Generative AI Syllabus Language and Considerations

Generative AI Taskforce Recommendation – May 2023

Introduction

The Generative AI Taskforce has worked to create some syllabus language that instructors may use as part of their course information. The language we are sharing includes a range of approaches to generative AI and its use in MSU Denver courses, which we've dubbed a "syllabus spectrum." Also included are points that we hope instructors, coordinators, chairs, curriculum committees, deans, etc. will consider when deciding what kinds of generative AI policies will be adopted in courses, programs and departments. The language in the included options is intended to guide instructors in preparing syllabi and should be modified as needed for individual courses.

Syllabus Spectrum

In the table below you will find three different versions of language that could be part of a course syllabus or could be included in the instructions for specific assignments. The three versions are an attempt to capture the spectrum of possibilities for how generative AI might be addressed.

Broad considerations for course policies

What counts as generative AI?

From a technical perspective it isn't easy to draw a clear line on what is and is not "generative AI." At this stage, using voice-to-text, spellcheck, Grammarly, are all on the continuum of AI, machine learning, etc. Instructors will have to grapple with the fuzzy boundaries between these various tools.

Accessibility and accommodation:

Please bear in mind that accessibility and accommodation for students with disabilities are also important considerations across all options. Some assistive technologies being utilized by students may contain elements of generative AI. As you consider the option that best fits your course, be sure to include language to address individuals who utilize such tools.

Amplification of existing bias

Generative AI incorporates and reinforces the biases of the content it was trained on. This poses an ethical problem for all users.

Data privacy concerns

Regardless of who submits the content to generative AI tools (prompts, responses, etc.), they may be violating data privacy expectations or laws.

Specific considerations

Following the sample syllabus language options is an incomplete list of considerations and implications of these choices. There are "Pros and Cons" from the following perspectives:

- Students
- Instructors
- Disciplines/departments
- "Return On Investment and Opportunity Cost" (abbreviated ROI & OC)

Note that not all pros and cons are equal, and there has been no attempt to artificially create a specific number of each.

Spectrum of syllabus language

Options	Suggested syllabus language (short version)	Suggested syllabus language (detailed version)
Option 1 **"Allowed"** (use of generative AI is generally allowed or encouraged)	Students may use generative AI in any assignment in this course. All use of generative AI must be cited/explained.	Students are free (and even encouraged) to use generative AI in all aspects of the course. Generative AI can be used when and wherever the student feels it is appropriate to enhance their learning. If generative AI is used as part of work that will be submitted, its use should be briefly but accurately explained in a submission statement.
Option 2 **"Mixed"** (distinct parts of the course forbid, allow, or encourage the use of generative AI)	Using generative AI is encouraged in some aspects of this course, allowed in others, and prohibited in some. The instructions included with every assignment will address the use of generative AI. When used, you will be asked to briefly but accurately explain how in a submission statement.	The use of generative AI is encouraged in some aspects of this course, allowed in others, and prohibited in some. Students are encouraged to explore any and all tools that help with their learning, including the use of generative AI. If generative AI is used as part of work that will be submitted, its use should be briefly but accurately explained in a submission statement. In creating submissions, generative AI may be used in specific parts of the coursework. - Help in generating an outline for a piece of writing. - Getting feedback and editing help on your original writing. - Etc. The following assignments should be completed without the use of generative AI. - Reflection essays - Responding to classmates in a discussion forum - Answering questions on any quiz, test or exam. - Etc. The use of generative AI in these cases will be treated as a violation of academic integrity.
Option 3 **"Restricted"** (use of generative AI is generally forbidden)	Students may only use generative AI in this course when an assignment explicitly calls for it. Use in any other assignment will be treated as academic dishonesty.	The use of generative AI is restricted to rare and specific circumstances in this course. Students should not use such tools unless they are specifically called for in an activity, assignment, or assessment. Any use of generative AI in the creation of submitted work for this course will be treated as a violation of academic integrity.

