

AI Framework for Carleton University



Carleton
University



Table of Contents

Background	03
Opportunities & Challenges	04
Purpose & Scope	06
Definitions	07
Guiding Principles	08
Implementation Guidelines	10
Immediate Next Steps	13
Governance	14
References	15

Background

When generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) became widely available in 2022 [1], Carleton University, like other post-secondary institutions, began exploring its implications for education. In early 2023, the provost convened a working group, chaired by the Vice-Provost (Academic and Global Learning). This group developed early [guidelines and recommendations on the use of GenAI within teaching and learning](#) for Carleton's community. The working group considered both the opportunities and challenges brought on by GenAI, including academic integrity, ethical and privacy concerns. As AI technologies continue to develop and become more common, the university began to consider the implications of the technology on research and administrative work.

This framework aims to build on and extend the university's earlier work. It draws from a variety of additional resources: The [University of Saskatchewan's AI Principles and Guidelines Revised](#), the [Australian Framework for AI in Higher Education](#), the Higher Education Strategy Associates' (HESA) [AI Observatory, a humanistic architecture for AI](#) by Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, and both academic and non-academic publications in the post-secondary sector.

The Office of the Vice-Provost (Academic & Global Learning) led the development of the initial draft framework, which was shared with several groups to gather feedback:

- Offices of deans and vice-presidents
- The Digital Steering Committee
- The university's Working Group on AI in Teaching and Learning
- FASS Faculty Board
- The Office of the Associate Vice-President (Indigenous Teaching, Learning and Research)
- The Office of the Vice-President (Research, Innovation and International)
- Information Technology Services
- MacOdrum Library
- Carleton University Academic Staff Association (CUASA)
- The Student Government

Meanwhile, Carleton's students, faculty and staff were invited and encouraged to provide their feedback via an online form that was open and promoted from November 2025 to February 2026.

This framework, shaped by the feedback collected, is not a policy or governance document. Rather, it is intended to support the Carleton community by providing general principles and guidance. It is a living document, and implementation guidance will evolve over time. Any future institutional AI policies will be informed by these general principles. As the university gains experience with AI, the implementation guidance will be routinely reviewed and updated.

[1] Open AI released ChatGPT to the public in November 2022.

Opportunities & Challenges

AI is affecting the way we work, learn, teach, research and complete operational and administrative tasks. Many of the tools we rely on, such as document and spreadsheet applications, image editors, learning management systems (LMS) and research databases, already include various AI features that the university often cannot disable.

The university acknowledges the various valid concerns surrounding the negative effects of AI, including but not limited to those on the environment, jobs, mental health, intellectual property, data sovereignty and academic integrity (Cotton et al., 2024; Crawford, 2021). If used improperly, AI has been shown to hinder cognitive skills, especially for novice learners (Grassini, 2023; Habib et al., 2024; Lin, 2025). Additionally, there is a growing concern that the adoption of AI could have lasting effects on important human traits like empathy, social and emotional intelligence, complex thinking, the ability to act independently, and sense of purpose (Anderson & Rainie, 2025).



Notwithstanding, the university must also recognize the potential AI has to support effective teaching practices, deepen learning experiences, foster innovation (Mollick & Mollick, 2023; Mucharraz y Cano, Venuti, & Herrera Martinez, 2023; UNESCO, 2023), enhance accessibility for people with disabilities (Zhao, Cox, & Chen, 2025) and make administrative work more efficient (Al Naqbi et al., 2024). As AI reshapes what we recognize as knowledge, how students engage with learning and what institutions can credibly verify, AI governance and AI literacy become necessary (Zezeza, 2025).

In this context, the university must act intentionally by promoting critical AI literacy within our community and strategically integrating AI technologies where and when appropriate. In doing so, the appropriate AI use will vary across disciplines and university functions (teaching, learning, research, operations/administration). AI integrations and adoptions should not impose uniform models that conflict with disciplinary and functional norms. Any use of AI needs to consider significant differences in how it can affect novices in the discipline field versus experts, between low- and high-risk AI use cases, and the distinction between AI literacy and AI operational fluency (Rogers & Carbonaro, 2025; Digital Education Council, 2025).

Faculty members retain authority over pedagogical and scholarly judgment within their courses and research programs. Faculty members can choose not to engage with AI at all if they prefer.

At the same time, the university is committed to encouraging innovation and will continue to support faculty members as they try to integrate the proper and effective use of AI in their teaching.



Purpose & Scope

This framework provides guidance on the use of AI at Carleton University, ensuring that academics, staff and students are equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to use AI technologies effectively, responsibly and ethically. It imposes no obligations on university community members; however, its general principles may inform the development of university AI policies and processes in the future.

