VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON
TE HERENGA WAKA

From Idea to Insight

Using copilot for your research journey

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Research

Support throughout a project

Literature review: Suggest search terms and compare papers.

Research questions: Explore and refine possible questions.

Idea generation and innovation: Develop and compare research ideas.

Methodology design: Compare methods and explain assumptions.

Data analysis support: Propose code and test it against your data.

Writing and drafting: Draft text and review arguments for clarity.

Thesis structure and outline: Plan chapters, sections and grant outlines.

Citations and referencing: Organise references and verify each source.

Conference and journal support: Adapt writing for audiences and publications.

Time management and productivity: Plan tasks, draft emails and adapt formats.

You judge the quality and relevance of every suggestion.

COPILOT RESEARCH

AI errors

AI can sound right without being right

AI predicts plausible language. It can invent facts or references, especially when context is missing.

Provide relevant material and ask for sources. Then open those sources and verify important facts.

Alternative answers may expose uncertainty. Agreement between answers still does not prove accuracy.



How to reduce the risk



Provide context

Give Copilot relevant documents, background and constraints. More grounding leaves less room for invention.

Ask for sources

Prompt Copilot to cite where factual information came from. Then check those sources.

Ask for alternatives when useful

Different answers cam expose areas where the AI may be uncertain, but consistency alone doesn't prove accuracy.

Cross-check important facts

Verify names, numbers, dates and citations against original or authoritative sources.

Review before using

Treat AI-generated content as a first draft. You remain responsible for checking and improving it before sharing it.

Building Guardrails for

Uncertainty

“Never make up answers when uncertain.
State unknowns and limitations clearly.
Ask clarifying questions until you have high confidence (about 95%) that you can complete the task successfully.”

Personalisation

Prompt context



Question

A specific question that you want to investigate.

02



Scope

Field, dates, population and acceptable sources.

03



Material

Relevant papers, reports, notes and constraints.

04



Output

A table, outline or summary with source references.

Summarising papers or topics

Standard Prompt

Summarise [paper/set of papers/topic] for [background section / general understanding / early drafting].

The source material is [pasted text below and/or attached files]. Focus on the main ideas and findings.

Enhanced Prompt

Role:
You are a [subject-matter expert] in [field] with experience summarizing peer-reviewed research.

Background and context:
The purpose of this summary is [background section / synthesis / framing a gap]. Use only [pasted text below and/or attached files] as source material.

Objective:
Produce an accurate and well-organized summary suitable for academic use.

Output format:
Plain-language overview (3–5 sentences)
Structured academic summary including:
Research question or focus.
Data/system (if applicable).
Methods (high level).
Key results.
Limitations noted by the authors.

Comprehensive Prompt

Role: You are a [subject-matter expert and methodological reviewer] in [field].

Background and context: The purpose of this summary is [background section / synthesis / framing a gap]. Use only [pasted text / attached files] as authoritative sources.

Objective and success criteria: Produce an accurate, citation-safe summary suitable for academic writing.

A successful summary: Separates results, interpretation, and limitations. Avoids introducing information not present in the source. Is structured for reuse.

Parameters and boundaries: If information is missing, state “Not specified in the source.” Do not infer causality unless explicitly claimed. Maintain tone appropriate for [audience/journal].

Output format: Plain-language overview (3–5 sentences) Structured academic summary: Research question. Data/system. Methods. Key results. Interpretation. Limitations. Citation-safe bullets and quote-safe phrases

Reasoning and transparency: Explicitly state any assumptions you make due to missing, ambiguous, or underspecified information. Explain your reasoning clearly and sequentially, especially when synthesizing, interpreting, or prioritizing information. Cite sources or evidence locations for factual claims (e.g., section numbers, table/figure references, or attached file names). Flag uncertainty and clearly distinguish evidence-based conclusions from interpretation or speculation. If the task cannot be completed reliably with the information provided, stop and explain why, and specify what additional input would be required.

Interpretation guidance: Downstream use: [manuscript/proposal]. Risk tolerance: Conservative



Evidence

Citations need checking



DOES THE SOURCE EXIST?

