



Dear all,

This is an advisory update on use of ChatGPT in the classroom. Please share it with faculty who may be facing these issues.

This is the first full semester where students have access to ChatGPT. The Provost's office is hearing from faculty about students generating essays, test answers, and even written class discussion they submit as their own. As adoption grows, the question for faculty is how we respond to violations of academic integrity, while adapting to the genuine utility of these tools.

As we respond to student use of these tools, we should remember that most students don't cheat. Despite the novelty of the challenge, we should not treat all students as putative violators; many are already willing partners in the university's adaptations to these tools. Students who struggle with formal English, especially those needing accommodations or who didn't learn written English as children, report a profound sense of relief at having a tool that helps translate their ideas into idiomatically correct English. Understanding whether and how this capability might be integrated into academic practice, without subjecting all such students to generic suspicion, will require thoughtful, incremental experimentation.

For the remainder of the semester, there are broadly three things faculty can do to reduce misuse: reaffirm ethical commitments, clarify expectations around written work, and alter assignments in light of these new capabilities. **The common theme in these strategies is students' need to know what their professors expect.**

There is currently no way to reliably prove ChatGPT use after the fact, and we expect detection tools to remain largely ineffective (claims from vendors like TurnItIn notwithstanding). When a faculty member suspects a student of having used ChatGPT or a similar tool, they can ask the student directly. A surprising number of faculty report students admitting using these tools when asked, and being willing to engage in conversations around class expectations.

Faculty can also grade inauthentic-seeming writing accordingly, or send it back. Some faculty are now telling students things like "This writing seems formulaic and not appropriate for this assignment. Please rewrite it along the following lines and re-submit," without needing to determine if it was written by a text generator or just reads like it.

Given the difficulties of detection of ChatGPT after an assignment has been turned in, strategies of prevention or integration will work better over the long term. Individual schools are doing good work on these issues, with advice likely to be more tailored to individual disciplines. Faculty should check in with their academic administrators as well.

Our best strategy for getting ethical behavior from students is to ask for it. Faculty can remind students that assignments are designed to give students a task they can learn from, and while aspects of grading can feel adversarial, the shared goal of instructor and student is for the student to learn. (Summative versus formative assessment, as education scholars put it.) Research on honor codes concludes that simply asking students to affirm their understanding of the community's shared values reduces violations of academic integrity, though the affirmation needs to be active. Merely including a statement in your syllabus does not suffice.

Faculty expectations around written assignments should also be clear, especially because students will usually encounter differing expectations in different classes. Students should know whether a given written assignment is trying to improve student recall of concepts, organization of their thoughts, or communication to particular audiences. Detailing those goals can clarify the link between effort and improvement.

Similarly, explaining what sorts of arguments can be advanced in short vs. long essays makes word count less an odometer and more a guide. Giving students models for the kind of writing faculty expects can help them understand what good work looks like. Making it clear that online discussions can proceed less formally than essay writing can reduce anxiety about participating. And so on.

Uses of ChatGPT exist on a spectrum from inspiration ("What are some Bollywood movies featuring family conflict?") to output ("Write an essay on family dynamics in *Do Bigha Zamin* versus *Kabuliwalla*, with citations.") The former sort of query would rarely be a problematic use of ChatGPT, the latter would be in almost all circumstances. There is a new imperative to be clear with students about where the dividing line is — how close to producing written output a student can get — for acceptable work in a class.

In its current state, ChatGPT is good at producing statements and lists. It is bad at reflection, metacognition, and structured argument, and it cannot yet produce diagrams, graphs, images, or video. In addition to clarity about the goals of assignments, it is possible to design assignments ChatGPT would not do well at, include asking students to:

- React to specific sections of readings
- Refer to discussions in class
- Include diagrams, charts, or graphics in their output
- Draft in an edit-preserving tool like Google Docs, enabling review of process, not just output
- Present their work in a spoken format, whether presentation, QA, or debate

It's also possible to design or redesign assignments that utilize ChatGPT, including asking students to:

- Design three separate prompts on a topic, then write about how the responses differ
- Generate pro and one con arguments, then ask students to compare arguments
- Give the entire class the same ChatGPT essay, and ask each of them to edit it into their own version.

We want to be realistic about the scale and speed of the change we are responding to; these tools mark an epochal shift for use of the written word. Text generators are already being integrated into standard tools (search, word processing, brainstorming) and industry practices (law, consulting, journalism). These changes will take years to unfold, as will our own adaptations.

If faculty want a checklist for the remainder of this semester, they can ask:

- Have I clearly explained my expectations around use of these tools
- Have students affirmed that they understand and will respect communal ethical norms?
- Do students understand how they should approach any given writing assignment?
- Is the assignment designed to either avoid or contain use of generative tools?

These questions will also help faculty adapt to change in future semesters. Should you or your faculty have questions or observations about faculty experimentation with ChatGPT or related tools, or student use of these tools, please contact Scott Henkle, sh188@nyu.edu.

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