DEVELOPING GUIDELINES FOR GRADUATE STUDENT USE OF GENERATIVE AI TOOLS – A GUIDE FOR GRADUATE PROGRAMS

Generative AI (GenAI) tools have rapidly propagated within the last several years, opening new opportunities in scholarly work, while also raising questions about the impact of these technologies on scholarship and student learning.

The availability and power of GenAI tools may also challenge long-standing assumptions about what it means to learn and conduct scholarship within and across academic disciplines. When GenAI tools can replicate (at least at a basic level) scholarly capabilities such as data generation and analysis, literature review and synthesis, and academic writing how might this change what we want and expect graduate students to learn and produce themselves?

The transformational impact of these technologies compels graduate programs to reflect on their academic cultures and learning objectives, and to thoughtfully design appropriate parameters for the use of GenAI in graduate student scholarship within their contexts. GenAI will have differing impacts across graduate programs, and context-specific approaches are necessary.

Graduate programs are encouraged to undertake a deliberate process to build a shared culture and understanding across their students, faculty, and staff regarding potential uses of GenAI in scholarship, and to align such uses with the learning objectives of the programs and the aspirations of graduate students themselves.

The outcomes of a self-review process will vary from program to program, but may include:

> Program/discipline-specific **statement of principles** about the use of GenAI in graduate student scholarship.

> Program/discipline-specific **policies and parameters about acceptable use** of GenAI within specific program components. While individual faculty members and instructors may set parameters for the student work that they are responsible for evaluating, a standardized approach to program-wide requirements such as comprehensive exams may be advisable to promote clarity and equity for students.

> Identifying or developing **learning opportunities for graduate students** to build literacy and capacity for innovative, appropriate, ethical uses of GenAI.

> Processes for establishing **agreements and navigating conflicts between graduate students and instructors/supervisors** about the use of GenAI in graduate student scholarship

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

1. Establish a graduate program-specific Generative AI usage committee. This committee should include a broad and diverse range of perspectives from faculty, students and staff.

2. Build your foundation for the discussions. Before diving directly into questions about how to address GenAI in your graduate program, start with some foundational learning and reflection.

> **Develop a baseline understanding of what GenAI is and what it can do.** There are several helpful resources on the main UBC GenAI website and within various disciplinary and professional associations

> **Review UBC's policies on academic and scholarly integrity**, as these form the overarching parameters on allowable use and citation of material that is not created entirely by students themselves.

> **Reflect on the values of your discipline and learning outcomes of your graduate program:**

  - What are the scholarly and/or professional values within our discipline? What values do we want our graduate students to hold as they become scholars and/or advanced-practice professionals in our field?

  - What are the learning objectives within our graduate program(s)?

  - What capabilities do we believe students should have upon graduation from our program? What capabilities are students saying they want to develop?

3. Reflect on how graduate student use of Generative AI may interact with the values, objectives and desired capabilities of your graduate program, your students, and the broader discipline.

> How would the use of GenAI potentially facilitate or hinder attaining learning objectives or developing desired capabilities within our graduate program(s)?

> How might GenAI change the needs and practices of our field?

> Based on the above, how might we need to change learning objectives, values, and desired capabilities to keep in line with the evolving expectations of our field?

> What changes should we want to make to how student learning and scholarship are demonstrated and assessed, given that many uses of GenAI are undetectable?

> How should ethical concerns such as perpetuating bias, data/IP ownership, environmental impact, or any other emergent ethical concerns figure into the decision to use GenAI?

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS (CONT.)

4. Consider policies that may need to be established or changed. Beyond those indicated in broader academic/scholarly integrity policies, are there any specific parameters or encouragements that we wish to implement, around allowable uses of GenAI in graduate student work? Consider in particular:

