GCU Student Policy for AI Use in Learning Activities

FULL POLICY

Purpose

Grand Canyon University (GCU) recognizes that AI tools are reshaping education and the modern workforce. As a Christian university, GCU is committed to equipping students with AI literacy grounded in character and integrity. This policy is designed to help students use AI ethically, contribute meaningfully to their own learning, and develop responsible habits that reflect GCU's mission to transform communities through character-driven education.

This policy applies to all learning activities, including assignments, assessments, projects, and other course-related tasks. It outlines when AI use is appropriate, what constitutes misuse, and how instructors may verify whether submitted work reflects authentic student learning.

Guiding Philosophy

At Grand Canyon University, we recognize that AI tools are reshaping how students learn, complete coursework, and prepare for their careers. GCU's approach to student AI use is grounded in our Christian worldview, which values truth, integrity, and the development of each student's God-given talents.

Students are encouraged to engage with AI tools in ways that support personal growth, academic effort, and ethical responsibility. Rather than avoiding AI, you are called to use it wisely; to deepen your learning, strengthen your understanding, and uphold the integrity of your work.

This philosophy is guided by five core principles:

- **Empowered Learning:** You are encouraged to use AI tools responsibly as you work toward meaningful academic goals, with clear direction on when your own effort is essential.
- **Integrity-Driven Assessment:** Your instructors may use appropriate methods to confirm your understanding and ensure that academic standards are met in a fair and supportive way.
- **Student-Centered Flexibility:** Courses may include assignments that adapt to new technologies while still focusing on genuine learning and individual growth.
- **Transparent Expectations:** You will receive clear and ongoing communication about when and how AI use is appropriate, helping you build habits for ethical use in both academic and professional settings.
- **AI Literacy with Accountability:** You are expected to develop informed, responsible practices for using AI, knowing when it supports learning and when it could interfere with your own development.

By embracing this philosophy, GCU ensures that AI supports—not replaces—the human elements of education: reflection, engagement, and growth. Our goal is to prepare you to use AI tools ethically, effectively, and with purpose, reflecting Christ-centered values in academic and professional life.

Student Responsibilities

As a student at Grand Canyon University, you are responsible for using AI in ways that support your learning, reflect personal effort, and align with the ethical standards of academic integrity and Christian character. While AI tools can offer support in studying, organizing, or clarifying ideas, they are not a substitute for your engagement, reasoning, and original work.

Your responsibilities include the following:

- **Understand and follow course-specific guidelines for AI use.**
  Each instructor may set different expectations for how AI can be used in assignments or assessments. You are expected to read all directions carefully and ask questions when expectations are unclear.
- **Use AI to support your learning and strengthen your understanding.**
  You may use AI to study, brainstorm, explore ideas, or other tasks as permitted by assignment directions, but your submitted work should reflect your own thinking. AI is a tool to help you engage more deeply with the material and build your academic skills.
- **Maintain ownership of your academic work.**
  Even when AI is used, you are expected to take full responsibility for the structure, logic, and conclusions of your work. You should be able to explain the content you submit and how you arrived at it.
- **Be transparent and provide attribution when using AI.**
  Any time you use AI to support your work, you are expected to clearly disclose how it was used. This includes summarizing the role AI played and attributing ideas or phrasing that came from AI tools. Transparency about AI use is part of academic integrity and helps demonstrate your honest engagement with the learning process.
- **Avoid unauthorized or deceptive use of AI.**
  Submitting AI-generated work when it is not allowed, using AI during assessments meant to reflect personal knowledge, or attempting to pass off AI responses as your own violates GCU's academic integrity policy and ethical standards.
- **Engage when asked to verify understanding.**
  If an instructor has questions about your work, you may be asked to explain your process, participate in a verbal check-in, or complete an alternative assessment. You are expected to respond professionally and cooperatively.
- **Develop AI literacy with accountability.**
  Learn how to use AI tools ethically, understanding their limitations, risks, and potential. Be intentional in how you integrate them into your academic life, always keeping learning as your primary goal.
- **Promote human flourishing.**
  Use AI in ways that contribute to your overall growth. Responsible AI use should promote your development as a whole person (academically, ethically, and spiritually) supporting GCU's vision of education as a path to human flourishing.

By meeting these responsibilities, you help uphold the integrity of your education, strengthen GCU's community of trust, and demonstrate readiness to engage with emerging technologies in ways that honor both scholarship and faith.