The framework aligns with Carleton's strategic priorities, Indigenous knowledge systems as outlined in Kinàmàgawin Calls to Action, Indigenous Data Sovereignty in Research, the Coordinated Accessibility Strategy, the EDI Action Plan and global ethical AI frameworks such as:

- Frameworks set forth by [federal](#) and [provincial](#) governments
- First Nations Ownership, Control, Access and Possession (OCAP) Principles
- First Nations and AI, Chiefs of Ontario
- Global Indigenous Data Alliance CARE Principles (collective benefit, authority to control, responsibility and ethics)
- [OECD AI Principles](#)
- [UNESCO's Ethics of AI](#)

The framework does not substantially address academic integrity. Instead, readers should refer to existing resources, including [guidelines and recommendations about the use of AI in teaching and learning](#) report by the Working Group on AI in Teaching and Learning and the university's [AI website](#).



This framework uses the general term “artificial intelligence (AI)” in recognition that AI may continue to develop beyond its current types like generative and agentic AI. It also uses UNESCO’s definition [2] of AI; that is, “systems which have the capacity to process data and information in a way that resembles intelligent behaviour, and typically includes aspects of reasoning, learning, perception, prediction, planning or control.” AI can take many forms, such as adaptive learning systems, chatbots, predictive analytics, accessibility tools and immersive technologies including augmented and virtual reality (B.C. Post-secondary ethical educational technology toolkit, 2025).

Agentic Artificial Intelligence is a form of artificial intelligence developed to operate autonomously, making its own decisions and taking actions with minimal or no human intervention to achieve specific goals (e.g. Perplexity Comet).

AI Literacy [3] refers to the knowledge and skills needed to understand, interact with, and critically evaluate AI technologies. It includes knowing how to use AI ethically, understanding both positive and negative impact associated with AI, questioning and evaluating AI output, and adapting to the changing AI landscape in both personal and professional settings.

AI Technical Proficiency or Operational Fluency is the knowledge and skill needed to effectively use AI technologies, software and functionalities.

Generative AI (GenAI) [4] is a subset of AI that can generate content in response to a user’s prompt, such as text, images, audio and code, based on patterns learned from its training data.

Large Language Models (LLMs) are machine learning models trained on large text datasets to learn patterns in language, enabling them to generate, transform and analyze text through probabilistic prediction.

Machine Learning [5] is a subfield of AI that focuses on enabling computer systems to learn from data by training algorithms on historical data to observe patterns and make predictions or decisions.

Predictive AI [6] combines traditional statistical methods with machine learning algorithms to find data patterns, analyze them and forecast future outcomes.

Definitions

[2] UNESCO (2021). Recommendation on the ethics of artificial intelligence

[3] Digital Education Council (2025). AI literacy framework.

[4] [Stryker, C. & Scapicchio, M. \(unknown\), IBM.](#)

[5] [Bergmann, D. \(unknown\), IBM.](#)

[6] [Caballar, R. D. \(unknown\), IBM.](#)

Guiding Principles

1. Creativity & Innovation

Carleton is dedicated to continuous improvement, lifelong learning and inclusivity. The university strives to create a campus experience that is forward-thinking and responsive to the evolving needs of our community and society at large. To this end, the university aims to foster a safe and supportive environment where academics, staff and students can explore and experiment with AI technology and voice their concerns about the use of AI.

1.1 Literate & Empowered

- Use AI to support creativity and innovation, not replace it.
- Develop critical AI literacy across all roles at the university.
- Encourage experimentation and ongoing learning.
- Examine the potential of developing AI models based on Indigenous knowledge.

1.2 Purposeful & Aligned

- Integrate AI only where it enhances learning, work or insight.
- Ensure that AI use is tied to authentic and outcome-driven goals.
- Link the use of AI to Truth and Reconciliation.

2. Responsible & Ethical Use

Carleton's employees and students will utilize AI technologies in ways that are fair and equitable, while protecting private and sensitive data, and minimizing the risk of harm. The university will promote AI literacy so that students, educators and staff can engage critically with AI technologies that are always in service of learning and human growth.

The university will not use AI to reproduce, distribute or monetize the image, voice or professional and academic work of faculty members and students without their explicit authorization. The same applies to the use of AI to reproduce the image and voice of professional staff members.

2.1 Inclusive & Equitable

- Prioritize equity, accessibility and diverse epistemologies.
- Consider Indigenous ways of knowing in assessing AI.
- Learn about and challenge AI-generated bias.
- Consider the environmental impact of AI technologies within Carleton-adopted systems during the procurement process, with the aim of reduction and alignment with the university's sustainability goals, as well as with the university's purpose to serve the public interest.

2.2 Privacy-Respecting & Secure

- Use only Carleton-approved tools for confidential, sensitive and institutional data.
- Recognize and respect the rights of Indigenous Peoples to control and protect Indigenous data and knowledge.
- Uphold privacy and academic integrity standards.
- Never use AI for surveillance.

