

When in doubt, ask before you prompt

What George Brown students need to know about the responsible use of AI

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As the Fall 2026 semester begins, students are returning to an ever rapidly changing academic landscape because of Artificial Intelligence (AI). Today, the way higher education intersects with AI has become a daily reality, especially with how generative AI has embedded itself in every student's learning experience ranging from social media consumption to study or research practices. Program coursework and assessments are being tested with AI technologies that can now generate research, essays, and presentations in a matter of seconds. This raises an important question to students: *How do you make the most out of these technologies without compromising your learnings, ethics, and academic integrity?*

Understanding the boundaries of AI isn't just about avoiding plagiarism anymore. It is quickly becoming one of the most critical aspects of your student success at George Brown.

Understanding How to Approach AI

Academic institutions recognize that banning specific AI platforms is impossible, as iterative updates constantly outpace new rules. Because of this, the focus is shifting away from policing software and moving toward understanding how students can actually utilize these digital tools.

According to UNESCO's (2023) Guidance for Generative AI in Education and Research, approaching AI with a "human-centered" mindset offers incredible advantages, such as personalized tutoring and accessible learning materials. However, UNESCO warns against "cognitive over-dependence" which is the risk of letting the machine do the thinking for you, which can hinder independent problem-solving, critical thinking, and intellectual development. Hence, educational experts emphasize that AI should be strictly leveraged to augment human capacities and support academic growth rather than replace fundamental thinking processes.

Accountability, Not Prohibition

George Brown Polytechnic approaches digital learning with a human-first mindset. George Brown sees AI not as a shortcut, but as a tool to help reimagine the future of education that is "characterized by scholarly inquiry, enthusiasm and forward thinking as we aim to continuously adapt to this evolving technology while still enriching our community and upholding our values." (George Brown Polytechnic, n.d).

Instead of an outright ban, George Brown Polytechnic encourages a thoughtful use which is grounded in eight guiding principles (George Brown Polytechnic, n.d.):

1		Responsible and Ethical AI We commit to the responsible and ethical use of AI and to minimize adverse impacts on individuals by prioritizing dignity, autonomy, privacy, data protection, non-discrimination, equality, and fairness. We will also continuously work to identify, address, and reduce bias to ensure fair and equitable outcomes for all.
2		Educational Enhancement We will use AI to enrich teaching, learning, and research experiences and foster a culture of academic integrity. We will integrate AI thoughtfully into the learning process to enhance and improve curriculum and educational outcomes.
3		Inclusive Consultation We commit to implementing AI through the engagement of diverse perspectives, lived experiences and thoughts with members of the college community and industry experts. This collaborative approach ensures a diverse range of insights and knowledge in the use of AI.
4		Transparent AI We commit to transparently using AI by clearly communicating its application and purpose to stakeholders clarifying when and why AI is being used to foster trust and understanding.
5		Data Protection We will comply with privacy laws and regulations protecting data, including sensitive, confidential, and personal information in AI applications to safeguard data against unauthorized access or breaches.
6		AI Literacy & Accountability We commit to the advancement of AI literacy to ensure the accuracy and reliability of AI-generated information, emphasizing the importance of trustworthy outputs.
7		Approved Institutional Usage We will review and approve AI applications for institutional processes to ensure they align with George Brown's strategic goals and values.
8		Professional Discretion of Educators Faculty and instructors may use their discretion when integrating AI into the teaching and learning environment, in keeping with George Brown's Use of AI Guiding Principles, the college's values, and the educational objectives of the learning experience.

- **Responsible and Ethical AI:** Prioritizing fairness, autonomy, and non-discrimination while actively working to reduce bias.
- **Educational Enhancement:** Thoughtfully integrating AI to enrich teaching, learning, and research while fostering academic integrity.
- **Inclusive Consultation:** Engaging diverse perspectives and industry experts to safely guide AI implementation.
- **Transparent AI:** Clearly communicating when, how, and why AI is being used to build trust across the community.
- **Data Protection:** Safeguarding sensitive and personal information in full compliance with privacy laws.
- **AI Literacy & Accountability:** Advancing the community's ability to critically evaluate AI outputs for accuracy and reliability.
- **Approved Institutional Usage:** Ensuring AI applications align with the college's strategic goals through careful review and approval.

- **Professional Discretion of Educators:** Empowering instructors to decide how AI fits into their classrooms based on educational objectives and college values.

When used honestly and ethically, AI acts as a helpful assistant that enhances your abilities, rather than replacing your own thinking.

Navigating the Semester: Can I Use AI?

While George Brown Polytechnic provides foundational principles for responsible AI use, the specific rules for whether and how AI is permitted align with the academic integrity policies of George Brown Polytechnic and are ultimately determined by the instructors. AI tools that are readily available do not mean they are authorized for use in every course or assignment. To protect your academic standing, adopt a proactive approach:

- **Check the Syllabus:** Treat your course outlines like a roadmap. Look for clear rules about using generative AI for that specific class.
- **Understand the Context:** Your instructor might encourage using AI to brainstorm ideas or organize data but strictly forbid using it to write your final report. Every assignment is different.
- **When in Doubt, Ask First:** Navigating new technology can be confusing, but it remains your responsibility to understand the expectations of your coursework. If an assignment's guidelines aren't perfectly clear, always ask your instructor for clarification before you start typing your prompt.
- **Safeguard Your Privacy:** Always remember that public AI platforms collect and store user inputs. Never upload personal, confidential, or sensitive information into these tools.

For a look at George Brown's hands-on approach to this technology, George Brown's Applied AI Solutions Development highlights how the college is actively teaching students to build and optimize artificial intelligence systems.

Protecting Your Academic Value

Artificial intelligence is definitely a part of the modern learning experience, and the professionals who will lead their industries in the future are those who learn to leverage these tools ethically, critically, and safely. As you settle into your Fall 2026 semester, make it a habit to clearly understand the technological rules and limitations of your study. At its core, academic success is about creating an environment where your own intellect and honest judgment always come first.

Learn More: The AI Centre of Excellence

To further understand the college's position and find practical support, visit George Brown Polytechnic's official AI Centre of Excellence (<https://www.georgebrown.ca/ai-centre-of-excellence>). Serving as the central hub for AI guidance, this platform connects students with trusted resources, training opportunities, and clear definitions regarding AI use to help you navigate these tools with your academic integrity at the forefront.

References

George Brown Polytechnic. (n.d.). *George Brown Polytechnic's position on artificial intelligence*. AI Centre of Excellence. <https://www.georgebrown.ca/ai-centre-of-excellence/guidance-policies-responsible-ai/george-brown-polytechnics-position-on-artificial-intelligence>

UNESCO. (2023). *Guidance for generative AI in education and research*. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. <https://doi.org/10.54675/EWZM9535>