Permitted Use of AI

GCU encourages students to develop AI literacy and engage with generative AI tools in responsible ways that enhance learning. AI use is permitted when it aligns with course expectations, supports cognitive and spiritual development, and contributes meaningfully to academic work without replacing the student's own understanding or effort.

AI may be used to support your learning under the following conditions:

- **Instructor Approval or Assignment Integration**
  AI use is appropriate for course work when your instructor clearly allows it or includes it as part of an assignment. Some tasks may ask you to interact with AI (such as generating responses, analyzing outputs, or comparing them with your own reasoning) as part of the learning process.
- **Idea Generation and Concept Clarification**
  AI tools can help you brainstorm topics, create study questions, explore alternative perspectives, or better understand complex material. In these cases, AI supports your learning but does not replace your responsibility to engage thoughtfully and produce your own work.

- **Writing Support with Oversight**
  You may use AI tools to help with grammar, organization, or initial drafting, but you must remain the author of your own ideas and maintain your personal voice throughout. It is your responsibility to review, revise, and ensure the final submission reflects your understanding and perspective.
- **Transparent and Attributed Use**
  Whenever AI contributes to your work, you must clearly acknowledge how it was used. This may include documenting input/output, submitting drafts, or describing the role AI played in the assignment. You are expected to follow the attribution and citation standards appropriate to your discipline (e.g., APA, MLA, Chicago) when crediting AI use. Proper attribution is essential to maintaining academic integrity.

Examples of appropriate AI use include:

- Asking an AI tool to explain a difficult concept in simpler terms as a study strategy.
- Using AI to brainstorm potential arguments or counterpoints before writing an essay.
- Getting formatting suggestions for APA style while still completing the citation work yourself.
- Exploring alternative solutions to a case study after developing your own analysis first.

Using AI appropriately means treating it as a learning companion, not a substitute for learning. It also means embracing the responsibility to steward technology in a way that reflects truth, humility, and respect for your own intellectual and spiritual growth. When in doubt, always check with your instructor about what is allowed in each course or assignment.

When AI Use Is Not Appropriate

AI is a powerful tool, but there are times when its use is not aligned with the goals of an assignment or course activity. In these cases, relying on AI would interfere with the learning process or violate expectations:

A. When the Assignment Requires Your Independent Thinking
Some tasks are designed to assess your personal understanding, analysis, or skill development. In these cases, using AI may take away from the intended learning experience. You are expected to complete these assignments using your own reasoning and effort, unless otherwise directed.

B. When AI Use Has Not Been Approved
If your instructor has not explicitly allowed AI for a specific assignment, do not assume it is permitted. Always follow assignment directions and ask if you are unsure. Clear communication ensures your use of AI aligns with course expectations.

C. When Use of AI Is Not Disclosed
Even in assignments where AI is allowed, failing to explain how you used it (or presenting AI-generated content as entirely your own) goes against expectations for honesty and transparency. Attribution is always required when AI contributes to your work. Do not represent work generated by AI tools or resources as being your own original work.

D. Use of AI for Collaboration or Interaction Substitution
When assignments are designed to evaluate communication or interpersonal skills (such as peer replies, discussion boards, or group reflections) AI must not be used to impersonate your voice or bypass genuine engagement.

E. AI Use in Place of Personal Reflection or Experience
Any assignment that asks for your perspective, experience, or personal growth must be completed without AI input. Generating false narratives or masking your voice with AI content violates both the spirit and substance of academic integrity.

F. When Uploading Protected Course Content
Unless explicitly allowed, you should not upload quizzes, assignments, rubrics, or other course materials to public AI tools (such as ChatGPT, Gemini or CoPilot). Doing so may compromise academic integrity or violate GCU's content policies. Do not upload or input any confidential or sensitive information about yourself or any other person into any Generative AI tool.

G. Using Copyrighted Materials in Conjunction with Generative AI

The materials on many web pages available to GCU students are copyrighted or trademarked by Grand Canyon University or licensed by Grand Canyon University for use by its authorized users. Students may not use copyrighted materials or trademark protected materials in conjunction with Generative AI tools or resources, for commercial purposes. Students must not upload or input any copyrighted, trademark protected or licensed materials into any AI tool to the extent doing so would reproduce or redistribute copyrighted or trademark protected materials to third parties.

Examples of prohibited AI use include:

- Submitting an AI-written essay on a topic without conducting your own research or analysis.
- Using AI to generate discussion responses and posting them without personal engagement.
- Having AI complete a personal reflection or journal entry based on fabricated experience.
- Editing an AI-generated answer to appear original without understanding the content.
- Using AI during a take-home exam or timed assessment where no external tools are allowed.

