

Cities and the Environment (CATE)
Policy on the Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI)
Updated August 2026

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1. Purpose and Scope

Cities and the Environment (CATE) recognizes that generative artificial intelligence (AI) technologies, including large language models (LLMs) and AI-assisted tools such as ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, Microsoft Copilot, and similar systems are increasingly being used in research and scholarly communication. This policy provides clear, up-to-date guidance to authors, reviewers, editors, and contributors on the responsible, transparent, and ethical use of such tools in all manuscripts submitted to CATE.

This policy is informed by and aligned with the Elsevier Group AI policy framework and is consistent with the guidance of the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE). CATE will monitor developments in AI and scholarly publishing and will update this policy as needed.

2. Guiding Principles

The following principles underpin all aspects of this policy:

AI tools may support research and manuscript preparation but cannot replace human intellectual contributions or critical judgement. Authors bear full responsibility and accountability for the accuracy, originality, integrity, and validity of all submitted content, regardless of whether AI tools were used. AI systems cannot be listed as authors or co-authors.

All AI-generated content must be carefully reviewed, verified, and edited by the authors before submission. Privacy and data confidentiality must be maintained. Authors must not upload unpublished manuscripts, sensitive data, or personally identifiable information to public AI systems without appropriate safeguards. **Use of AI tools in manuscript preparation or in the research process must be disclosed as specified in this policy.**

3. Acceptable Uses of AI

Authors may use AI tools in the following ways, provided all outputs are subject to appropriate human oversight, review, and validation:

- Language editing and grammar correction;
- Improving readability, flow, and clarity of text;
- Translation assistance (with author verification of accuracy);
- Coding support and programming assistance;
- Data processing, quantitative analysis, statistical modelling, or visualization where scientifically appropriate (must be disclosed in the Methods section);
- Literature organization, reference management, and evidence synthesis (with human verification of all outputs, including references, which AI systems are known to fabricate);
- Summarizing complex literature to inform the author's own analysis and interpretation.

In all cases, the use of AI tools must not substitute for the author's own original intellectual contribution, critical analysis, or professional expertise.

4. Unacceptable Uses of AI

Authors must not:

- Submit AI-generated content that has not been reviewed, edited, and verified by the human authors;
- Use AI to fabricate, manipulate, or falsify data, images, figures, references, results, or citations;
- Present AI-generated text as original human scholarship without disclosure;
- Use AI to produce or substantially draft the core intellectual argument, conceptual framework, or main findings of a manuscript, without this being explicitly disclosed;
- Use AI to generate peer-review evaluations or editorial recommendations on behalf of the journal;
- List AI systems as authors or co-authors, or cite AI tools as an author in reference lists;
- Use AI tools to generate or alter figures, images, maps, graphical abstracts, or other illustrations, unless this is part of the documented research methodology (see Section 7).

Any evidence of misconduct involving AI, including but not limited to fabricated references, undisclosed AI authorship, or data manipulation may result in manuscript rejection, retraction of published articles, or notification of the author's institution, in accordance with COPE guidelines.

5. Disclosure Requirements

5.1. Declaration Statement

When generative AI or AI-assisted technologies are used at any stage of manuscript preparation, authors must include a disclosure statement in a dedicated section placed immediately before the References section, entitled:

Declaration of Generative AI and AI-Assisted Technologies in the Writing Process

This section title is standardized across Elsevier journals. The disclosure statement must include:

- Name of the AI tool(s) used;
- Version number, where known;
- Purpose of use (e.g., language editing, data analysis, literature synthesis);

- Extent of use in manuscript preparation;
- Confirmation that all AI-generated outputs were reviewed and verified by the authors.

5.2. Example Disclosure Statement

Declaration of Generative AI and AI-Assisted Technologies in the Writing Process

During the preparation of this manuscript, the authors used Claude (Anthropic, version 3.5) to improve language clarity and readability of the discussion section, and ChatGPT (OpenAI) to assist with R code for statistical analyses. The authors reviewed, edited, and verified all generated content and outputs. All references were independently verified. The authors take full responsibility for the integrity and accuracy of the published work.

5.3. Threshold for Disclosure

Basic automated checks of grammar, spelling, and punctuation (e.g., built-in word-processor tools or Grammarly) do not require disclosure. All uses of generative AI for content creation, structural editing, synthesis, or data/code generation must be disclosed.

