

TEACHING IN A WORLD WITH AI

# **Coalition of Writing Statement on AI Writing**



University Center for  
Assessment, Teaching  
& Technology

# Contents

**1**

ChatGPT

**3**

AI Writing and Teaching

**5**

Academic Integrity

**7**

An Invitation to Conversation

**8**

Selected References

# ChatGPT

The Coalition of Writing Across the Curriculum at UArizona is an interdisciplinary, multi-unit group that supports instructors and students with writing instruction.<sup>1</sup> As we consider the impact of AI in academic settings, there are practical, pedagogical, and ethical concerns. In this document, we clarify various points and provide resources for further support.

The release of ChatGPT has led to worries about plagiarism, cheating, the [death of the college essay](#), and the end of remote exams. Instructors have also experimented with AI-generated lesson plans, rubrics, and multiple-choice items. Tools have always shaped how people write. Typing, word processing, internet searches, spellcheck, citation builders, online writing assistants are but a few of the innovations to influence recent generations. However, given the ease and uncanny fluency with which ChatGPT generates textual responses, it is understandable to be nervous about the impact of AI technology on student writing, learning, and how we teach. As a Coalition, we hope to offer a start to the conversation and address these concerns by inviting us all to educate ourselves further in the following sections.

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<sup>1</sup> This includes the University Center for Assessment, Teaching, and Technology (UCATT), The Office of General Education, Writing Across the Curriculum, Think Tank, C.A.T.S. Academics, The University of Arizona Libraries, The SALT Center, The Writing Skills Improvement Project, The UA Writing Program, UA Global, The UA Graduate Center, CIRTL, and numerous interdisciplinary faculty.

## What is ChatGPT?

ChatGPT is a tool. This “generative pretrained transformer” (GPT) uses a large language model (LLM) algorithm along with massive amounts of digital data and human feedback to recognize and generate text that mimics human language. People can ask questions, give commands, or prompt ChatGPT to write computer code, essays, poetry, tweets, song lyrics, outlines, and other genres. Through successive prompts, people can guide changes to generated text. ChatGPT and similar generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools are used to do tasks such as write paper abstracts and titles, produce marketing copy, summarize information, create snippets of computer code, and imitate human speech.

## How Does One Get Access to ChatGPT?

A public version is available at no cost via the [website of OpenAI](#), the start-up that created it. Registration is required. The [terms of use](#) state that one must be 18 years of age or older. OpenAI’s [privacy policy](#) says that it collects information that could be used to identify users.

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<sup>2</sup> Writing Across the Curriculum is a disciplinary and pedagogical perspective that highlights the role of writing across contexts in student learning. WAC resources help instructors across campus to integrate writing in the curriculum with attention to genre awareness and reflection.

# AI Writing and Teaching

## Will ChatGPT Replace Writing?

Writing is more than a tool for evaluation. As Blummer et al. state, “If writing is assigned purely for evaluative purposes, students will come to see it as a narrow, hoop-jumping task unrelated to learning. Their potential to see writing as a valuable learning tool and a necessary life-long skill will be diminished.” A core principle of Writing Across the Curriculum<sup>2</sup> at the University of Arizona is that writing is a [mode of learning](#). Writing is an essential means of fostering deep learning and developing critical thinking skills. Therefore, aligning assessment practices (such as rubrics, feedback practices, and assignments) with learning outcomes can help contextualize students’ learning in your course and create relevant writing assignments.

## Does ChatGPT Require Changes in Writing Assignments?

Instructors can minimize the negative impact of AI text generation on student writing by using a combination of strategies:

- » Design more process-oriented assignments. For example, ask students to explain or reflect on their own process for writing.
- » Plan for students to submit drafts, receive feedback, and revise. It is important to also ask students to reflect on how they utilized the feedback.
- » Assign projects in which students apply specific personal/professional experiences to the local context or to specific course materials.
- » Guide the process of research, including how to incorporate and cite a wide variety of academic and popular sources.
- » Redesign writing assignments to be visual, multimedia, (recorded) oral, and/or collaborative assignments.

The decade-long [Meaningful Writing Project](#) emphasizes the importance of creating authentic learning experiences for students. It is possible to create meaningful assignments by highlighting context and tailoring topics to student interests. Additionally, for short written work, such as responses to readings, students can describe or self-check their thinking process or connect what they are studying to personal experiences. Teachers should use writing to create, synthesize, evaluate, and transfer rather than restate information. By emphasizing writing as a learning process and breaking it into stages of drafts, peer reviews, reflections, and metacognitive elements, you can encourage students to hone [critical thinking skills](#), develop their ideas, and use writing tools appropriately.