Attribution vs. Citation in AI Use

As AI tools become a common part of academic work, it's important to distinguish between citation and attribution, while also following the guidelines of your discipline (e.g., APA, MLA, Chicago). In many cases, both citation and attribution may be appropriate when acknowledging AI use.

Citation

Citation refers to formally acknowledging sources in a standardized format (e.g., APA style). You should cite a source when you use an author's original ideas, data, or direct quotes from published material. Some citation styles, such as APA, have begun providing specific guidance on how to cite generative AI tools. When required by your discipline, include both in-text citations and a full reference entry for AI-generated content. Consult your instructor or university library for current guidance relevant to your field.

Attribution

Attribution refers to clearly and transparently stating how an AI tool contributed to your learning or assignment. This is especially important when AI is used in ways that do not require a formal citation, such as brainstorming, editing, or organizing ideas. Attribution can be included in a note, comment, or reflective statement within the assignment.

Examples of appropriate attribution for AI use:

- "ChatGPT was used to generate initial brainstorming ideas for this essay, but all analysis and final writing are my own."
- "An AI tool was used to check grammar and formatting, but no content was generated or rewritten by AI."
- "AI-generated responses were used as examples to help structure my argument; all final content was developed by me."

If your instructor requests AI input/output logs or documentation of your process, be prepared to share them. Transparent attribution is expected whenever AI meaningfully contributes to your work, even if the final output is entirely your own. Briefly acknowledging small uses (such as grammar checking or rephrasing) still promotes transparency and upholds academic integrity.

Being honest and specific about how AI supported your assignment helps your instructor assess your learning, fosters trust, and ensures your use of these tools aligns with GCU's academic expectations and commitment to character-driven education.

Verification and Instructor Response

GCU's approach to AI use prioritizes support, transparency, and academic integrity. When there are questions about how AI was used or whether submitted work reflects meaningful student learning, instructors are encouraged to engage students in a constructive process that promotes clarity and understanding.

Faculty are not expected to investigate or prove AI use. Instead, they are empowered to use professional judgment and student-centered strategies to ensure that learning outcomes have been met. If your instructor has concerns about the originality or authorship of your work, they may initiate a verification process focused on clarifying your engagement with the assignment and helping you demonstrate your understanding.

If your use of AI makes it difficult for your instructor to assess your learning, they may take steps to better understand your engagement with the assignment. These strategies are meant to support your learning and ensure that academic expectations are met. Instructors may choose from a range of approaches, such as:

- **Pause grading and initiate a conversation.** Your instructor may temporarily stop grading the assignment and contact you to ask for clarification about your work process, intent, or understanding.
- **Request a verbal or written explanation.** You may be asked to describe how you approached the assignment, what steps you took, or how specific ideas were developed.
- **Request a phone or video conversation.** To better understand your thinking, your instructor may ask to speak with you by phone or video so you can verbally explain your understanding of the material.
- **Ask for supporting materials.** This may include drafts, outlines, notes, or AI input/output logs to better understand how you arrived at the final submission.
- **Assign an alternative assessment.** In some cases, your instructor may ask you to complete a different task—such as a presentation, oral response, or live demonstration—to verify that you understand the material.
- **Provide feedback and guidance.** If your use of AI was unintentional or unclear, your instructor may use the situation as a learning opportunity, helping you better understand the policy and expectations going forward.
- **Use professional judgment to determine a fair approach.** These examples are not exhaustive. Instructors will determine what verification method is most appropriate based on the course learning objectives and the nature of the assignment.

You are expected to:

- Respond promptly and professionally to instructor outreach.
- Cooperate with reasonable requests to clarify or demonstrate your learning.
- Be honest and forthcoming about how AI was used.

The purpose of this process is to uphold the integrity of the learning experience and ensure that grades reflect genuine student understanding. Verification is a supportive step that promotes fairness for all students and reinforces the value of personal engagement in academic work.

If questions remain after this process, instructors may follow GCU's formal academic integrity procedures to ensure that concerns are addressed consistently and in alignment with university policy.

Academic Integrity

GCU is committed to fostering a learning environment where academic integrity, personal growth, and fair assessment are valued. Responsible use of AI tools is part of this commitment. Using AI in ways that misrepresent your work (such as unauthorized use, lack of attribution, or reliance that bypasses learning) can compromise both your development and the trust built within the academic community.

