Using GenAI: How Much is Too Much?
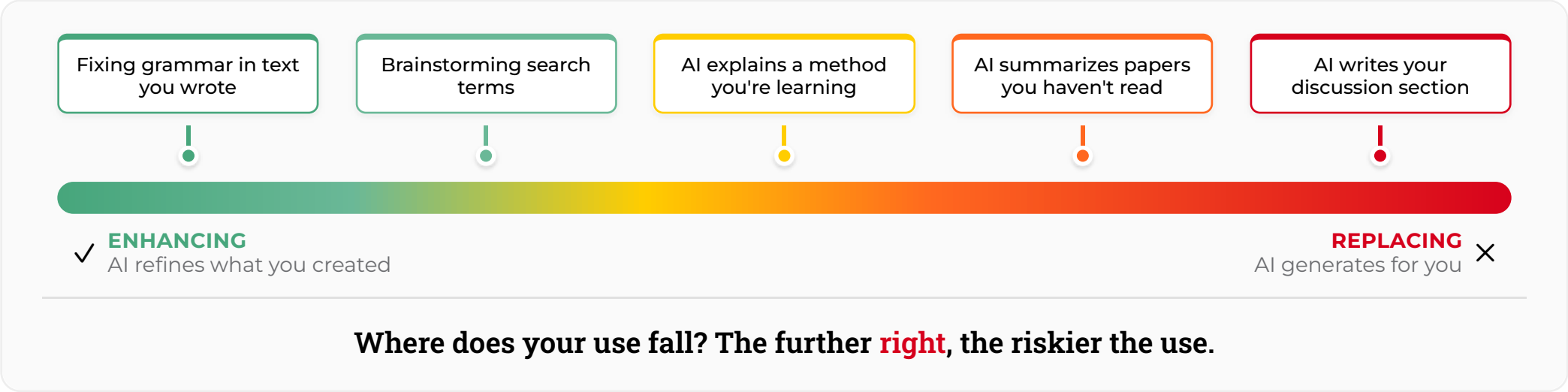
A thinking framework for GenAI use in graduate studies

THE CORE PRINCIPLE
GenAI should **enhance but not replace** your academic work.

The AI Assistance Spectrum

Fixing grammar in text you wrote	Brainstorming search terms	AI explains a method you're learning	AI summarizes papers you haven't read	AI writes your discussion section

ENHANCING
AI refines what you created

REPLACING
AI generates for you

Where does your use fall? The further right, the riskier the use.

Five Questions to Ask Yourself

1 THE ORIGINALITY TEST

Did the core ideas come from me?

Your thesis, arguments, interpretations, and conclusions should originate from your own thinking and analysis of the evidence.

Ask: *If I removed all AI contributions, would the intellectual substance remain?*

2 THE DEPENDENCY TEST

Could I produce this without the AI output?

If the AI output disappeared entirely, could you recreate the substance from your own knowledge and skills?

Ask: *Am I using AI as a shortcut or as a crutch?*

3 THE LEARNING TEST

Did I learn what I was supposed to learn?

Graduate school develops specific competencies. If AI performed a task for you, did you miss a critical learning opportunity?

Ask: *What skill was this assignment meant to build? Did I circumvent that with AI?*

4 THE EFFICIENCY TEST

Am I using AI for efficiency or capability?

There's a difference between speeding up what you can already do versus having AI do what you cannot.

OK: *Faster editing.* **Problem:** *Writing I couldn't have produced myself.*

5 THE TRANSPARENCY TEST

Would I show my supervisor exactly how I use it?

If you would hide, downplay, or feel uncomfortable disclosing your AI use, that discomfort is a signal.

Ask: *Would I want to share my exact prompts and outputs?*

Quick Reference: The Hard Lines

WORK TYPE	THE BOUNDARY
Candidacy / Field of Study Exams	Any GenAI use during the exam **ZERO TOLERANCE***
Thesis Defence	Any GenAI use during the defence **ZERO TOLERANCE***
Data Analysis Seek Supervisor Guidance First	Analyses and interpretations must be yours
Thesis Writing Seek Supervisor Guidance First	The written thesis must be your own work

Such use may be considered a breach of academic integrity and subject to Academic Misconduct procedures.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Ask Yourself: "Can I explain and defend every aspect of this work to my committee?"

If your answer is **no** → you've used too much AI.

When in doubt: Ask your supervisor first. Get written authorization. Document your use.