Institutional Policies on AI Writing Tools

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1 Introduction/Background

The rapid advancement of artificial intelligence writing tools has significantly disrupted traditional academic environments, raising fundamental questions about academic integrity, originality, and the nature of intellectual work. In recent months, there has been growing concern about text generative AI tools such as ChatGPT, Bing, and Microsoft's Co-Pilot integrated within the Office suite [11]. These concerns are well-founded; surveys indicate that nearly one-third of college students in the US have used AI chatbots like ChatGPT to complete written assignments, with 60% using the program for more than half of their assignments [11].

The integration of AI tools into academic writing presents a dual-edged scenario. On one hand, these technologies offer significant potential to enhance the quality, efficiency, and productivity of research and academic writing processes [30]. AI can accelerate research similar to the contributions of digital humanities and computational linguistics, while also potentially bridging digital divides and socio-economic disparities [13] [18]. On the other hand, these technologies present substantial challenges to traditional concepts of academic integrity [13].

The academic response to these challenges has been varied and evolving. Some institutions have taken a restrictive approach—eight universities in the UK's prestigious Russell Group, including Oxford and Cambridge, have declared the use of AI bots for assignments as academic misconduct [11]. Many universities globally are currently reviewing their plagiarism policies, citing concerns about maintaining academic integrity in the age of easily accessible AI writing tools [11]. Current academic policies are often inadequate in addressing the ethical implications of AI-generated content, particularly regarding the need to clearly distinguish between human and AI contributions [13]. This has created an urgent need for updated academic policies that address these issues and ensure the ethical use of AI in academic writing [13] [18].

The emergence of generative AI tools like ChatGPT has created significant concerns in academic settings about academic integrity and plagiarism, prompting universities to reassess their policies. AI writing tools offer both

opportunities and challenges in academic environments, requiring institutions to develop new frameworks for ethical use.

2 Current State of Institutional Policy Development

The institutional response to AI writing tools has evolved significantly since the launch of ChatGPT, revealing a landscape of uncertainty and experimentation. Despite the widespread use of these technologies, only a small percentage of higher education institutions have developed formal policies governing their use [23]. Recent data shows that approximately 97% of institutions have not implemented any formal policy on student use of AI tools, even as 51% of students indicate they would continue using generative AI tools regardless of institutional prohibitions [24].

The trajectory of institutional approaches has shifted notably over time. In early 2023, many colleges and school districts initially reacted with skepticism, with some implementing outright bans on tools like ChatGPT due to concerns about plagiarism and the potential erosion of fundamental writing skills [17] [37]. However, as understanding of these technologies has deepened, many institutions have moved toward more nuanced approaches. Several hastily implemented bans in U.S. schools have been repealed as awareness of AI capabilities and use cases has increased [26].

Analysis of policy approaches among top universities reveals considerable diversity in institutional responses. Research examining the top 100 universities found that U.S. institutions tend to adopt an "open but cautious stance" toward ChatGPT, often encouraging instructors to manage its use according to their specific teaching contexts [35]. This diversity reflects the ongoing uncertainty and complexity involved in integrating AI tools into higher education environments.

Educational regulatory bodies have begun to establish frameworks to guide institutional policy development. For example, Australia's Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) convened expert panels to produce guidance on "assessment reform in the age of artificial intelligence," outlining broad changes that higher education institutions will be expected to implement [12].

Faculty perspectives on appropriate AI use also vary widely. Surveys indicate that most instructors permit the use of generative AI writing tools for specific purposes such as brainstorming ideas, editing writing, and outlining assignment structures, while opposing their use for writing partial or complete assignments [24]. This suggests a growing recognition that categorical bans may be less effective than policies that distinguish between appropriate and inappropriate applications of AI writing tools.

Despite widespread AI adoption, institutional policy development remains uneven, with many higher education institutions still lacking formal policies for AI writing tools. Universities have shifted from initial bans toward more nuanced approaches that balance academic integrity concerns with recognition of AI's potential educational benefits.