## **What Are Some Potential Problems with ChatGPT?**

Often ChatGPT presents false or incorrect information. It is sometimes nonsensical or weirdly creepy. Because ChatGPT was trained on a huge range of stuff from the internet along with books, it can generate racist, sexist, bigoted, homophobic, and other [biased responses](#). Yet it is usually syntactically correct and credible-sounding. It frequently misinterprets and utilizes texts poorly, which is something to explain to students to guide their growth in data literacy. Several studies and experiences at academic institutions and journals indicate that neither knowledgeable humans nor currently existing [AI-output detectors](#) can always identify ChatGPT-produced content. At present, text similarity detectors, e.g. TurnItIn, cannot identify large language model (LLM) generated text.

## **Can ChatGPT Be a Tool In Our Classrooms?**

ChatGPT and other text-generation tools provide teachers and students with opportunities to explore why writing is important for student development. Instructors can use ChatGPT (or other AI) as a tool. For example, instructors can share their assignment prompts in ChatGPT to refine the directions or see outputs that might be similar to what students see. Students can fact-check or “grade” its responses. As students and instructors learn the capabilities and

limitations of AI tools, they will be able to define more clearly how to use these tools in the context of a particular class or assignment. [See ideas for how to teach with ChatGPT.](#)

If there are circumstances when use of ChatGPT is appropriate, students may need guidance. What is acceptable is likely to vary across disciplines, courses, and instructors. For example, in keeping with a recent policy adopted by the journal Nature (which states that researchers should acknowledge using AI-generated text in the methods, acknowledgments, or similar sections of a paper), a syllabus or assignment instructions might include: “If you use ChatGPT in your research, writing or design process, include a cover sheet that explains 1) what prompts were used and 2) how you verified, analyzed, or changed the AI output.”

# Academic Integrity

## What About Academic Integrity?

ChatGPT offers the opportunity to build a culture of academic integrity and to clarify what is and is not acceptable in AI tool use. If you don't want students to rely on ChatGPT, tell them explicitly and discuss your reasons. If writing is being used to present existing information or for testing purposes, changes in teaching strategies may be warranted. [Drawing or diagramming](#) readings and information, for example, is an effective alternative for learning and a way to make student thinking visible. (Recorded) oral assessment and frequent low-stakes assessments are, too.

## Does the University Need New Policies?

Not at this moment, but we strongly encourage discussions about ChatGPT. The capabilities of AI tools are developing very quickly. Familiarity with the tools, pedagogical experimentation, collegial conversations, and communication with students should drive formulation of new policies as needed. The [UArizona Code of Academic Integrity](#) and statement on [Culture of Honesty for Remote Instruction](#) are flexible; yet there may be a need to specify course or assignment rules. For example, Ethan Mollick, an instructor at Wharton School of Business, writes in his course syllabus: “I expect you to use AI (e.g., ChatGPT and image generation tools) in this class. ...You will need to refine your prompts in order to get good outcomes. This will take work. Don’t trust anything it says. If it gives you a number or fact, assume it is wrong unless you either know the answer or can check with another source.”

## Should We Ban ChatGPT?

Banning ChatGPT use at a university is difficult to enforce and is unlikely to stop cheating. Further, a ban may penalize students who have communication disabilities, struggle with writing, or use grammatical, vocabulary, or tutoring tools for support. A ban will disproportionately increase stress and impede productive student-instructor interactions with some learners. Decades of research indicate that most students behave honestly when they believe that a learning environment is equitable, that the work is relevant to their success, and that they are empowered to act with integrity. We should thus help students to know why they are writing, how to study, and what to do when writing is difficult.

All things considered, students are better prepared for their futures by expanding their literacy through practice and recurring conversations about how these tools are (and are not) useful.

# An Invitation to Conversation

We are eager to hear from you as we continue facilitating conversations and figuring out ways to support our campus community in understanding, utilizing, and navigating AI writing tools. We are in the process of creating the following opportunities to collaborate:

- » [Open Conversation About AI writing tools, such as ChatGPT – March 23rd, 2023](#)
- » Panel on Teaching with AI – *coming soon*
- » Robust Resource Hub – *coming soon*

Additionally, we are happy to consult/communicate with you at any time.

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