6. AI Use in Research Methods

When AI tools form part of the documented research methodology their use must be described in sufficient detail in the Methods section to ensure full transparency and reproducibility.

Authors must provide:

- Software or model name and type;
- Version and release information;
- Key parameters, training data, or prompts used, where relevant;
- Validation procedures and accuracy assessments;
- Known limitations and potential sources of bias.

AI use as part of the research methodology should also be summarized in the disclosure statement (Section 6.1).

7. AI-Generated Images, Figures, and Visual Content

CATE does not permit the use of generative AI or AI-assisted tools to create or alter images, figures, maps, graphical abstracts, or illustrations, except where such use is an integral and documented part of the research design or methodology (e.g., AI-assisted image classification or remote sensing analysis). If this applies, the use must be described in detail in the Methods section. Adjustments of brightness, contrast, or color balance are acceptable provided they do not obscure or eliminate any information present in the original image.

CATE and its publisher reserve the right to:

Apply image forensics tools to submitted manuscripts to detect suspected irregularities;
Request original, pre-AI-adjusted image files, raw composite images, or AI workflow documentation;
Reject images that misrepresent data or scientific findings.

8. Responsibilities of Reviewers

Peer reviewers play a critical role in maintaining the integrity of the scholarly record. Reviewers must:

- NOT upload submitted manuscripts, data, figures, supplementary files, or any other confidential material to public generative AI systems;
- Prepare independent, confidential, and substantive evaluations based on their own expertise and judgement;
- Disclose to the Editor-in-Chief any use of AI tools in the preparation of their review (e.g., for language checking), and confirm that no confidential manuscript content was shared with AI systems.

9. Responsibilities of Editors

Editors must exercise independent, human judgement in all editorial decisions. Editors must not:

- Use generative AI systems to make acceptance, rejection, or revision decisions;
- Upload submitted manuscripts or reviewer reports to public AI systems;
- Delegate editorial judgement, including ethical investigations to AI tools.

All editorial decisions remain the responsibility of the human Editor-in-Chief and Associate Editors.

10. Privacy and Data Confidentiality

Authors, reviewers, and editors must review the terms and conditions of any AI tool they use to ensure that:

- Unpublished manuscripts, sensitive research data, and personally identifiable information are not stored or used for model training by the AI provider;
- The use of the AI tool does not compromise intellectual property rights or impose restrictions on the subsequent publication of the work;
- Confidentiality obligations towards research participants, collaborators, or institutions are maintained.

11. Compliance and Enforcement

Failure to comply with this policy may result in:

- A formal request for clarification, correction, or supplementary disclosure;
- Rejection of the manuscript prior to or during peer review;
- Retraction of a published article;
- Notification of the authors' institutions and/or funding bodies, where appropriate;
- Reporting to COPE or other relevant professional bodies.

CATE reserves the right to revise this policy as AI technologies and scholarly publishing practices evolve. Authors are advised to consult the latest version of this policy prior to submission.

12. Related Resources and Further Guidance

The following sources informed the development of this policy. CATE acknowledges these frameworks as the primary basis for the provisions outlined above. Authors are encouraged to consult the following for further guidance:

Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE). (2023, February 13). *COPE position — Authorship and AI tools*. <https://doi.org/10.24318/cCVRZBms>

Elsevier. (2025a). *Generative AI policies for journals*. <https://www.elsevier.com/about/policies-and-standards/generative-ai-policies-for-journals>

Elsevier. (2025b). *The use of AI and AI-assisted technologies in writing for Elsevier*. <https://www.elsevier.com/about/policies-and-standards/the-use-of-generative-ai-and-ai-assisted-technologies-in-writing-for-elsevier>

Elsevier. (2025c). *The use of generative AI and AI-assisted technologies in the review process*. <https://www.elsevier.com/about/policies-and-standards/the-use-of-generative-ai-and-ai-assisted-technologies-in-the-review-process>

Wiley. (2025). *AI guidelines for researchers*. <https://www.wiley.com/en-us/publish/article/ai-guidelines/>

Zielinski, C., Winker, M.A., Aggarwal, R., et al. for the WAME Board. (2023, May 31). *Chatbots, generative AI, and scholarly manuscripts: WAME recommendations*. World Association of Medical Editors. <https://wame.org/page3.php?id=106>

RELX Group. (2023). *RELX Responsible AI Principles*. <https://www.relx.com/corporate-responsibility/being-a-responsible-business/responsible-ai>