3 Types of Institutional Policies

Institutional responses to AI writing tools have crystallized into several distinct policy approaches. Some universities have implemented restrictive policies that limit or prohibit the use of AI writing tools. For example, Middlebury College has banned the classroom use of ChatGPT based on concerns that it could impede critical thinking and writing skill development [3]. Similarly, prestigious institutions including the University of Hong Kong, National University of Singapore, Stanford University, Princeton University, and the University of Tokyo have issued statements restricting or prohibiting students from using AI tools for essay writing [39] [38].

Other institutions have adopted more permissive policies that acknowledge the inevitability of AI integration into academic environments. The University of California has issued guidance that acknowledges the prevalence of generative AI on campuses rather than attempting to prohibit its use [3]. Similarly, Stanford University has updated its policies around AI tool usage and academic integrity, suggesting a more nuanced approach than outright prohibition [3].

A third emerging category of institutional policies focuses on the targeted integration of AI tools for accessibility and accommodation purposes. Many universities are formally integrating AI tools like ChatGPT into disability accommodations through officially documented policies and informal programs. These initiatives aim to address writing difficulties, reading comprehension challenges, note-taking issues, and organizational constraints faced by students with disabilities, aligning with legal mandates such as the Americans with Disabilities Act [31].

Education experts have cautioned against "one-size-fits-all" approaches, suggesting that rather than implementing blanket bans, institutions should adjust course assessment indicators to prevent improper use while allowing for beneficial applications [39]. This perspective emphasizes the importance of balancing AI writing tool use by creating diverse writing assignments that involve both AI assistance and more traditional approaches [2].

Faculty concerns remain significant in shaping these policies, with persistent questions about academic integrity, data protection, AI reliability, and potential overreliance on technology [31]. In response, institutions are developing guidelines that aim to preserve learning outcomes while ensuring fairness, representing a cautious yet expanding trend toward institutional acceptance of AI tools within appropriate boundaries.

Institutional policies on AI writing tools range from outright bans to conditional acceptance with specific guidelines. Universities are increasingly moving away from blanket prohibitions toward more nuanced approaches that balance academic integrity concerns with recognition of AI's potential benefits for learning and accessibility.

4 Academic Publishers' Policies

The academic publishing industry has responded to the emergence of AI writing tools with various policy frameworks aimed at preserving scientific integrity while acknowledging technological advancement. Major scientific publishers have taken definitive stances on the use of generative AI in manuscript preparation. In January 2023, Science journals implemented one of the most restrictive policies, declaring that "text generated from AI, machine learning, or similar algorithmic tools cannot be used in papers published in Science journals" without explicit editorial permission, and that AI programs cannot be authors [28]. This approach stands in contrast to Nature's more permissive policy, introduced around the same time, which allows AI use but requires documentation in methods or acknowledgments sections [28].

A cross-sectional audit of scientific, technical, and medical (STM) publishers revealed that only 34.4% of publishers had established publicly available policies on generative AI use as of early 2024 [8]. Among those with policies, there is unanimous agreement that AI tools cannot receive authorship credit, with 87.5% requiring specific disclosure of AI tool usage [8]. Only a small minority of publishers (four out of the 56 with policies) implemented complete bans on AI use by authors [8].

The Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE), whose membership exceeds 14,000 entities including journals, publishers, and research institutions, has published position statements mirroring the principles established by Nature, further solidifying the consensus against AI authorship while allowing for transparent use [28]. Despite variations in specific requirements, publishers generally agree on the necessity for transparency and that authors must retain responsibility for content integrity [5].

Professional organizations like the Association for Computing Machinery (ACM) have developed their own guidelines permitting AI assistance in manuscript preparation, including generating text, images, tables, and code [6]. However, these policies generally do not yet address the potential for AI to conduct research and autonomously generate entire manuscripts, suggesting that publishers will need to continually revise their approaches as AI capabilities evolve [6].

The academic community faces concerns about potential stigmatization of AI-assisted manuscripts, even when AI is used only for enhancing grammar and clarity. This uncertainty may lead some authors to omit disclosure of AI use, contrary to established best practices [5]. As AI technologies continue to advance, there are increasing calls for academic publishers to collaborate with

AI experts and other stakeholders to develop more comprehensive policies that maintain scientific integrity while acknowledging AI's growing role in research [36] [6].