3. Human Agency & Transparency

AI is a supplementary technology and should never replace human decision-making. Humans remain responsible and accountable for all aspects of their work: academics are responsible for the integrity of their research projects, course design and the assessment and evaluation of their learners; students are responsible for learning honestly, authentically and with integrity, as outlined by Carleton's Academic Integrity Policy; and staff are responsible for the accuracy and impact of their work and decisions.

Decisions about admission to programs, hiring, tenure and promotion, and any other situations where a person is being evaluated must be made by humans and therefore cannot rely solely on AI.

3.1 Human-Centered & Responsible

- People - not AI - are responsible for the outcomes of research, teaching, learning and operations.
- Maintain human judgment in feedback, research, teaching, learning and decision-making.
- Respect the right to opt out of AI use.
- Respect academic freedom and all provisions of collective agreements for faculty, staff, contract instructors and teaching assistants.

3.2 Transparent & Explainable

- Disclose the use of AI clearly and explain how and why it was applied.
- Foster an open and reflective culture around AI engagement.

The outlined guiding principles apply to the broader university community, including academics, students, student-employees, professional staff, contractors and service partners. These principles are reflected across all areas of the university through distinct responsibilities in research, teaching, learning and administration.



Implementation Guidelines

Implications of AI require the university to adjust its policies and processes, and create a practical set of guidelines, including setting limits on AI (Zezeza, 2025). The following guidelines are intended for employees and students who choose to use AI in their university-related work.

Teaching

- Make expectations for AI use clear in the course outline and discuss them early in the term, with reinforcement as required.
- Use AI to support pedagogical goals, not replace human interaction.
- Help students think about the impact of AI on the relevant discipline or field of study.
- Design assessments that encourage authentic work and reflection on AI.
- Foster conversations about AI's role in learning and society, including adverse effects on environment, mental health, biases, privacy, misinformation and the impact of AI algorithmic biases.
- Embed AI competencies in teaching activities and materials where appropriate to prepare graduates for the use of AI and the interpretation of AI-generated outputs beyond university.
- Balance developing learners' creative and critical thinking skills with the use of AI.
- Contextualize AI activities to highlight the importance of human skills and creativity.
- Help students develop mindful habits around AI to maintain a balanced relationship with digital tools.
- Ensure AI-enabled technologies and activities are accessible to all students, including those using adaptive technologies.
- Ensure the final evaluation of students' work is always done by the course instructor, especially if AI was used to assist with grading.

Curriculum

- Regularly review and update programs and courses to reflect the evolving impact of AI on disciplines, careers and society.
- Critically assess the relevance of program-level outcomes to ensure alignment with employment trends, evolving skill sets, employer expectations and technological advancements.
- Integrate AI-related competencies and skills, such as ethical reasoning, critical evaluation and data literacy, across curricula to ensure our graduates are equipped for the future. Integrating AI competences should account for variability in learner needs.
- Include accessibility implications and the experience of disabled people in curriculum discussions about AI ethics.
- Enhance the students' awareness of issues such as copyright, rights to privacy, data sovereignty and Indigenous data sovereignty.
- Leverage Carleton's commitment to interdisciplinarity by fostering collaboration and integration across programs to bolster AI literacy and to help students navigate AI's ethical, societal and technical dimensions.
- Actively involve program and university stakeholders (e.g. students, academics, alumni and industry) in the curriculum renewal process to ensure graduates are well-prepared to meet current and emerging job market demands.

Learning

- Use AI as a learning aid, not as a means to shortcut the learning process.
- Reflect honestly on how AI impacts your learning and seek help when unsure about the use of AI.
- Learn how to critically evaluate AI outputs and develop critical understanding of the ethical and legal implications of inputs used to train LLMs.
- Learn about Indigenous data sovereignty principles and Indigenous AI models.
- Follow the rules and guidelines about AI use in the course outline and as laid out by the course instructor. Seek guidance and instruction from the course instructor about AI use when expectations are not clear before engaging with AI for course work.
- Safeguard your private information and do not share it with AI models. This can be achieved by using AI technologies that have been adopted by Carleton and have passed an internal Data Privacy and Risk Assessment review.
- Review the Academic Integrity Policy and your responsibilities and ask questions when you are uncertain about academic-related behaviours.
- Verify the information provided by AI with other sources and use it as a supplement rather than a replacement for traditional search methods.
- Acknowledge any and all use of AI through citations and AI disclosure statements.

Research

- When appropriate, leverage AI technologies to explore ideas, inform hypotheses, process information, generate summaries or assist with drafting grant applications.
- Respect Indigenous data sovereignty principles and Indigenous AI guiding ethics and protocols.
- Recognize and acknowledge that AI technologies are inherently biased.
- Validate AI outputs and remain accountable for research accuracy.

