

Ethical Use of AI in College Writing

This document outlines the ethical considerations surrounding the use of AI tools for college written assignments. It provides guidance on identifying appropriate situations for AI use and emphasizes the importance of maintaining academic integrity. By adhering to these guidelines, students can navigate the complexities of AI assistance responsibly while ensuring the authenticity of their work.

Students should familiarize themselves with the AI policy in the DACC Student Handbook and the policies of their individual instructors. Those policies take precedent over any advice offered here. Those are the policies that govern what happens if a student is accused of using AI unethically.

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Identifying Appropriate Situations

The advent of powerful AI language models has opened up new possibilities for students seeking assistance with their written assignments. However, not all tasks are suitable for AI assistance. Identifying the appropriate situations for AI use is crucial to maintaining ethical standards.

Consider the following questions when deciding whether to use AI for an assignment:

- Is the assignment specifically designed to assess your writing abilities or critical thinking skills? If so, AI assistance may undermine the purpose of the assignment.
- Does the assignment require independent research and analysis? Using AI to generate content without conducting your own research could be considered plagiarism.
- Is the assignment focused on personal reflection or subjective opinion? Using AI for such assignments would likely result in impersonal and generic content.

When AI Use is Ethical

While AI should not be used to complete assignments entirely, there are ethical ways to utilize it as a tool for learning and improvement.

AI can be ethically employed for the following:

- Brainstorming and generating ideas: AI can assist in brainstorming by suggesting potential topics or expanding on existing ideas.
- Proofreading and grammar checking: AI-powered grammar checkers can help identify and correct grammatical errors, improving the clarity and flow of your writing.
- Summarizing large amounts of text: AI can be useful for summarizing complex research materials or lengthy articles, saving you time and helping you focus on key points.
- Translating text into different languages: AI translation tools can be helpful for understanding research materials or communicating with collaborators who speak different languages.

When AI Use is Unethical

Using AI to generate entire assignments or to replace your own original work is unethical and could be considered academic misconduct. Here are some specific examples of unethical AI use in college assignments:

- Submitting AI-generated essays or papers without disclosing the assistance. This is essentially plagiarism.
- Using AI to complete research assignments without conducting your own research. This could be considered academic dishonesty.
- Using AI to rewrite or paraphrase existing text without proper attribution. This can be considered plagiarism, even if you are not using AI to generate entirely new content.

Demonstrating Your Own Work

It is essential to demonstrate your own contribution to any assignment, even if you have used AI for assistance. This helps ensure that your work is considered authentic and original.

Here are some ways to demonstrate your own work:

- Show your research process: Document your research sources, including any AI tools you used, and explain how you incorporated this information into your writing.
- Include a reflection or analysis section: In this section, you can discuss your understanding of the topic, your critical thinking process, and your own personal insights, demonstrating your independent engagement with the material.
- Provide examples of your own original writing: Include excerpts from your work that you wrote without the assistance of AI.
- Keep research notes and copies of annotated sources if your writing project involves research or use of source material.
- Use the "track changes" feature on your word processing program or keep multiple files of your document where you can track substantial revisions and show the development of your work from the first to final draft.
- If you are in a class that offers any type of scaffolding assignments such as assignments where you submit specific parts of the total text at different points for a grade, peer reviews, conferences with tutors, related in-class work, etc., be sure to complete and submit those assignments so that you can demonstrate your role in creating the final draft.

Disclosing AI Assistance

It is always advisable to disclose any AI assistance you have received for an assignment, even if you believe it was ethical and you've done nothing wrong. This transparency can help prevent misunderstandings and demonstrate your integrity.

Here are some ways to disclose AI assistance:

- **Inform your instructor in advance:** If you plan to use AI for certain tasks, discuss your approach with your instructor beforehand to ensure that it is acceptable.
- **Include a statement in your assignment:** Include a brief statement in your work acknowledging any AI assistance received, providing specific details about the tool used and its role in the assignment.
- **Be prepared to explain your choices:** If your instructor questions your use of AI, be prepared to explain your rationale and demonstrate your understanding of the ethical considerations involved.

Seeking Instructor Guidance

If you are unsure about whether it is ethical to use AI for a specific assignment, the best course of action is to seek guidance from your instructor.

Your instructor can provide you with specific instructions about acceptable AI use, clarify their expectations for the assignment, and help you understand the ethical implications of AI assistance.

Maintaining Academic Integrity

The ultimate goal of using AI tools for college assignments is to enhance learning and improve your skills.

Remember that using AI tools responsibly and ethically is essential for maintaining academic integrity.

By adhering to these guidelines, you can ensure that you are using AI ethically and that your work is considered authentic and original.

Ethical AI Use	Unethical AI Use
Brainstorming ideas	Generating entire assignments
Proofreading and grammar checking	Submitting AI-generated essays
Summarizing text	Using AI to replace your own research
Translating text	Paraphrasing existing text without attribution

Resources for Students

The following resources can provide further guidance and support for students on the ethical use of AI in college writing:

- **Your academic materials:** The DACC Student Handbook states the college's policy on use of generative AI to complete assignments. You should also refer to the Course Outline and the Assignment Guide for the particular class and assignment you are working on. They can offer information on plagiarism, academic misconduct, and the use of AI tools. DACC's policy is that instructors decide what is and is not ethical use within their classes, and it is the student's responsibility to be aware of these policies and abide by them. So, you can expect to encounter a wide variety of expectations during your course of study at DACC.
- **The DACC Writing Center:** Writing centers can provide assistance with writing skills, including effective strategies for using AI tools ethically.
- **Your instructor:** Always feel free to discuss your concerns or questions about AI use with your instructor. Remember, it's better to do this before submitting your work for a grade.