

Opinion

Is using ChatGPT cheating, plagiarism, both, neither, or forward thinking?

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The recent emergence of ChatGPT has led to multiple considerations and discussions regarding the ethics and usage of AI. In particular, the potential exploitation in the educational realm must be considered, future-proofing curriculum for the inevitable wave of AI-assisted assignments. Here, Brent Anders discusses some of the key issues and concerns.

Given ChatGPT's revolutionary capabilities in answering virtually any question and creating any type of text, its application in education has been a topic of a major amount of inquiry. I shared the news of ChatGPT with many professors as well as other people in academia, and a majority of them went directly to expressing how students would use it for academic dishonesty. Yet, as a PhD obtainer, a retired Army Sergeant Major, and a life-long learner in academia for over 20 years and having taken thousands of classes (both face-to-face and online), I am always thinking like a student. This made me contemplate an ethical situation: the idea of a student being confronted by a professor, angry that AI was used.

First, let's realize that most universities have an academic dishonesty portion of a student code of conduct policy that goes something like this:

Cheating is not allowed in any form and includes any actions taken by students that result in an unfair academic advantage for that student or an unfair academic benefit or disadvantage for any other student to include improperly representing another person's work as their own. A student must do their own work.

Plagiarism, defined as the use of another person's ideas, words, or concepts without proper attribution, is strictly forbidden. This includes the paraphrasing of words or concepts of another person without proper citation.

Given this currently typical university policy, I fully believe that our contemplated student could make a good argument that AI is *not* cheating or plagiarism.

What could the student say to make his or her defense? Something like:

"No professor, I am not cheating at all. AI like ChatGPT is now freely available to everyone, so why would anyone say that using it is an 'unfair academic advantage'? An AI is not 'another person'; it is software, a tool. So why would I need to attribute anything to it?"

I know that "a student must do their own work," and I did do the work. Once I was given the assignment, I thought about it and *remembered* what program I should use that would be best for the task (the ChatGPT AI). I *understood* how to properly go through the process and *applied* my knowledge in using the program effectively. I then *analyzed* the result of the AI and *evaluated* whether the AI results fully met the overall rubric requirement. I finalized my finished *created* product and turned it in. So, this was a great assignment in that I went through the entire Bloom's Revised Taxonomy.^{1,2}

Some academia leadership might think to jump to the solution of changing their definition of plagiarism to something like "defined as the use of another person's or AI's ideas, words, or concepts." This knee-jerk response is clearly not the answer. We cannot and should not ban AI in that a type of AI is already part of Microsoft Word and Grammarly. Additionally, Microsoft has heavily invested in ChatGPT and will be integrating it into Bing search results as well as Microsoft Office products.³ Are we going to start to require students to cite Microsoft Word and/or Grammarly? That would be quite awkward.

Another idea would be to add to the definition of cheating by incorporating text such as "cheating includes the use of advanced original text creation AI when it is specifically not allowed by the instructor for a given assignment." This would give more authority to an instructor who doesn't want students to use AI for a specific assignment. It could be part of the assignment's instructions and even written into the rubric.

I highly recommend this tactical approach as opposed to a simple general limiting or banning of AI in that all of us in academia must realize that this is the new reality. Advanced AI is now fully here and freely available to all. Every person, now more than ever, needs to develop their AI literacy. By AI literacy I mean four specific things.

- (1) Awareness that AI is all around us
- (2) Ability to use it and harness its power
- (3) Knowledge that anyone can use it (even students)
- (4) Critical thinking regarding AI content
 - (a) Method used to create the result
 - (b) Sources used to create the result
 - (c) Biases that might exist within the system

Students especially need to gain AI literacy in order to be competitive and effective in the job market, which is using AI more than ever.⁴ Yet all instructors must also develop strong AI literacy to be more relevant and effective in



properly teaching these skills to students as a soft/power skill while also teaching the main subject of their instruction.

These are important ethical considerations dealing with AI that must be contemplated and discussed if we are to properly prepare students and instructors for our newly obtained reality. This must happen now in that the rate of AI development is only increasing with predictions of GPT4's release expected to come out later this year, which could increase ChatGPT's power and capabilities by a great amount.⁵ We must be ready and forward thinking to adapt and succeed.

DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

The author declares no competing interests.

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About the author

Brent A. Anders has a doctorate in education and currently works as the director of the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment, and the Center for Teaching and Learning at the American University of Armenia. Anders has also done multiple public-speaking events throughout the US and other parts of the world, authoring books, research articles, and blog posts dealing with educational methodologies, online learning, and educational technology. Anders's most recent book, *ChatGPT AI in Education: What it is and How to Use it in the Classroom*, is now available on Amazon.