Collaboratively Defining AI Boundaries with Students

Course Subject:	First Year Writing & Advanced Writing in the Disciplines – Business Administration
Student Level:	Undergraduate
Number of Students:	19
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What Students Did

Students took part in a three-part activity. In part one, they explored what generative AI is, how it works, its ethical issues, and its strengths and weaknesses. In part two, they worked in small groups to discuss and define their own beliefs about how gen AI should be used in writing. In part three, students developed a community agreement defining the boundaries for the whole class on using generative AI tools to complete course assignments.

Learning Goals and Purpose

The purpose was to engage students in the process of learning about generative AI and collaboratively deciding how the tools could and could not be used to complete coursework. Through this process, students:

- Developed a shared understanding of how generative AI works

- Gained perspectives on ethical issues related to the use of generative AI in writing
- Built community

Assessment

The community agreement activities were not graded. Written reflections indicated that the activities helped them learn about and use the AI tools and to build trust in each other. Students also said the process helped them make sense of the tools and to make conscious decisions about how to use them to balance preserving their own writing voice and enhancing their work.

Faculty Reflections

The first semester that I did these activities, the language I used for categories were grade-oriented. I found that focusing on grades took me into murky territory and this was not the best way to frame it, as it didn't capture the soul of the activity. So I changed it to focus more on the community agreements that we were creating.

There will be some students who are going to use AI based on their own set of ethical guidelines (rather than the group's), but having the class level agreement removes the ambiguity for 95% of the class and helps the instructor. When doing this at the beginning of the semester, it works great as an icebreaker, since it engages students in interactions with each other to create something meaningful.

Step-by-Step Directions for Students

Step 1	**Explore what generative AI is, how it works, its ethical issues, and its strengths and weaknesses** – Through reading, pre-writing, a micro-lecture, and in class discussions on ethical challenges, learn about the technology, how the technology works, where the data comes from, issues with attributing ownership of generative AI output, and more.
Step 2	**In small groups (approximately 4 people per group), discuss scenarios of generative AI use in course assignments, and identify ethical lines and beliefs about the use of generative AI in writing** – For given prompts (use cases), determine whether the use of AI should be red (gen AI not allowed), green (gen AI allowed), or yellow (warning). *NOTE: For additional details, see the Boundaries and Prompts document under Related Materials below.*
Step 3	**Boundary setting activity in the whole group** – In the whole group, share your small group's categorizations and your rationale for these decisions. After each group has shared, everyone votes on how each scenario should be categorized within a class agreement document. If there are any debates about any of the scenarios during the voting process, we will discuss it further. Additionally, any student can contact the instructor with concerns afterwards and re-open it for discussion. For scenarios that are reopened, begin with a free-write in class before discussing.

Related Materials

- [Categories and Prompts](#)