Specific considerations – Option 1: Allowed

Impact on?	Pro/Con	Description
Student	*Pro*	Students may find ways to complete tasks in a more efficient manner, without sacrificing learning.
Student	*Pro*	Allowing students to adopt generative AI in a guided capacity can lead to both critical thinking and deeper research and/or creativity in a time-saving manner. (move to Option 2?)
Student	*Pro*	When used judiciously, feedback from generative AI during the creative process could greatly benefit this process.
Student	*Pro*	Generative AI is increasingly being used in many fields. Restricting student access to this technology now could leave them at a disadvantage later.
Student	*Pro*	Students may use generative AI to get feedback that helps them become better writers. Restricting this use may, in some cases, harm the writing process and its improvement.
Student	**Con**	Access? Will all students have equal access to the tools? Does the tool cost? Does it sell student information instead of requiring payment? Do these factors impact the equity of a permissive policy?
Student	**Con**	Over-reliance on generative AI could have a detrimental effect on critical thinking and genuine student creativity.
Student	**Con**	The temptation to use generative AI may prevent students from engaging in creative and critical thought exercises.
Instructor	*Pro*	Professors have the freedom to experiment with new teaching methods and technologies.
Instructor	*Pro*	The use of generative AI can help students who struggle with language barriers, access, poor preparation, etc.
Instructor	**Con**	The use of AI may lead to a lack of original thinking and plagiarism.
Instructor	*Pro*	The use of generative AI to complete instructor (grading, feedback, communication, etc.) work would be consistent with student-use policy.
Instructor	**Con**	Professors may discover that permitting generative AI creates unforeseen learning and academic-conduct issues.
Discipline	*Pro*	In the specific course, topic or discipline, generative AI will be a commonly used tool, and students need to learn how to use it.
ROI + OC	*Pro*	Might limit the university's legal liability, as there would be fewer actions regarding academic integrity.
ROI + OC	**Con**	Redesigning course activities and assessments to accommodate generative AI will require significant investment of time by departments and instructors.

Specific considerations – Option 2: Mixed

Impact on?	Pro/Con	Description
Student	*Pro*	Because generative AI is used in an increasing number of fields and applications, there will be opportunities to work with this technology and without it.
Student	**Con**	Creates the potential for allegations of academic misconduct as each assignment will vary in the permissibility of using generative AI.
Instructor	*Pro*	Guidelines can help ensure that professors are using AI in an ethical and effective manner. Careful consideration of ethical issues can help prevent academic misconduct. Students may feel more confident that their work is being evaluated fairly.
Instructor	*Pro*	Careful consideration of guidelines before courses begin can help professors understand the issues that might arise.
Instructor	**Con**	Developing guidelines may be time-consuming and require significant resources.
Instructor	**Con**	Guidelines may not be effective if they are not widely adopted or enforced.
Discipline	*Pro*	Adapting generative AI responsibly as a tool in line with classroom guidance will allow for further instruction, critical thinking, and instant feedback.

Specific considerations – Option 3: Restricted

Impact on?	Pro/Con	Description
Student	*Pro*	Minimal or no use of generative AI reduces the possibility students need to pay for the tool.
Student	*Pro*	Students can have confidence that they and their classmates are being judged exclusively on their own work.
Student	**Con**	Lacks the opportunity to immerse in generative AI use.
Student	**Con**	No use of generative AI means their educational experience will not match their professional environment
Student	**Con**	Students will be unable to 'work smarter' in ways that might benefit them
Student	**Con**	Opportunities for more effective learning that incorporates AI are not allowed
Instructor	**Con**	Restricting student use of generative AI could increase the prestige of MSU Denver and demonstrate a greater commitment to academic integrity.
ROI & OC	*Pro*	Tools for detecting generative AI use may be expensive.
ROI & OC	**Con**	Attempting to catch student use of generative AI may be time-consuming and ineffective.
ROI & OC	**Con**	Detection doesn't work: Use of generative AI in student writing should be assumed to be undetectable. That is, no technological tool will give an instructor **certainty** that students have used generative AI.
Discipline	*Pro*	If generative AI use would be a gross violation of discipline norms, students need to understand how to do without it.

Background:

GAIT's mission is to provide the provost and other university leaders with recommendations on policies, procedures or other actions designed to meet the promise and demands that the institution faces in working with Artificial Intelligence in the educational process and elsewhere at MSU Denver.

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