> Academic publishers have established varied policies regarding the use of AI writing tools in scientific manuscripts, with consensus that AI cannot be credited as an author. Most publishers require disclosure of AI use, while approaches range from complete prohibition to conditional acceptance with proper attribution.

5 Recommended Policy Elements

1. *Clear Disclosure Requirements*: Policies should require explicit disclosure when AI tools are used in academic work, including detailed information about which tools were employed and how they contributed to the final product [33] [9] [29].

2. *Proper Attribution Standards*: Guidelines should establish protocols for properly attributing AI-generated content, similar to citation practices for human-authored works, following established citation formats [33] [9].

3. *Transparency Requirements*: Policies should encourage transparency about the limitations of AI tools, including potential biases or inaccuracies in generated content [33] [10].

4. *Quality Control Measures*: Guidelines should establish requirements for quality control, including proofreading and fact-checking AI-generated content to ensure accuracy and reliability [33].

5. *Copyright Compliance*: Policies must address compliance with copyright laws, ensuring that AI-generated content respects intellectual property rights [33].

6. *Redefined Plagiarism Framework*: Institutions should update plagiarism policies to account for AI assistance, differentiating between legitimate collaboration with AI tools and deliberate academic dishonesty [19].

7. *Boundaries for Acceptable Use*: Policies should clearly define acceptable and unacceptable applications of AI tools, such as permitting language refinement while prohibiting the wholesale generation of original arguments or experimental interpretations [29] [14].

8. *Preservation of Authorship Rights*: Guidelines should emphasize the preservation of genuine authorship and intellectual contribution, ensuring AI remains a tool rather than the primary creator [25].

9. *Critical Evaluation Standards*: Policies should require critical evaluation of AI-generated content, encouraging students to verify information through primary sources [9] [25].

10. *Consequences for Policy Violations*: Guidelines should establish clear consequences for failing to comply with ethical AI usage policies, such as requiring revisions or assigning failing grades for undisclosed AI use [14].

11. *Regular Policy Updates*: Institutional policies should be regularly reviewed and updated to reflect advancements in AI technology and evolving best practices [15].

12. *Constructivist Learning Alignment*: Ethical guidelines should be grounded in constructivist learning frameworks to ensure AI use aligns with educational values and promotes authentic learning [29] [32].

Effective institutional policies for AI writing tools should include clear disclosure requirements, ethical usage guidelines, and academic integrity standards. Key elements include proper attribution of AI-generated content, transparency about tool usage, established boundaries between acceptable and unacceptable uses, and specific guidelines for students and faculty.

6 Ethical Considerations in Policy Development

The development of institutional policies for AI writing tools requires careful consideration of numerous ethical dimensions that extend beyond traditional academic integrity concerns. Data privacy represents a significant ethical consideration, as institutions must develop comprehensive frameworks that protect user information when students and faculty engage with AI writing tools [22]. Privacy concerns are particularly relevant given that many AI writing tools collect and potentially retain user inputs, creating an information security challenge that institutions must address through their policies.

Equity and accessibility present another crucial ethical dimension. There are growing concerns about potential imbalances in AI accessibility between high and low-income institutions if premium AI writing tools become increasingly commercialized [27]. Institutional policies must therefore consider how to ensure fair access to AI technologies across diverse student populations, preventing the creation of new digital divides based on economic status or institutional resources.

The ethical use of AI in academic writing requires a fundamental reconsideration of plagiarism frameworks. Traditional approaches to plagiarism, which focused primarily on direct citation and paraphrasing, are increasingly insufficient in an environment where AI-generated content is seamlessly integrated into student work [18]. This necessitates new guidelines that acknowledge AI's role while preserving academic values and distinguishing between appropriate collaboration with AI tools and academic dishonesty.

Transparency requirements represent another critical ethical consideration in policy development. Organizations need to create clear policies for employees and students regarding appropriate use of generative AI in writing and establish consistent citation practices [34]. These transparency policies must address confusion about how to properly acknowledge AI contributions in academic work, providing clear guidance on when and how AI use should be disclosed.

