Generative AI policies in higher education for human-centered learning: A qualitative thematic analysis of documents

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Abstract. This article examines the evolving landscape of generative artificial intelligence (AI) policies in universities and colleges, situating them within broader knowledge systems and frameworks of human intelligence. The study employs a reflexive thematic analysis of AI policy documents to map the current landscape of generative AI policies in higher education. The data corpus consists of three main sources: (1) global recommendations and position papers issued by international organizations and accrediting bodies; (2) scholarly generalizations of policy statements and frameworks from higher education institutions; and (3) institutional-level disciplinary syllabi AI policy statements presented in Crowdsourced Syllabus Statements on AI Tools. Documents were selected based on relevance to generative AI, higher education, and policy development. Case studies from leading universities illustrate diverse policy approaches, ranging from strict restrictions on AI-assisted assignments to integrative strategies embedding AI literacy and ethical considerations into curricula. By mapping these policy landscapes, this article contributes to an understanding of how higher education organizes, shares, and applies knowledge in the age of generative AI. It argues that successful AI integration depends on flexible governance, ongoing stakeholder dialogue, and institutional capacity to adapt policies in response to rapidly evolving technologies. In doing so, higher education institutions not only safeguard academic integrity but also shape the societal norms of responsible AI use for future generations.

Keywords: *generative AI policies, higher education, thematic analysis, academic integrity, governance, human-centered learning.*

Андрієнко-Дженін Тетяна, Саєдж Джордж. Політика стосовно генеративного штучного інтелекту для навчання, орієнтованого на людину: якісний тематичний аналіз документів.

Анотація. Стаття покликана вивчити розвиток політики щодо генеративного штучного інтелекту (ШІ) в університетах та коледжах, розглядаючи її в контексті

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ширших систем знань та концептуальних рамок людського інтелекту. У дослідженні використано підхід на основі тематичного аналізу документів для відображення поточного стану політики щодо генеративного ШІ у сфері вищої освіти. Корпус даних складається з трьох основних джерел: (1) глобальні рекомендації та програмні документи, опубліковані міжнародними організаціями та акредитаційними органами; (2) наукові узагальнення програмних заяв та концептуальних рамок від закладів вищої освіти; та (3) програмні заяви щодо ШІ на рівні дисциплін, представлені у документі *"Crowdsourced Syllabus Statements on AI tools"*. Документи було відібрано на основі їхньої актуальності для генеративного ШІ, вищої освіти та розробки політики. Приклади з провідних університетів ілюструють різноманітні підходи до формування політики – від суворих обмежень щодо завдань, виконаних за допомогою ШІ, до інтеграційних стратегій, що передбачають включення ШІ-грамотності та етичних міркувань до навчальних програм. Шляхом аналізу цих політичних ландшафтів стаття сприяє розумінню того, як вища освіта організовує, поширює та застосовує знання в епоху генеративного ШІ. Успішна інтеграція ШІ залежить від гнучкого управління, постійного діалогу між зацікавленими сторонами та інституційної спроможності адаптувати політику відповідно до технологій, що стрімко розвиваються. Отже заклади вищої освіти не лише захищають академічну доброчесність, а й формують суспільні норми відповідального використання ШІ для майбутніх поколінь.

Ключові слова: *політика щодо генеративного штучного інтелекту, вища освіта, тематичний аналіз, академічна доброчесність, управління, навчання, орієнтоване на людину.*

Introduction

Our time has seen an unprecedented growth of AI development and breakthrough into everyday use. According to Perez (2025), ChatGPT became the fastest app ever to reach 100 million monthly active users shortly after its November 2022 release as a research preview, – a milestone it hit in only two months' time, reaching 100 million weekly active users by November 2023, which grew to 300 million by December 2024, then 400 million in February 2025.

Bick et al. (2024/2025) found that by late 2024 nearly 40 % of U.S. adults (age 18-64) had used generative AI. About 23 % of employed respondents had used it for work in the prior week, and 9 % used it every work day. Chatterji et al. (2025) document that from launch in November 2022 to July 2025, ChatGPT was adopted by about 10% of the world's adult population. They show adoption is growing especially quickly in lower-income countries, and non-work (everyday) uses now dominate usage (~70 %) over work-related uses.

At the vanguard of this exponential growth were early adopters – college students attracted to AI technology at first by its novelty (Andreessen Horowitz, 2025). Harvard Undergraduate Survey on Generative AI that studied the influence of AI on the study habits, class choices, and career prospects of Harvard undergraduates (n=326), found that almost 90 % of students use

generative AI. For roughly 25 % of these students, AI has begun to substitute for attending office hours and completing required readings. Half of students are concerned that AI will negatively impact their job prospects, and over half of students wish that Harvard had more classes on the future impacts of AI (Hirabayashi et al., 2024). In another study (Contractor, Reyes, 2025), 82.5 percent of Middlebury College students reported using generative AI for academic purposes, with substantial variation in usage intensity: 23.5 percent use it rarely, 22.2 percent occasionally, 26.2 percent frequently, and 10.6 percent very frequently.

Despite some variance, most studies show almost universal adoption of AI by college students, which should be the sign of optimistic embrace of the innovation. Yet AI euphoria is not as impeccable as one might think. Half of the surveyed Harvard students were worried that AI would increase economic inequality, and 40% believed that extinction risk from AI should be treated as a global priority with the same urgency as pandemics and nuclear war (Hirabayashi et al., 2024).

Extensive adoption of AI, including in education, boosted research of AI, resulting in fast growth of publications in leading scholarly journals. Bibliometric analysis covering the period from 1998 to 2023, shows 19.16 % growth in research output on chatbots (narrowed to ChatGPT) and generative AI in the Web of Science and 27.19 % in Scopus (Khosravi et al., 2024). The key areas of interest appear to be AI and related technologies, design and evaluation of conversational agents, digital technologies and mental health (usage in apps, impact on psychological well-being).

