Boulder Faculty Assembly, Academic Technologies Committee
Recommended Guidelines on Ethical and Responsible Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) as an Academic Technology, *version 1.0, 3/27/26*

AI Disclosure (not intended as an endorsement of AI use): In order to facilitate creation of these guidelines in a short time-frame, Microsoft CoPilot 4.2 was initially used to synthesize existing University of Colorado documents (list at end) into a draft form of section 1: Guiding Principles, and also to suggest more 'student-facing' language in section 2.1 Students. This content was then reviewed, edited, and verified for accuracy by the ATC. The final version of this document involved substantial human editing and revision, and incorporated input from over 40 campus members with various expertise and varied perspectives on AI, including faculty, students and members of the CTL, ASSETT, OIT and topics raised by OIT-facilitated AI focus groups. An accompanying **FAQ** was also developed to expand on some topics.*

This document is designed to provide an initial set of guidance on ethical and responsible use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) as an **academic technology** at CU Boulder based on existing CU policies* and in alignment with the campus's academic mission and values. AI use at CU Boulder must adhere to responsible and ethical principles, including privacy and data protection; security and safety; integrity, transparency, accuracy, and accountability; fairness, access and inclusivity; and a sustainable, human-centered approach. These guidelines apply to both university-provided and third-party tools.

Because AI is changing quickly, its impact on data security and academic work continues to evolve and these guidelines should be regularly reviewed and updated. Campus users are expected to stay aware of the policies and their responsibilities. If unsure whether AI use is appropriate or safe, ask for guidance at security@colorado.edu.

Definitions as they pertain to this document

- **Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI):** computer systems capable of performing tasks typically requiring human intelligence, such as reasoning, learning, problem-solving, and perception, including generating text and images.
- **AI Disclosure:** clear statement describing when and how AI contributed to one's work (e.g., brainstorming, summarizing, generating first drafts of documents).
- **Deepfake**: form of audio-visual content generated or manipulated using AI that misrepresents something or someone, including a person's voice, face, body, etc.
- **Private AI Model/Tool:** keeps data used as an input within the organization or institution utilizing those models.
- **Public AI Model/Tool:** uses data input by users to help train the model, unlike private AI models/tools. These lack CU's required data privacy controls and contractual protections.

1. Guiding Principles for Students and Faculty

Below are general principles to guide ethical and responsible use of AI as an academic technology.

1.1 Privacy and Data Protection

- Protect personal and university information. Don't put personal, sensitive, or confidential materials into **public** AI tools.
    - To decide what data can be put into a **public** AI tool, consider: if the data is not appropriate for a webpage accessible to the public (e.g., the data is private, sensitive, or protected, including information posted to restricted social media or subject to FERPA regulations), then it should NOT be entered into a public AI tool.
    - Also, don't upload another person's writing, code, project, publications, or other work into a **public** AI tool without their knowledge and consent.
- Follow CU's data-classification and *data-governance policies*+ (see list at end).

    - Use CU Boulder-approved AI tools to protect personally identifiable and university information. (Access requires logging in with university credentials.) These tools are vetted to meet campus security and accessibility criteria and have gone through CU's review process.
        - For campus users with needs to utilize specialized AI tools for research or work, there is a campus review process to receive conditional approval.
    - Currently **only** Microsoft Copilot 365 or CoPilot Chat - when logged in using CU credentials - are approved for use with **confidential data** (but NOT *highly confidential data*). These operate within CU's protected environment and meet campus security compliance standards for public and confidential data, meaning data that's entered stays protected under CU's enterprise agreement.
        - Unless individual approval has been received, only public data should be used with **all other AI tools**.
- Watch out for AI-enabled scams, fake messages, impersonation, and deepfakes. Err on the side of caution and report concerns to security@colorado.edu. For information on how to remain vigilant for these scams, see FAQ.
- Be careful with AI-powered browser add-ons (including AI notetakers for meetings); check what data they can access and only use trustworthy tools.
    - These add-ons may access your web activity, including keystrokes and sensitive data, resulting in threats including data harvesting, stealing AI chat history, and malicious updates to previously trustworthy extensions.
        - For information on how to remain vigilant for these scams, see FAQ.

