

Guidance on Course-Level AI Policies

Instructional Technology & AI Committee

Purpose & Introduction

Faculty are the primary decision-makers about AI use in their courses. That principle stands at the center of this document.

Generative AI tools are no longer on the horizon. They are here, actively shaping how students learn, how faculty teach, and how institutions operate. This raises many questions: What's allowed? What's expected? And who gets to decide?

This document is designed to support you in navigating those questions with clarity and confidence. It is grounded in guidance from the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges (ASCCC), the Faculty Association of California Community Colleges (FACCC), and the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office (CCCCO) Vision 2030 AI Workplan.

The purpose of this guidance is to:

- Provide a clear, flexible framework for setting course level AI policies
- Support faculty in communicating AI expectations to students with transparency and consistency
- Offer practical tools, including tiered policy options, citation guidance, and a process for addressing AI-related concerns, that can be adapted to fit your course, discipline, and pedagogy

This guidance document provides a framework, practical resources, and thoughtful guardrails. It is a tool to help you exercise your authority intentionally, equitably, and in alignment with your commitment to student success.

A note on equity and access: AI tools are not equally available to all students. Free-tier and paid versions offer different capabilities, and some students may rely on AI tools as assistive technology. When setting your course AI policy, consider how your expectations may affect students with varying levels of access, resources, and needs.

Based on SMC policies, this document is not a requirement and is not intended to replace the model syllabus, or any policies related to academic integrity.

Tiered Framework for Course-Level AI Policies

Research across institutions consistently shows that clarity in AI course policy, delivered in writing and in conversation is the single most effective tool for setting student expectations and reducing academic integrity incidents. Vague or missing AI policies create confusion and unfair outcomes for students.

Whether you plan to allow, restrict, or prohibit AI use in your course, we strongly recommend that every syllabus include a clear statement on AI. Students benefit most when expectations are made explicit. Silence on AI is increasingly interpreted as ambiguity, not prohibition. A brief, intentional policy protects both you and your students.

We recommend the use of a tiered approach to shape course policies which provides flexibility in implementation. As the instructor, you may choose to use one tier for a full course or identify which tier is best suited for each assignment. Use the following templates as a starting point, and adjust the language to fit your course, your discipline, and your students.

The following language is written for inclusion in your syllabus and is addressed directly to students.

Tier 1 – Prohibited Use: AI Use is Not Permitted

AI tools may not be used in any form for this course. You are expected to produce all work without the use of AI tools.

AI tools may not be used for any assignments or assessments.

- These tasks are designed to help you build foundational skills your independent effort and original thinking
- All work must be your own, without AI assistance

Using AI when it is not permitted is considered a violation of academic integrity.

Tier 2 – Conditional Use: AI Use is Permitted for Specific Tasks

AI tools are permitted in ways which are explicitly designated by the instructor in the assignment instructions. You remain fully responsible for the accuracy, integrity, and intellectual ownership of all submitted work.

When the use of AI is permitted, students must:

- Disclose the tool(s) used
- Include your prompt(s)

- Explain how you evaluated or revised the output
- Cite the AI tool (see example below)
- Take full responsibility for the final work

Using AI outside of the allowed scope, or not disclosing use, is considered a violation of academic integrity.

Tier 3 – Open Use: AI Use is Encouraged with Disclosure

AI Tools may be used broadly, unless otherwise noted for a specific assignment or assessment. You remain fully responsible for the accuracy, integrity, and intellectual ownership of all submitted work.

When using AI, students must:

- Disclose the tool(s) used
- Include your prompt(s)
- Explain how you evaluated or revised the output
- Cite the AI tool (see example below)
- Take full responsibility for the final work

Undisclosed AI use remains an academic integrity violation.

(Additional Resource – See Appendix A: Choosing Tiers for the Use of AI)

Citing AI Use

When AI use is permitted, proper citation is expected. Below are examples using APA, MLA, and Chicago formats. Faculty may require alternative citation formats consistent with their discipline.

APA (7th Edition)

APA treats the AI developer as the author. If citing a specific chat, include the date, chat title, a bracketed description, the tool name, and a shareable URL.

Reference list (specific chat): OpenAI. (2026, March 8). *Essay 2 outline on 2008 financial crisis* [Generative AI chat]. ChatGPT. <https://chatgpt.com/share/abc123>

In-text: (OpenAI, 2026)

Reference list (general tool): OpenAI. (2026). *ChatGPT* [Large language model]. <https://chatgpt.com>

In-text: (OpenAI, 2026)

MLA (9th Edition)

MLA does not treat the AI tool as an author. The works-cited entry begins with a description of the prompt, followed by the tool name, model version, publisher, date, and a shareable URL if available.

Works Cited: "Outline the major causes of the 2008 financial crisis in 5 bullet points" prompt. *ChatGPT*, model GPT-4o, OpenAI, 8 Mar. 2026, chatgpt.com/share/abc123.

In-text: ("Outline the major")

Chicago (18th Edition)

Chicago treats the AI tool as the "author" of the content and the developer as the publisher. AI-generated content is typically cited in a footnote or in the text — not in a bibliography — unless a publicly shareable URL is available.

Footnote:

1. ChatGPT, response to "Outline the major causes of the 2008 financial crisis in 5 bullet points," OpenAI, March 8, 2026, <https://chatgpt.com/share/abc123>.