If AI is used inappropriately, it may be addressed through the university's Academic Integrity policy. Responses are guided by the principles of accountability, restoration, and alignment with learning goals, taking into account the context and intent of the situation.

Possible consequences of AI misuse include:

- **Academic sanctions within the course,** such as:
  - A requirement to revise or redo the assignment using approved methods.
  - A grade penalty on the assignment or course component.
  - A zero on the assignment in cases of clear misrepresentation or prohibited use.
- **Educational remediation,** including:
  - A written reflection on the misuse and what was learned from the experience.
  - A required meeting with an instructor, program chair, or academic advisor to review academic expectations.
- **Referral to university-level review,** particularly for repeated, intentional, or severe violations. This may result in:
  - A formal warning or disciplinary probation.
  - Academic integrity holds or notations.
  - Suspension or dismissal, in cases where misconduct is egregious or part of a pattern.

Your instructor will decide how to handle any concerns about AI use based on the course and situation. If needed, they may involve Academic Affairs or Student Affairs to help review the matter. You will be informed if there's a concern and will have the chance to explain your work or participate in the review before any decisions are made.

GCU approaches these matters with a commitment to fairness, development, and due process. However, it is the student's responsibility to understand and follow AI-related expectations in each course. Ignorance, lack of intent, or misunderstanding of the policy will not exempt a student from consequences but may influence the type of response taken.

Uploading GCU Materials to AI Platforms

Students may not upload, input, or otherwise share GCU course materials with AI tools, platforms, or third-party services not affiliated with the university (such as ChatGPT, Gemini, or CoPilot). This includes but is not limited to assignment instructions, rubrics, quizzes, test questions, instructional materials, and course content.

Uploading GCU content into external AI systems:

- Violates GCU's intellectual property rights and compromises the confidentiality of instructional materials.
- Risks exposure of sensitive information, potentially breaching student privacy or FERPA protections.
- Undermines academic integrity by enabling unauthorized assistance or generation of work based on proprietary course materials.

Such actions are considered a violation of both this policy and the university's academic and conduct standards. Students are expected to protect the integrity of GCU's educational resources and refrain from using AI in ways that share or replicate course content beyond intended academic purposes.

Violations

Violations of this policy occur when a student uses AI in ways that misrepresent their own work, breach academic integrity standards, or fail to follow course-specific guidelines for AI use. Any violation of this policy will be addressed through the GCU Code of Conduct procedures. Alleged violations will be reviewed in accordance with the processes outlined in the Code of Conduct, ensuring due process, fairness, and consistency.

Support and Guidance

GCU is committed to helping students engage with AI tools in ways that are ethical, informed, and supportive of their academic development. Understanding when and how to use AI appropriately can be challenging, especially as these tools evolve rapidly and vary in application across different courses and disciplines.

To ensure students feel confident and capable in using AI responsibly, GCU provides multiple layers of support:

- **Instructor Guidance**
  Your instructor is your first point of contact when it comes to understanding course-specific expectations. Instructors are encouraged to clearly communicate when AI use is allowed, discouraged, or prohibited. If you are unsure about whether you can use AI for a particular assignment or in a specific way, ask before proceeding. Open dialogue promotes transparency and helps avoid unintentional misuse.
- **Academic Resources and Training**
  GCU offers academic support services that can help you:
  - Understand how to use AI effectively without replacing your own learning.
  - Learn how to incorporate AI into your workflow as a thinking partner rather than a shortcut.
  - Receive coaching on citation, attribution, and appropriate documentation of AI use.

  Resources on AI literacy are available to help students build technical skills, understand ethical considerations, and recognize the strengths and limitations of generative tools.
- **Ethical Decision-Making Support**
  Because AI use often falls into gray areas, students are encouraged to reflect on the purpose of each assignment and how AI impacts their own development. If you're unsure whether a specific use of AI is ethical or aligns with course goals, consider:
  - Does this use help me learn and think more deeply?
  - Would I be comfortable explaining this use to my instructor?
  - Can I still demonstrate personal understanding of the material?
- **Community of Trust**
  GCU fosters a learning culture rooted in respect, responsibility, and growth. When students and instructors work together to clarify expectations and share best practices for AI use, everyone benefits. By using AI responsibly and transparently, students contribute to a trusted academic environment where innovation and integrity coexist.

If at any time you feel uncertain about how AI tools should be used in your academic work, reach out. Support is available, and questions are always welcome.

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