

**From Perception to Policy: Students' Views and Collaborative Development of Ethical AI Usage in Academia**

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### **Introduction/Need for Innovation or Idea**

Artificial intelligence (AI) has had significant advancements from its emergence in 1956 (Kokina & Davenport, 2017) to the present day (Chiu et al., 2023). These recent advancements have revolutionized education, and today's learners have an unparalleled array of resources and strategies at their disposal, allowing them to tailor their educational journey to their individual needs (Davies & West, 2013). However, academics are concerned students will use AI tools to cheat or plagiarize on their assignments (Chan, 2023). Additionally, many believe students will lose the critical thinking skills needed to complete assignment-related tasks if they use AI (Sætra, 2023). These concerns have created an urgent need for universities to develop an AI education policy that prepares students to work with and understand AI technology and usage.

Previous research has found involving students in shaping their education allows for more suitable, acceptable, and effective learning (Geurts et al., 2023). Additionally, seeking and listening to student perspectives can be worthwhile because students provide unique insights to challenges while encouraging students to be involved and take ownership of their own learning (Chan et al., 2014). Although student use of AI raises concerns, the reality is these types of tools are being widely adopted by industry, and students should gain experience using them (Peres et al., 2023). By involving students in an AI policy creation process, it enables students to have input on a course policy, which may largely impact them. This poster describes a two-part activity in a scientific communications course that asked students to brainstorm and draft an ethical AI usage policy to be used throughout the remainder of the course.

### **How it Works**

At the start of the summer one session, students enrolled in the online scientific communication course were tasked with developing a policy to outline acceptable AI usage in the course. First, using the discussion board feature embedded within the university's learning management system, students were asked to create an initial thread addressing the following questions regarding ethical AI usage: 1) How do you and your peers use AI within your courses (if at all)? 2) What are the benefits of using AI in an academic setting? 3) What are the drawbacks or concerns? and 4) Should citations be required? Students were also asked to identify three of their peers' AI policies that they liked and respond to them. The following week, students were assigned an Ethical AI Reflection assignment, which encouraged them to use the brainstorming discussion board activity from the previous week to help them create a proposed AI policy for the course and reflect upon ethical AI usage. The reflection asked students to summarize their answers to the four discussion board questions as well as answer the following: 1) After reviewing your peers' proposed policies, what did you learn that you could incorporate into your own policy? and 2) How did this change your final policy? Using the students' discussion board threads and reflections, the lead instructor and two teaching assistants created an AI policy that incorporated student feedback.

### **Results to Date**

The two activities helped students actively participate in drafting the AI usage policy for the course and enabled the instructor and teaching assistants to learn more about student perceptions of ethical AI usage. Through student reflections, we learned that only one of the 25 students had not used AI software before. Additionally, the reflections provided insight into what students

consider ethical issues or uses of AI and what they deem important to include in the course's AI usage policy.

Regarding ethical AI usage, many students emphasized AI tools should only be used as a brainstorming tool and should not replace their own critical thinking. One student indicated, "Students should use AI as a helper, not a replacement for their own work. This ensures that students learn the content and that AI does not take away from student learning." Another mentioned, "It is important to use AI as a helping tool. Relying too much on AI can affect student learning goals and is considered cheating." Additionally, students suggested using AI for idea generation and to check grammar, spelling, and punctuation is an ethical usage of AI. One student said, "Students may use AI tools to assist them with tasks such as gathering information, brainstorming ideas, and checking grammar, spelling, and punctuation to ensure clarity in your writing." Lastly, students mentioned AI should be used sparingly and treated like a public forum. For example, "All information given to AI must be treated as if it were being publicly released." Another student said, "Students should avoid sharing personal, sensitive, or confidential information with AI tools because the privacy of the data is unknown."

In their final drafts of the AI usage policy, almost all students noted a disclosure statement or citation should be required by the course policy if AI is used for coursework. One student said, "When using AI to generate content, students should include a general note at the end of their assignment stating that AI was used." Another indicated, "AI tools must be properly documented and cited appropriately for academic integrity." Several students also mentioned the policy should state that AI-generated content should not be used verbatim. For example, "AI-created work should not be used verbatim in academic work due to the unknown origins of information provided by AI." Finally, students suggested the AI policy include a certain percentage of how much of a submitted assignment can be generated by AI. One student suggested, "A student will be given a 20% acceptance of AI in each assignment. If 20% is surpassed in a single assignment, the assigned grade will result in a zero."

### **Future Plans/Advice to Others**

With AI constantly evolving, it is important that students recognize the benefits and risks of these tools so they can use them effectively and ethically (Chan, 2023). We recommend educators develop clear policies on AI usage in coursework and involve students in creating the policy to help foster a culture of responsible AI usage (Chan, 2023). This approach not only educates students about the ethical implications of AI but also ensures that the policies are relevant and practical (Peres et al., 2023). Within this class, we will continue to discuss the implications of AI, and what responsible and ethical AI usage means for students.

### **Cost/Resources Needed**

Implementing these activities in your course is free and requires no additional external resources. Students should already be equipped with the essential materials needed to participate in this class activity, such as a laptop and access to the Internet. Instructors should allot an adequate amount of time to complete the initial discussion and follow-up AI reflection. Due to the online nature of this course, students were given one week to complete each of the assignments.

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