1.2 Integrity, Transparency, Accuracy, and Accountability

- Follow CU's academic integrity policies and any rules your instructor or program sets.
- Always disclose when and how you used AI in all of your academic work. Failure to disclose may be considered academic, scientific, or scholarly misconduct, or a violation of others' Intellectual Property (IP) rights. See FAQ for more information.
- Carefully review and verify the accuracy of AI-generated content prior to relying on such information. You are responsible for the accuracy and appropriateness of any AI-generated content you rely on or use.
    - AI tools (LLMs) are designed to be agreeable and cooperative, and align with your previous searches and preferences, which means they may go along with assumptions in your prompt, even when those assumptions are wrong or biased.
    - Check facts, citations, and interpretations. AI can get things wrong, include biased or misleading information, plagiarize work, or reproduce copyrighted content.
        - Track down sources when citing research; don't rely on AI-generated citations. Never cite a source you have not read yourself.
- Ensure any AI-assisted decisions can be explained and are overseen by a human being.

1.3 Human-First Approach

- Use AI to support - not replace - your own thinking, experience, creativity, and judgment.
- Keep humans in the loop for all important decisions.
- Be cautious about how your judgment might be biased by AI outputs.
    - Be aware AI (LLMs) are trained to respond affirmatively to a user and AI assumes what is requested is relevant, necessary, and should be reinforced.
    - AI may amplify personal traits (e.g., detail-oriented, conflict-avoidant, perfectionist) and disguise them to look like best practices See FAQ for more information..
- Prioritize learning, critical thinking, and faculty expertise over convenience.

1.4 Fairness, Access, and Inclusivity

- Use AI in ways that are fair and accessible to everyone.
- Don't use AI in situations in which you're expected to complete work yourself or to get around course requirements.
- Check AI outputs for bias, stereotypes, or inequities. These tools are consistently shown to produce outputs that encode gender, racial, dialectal, and other biases.
    - AI reflects patterns in the data it was trained on, which can include biased or harmful assumptions.
    - Prompts that include biased language will produce biased results. Be thoughtful about how you frame your prompts.
    - Dialectical prompt structures (e.g., African American English) can also introduce covert bias.

1.5 Ethical and Responsible Use

- Use AI in ways that support CU's academic mission, including use of approved tools, and contribute positively to society.
- Do not use AI deceptively, including to create deepfakes (i.e., intentional misrepresentation of someone or something).
- Do not rely on AI to the detriment of your own learning, emotional intelligence, and mental health. Pay attention to how it is impacting you.

1.6 Code of Conduct

- Use AI in ways that uphold CU's ethical, professional, and legal standards.
- Don't use AI in ways that violate anti-discrimination laws or CU's policies.
- Follow privacy, security, and intellectual property laws when using AI tools.

1.7 Sustainability

- Learn about and consider environmental impact of AI tools; choose lower-impact options (e.g., regular Google search) when possible; be strategic and targeted in use of AI tools. (See FAQ for some additional information.)
    - AI-powered tasks consume considerable energy and frequent use contributes to the need for more data centers, which have high energy and water consumption.

2. Further Expectations by Role - Students, Faculty, and Researchers

AI use at CU Boulder must follow all CU Boulder and CU system policies, standards, and guidelines including data protection, academic integrity, accessibility, and responsible use. Make sure your AI use fits these expectations and the specific rules for your courses. Below are further expectations by role to promote best practices for AI use as an academic technology.

