UTS College | UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY SYDNEY

GenAI and students

The new approach from UTS College

New generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) tools and functionality are being developed faster than anyone can keep up with. The impact is far reaching in the Education sector generally, and on how students are using or misusing GenAI for their studies, assignments and exams.

Rather than framing GenAI use only in terms of misconduct or misuse, UTS College is taking a collaborative approach with students, to inform and educate them on the effective and ineffective use of GenAI for study, assignments and exam preparation. This approach:

- educates students to think critically about GenAI
- models where and how it can be applied
- informs about where its application is detrimental to learning and skills development.

This approach provides guidance and clarity to students and enhances their understanding.

Addressing GenAI use with students

A survey conducted in July 2024 with 466 UTS College students showed they were regularly using a variety of GenAI tools to check ideas, learn new vocabulary and edit written work. Students also reported using GenAI to translate written work, generate code, generate images, and generate whole or partial texts for assessment submission.

Students were also confused about exactly what GenAI-related academic misconduct was and what kind of GenAI usage may be helpful.

The UTS College approach to GenAI use for learning addresses both the risks and the opportunities for students and provides clarity and consistency for both students and teachers throughout UTS College.

The UTS College approach to GenAI use

Our approach focuses on educating students on the effective and ineffective use of GenAI for learning and skill development.

Students are encouraged to use approved GenAI platforms as a supplementary tool for basic research, building knowledge on a topic, and enhancing retention of that knowledge. This is what our experts in education have determined is effective use.

As part of their coursework, students are also shown examples of specific skills they will not develop if GenAI is used to create work for them. This is what our experts in education have determined is ineffective use.

GenAI and learning development

One of the key aspects of our approach is to show students the link between types of GenAI use, and the specific skills each type of usage would prevent them from developing. This is shown in the following table:

The skills students don't develop when they use GenAI to produce work:

If you	Students will not develop the skills of
Generate text	Academic writing, English language and critical thinking
Generate images	Software design, design thinking, evaluative thinking
Generate code	Coding software, active coding, problem solving
Summarise text	Advanced reading, synthesising texts, analytical thinking
Translate text	Academic writing, English language, evaluative thinking

The risks of GenAI use for students

Credibility of source: students are informed that:

- GenAI itself is not a credible source (University College London, 2025)
- GenAI makes mistakes (OpenAI, 2024a)
- GenAI demonstrates bias (OpenAI, 2024b)

Equity of GenAI tools: While many GenAI tools are free, more professional versions and different types of GenAI tools are not freely available. This makes their use by students financially dependent and therefore inequitable.

Preventing skill development: In addition to the potential for missing specific skill development opportunities listed in the table above, students are informed of other educational reasons not to use GenAI to produce work for them. These include:

- missing the opportunity to build on new skills over time
- GenAI is not a subject expert (Australian Catholic University, 2024)
- students are also not yet subject experts, and they may not be able to effectively evaluate the content or quality of what GenAI produces.

The opportunities in GenAI use for students

Building knowledge: students are encouraged to use GenAI to build knowledge in the following ways. To:

- explore more about topics being studied
- simplify complex concepts
- check ideas
- conduct basic research
- unpack and understand assignment briefs.

As a study aid: students are encouraged to use GenAI to enhance their knowledge retention in the following ways. To:

- create quizzes to check knowledge
- create study and revision plans
- create word lists and mind maps to assist memory
- organise study notes.

Channels of communication to students

The UTS College approach to GenAI use is communicated to students in a variety of ways throughout their learning journey, including within:

- assessment briefs and on the assessment pages of their subjects in Canvas, the UTS College online learning management system
- Welcome Week workshops
- the compulsory academic integrity module
- specific lessons and self-paced activities
- supporting HELPS Centre information.

A flexible framework for GenAI usage in assessments

Using the following framework, UTS College teachers make it clear to students on their assessment tasks in Canvas, our online Learning Management System:

- why, when and how CoPilot (the recommended AI tool) should and should not be used for a task.
- how to acknowledge its use.
- skills development and limitations of GenAI.

What	Clear expectations	Transparency	Educational reasons 1	Educational reason 2
How	• Define GenAI - related Academic misconduct. • Outline effective usage (knowledge building and retention).	• Request acknowledgement of any GenAI use in assessments. • Provide an easy method for students to do this, e.g via a dedicated section on assignment cover sheets or via a comments box.	• List the skills students will not develop if they use GenAI to produce the submission for them.	• Give specific examples of how GenAI performed when asked to produce the task response OR • Give general examples of GenAI limitations.
Why	• Provides clarity for both students and educators.	• Helps elevate GenAI to a non-cheating tool. • Helps students plan and reflect on use.	• Helps students realise why they should not use it for certain tasks and how doing so would impact their learning.	• Helps model evaluation, test susceptibility of assessment item and highlight its limitations.

