

# ChatEthics: Does teaching the ethical use of generative AI have an impact?

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# Introduction

A more realistic approach than banning AI is showing students AI can be used ethically as a tool.

How? Help students better understand the issues and concerns behind generative AI + how it should/shouldn't be used through instruction, activities, and assignments.

This research focuses on whether this foregrounding of ethical considerations has an impact on students' awareness, perceptions, and behaviours.

# Literature Review



- Academic integrity is a legitimate concern sparked by generative AI (Najjar & Akpan, 2023).
- As highlighted in Najjar and McCarthy's forthcoming book chapter (2024), key aspects that need consideration include issues of linguistic justice for non-native English speakers; hallucination, misinformation, inconsistencies, and biases; questions of ownership and authorship; the loss and limiting of creativity; and the challenge educators face of keeping up with how fast generative AI is evolving.
- Individual faculty members are pressed to find ways of rethinking course content and assessment to encourage academic integrity and promote student learning (Najjar & McCarthy, 2024).
- Universities too.
- Relative slowness schools are moving to provide guidelines: "regulatory vacuum leaves room for misuse and uncertainty" leaving faculty at risk when seeking to punish students for claims of plagiarism or academic dishonesty (Hanover Research, 2023).

# Research Questions



- What policies have universities developed in response to the use of generative AI?
- How are faculty and departments reacting or adapting to university guidelines on the use of generative AI (particularly in common courses)?
- What are students' regular practices regarding generative AI?
- Do students recognise ethical issues and report them?
- Does teaching the ethical use of AI create more student awareness and understanding?
- Does teaching the ethical use of AI create a shift in student behaviour and have an impact?
- What activities can foster a greater understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of generative AI and promote the ethical use of AI?



# Methodology

Fall 2023-2024 WRI 101 (Academic Writing) course at the American University of Sharjah- module which covered concerns and issues with generative AI, guidance on the ethical use of AI across the writing process, and a list of dos and donts.

Students- groups of 3 or 4 generated a list of how they'd use AI across the writing process to gauge their understanding.

Students- different groups of 3 or 4 created a set of questions for a "Quiz Show" activity (1 question per group member, and the student must know the answer to his/her question) and challenged other groups to answer the questions. Questions were all about the ethical use of AI and issues with generative AI and were either scenarios inspired by real university situations or "what's problematic about this..." or "which text is generated by AI and which by a student".



# Methodology

Individual major assignment: a video essay that required students to critically analyse one of four essays on different topics, all of which were generated by ChatGPT. I prompted ChatGPT to assume the role of a university student and generate essays that included research and references.

In the essay students had to address the following-  
What are the strengths of the essay? What are the weaknesses of the essay (including the accuracy and validity of the information and evidence provided). What improvements can be made in terms of content, research, and writing style?

The assignment's conclusion included a student reflection on the experience, whether they would use ChatGPT, and how they would use it.

# Methodology

Anonymous survey to gauge the overall effectiveness of teaching the ethical use of AI in a course and to understand the effects of teaching the ethical use of AI in writing classes on students' behaviour and their adherence to ethical principles when using AI tools (52 students responded). Questionnaire- 14 questions in total, a mix of Likert scale, multiple choice, and long answer text. Examples of questions include:

- “How often do you use AI-based writing tools for your assignments?”
- “To what extent did you learn about the ethical use of AI from Analytical Essay 1?”
- “If you were redesigning our class sessions that focused on the ethical use of AI, how would you go about it?”

I also observed how students approached subsequent writing assignments.





# Results

- University policies and department reactions: At AUS “fixed policy” with “flexible parts” from university + Generative AI committee for Department of English (especially for common courses).



# Results

Students' regular practices regarding generative AI.

- Using AI based writing tools for assignments: 40.4% sometimes, 36.5% occasionally, and 13.5% often.
- When using AI-based writing tools, how often do you check and ensure the output aligns with ethical standards: 46.2% always, 30.8% often, 15.4% sometimes, 7.6% rarely.
- 63.5% strongly agreed "I understand the ethical considerations when using AI for writing tasks".
- 73.1% strongly agreed "I believe it is important to use AI in a responsible and ethical manner in my writing."
- 48.1% agreed vs 42.3% strongly agreed "I am confident in my ability to use AI tools ethically in my writing".



# Results

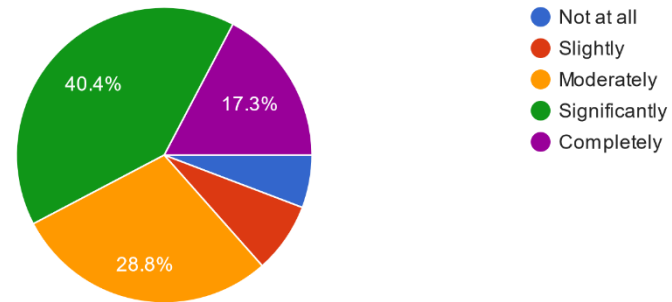
Students' regular practices regarding generative AI.

- Have you ever encountered a situation where you or someone you know used AI unethically in writing assignments? If yes, please describe the situation briefly. 44 responses.
  - “Yes, putting the assignment in chatgpt, paraphrase using paraphrasing tools, copying and pasting.”
  - “Usually when the essay topic is way beyond a person's comfort zone or has a really tight deadline.”
  - “Yes, they copy and pasted the response by CHATGPT and didn't change anything.”
- Have you taken any actions to address or prevent the unethical use of AI tools by you or others? If yes, please describe the actions briefly. 40 responses.
  - No...or advised on the ethical use of AI.