- Ensure confidential or sensitive research data is used only with Carleton University-approved tools.
- Disclose AI use when drafting manuscripts, literature reviews or data summaries.
- Consult and follow the guidelines on AI use and disclosure provided by journals, funding agencies and professional associations.
- Update policies for AI-assisted research.



Operations & Administration

- Use AI to streamline repetitive tasks (e.g. summarizing, drafting, data analysis), provided such tasks would not result in the disclosure of sensitive or confidential information.
- Ensure accessibility criteria guide the adoption of automation across the university.
- Protect institutional and sensitive data and use only technologies approved by the university for work-related information.
- Promote human-centered automation that supports rather than replaces human judgment.
- Always check the accuracy of AI output and ensure human oversight for any AI-generated content.
- Disclose and document use of AI in university records, consistent with best practices and guidelines by Records Management and Corporate Archives.
- Become familiar and follow the process of approving new AI technologies by Carleton's ITS. Recognize that all new software needs to have a Privacy Impact Assessment and Digital Protection Risk Assessment completed, as legislated for all public institutions.
- At the department level, define and document for staff those materials that should not be entered into AI systems.
- If you are uncertain about the appropriateness of AI use, consult your managers and departmental leads for guidance.
- Learn about AI technology.
- Explore developing and implementing a course on AI literacy for all incoming first-year students.
- Explore creating Carleton's own AI-based technology for streamlining administrative processes while ensuring that all Carleton's data are protected and kept within Carleton-approved infrastructure.
- Ensure considerations of legislation and regulations related to AI use (e.g. Bill 194: Strengthening Cybersecurity and Building Trust in the Public Sector Act, 2024).
- Ensure that financial and other resources are available to support AI activities on campus, including building AI literacy, professional development opportunities for employees, centralized support, training and consultation resources for staff, faculty, contract instructors, teaching assistants and community members who experiment and or adopt AI in their work.
- Encourage the development and innovation of Indigenous AI and Indigenous AI-related research.
- Encourage research about AI and its impacts, including research that exposes and examines AI bias and develops means of reducing such bias.
- Ensure collective agreements with staff, faculty, librarians, contract instructors and teaching assistants are respected and protection measures are taken in situations where AI may impact employees.
- Explore opportunities to collaborate with Ottawa's other post-secondary institutions (e.g. La Cité, Algonquin, uOttawa) on the co-construction and management of a shared data centre, cloud system and compute resources.
- Monitor the development and implementation of AI initiatives across the university's functions (e.g. teaching, learning, research, operations and administration). Consult with the campus community to identify potential gaps, critically assess AI use and its effects, and recommend appropriate actions.

Carleton University Leadership

- Ensure that cybersecurity and data governance protocols, along with AI guidance and considerations, are updated regularly to reflect advancements in AI.
- Proactively engage with stakeholders from a change and communications perspective (e.g. employees, unions, management, students, governance groups) to ensure alignment on the use of AI across the university.
- Encourage consistent, university-wide communication and guidance regarding AI.

Immediate Next Steps

The Senior Management Policy Committee should work with all relevant stakeholders to update or develop relevant institutional policies to address issues such as acceptable use of AI, academic integrity, AI-related procurement standards, AI-related research and other relevant policies.

Information Technology Services (ITS) should establish a clear process for vetting AI features, with a simplified and quick process for those posing a low-level risk. ITS should collaborate with Human Resources, privacy and legal offices, and operational units to assess opportunities and risks in administrative automation.

Human Resources, in collaboration with ITS and other relevant units, should develop training for professional staff and managers, including training on responsible AI use in administrative tasks.

Teaching and Learning Services, the Library and Student Academic Support Services should expand their workshops and resources on AI-enabled teaching, student AI literacy and AI use in research.

Coordinate among the Office of the Vice-President (Research), CORIS, IPS, Post Awards, research computing, ethics boards and library services to address AI use in research workflows, data governance and compliance with funder and journal policies.



Governance

The Working Group on AI in Teaching and Learning will broaden its mandate and membership to become the cross-functional AI Advisory Group. This group already brings together representatives from academic leadership, IT, the Library, faculty members representing all faculties, student representatives and TLS. Adding members from the privacy, legal and research offices will allow the group to better serve as the operational forum for evaluating and coordinating AI-related issues before decisions move through existing governance structures.

The AI Advisory Group will work closely with the Teaching and Learning Technology Committee (TLTC), the Research Computing Committee (RCC), the Administrative Computing Committee (ACC) and the Data Administration Working Group (DAWG) on AI-related matters.

The AI Advisory Group will also regularly inform the Senate and the Carleton University Academic Staff Association (CUASA) about new AI developments that could impact academic matters.



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