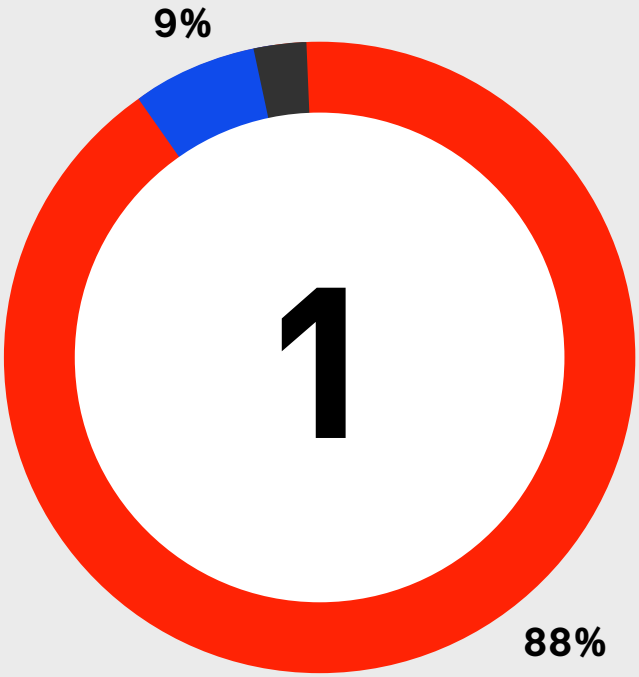
Assessing students' understanding of the approach to GenAI use

In Semester 1 2025, 950 current students were surveyed on their understanding of the UTS College approach to GenAI use for learning and skills development.

The following graphs show that students have a high awareness of both effective usage of GenAI (88%) and an understanding of GenAI-related academic misconduct (94%).

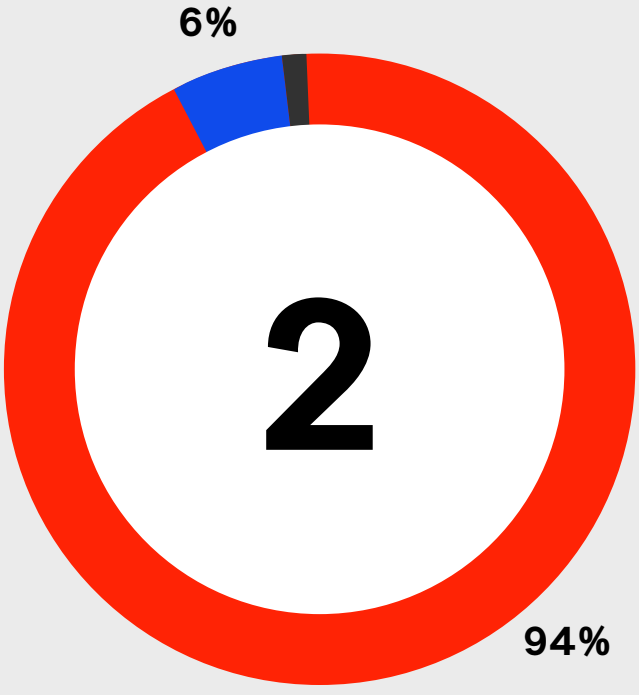
1. Do you know how to use GenAI effectively in your studies?

835	Yes, I know how to use GenAI effectively in my studies.
87	I'm not sure how to use GenAI effectively in my studies.
28	No, I don't know how to use GenAI effectively in my studies.



2. Do you know what GenAI related academic misconduct is?

891	Yes, I know what GenAI related academic misconduct is.
53	I'm not sure what GenAI related academic misconduct is.
6	No, I don't know what GenAI related academic misconduct is.



Key takeaways

By educating students on how and why GenAI use may either benefit or disadvantage them, they can begin to make decisions that enhance their learning. This approach has been well-received by UTS College staff and students, who now have some clarity around these complex issues. The ten points below are key lesson we have learned that can be applied in the classroom and to students:

1. Listen to your students about their current uses and perceptions of GenAI.
2. Answer the key questions you have about using GenAI in education.
3. Move away from framing GenAI only in terms of academic misconduct.
4. Consider GenAI as helpful in the learning process and research available GenAI tools.
5. Develop a framework for communicating effective usage to students.
6. Provide clear examples of ways students can use GenAI effectively.
7. Provide clear educational reasons why students should not use GenAI for certain tasks or to produce work for them.
8. Reinforce your approach using in-class and self-paced activities.
9. Show students how to evaluate what GenAI produces (crucial for effective use).
10. Give students an opportunity to plan how they might use GenAI in assessment-related work and a chance to reflect on that usage or non-usage.

Next steps for GenAI use at UTS College

At UTS College, our GenAI working group is taking further steps to ensure our students get the most out of their learning experience, including how effective use of GenAI can assist learning. These steps include:

1. Research on students' application of the educational approach (are students using GenAI effectively and responsibly?).
2. Research and installation of AI tutors and agents for students (chatbots to aid the learning process).
3. Developing an AI policy for teachers (what we should and shouldn't be doing with AI).
4. Research and implementation of GenAI tools for teachers to increase productivity and improve the student learning experience.
5. A focus on Access and Inclusion (what is GenAI's role?).

Conclusion

To get the most out of GenAI, students can use it as a tool for learning enhancement rather than a substitute for skill development and genuine engagement with their studies. The survey data shows that students understand this significant difference in GenAI use.

The next steps will be to assess students' use to ensure it is effective, and to roll out this approach to other areas of the business, including UTS College programs conducted offshore through TNE centres.

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