# Results

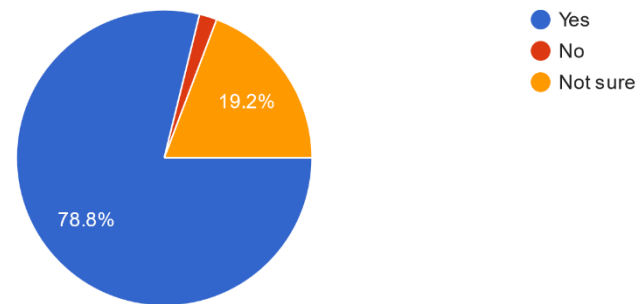
To what extent do you believe that education on the ethical use of AI in writing classes has influenced your behavior and choices when using AI-based writing tools?

52 responses



Do you believe that teaching AI ethics should be a standard part of writing education?

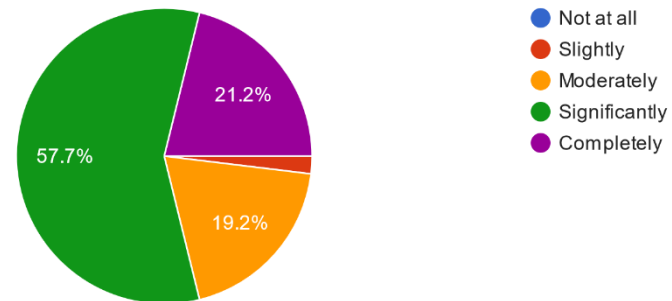
52 responses



# Results

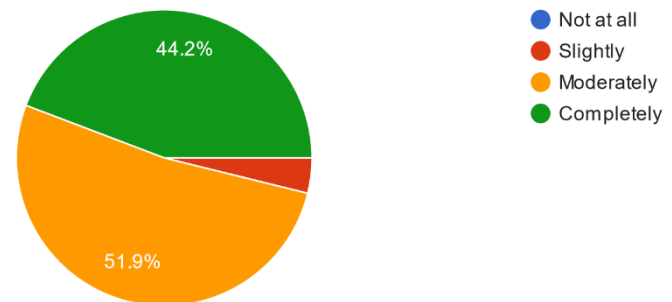
To what extent did you learn about the ethical use of AI from the material covered in class and Quiz Show Battle?

52 responses



To what extent did you learn about the ethical use of AI from Analytical Essay 1?

52 responses



# Results

If you were redesigning our class sessions that focused on the ethical use of AI, how would you go about it? 52 responses.

- Do the same (most)
- More time for students to experiment with AI in class and provide more examples.
- In-class writing with students having to answer questions about what they wrote.

What activities or assignments would you include to foster a greater understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of generative AI and promote the ethical use of AI? 52 responses.

- Quiz Show, analysis of AI written essays, games, in-class discussions, showing websites and journals that have caused a controversy because of the use of AI, comparing AI generated text with human written text....
- “I'd include more research-based questions. Like, on the projector I'll write a question about history for example, and I'd ask the students to use ChatGPT to find the answers with their original sources. Based on that they can deduce whether AI really provides actual sources or not.”

# Results

Please share any additional thoughts, comments, or suggestions related to AI ethics education in writing classes. 18 responses.

- “Definitely AI education on ethical uses should continue to be in the writing classes because it made me more aware on how to use it ethically for example an ethical use that the professor suggested was to use ChatGPT to grab some ideas where at first I thought that wasn’t ethical however turns out I was wrong.”
- “Not many comments, very happy with course structure and teaching, hoping to retake with Dr Jasmina next semester.”
- “Honestly, I like our WRI class activities, because it helps me channel my thoughts by writing and "gamification" helps reduce my stress. So, every time I enter the class I know that I'm going to be relieved due to the irregular activities that we do in class.”

# Results

Students' responses to survey questions suggest that teaching the ethical use of AI has a positive impact and changes behaviour and that students believe that receiving instruction on the ethical use of AI is beneficial.

The group activities assisted students' learning and understanding as I generally observed.

The video essay involving analysing ChatGPT content helped students understand both the benefits and limitations of AI and also built students' confidence in their critical thinking, evaluative, analytical, research, and writing skills. The findings suggested that such an assignment encourages fact checking (and source checking) and informs students as to how AI can be used as a tool to promote learning and enhance performance (Najjar, 2023).

As I generally observed, the vast majority of students made an effort to ethically use AI and did their own work in subsequent assignments.

# Discussion

- This research shows that it is possible to encourage the ethical use of AI through instruction, activities, and assignments.
- While the results are promising and encouraging, this does not mean that students won't use generative AI unethically or in full to generate their work for courses.
- This stresses the critical nature of finding ways to clearly communicate what is acceptable use of generative AI and what isn't, making course content and assignments relevant to students, and helping students see value in honing their own skills and being active agents in their own learning journey.

# References

**\*Hanover Research. (2023). (rep.). Benefits, challenges, and sample use cases of artificial intelligence in higher education. Inside Higher Education. Retrieved December 5, 2023, from <https://www.insidehighered.com/sites/default/files/2023-10/Benefits%2C%20Challenges%2C%20and%20Sample%20Use%20Cases%20of%20AI%20in%20Higher%20Education.pdf>.**

**\*Najjar, J. (2023) To AI or Not to AI: that is the question in writing courses. Paper presented at the AMICAL 2023 Conference (Ifrane, Morocco, 24-26 May).**

**\*Najjar, J. & Akpan, E. (2023) Academic integrity: issues and solutions. Paper presented at the AMICAL 2023 Conference (Ifrane, Morocco, 24-26 May).**

**\*Najjar, J. & McCarthy, P. (2024) AI and the Digital Writing Process. In C. Ludwig & S. Kersten (Eds), Born-digital Text in English Language Teaching. Multilingual Matters, an imprint of Channel View Publications Ltd, UK.**



# Thank you

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