Shortened footnote: 2. ChatGPT, response to "Outline the major causes."

Bibliography (only if a shareable URL exists): OpenAI. Response to "Outline the major causes of the 2008 financial crisis in 5 bullet points." ChatGPT, March 8, 2026.

<https://chatgpt.com/share/abc123>

Communicating AI Expectations and Addressing Concerns

Your course-level AI expectations should align with SMC's academic integrity policies. As instructors, it is important that we both uphold the standards of integrity expected in higher education while also understanding that this level of integrity may not align with the practices that students may have been exposed to in other spaces. This requires that we are clear and consistent in communicating how this looks in individual courses, while also having the needed dialogue with students around integrity related to the use of AI.

Encourage students to be open about when and how they used AI, even imperfectly.

Key expectation: Transparency over perfection.

- Using AI without disclosure (when required) = academic integrity concern

- Submitting AI-generated work as fully your own = academic dishonesty
- AI errors (bias, hallucinations, inaccuracies) are not an excuse

What Happens If There Are Concerns?

Rather than “policing students” we want to reinforce the emphasis of learning, communication, and growth.

If concerns about AI use arise, consider implementing the following process:

1. **Conversation first** - Ask students to explain their process, thinking, or sources. (document the conversation and outcome)
2. **Opportunity to revise or resubmit (*when appropriate*)** - Redirect students to focus on learning and skill development rather than submitting a perfect product. (document the conversation and outcome)
3. **Follow-up based on SMC academic integrity procedures (*if needed*)** - Based on student response (and/or compliance), initiate policies consistently and fairly.

A note on AI detection tools: These tools should not be used as sole evidence of a violation. They do not guarantee accuracy and cannot capture the full context of how a student approached an assignment.

Revisiting Your Course AI Policy

AI tools are evolving rapidly, and a policy that makes sense at the start of the semester may need adjustment as new tools emerge or as you learn how students are engaging with AI in your course. We encourage faculty to treat their AI policy as a living document rather than a fixed rule.

A few practical considerations:

- Review your AI policy each semester before finalizing your syllabus. What worked last term may need updating based on your experience or changes in available tools.
- If you adjust your policy mid-semester, communicate the change clearly to students, in writing and in class, and explain the reasoning behind it. Students are more likely to respect a policy shift when they understand why it happened.
- Talk with colleagues in your department about what they're seeing. Shared patterns, like students confused by inconsistent policies across courses and new tools creating unexpected challenges, can inform better decisions for everyone.

This document will also be updated periodically as institutional guidance, technology, and best practices continue to develop.

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Appendix A: Choosing Tiers for the Use of AI

	1 - RESTRICTED USE	2 - CONDITIONAL USE	3 - OPEN USE
Tier Overview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AI NOT permitted Focus on independent skill No AI use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AI allowed in specific ways Focus on process + guidance Structured AI use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AI broadly allowed Focus on application Open but transparent use
What is the primary learning goal of this assignment?	Skill development (writing, calculations, technique, foundational knowledge)	Guided practice + learning process	Application, synthesis, real-world skills
What skill am I assessing?	Foundational skill	Process skill	Applied/transfer skill
Would AI use undermine the learning goal?	Yes	Maybe	No (or enhances it)
Do I want students to learn how to use AI in this context?	Not yet	With guidance	Yes
Is this high-stakes or low-stakes?	High stakes (exam, certification prep)	Medium (drafts, structured assignments)	Low stakes / exploratory
DEPARTMENT SPECIFIC EXAMPLES			
Kinesiology / Exercise Science	Assignment: Calculate target heart rate zones manually Why: Foundational physiological understanding AI Risk: Replaces core learning	Assignment: Design a 4-week training plan AI Use Allowed For: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brainstorming exercise ideas NOT generating full plan 	Assignment: Analyze a client case study AI Use: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generate possible interventions Compare AI vs. human reasoning

			Focus: Critical thinking + application
Nursing / Health Sciences	<p>Assignment: Medication dosage calculations</p> <p>Why: Safety-critical skill</p>	<p>Assignment: Care plan draft</p> <p>AI Use: Generate outline, Student must verify all clinical accuracy</p>	<p>Assignment: Patient education materials</p> <p>AI Use: Draft communication Revise for clarity and cultural competence</p>
English / Writing	<p>Assignment: In-class essay</p> <p>Why: Writing fluency and voice</p>	<p>Assignment: Essay drafting process</p> <p>AI Use: Brainstorm thesis ideas, NOT generate full essay</p>	<p>Assignment: Rhetorical analysis of AI-generated text</p> <p>AI Use: Generate sample text Critique it</p>
Business / Marketing	<p>Assignment: Basic financial calculations</p> <p>Why: Students must know how to perform calculations</p>	<p>Assignment: Marketing plan outline</p> <p>AI Use: Idea generation, Must justify decisions</p>	<p>Assignment: AI-assisted campaign strategy</p> <p>AI Use: Generate campaign ideas Evaluate effectiveness and bias</p>
Mathematics	<p>Assignment: Solve equations by hand</p> <p>Why: Students must know how to perform calculations</p>	<p>Assignment: Word problem interpretation</p> <p>AI Use: Clarify problem meaning, NOT solve</p>	<p>Assignment: Compare AI vs. human problem-solving</p> <p>AI Use: Generate solution Identify errors</p>