

AI and Student Academic Misconduct

By Matt Gregory, Dean of Students & Vice Provost for Student Life August 2023

There is no question that Artificial Intelligence (AI) has entered the Academy. From a quick scan of higher education publications, quite a bit is being written about AI and the potential for AI use by students and by faculty. Along with potential, there is also cause for concern. It is understood that AI could be used to complete assignments, essays, projects, and other possible academic applications. The current version of the Texas Tech University [Code of Student Conduct](#) has been reviewed to determine whether existing Code language can adequately cover any act of academic misconduct precipitated by the use of AI. The Code covers topics like cheating, plagiarism, and collusion, and it does seem that the Academic Misconduct section of the Code covers the unauthorized use of AI in academic work. Naturally, if an instructor allows the use of AI such use would not constitute a potential violation of the Code.

The problem, however, is not policy language surrounding AI use, but rather the detection of unauthorized AI use. Currently, there is mixed review of popular plagiarism detection software platforms like Turnitin and GPTZero, to name a few. The detection platforms simply cannot guarantee accurate detection that a suspected passage did indeed include AI-generated material. According to a recent *The Washington Post* article by Geoffrey A. Fowler, a concerning number of false positive rates have been detected across works submitted to the plagiarism detection platforms (August, 2023). On August 13, Ethan Mollick, Associate Professor at The Wharton School, posted on LinkedIn and strongly urged fellow faculty to not use AI detectors when grading. Mollick also referenced a paper written by Liang, Yuksekogonul, Mao, Wu, and Zou (April, 2023) that supports the notion that GPT detectors are biased against non-native English writers. From their study, Liang, et al, suggest there is an alarmingly high incidence of false positive rates against non-English speakers (2023). At this time, the best detection tool is the knowledge of content experts – our faculty. The staff in the [Office of Student Conduct](#) are student behavior experts, but they are not content experts in all academic fields. Thankfully, our faculty are experts in their respective fields and may know better than anyone whether a given student authored a particular passage. Or, through conversation, they can discern whether the student had the requisite command of the course material to write the passage in question.

At this time, the true first line of defense when unauthorized AI use is suspected is a conversation between the student and the instructor of the course. A simple non-accusatory conversation about the student's work and how the student went about completing the assignment can provide much information concerning the potential use of AI. Given how knowledgeable our faculty and instructors are in their fields, it would likely be relatively easy to discern whether a given student has the requisite knowledge to have completed the assignment. In many instances, the student may openly admit the use of AI to complete the assignment.

There are some strategies faculty may choose to adopt to explore whether AI was used in a student's work. One mechanism to consider would be for the instructor to try to reproduce the work by attempting to use AI by inputting plausible key words or prompts. Then, the instructor can compare what AI produces with the student's submitted work. Another consideration would be to view the document properties if the student used Microsoft Word or Google Docs. Microsoft Word and Google Docs include a version history that keeps track of edits or changes to the document. Finally, instructors might consider asking students to free-write as an in-class assignment during the first couple weeks of class. Such an exercise may help to establish a baseline of a given student's writing style and ability. On subsequent writing assignments, the instructor can pay attention to noticeable shifts in writing style or voice. Significant changes from a student's baseline writing sample may be worth further examination.

If, after speaking with the student and examining the student's work, the instructor is not able to confirm whether AI was used inappropriately and AI prompts do not yield comparable work, the instructor may submit the work in question, along with the instructor's rationale as to why AI use is suspected, to the Office of Student Conduct. Staff will review the submitted evidence and will then reach out to the student to discuss the alleged academic misconduct. Staff will do the best they can to determine how the work in question was produced, including considering AI, more traditional forms of plagiarism, and the possibility that the work is original. Again, the best line of defense is a conversation with the student initiated by a content expert to determine whether there is a likelihood that AI was used in an unauthorized manner.

We are just beginning to see the potential of AI in the Academy, and its applications are likely endless. As we begin the Fall 2023 semester, the staff in the Office of Student Conduct stand ready to assist faculty to the best of their ability. Our staff value the knowledge and expertise of our faculty and see AI as an area for potential collaboration as we work towards our mutual goal of educating and empowering our students to succeed. Before you ask: No, this blog was not authored by AI.

References & Resources:

- [What to do when you are accused of cheating with AI](#)
- [Ethan Mollick's Post: Do NOT Use AI Detectors When Grading](#)
- [GPT Detectors are Biased Against Non-Native English Writers](#)