2.1 Students

- **Use AI to support your learning, not to complete assignments for you**. AI should be used as a supportive tool, but should never replace the thinking, studying, writing, or skill-building your course requires. Relying on AI to do the thinking or work for you will lead to less learning making you not only less prepared for exams, but also future classes, internships and jobs.
- **Check what's allowed in each class.** Every instructor sets their own rules for acceptable and unacceptable AI use. Make sure you understand those expectations and follow them.
    - If your instructor does not communicate their AI use expectations or you are uncertain, ask. (Click this link for some clarifying questions you can ask.)

- **Unapproved AI use counts as academic misconduct.** Using AI in ways your instructor hasn't permitted violates the Honor Code. (See AI and the Honor Code.)
- **Always double-check AI output**. AI tools can produce incorrect information, including fabricated citations or data.
- **Don't use AI to complete work you're expected to do yourself or to get around course requirements**. (See FAQ for some additional information.)
- **Agree on AI use for groupwork.** Develop and adhere to an agreement (following campus standards) as to how AI may, or may not, be used by group members.

2.2 Faculty and Instructors

- **Faculty responsibility for setting AI expectations**. Instructors have complete discretion in establishing acceptable use of AI in their courses, as long as that use complies with existing university policies. (See FAQ for some best practices.)
- **Designing course-aligned AI policies**. Instructors should include clear AI-use policies in syllabi and communicate them frequently to their students.
    - Align AI use policy with the pedagogical goals of your course.
    - Explain acceptable and unacceptable AI uses in a course at a **task-specific level** (e.g., proofing, drafting, brainstorming, summarizing, coding, data visualization).
        - Some recommended language for syllabus statements.
        - Some examples of questions to consider when creating a policy.
        - If you require AI use in your course, consider providing alternatives for students who do not want to use AI (e.g., for ethical reasons).
            - If it is not possible to provide an alternative, be clear in the course description that students will be required to use AI in the course.
    - Provide rationale for why AI is allowed or restricted, such as its impact on learning, assessment integrity, or sustainability. Explanation helps students understand the pedagogical intent behind the policy. (For example: how AI would undermine the learning objectives, or what you hope students will learn by using AI.)
- **Communicating expectations and disclosure requirements**.
    - Syllabi should specify any required forms of disclosure or citation for AI use, along with examples of appropriate acknowledgments.
        - Some examples of how to acknowledge or disclose AI use.
    - Instructors are encouraged to discuss concerns about potential misuse with students to understand their process before initiating an Honor Code case.
- **Data governance, transparency, and responsible use**. Faculty must follow university data-governance requirements[+] (list at end) when using AI tools with instructional materials or student data.
    - Human oversight should remain central. AI should support, not replace, the instructor's role in teaching, course-material creation, feedback, and evaluation.
    - Model good behavior. Disclose AI use in grading, feedback, or course-material creation including assignments so students understand how these tools are being integrated.
- **Use of AI-detection tools**. CU Boulder does not currently support any AI-detection tools due to concerns about accuracy and privacy. AI detectors are neither accurate nor reliable, producing a high number of false positives and false negatives. These tools should be used with caution and not as the sole basis for determining whether AI was used. If you choose to use an AI-detection tool, this should also be disclosed to students to maintain trust, ensure transparency, and uphold academic fairness.