- Admissions applications
- Course assignments
- Major projects
- Scholarship, award or grant applications
- Comprehensive exams
- Research proposals
- Theses/dissertations
- Oral defences
- Mentorship Publications
- Grant proposals
- Future faculty/professional practice
- Working with collaborators
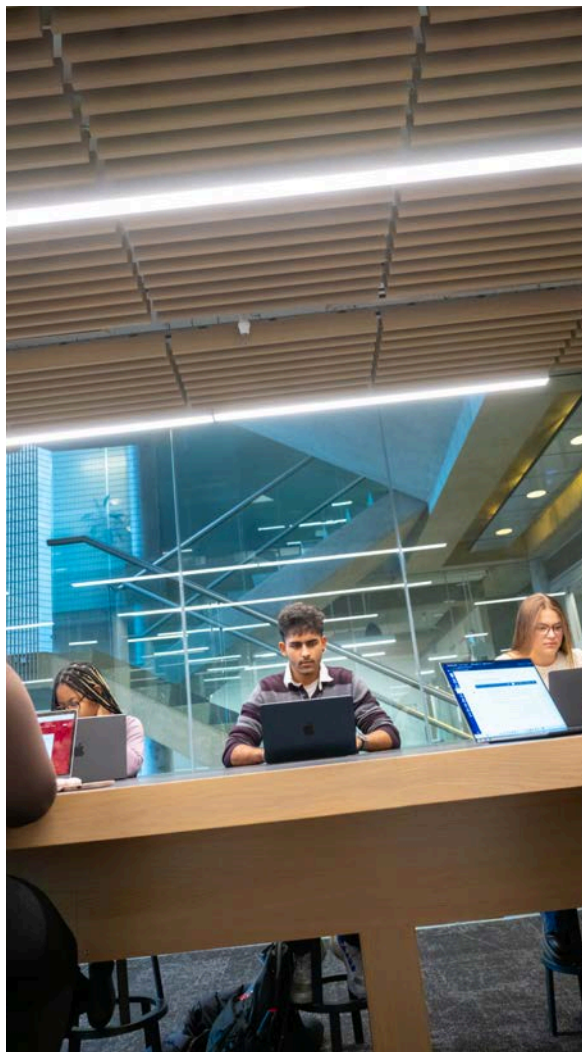
> How rigid should these boundaries be? Are they starting points for discussions around grad student work? Are they non-negotiable?

> How would these new boundaries be monitored and enforced?

5. Identify and implement changes. Draft suggested guidelines/policies and undertake appropriate consultation and approval within your program, department, and/or Faculty. Students should be strongly involved in this process.

> Consult with the Academic Integrity Hub and Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies to ensure your program-level guidelines/policies are aligned with other related policies.

> Establish a clear mechanism and statement for how your GenAI guidelines/policies will be monitored, and how any disputes about use will be addressed.

> Communicate changes to students, faculty and staff. Ensure your information resources (e.g., program handbook, website, orientation sessions, expectations documents, etc.) are updated to include your approach to use of GenAI.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS (CONT.)

6. Foster cultural practices and educational resources that address and build literacy in GenAI. Open and curious dialogue about uses, opportunities and challenges of GenAI can build a culture of ethical and productive engagement with these technologies.

> Develop and promote opportunities for students and faculty to explore the practical and ethical issues of Gen AI in the context of your field. Consider embedding the topic in courses and providing workshops/talks. Do external actors in your field (associations, publishers, employers, etc.) offer useful learning opportunities? Resources: genai.ubc.ca/home-page/tools-and-training

> Encourage faculty and students to use discussion prompts to navigate decisions about potential use of GenAI in the context of department GenAI guidelines, disciplinary expectations and professional expectations for a practitioner in the field.

> Enable students and faculty that are using GenAI to share their experience and insights within your program. Consider an annual symposium on the topic.

> Consider what support will be given to TAs to ensure they can address the GenAI policy and implications in their instruction/marking. See: ai.ctlt.ubc.ca for resources.

grad.ubc.ca/GenAI

7. Monitor use of GenAI and solicit feedback, using this information to keep your approach up to date. As GenAI technologies and their uses in scholarly work evolve, your guidelines may need to change.

> Consider mechanisms for tracking uses of GenAI in graduate student scholarship. Indicators such as GenAI citations or statements of use within comprehensive exams and theses may help quantify and characterize its evolving use.

> Gather input from students about their use of GenAI in research, coursework, and milestones. Focus groups or a survey can inform ongoing revisions to your educational and policy approaches.

> Establish a regular process (perhaps yearly) for reviewing and updating your program guidelines/policies.

8. Share your experience with other programs and departments! While not every graduate program will have the exact same considerations, there will be much overlap. Exchanging the lessons you learn with other units will help build broader institutional understanding and capacity.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Planning an Assessment Task that Promotes Creativity and Academic Integrity Model
Peters, Angelov, January 2024

Assessment Design using Generative AI