

Up to Code

Make an AI Policy for Your Classroom

By Pamela Schumacher, MS, Prosci, RYT

Generative artificial intelligence (gen AI) is reshaping the world. It not only helps educators streamline routine tasks, but students are using it every single day, for better or worse. Adopting it in the classroom requires clear guidance, thoughtful policies, and strong human oversight to ensure accuracy, fairness, and responsible use—especially when preparing medical assistants for real-world clinical and administrative work.

A New Classroom Algorithm

ChatGPT, a gen AI program that learns patterns and uses them to generate text, images, music, or code, was introduced in November 2022 and marked a major turning point in education. Suddenly, AI was available to everyone at the same time—administrators, educators, and students. Colleges did not have time to set thoughtful policies, and the initial response was to prevent the use of gen AI for any academic purpose.¹ But AI can also help educators teach in new ways.²

“Like many institutions, we had to adapt quickly as AI evolved and students began using it to complete their coursework. Our initial focus was on maintaining academic integrity while we evaluated the technology and its impact on teaching and learning,” says Christopher Adams, BS, MPH, CMA (AAMA), CPT (NHA), an educator in the allied health division of the School of Health Sciences at Central Penn College in Enola, Pennsylvania. “When I started using AI to improve my classes, I decided to develop policies for student AI use because I knew they were also using it.”

“Students are already using AI tools whether programs are addressing them or not. Without guidance, they are developing habits that they will carry into clinical practice. In health care education, those habits

have consequences beyond academics,” notes Dipu Patel, DMSc, MPAS, PA-C, ABAIM, the vice chair for innovation and a professor at the University of Pittsburgh in Pennsylvania.

Prompt Response

Establishing policies starts with educators becoming familiar with AI tools, taking time to experiment with these systems, and understanding what they can and cannot do.² Educators should create policies that foster students’ critical thinking, adaptability, and readiness for the future by adhering to principles such as the following³:

- **Transparency:** Tell students exactly how and when AI can be used for each assignment.
- **Consistency:** Avoid conflicts between school and department-specific policies.
- **Equity:** Recognize that not all students can access, afford, or understand AI tools without support. All students should have equal access to AI tools.
- **Adaptability:** Regularly review and revise the AI policy so that it evolves with the technology.

Lee Forest, MEd, assistant director for the Center for AI at Bridgewater State University in Bridgewater, Massachusetts, says educators can employ a variety of policies ranging from restrictive to open, depending on the class. Drawing in part from Leon Furze’s AI Assessment Scale,⁴ these could include the following:

- **No AI Use:** Ensures that students develop a thorough, personal understanding of core skills and knowledge entirely on their own. One trade-off is that it removes the opportunity to build AI literacy or practice working

alongside tools that are increasingly present in professional contexts. A risk is that there is no surefire way to enforce compliance.

- **Limited/Planning-Only AI Use:** Allows students to use AI for ideation—brainstorming, outlining, and synthesizing ideas—but emphasizes the importance of independently developing deeper insights and arguments. Encourages engagement with generative tools, helping students build AI literacy skills while avoiding the risk of off-loading cognitive effort to AI. The challenge is that the line between planning and doing can be blurry, and enforcement may be difficult.
- **Active/Integrated/Collaborative AI Use:** Permits AI use for creating a first draft and support with revisions. This strategy can also blur the line between what the student did and what AI created, and it is challenging to enforce.
- **Unrestricted/Full AI Use:** Places no limits on how AI is used but raises the bar—the final product must be *superior* to what either the student or AI would have achieved independently. This develops skills in directing and leveraging AI effectively. The challenge is assessment; it requires educators to evaluate not just the product but the quality of the human-AI collaboration, including the salience and evidence of the student’s academic voice and critical thinking.

“My original policy was no AI allowed, because I didn’t understand it well enough,” says Adams. “But I educated myself—took online classes and went to several conferences about the ethical uses of AI in education. Now, I include specific examples of how students can use AI for assignments and specific examples of how it’s being applied

AI Policy Examples

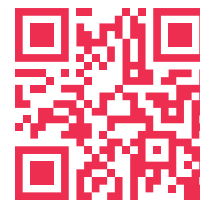
A repository of more than 200 sample classroom AI policies



AI in Academia: Policies, Guidelines, and Governance



Leon Furze's AI Assessment Scale for use in the classroom



in medical offices.”

IRL Preparation

Concerns about gen AI in higher education often center on academic integrity and the risk of misuse, but thoughtful policies and well-designed safeguards can significantly reduce those challenges.⁴

“Change happens at the speed of trust, and AI policy in education is no exception,” says Patel. “Don’t just drop an AI policy in the syllabus and expect students to understand it. Explaining the ‘why’ before the ‘what’ can really help. Whenever possible, involve students in developing the norms. A student who helped shape the policy is far more likely to hold themselves to it.

“Also, connect the policy directly to their clinical future,” she says. “Ask students, ‘What happens when an AI tool is wrong or you don’t have the reasoning skills to catch a mistake?’ That’s not a hypothetical situation, because it happens all the time in health care. Frame the policy as preparation for real-world practice rather than a restriction.”

Debugging Issues

After ChatGPT was released, AI content detection tools were developed, but they remain unreliable.⁵ “There is plenty of research showing AI detection tools do not work and this is an arms race you won’t win,” says José Antonio Bowen, PhD, FRSA, a senior fellow at the American Association of Colleges and Universities in Washington, D.C., and coauthor of *Teaching with AI*. “Detectors do *not* give you proof. At best, detectors provide a probability score that will

not hold up in court. Those scores demonstrate extreme vulnerability. For instance, a hybrid editing strategy can enable up to 88% of AI-generated content to evade detection successfully. AI detectors do not accuse students of cheating; the teacher does. Legally, you must be ready with proof.

“Also, using AI is not plagiarism. Plagiarism requires an author from which you copy. Every time you prompt an AI bot, you get a different and unique answer, so you cannot demonstrate an original that was plagiarized,” says Bowen. “The U.S. Copyright Office has ruled ‘the outputs of generative AI can be protected by copyright only where a human author has determined sufficient expressive elements.’⁶”

Adams has had fewer academic integrity issues since he has put an official policy in the syllabus, which he discusses in class and requires each student to sign. He also encourages students to talk to him about how they are using AI. “But I make it clear that if [they] misuse it, and I’m able to determine that [they] have, there’ll be consequences. The college has a structured academic integrity process that I refer to, but even that doesn’t deter all students because many think they know better than you.”

If he suspects a student has crossed a line, he runs the assignment topic through several free AI tools and compares that output to the student’s work. He has also reviewed enough AI generated writing that he often spots the familiar patterns immediately and does not always need a detector. If he suspects a student has flouted the policy, he handles it quickly: “I’ll show them why I think they may have misused the AI tool and

let them take it from there. If they admit to it, then we’ll talk about ways they can redo the assignment, with some point reduction.”

However, policies alone are not the solution, notes Bowen: “What’s needed is to rethink education so that students are learning the things that we want them to learn. We’ve been assuming that the essay or exam represents thinking and learning, but it was never actually measuring learning, and AI has exposed this. Rather than worrying about cheating, we should make sure that our students can do the things that AI cannot.” ♦

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