2.3 Researchers

- **Maintain Transparency.** Disclose when AI tools have contributed substantive ideas or analysis to research, specifying at a minimum: name of tool(s), purpose and nature of use. Core scholarly and research contributions – including, but not limited to, conceptualizing research questions and projects, interpreting data, and drawing conclusions – are expected to remain under the full direction and responsibility of the research team.
    - This is discipline-specific, but can include recording the specific tools, prompts, and model versions used in any stage of the research process—particularly when AI assists with data analysis, literature synthesis, coding, or drafting.
    - Check publisher and sponsor policies to ensure compliance with relevant policies; many require documentation of AI use and how it was used in proposals, peer review, research, and many do not allow AI as a co-author, etc.
- **Safeguard against false results.** Review and verify AI-generated information.
    - AI-generated citations, insights, summaries, classifications, or analyses should be validated against primary sources. Summaries of interviews, transcriptions, translations or qualitative data produced by AI should be checked against original transcripts.
- **Research Misconduct.** Federal policy recognizes three primary forms of research misconduct: plagiarism, fabrication, and falsification.
    - AI should never be used to fabricate data, citations, or results for fraudulent or unethical purposes.
    - Undisclosed AI use in writing, including first drafts, constitutes plagiarism.
- **Compliance with Research Policies and Data Governance**. All AI use in research must comply with IRB protocols, data-use agreements, sponsor requirements, and CU Boulder data-governance standards ([+]see list below).
    - AI tools may not be used to process identifiable and private, or sensitive data unless explicitly approved by the IRB and OIT. For regulated, proprietary, or human-subject data, only OIT-approved tools may be used.
- **Human Oversight.** AI should support, not replace, the researcher's judgment. Human oversight must be maintained throughout the research process.
- **Ensuring Reproducibility**. When relevant to the integrity or reproducibility of the work, AI-assisted steps should be documented with enough detail another researcher can understand and reproduce them, including noting model versions (e.g., GPT-4.1, or GPT-4.1-2025-04-14, as appropriate) and using version-control practices.
- **Intellectual Property**. CU Boulder Venture Partners facilitates the protection and commercialization of AI-related discoveries made by faculty, students, and staff.

2.4 Administrators and Leadership

- **Involve and utilize campus governance groups**. Include relevant stakeholders in discussions and decisions relating to AI tools.
- **Be transparent**. Clearly communicate how and when AI is used
- **Maintain a human-first approach**.
    - Exercise human oversight and avoid overreliance on AI-generated outputs.
        - Monitor for AI amplification of personal traits (e.g., detail-oriented, conflict-avoidant, perfectionist) disguised as best practices, especially in creating campus documents (e.g., policies). (See FAQ for more information.)
        - AI should support, not replace, human judgment particularly in high-impact decisions, including hiring, reappointment, tenure, promotion, or termination.

    - Provide the ability to opt out of AI-based tools if campus members object to the technology (e.g., ethical or pedagogical reasons).
    - Do not increase workloads so campus members cannot do their jobs without using AI tools.
    - Do not use AI tools as a cost cutting measure to replace faculty (of any rank), staff, and graduate or undergraduate student labor.
    - Critically assess for bias in AI-generated outputs. Consider how results might impact vulnerable populations or reinforce existing inequities.
- **Support AI literacy.**
    - Provide training for all campus members (staff, faculty, and students) to understand the implications of AI use and its ethical and responsible use so they can make informed choices.
    - Provide guidance in choosing lower-impact options, including how to not run AI-powered searches
    - Provide ongoing professional development opportunities.
- **Protect our campus.**
    - Protect intellectual property, including instructional materials.
    - Protect privacy of all campus members.
    - Consider how AI tools impact the campus's Climate Action Plan, and how impact can be mitigated.

**Resources drawn from:*

- *AI at CU Boulder*
- *AI Guidance at CU Boulder*
- *APS 6012 draft*
- *Artificial Intelligence (AI) Data Security Guidelines - CU Boulder Guidelines*
- *CU AI Guiding Principles*
- *Ethical Considerations of Generative AI*
- *Teaching, Learning, & AI*
- *Technology & AI*
- *UIS Guidance for Artificial Intelligence Tools Use*

***+Data governance list**:*

- *Data classification*
- *Data governance policy*
- *Data governance website*

Other related Universitywide and System Administration policies:

- *Artificial Intelligence (AI) Tool Review and Approval*
- ChatGPT at CU Boulder - FAQ
- *Collection of personal data from students and customers*
- *Explore Sources on Using Artificial Intelligence at CU*
- *FAQ for GenAI and Copilot at CU*
- *Information security program policy*
- *IT procurement processes*
- *Principles of Ethical Behavior*
- *Privacy policy*
- *Use of IT Resources policy*