <https://claude.ai/new>

DeepL. (2026). *DeepL Write* [Generative AI]. <https://www.deepl.com/en/write>

Google. (2026). *Gemini* [Generative AI]. <https://gemini.google.com/>

Google. (2026). *NotebookLM* [Generative AI]. <https://notebooklm.google/>

Microsoft. (2026). *Copilot* [Generative AI]. <https://copilot.microsoft.com/>

Mistral AI SAS. (2026). *Mistral Medium* [Generative AI]. <https://mistral.ai/>

OpenAI. (2026). *ChatGPT* [Generative AI]. <https://chatgpt.com/>

Perplexity AI. (2026). *Perplexity* [Generative AI]. <https://www.perplexity.ai/>

2.2 AI-tool with chat

AI company name. (year, month day). *Chat title* [Generative AI chat]. Name AI tool.
<https://xxxx>

The GenAI entry consists of six sections:

1. **AI company name** The name of the company that offers GenAI.
2. **Date** The date of the chat.
3. **Chat title** Use the title provided by the AI tool or give the chat a title yourself. Put the title in *italics*.
4. **Description** The description in square brackets: [Generative AI chat].
5. **Name AI tool** The name of the tool.
6. **URL** The URL of the chat; the retrieval date is not mentioned.

Examples

Anthropic. (2026, June 24). *Quality management models in higher education* [Generative AI chat]. Claude Sonnet 4.6. <https://claude.ai/chat/0097781d-586e-4116-b281-d6a29c033a88>

Google. (2026, June 24). *Quality management in higher education* [Generative AI chat]. Gemini. <https://gemini.google.com/app/017919c51a3ed48a>

OpenAI. (2026, June 24). *Quality management in HE* [Generative AI chat]. ChatGPT. <https://chatgpt.com/c/6a3be3c8-ecf8-83eb-bc36-e8c9b16b9cb0>

Perplexity AI. (2026, June 24). *Formulate a research question for a literature review on quality management in higher education* [Generative AI chat]. Perplexity. <https://www.perplexity.ai/search/b57b93d9-0f80-426b-9222-d23d008ff24c>

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- McAdoo, T., Denny, S., & Lee, C. (2025c, September 9). *Citing generative AI in APA Style: Part 3—Is AI “allowed” in APA Style?* APA Style. Retrieved March 16, 2026, from <https://apastyle.apa.org/blog/cite-generative-ai-allowed>

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