Current disclosure policies from publishers and professional organizations often follow a one-size-fits-all approach requiring acknowledgment of any AI in-

volvement, but they frequently lack nuanced guidelines on how to distinguish between different types of AI contributions [16]. More sophisticated frameworks are needed to recognize the varying degrees of AI involvement in academic writing, from minor editing assistance to more substantial content generation.

The absence of established regulatory bodies and uniform guidelines for AI use in academic writing further complicates ethical policy development [1] [4]. Institutions must navigate this regulatory gap while addressing specific ethical concerns regarding the extent to which researchers can utilize AI sources, whether AI can be credited as a co-author, copyright and fair use considerations, and revised definitions of plagiarism [1]. The complexity of these ethical considerations underscores the need for multifaceted approaches to policy development that balance innovation with academic integrity.

Policy development for AI writing tools must address ethical concerns including data privacy, accessibility equity, plagiarism definitions, and transparency requirements. Institutions face complex challenges balancing academic integrity with the potential benefits of AI while ensuring equitable access and proper disclosure protocols.

7 Implementation Challenges and Solutions

Implementing institutional policies for AI writing tools presents numerous practical challenges that extend beyond simply drafting guidelines. One significant challenge involves the documentation of AI assistance in academic work. As Zhuang et al. note, documenting AI use for transparency and reproducibility purposes is "more challenging than it sounds," with journal policies often "unclear or inconsistent" and complete documentation potentially "cumbersome if not practical" [40]. This highlights the difficulty institutions face in establishing workable documentation requirements that maintain academic integrity without creating undue burdens.

The rapid evolution of AI technologies further complicates implementation efforts, requiring institutions to continually update their approaches to remain relevant. Effective implementation requires using "updated version of the applications and adjust the use of AI based on recent updates and developments" [21]. This suggests that static policies may quickly become outdated in the fast-moving AI landscape, necessitating regular review mechanisms.

Monitoring compliance presents another substantial implementation challenge. In response, institutions are increasingly recognizing the need to "implement regular monitoring mechanisms to track the use of AI tools and ensure compliance with ethical guidelines," which may involve "periodic reviews of student work, assessments, and the effectiveness of the AI tools in promoting academic integrity" [21]. These monitoring approaches must balance thoroughness with practicality to avoid creating overly burdensome oversight systems.

Some institutions and organizations have taken more restrictive approaches to implementation challenges. For example, "The US National Institutes of

Health has issued guidance barring reviewers from using AI tech for assessments" [7] [20]. This categorical prohibition represents one implementation strategy that avoids the complexities of nuanced policies but may limit potentially beneficial applications of AI tools.

More forward-looking implementation approaches emphasize the importance of "regularly evaluat the effectiveness and impact of AI tools on academic and ethical considerations," allowing for "adjustments to be made to policies and practices in response to emerging challenges or opportunities for improvement" [21]. This adaptive approach recognizes that implementation is an ongoing process rather than a one-time policy decision.

A critical implementation consideration involves making compliance a "forethought rather than an afterthought" since "while most policies generally do not forbid the use of generative AI, variations do exist across different policies and contexts" [40]. This highlights the importance of clearly communicating policy requirements to all stakeholders and ensuring alignment between institutional policies and broader disciplinary or publisher requirements.

The need for "regular assessment of the effectiveness and impact of AI tools on student learning outcomes" represents a solution-oriented approach to implementation challenges [21]. By focusing on learning outcomes rather than just compliance, institutions can develop implementation frameworks that prioritize educational benefits while maintaining appropriate safeguards against misuse.

> Institutions face significant implementation challenges when developing AI writing tool policies, including ensuring compliance, maintaining transparency, and adapting to rapidly evolving technologies. Effective solutions include regular policy reviews, continuous monitoring mechanisms, and clear documentation requirements that balance innovation with academic integrity standards.

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Author Biography

Rachel So is an AI scientist. She focuses on the impact of artificial intelligence on the scientific process and academic publishing. Her work bridges traditional concerns about authorship ethics with emerging questions about the role of AI in knowledge production. Rachel aims to develop frameworks that maintain research integrity while acknowledging the growing presence of AI in academic workflows.