Open the paper, publisher page or library record. Verify title, authors, year and DOI.



DOES IT SUPPORT THE CLAIM?

Read the cited passage in context. Check the population, method, limitations and exact result.



DOES THE CONCLUSION FIT?

Separate the authors' findings from Copilot's interpretation. Look for contradictory evidence.



WHAT NEEDS FOLLOW-UP?

Recalculate important numbers. Mark gaps and unsupported statements. Keep the source with your research notes.

Integrity

A pre-use checklist for each project

Use your institution’s approved account and tools. Check permissions before uploading material.

Review consent, confidentiality, copyright and data sovereignty requirements.

Keep a record of the tool, date, prompts, sources and checks. Follow supervisor, funder and publisher disclosure requirements.



COPILOT RESEARCH

You decide

Copilot can help with research and drafting.
Specific prompts and source material reduce guesswork.
Confident answers still need original-source checks.
You analyse, validate and take responsibility.

Key points



Copilot helps you draft

It can support preparation and writing. You remain responsible for the work.



AI can sound right

Confident language can hide factual errors. Check the original evidence.



You create knowledge

Copilot supports your thinking. You analyse the evidence and validate conclusions.

Reading

Sources and further reading

MS The Academic Researcher's Guide to Gen AI

Copilot prompts for research

AI in Research case studies – Oxford University AI Competency Centre

Royal Society NZ – Guidelines for best-practice use of GenAI in research



Copilot training

What we cover in a session

Models and prompts

- Choosing models
- Write & schedule prompts

Personalising Copilot

- Personalising Copilot, Outlook and Excel

Copilot in Microsoft 365

- Skills in PowerPoint and Excel
- SharePoint and OneDrive

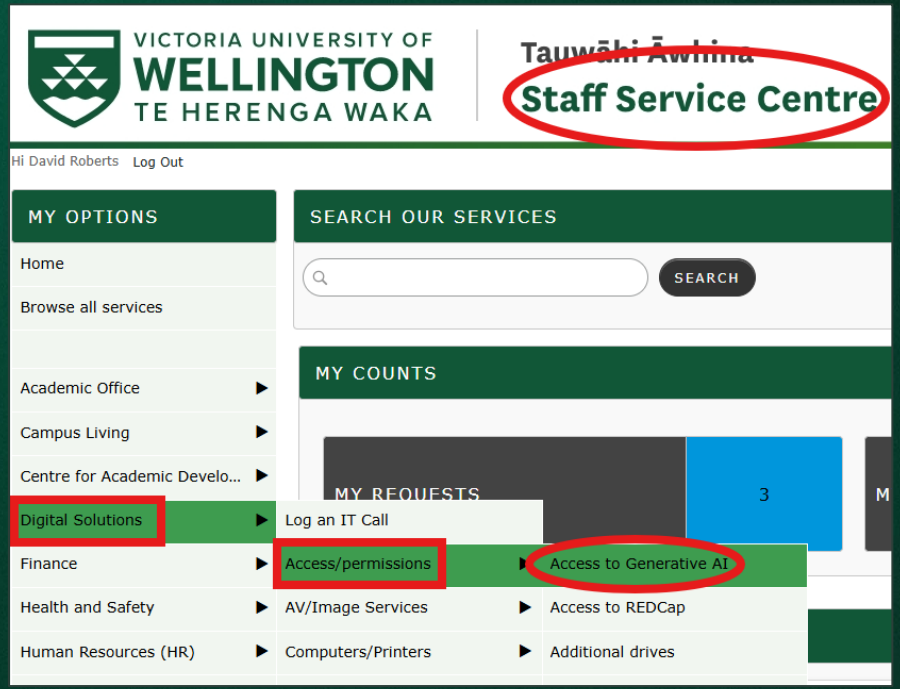
Working with agents

- Using built-in agents
- Creating an agent*

Next steps

Apply for a Copilot licence

then book onto my training to explore this content in more detail.



David Roberts

Workplace Technology Trainer

Time? Let's personalise the copilot app