Although several recent systematic reviews and meta-analyses of ChatGPT / generative AI in education do treat policy-related issues (academic integrity, ethics/fairness, pedagogy and learning outcomes, institutional readiness and governance recommendations), the studies focused exclusively on AI policies in educational contexts are scarce.

Most systematic reviews treat policy as one important implication among others (ethics, pedagogy, integrity), and then offer recommendations (e.g., policy templates, governance principles). Thus, Bittle & El-Gayar (2025) explicitly review generative AI and academic integrity and set a research agenda with policy implications. Other reviews (e.g., Batista 2024; Albadarin 2024; Munaye et al., 2025) emphasize impacts and responses in higher education (assessment redesign, instructor practice, guidance).

This overview demonstrated that, despite the rapid growth of research on generative AI in education and extensive AI use in colleges and universities, systematic reviews reveal that most scholarship has centered on pedagogy, academic integrity, and ethical implications, while few studies have examined AI policies in higher education as a distinct area of inquiry. The absence of policy-focused syntheses creates a significant gap, as universities face urgent pressures

to establish governance frameworks that balance innovation with integrity, equity, and transparency.

Current reviews often highlight policy implications in passing, but fail short of systematically analyzing institutional guidelines, regulatory responses, or governance practices. This lack of consolidated evidence leaves administrators and faculty without clear benchmarks for developing effective AI policies, resulting in fragmented approaches across institutions. Therefore, a dedicated examination of AI policy landscapes in higher education is needed to address inconsistencies, provide comparative insights, and guide institutions in aligning technology adoption with ethical and pedagogical responsibilities.

Considering the existing gap in the research literature and the urgent need for providing research-based guidance for the educational institutions in shaping their AI policies, we see the aim of this study as providing a systematic overview of AI policies across domains and institutions of higher education, with attention to both global recommendations and institutional-level implementations.

The study pursues the following objectives:

1. Following thematic analysis framework by Braun and Clarke (2006), to identify general principles and international recommendations on AI in higher education based on the guidance from international educational governing bodies (e.g., UNESCO, CHEA, ACBSP, EDUCAUSE).
2. To reveal approaches and implications of generative AI policies articulated in university syllabi and institutional guidelines.
3. To assess the alignment and gaps between global guidance and institutional practices regarding academic integrity, ethics, and student data privacy.
4. To provide a set of policy recommendations that support ethical, equitable, and pedagogically sound integration of AI in higher education.

In alignment with the purpose and objectives, the Research Questions are:

1. What are conceptual frameworks and general principles of developing policies for AI use in higher education, outlined in the guidance by international organizations and accrediting bodies?
2. How do educational institutions approach developing AI policies, including in course syllabi?
3. To what extent do institutional policies align with, diverge from, or extend global recommendations, and what gaps or challenges emerge in this comparison?

Development of policies for using Generative AI in Higher Education Institutions is governed by the guidelines and principles set by the leading accrediting organizations, international and national bodies that oversee educational policies. This article summarizes the main principles, definitions

and research findings about Generative AI policies in higher education institutions.

Method

Materials

This study employs a qualitative document analysis approach to map the current landscape of generative AI (GenAI) policies in higher education. The data corpus consists of three main sources: (1) global recommendations and position papers issued by international organizations and accrediting bodies, including UNESCO, the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP) and EDUCAUSE, a US nonprofit association aiming to advance higher education through the use of information technology; (2) scholarly generalizations of policy statements and frameworks from higher education institutions; and (3) institutional-level disciplinary syllabi AI policy statements presented in *Crowdsourced syllabus statements on AI tools* (Eaton, n.d.).

Documents have been selected based on relevance to GenAI, higher education, and policy development. Global-level sources provide ethical and governance principles, while institutional syllabi and guidelines illustrate practical implementations.

To establish the main themes and patterns in AI policies of different levels and examine alignments and gaps between international recommendations and institutional practices, this study employs thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) which allows to examine patterns of meaning and interpretation across international, national, and institutional documents related to the governance of generative AI in higher education. Thematic analysis is well-suited to the purpose of this research, as it enables systematic identification and interpretation of both explicit (manifest) and implicit (latent) ideas within policy texts, for a deeper understanding of how AI policy principles are conceptualized, framed, and enacted across different contexts. ChatGPT (OpenAI, GPT-5.2) was used as an assistive tool to support the organization of codes and refinement of thematic descriptions; all substantive analytical judgments, interpretations, and conclusions were made solely by the authors.

Statement of the Problem

Active adoption of generative artificial intelligence (AI) is a testament to its positive contributions to augmented quality and increased productivity. Positive accounts of AI's potential to improve processed and results come from across

industry and academia alike. The 2023 study of the impact of generative AI on market equilibrium revealed its capability to generate creative content akin to human output with greater efficiency and reduced costs (Zhang et al., 2023). Numerous authors demonstrate the potential of AI to enhance learning by fostering creativity (Akbar et al., 2024; Manditereza & Chamboko-Mpotaringa, 2024; Omran Zailuddin et al., 2024), developing soft skills such as problem-solving, communication, collaboration and critical thinking (Alvarado-Bravo et al., 2025; Akbar et al., 2024; Hasan et al., 2025) and providing personalized adaptive learning experiences (Akbar et al., 2024; Merino-Campos, 2025; Sajja et al., 2024; Huang, 2025). AI-driven assessment is envisioned as not only the tool to reliably measure higher cognitive skills such as inference, originality, communication clarity, but also way to enhance critical thinking and creativity among university students, also fostering positive emotions (Suazo-Galdames et al., 2025; Zhao, 2024).

This enthusiasm around using generative AI for enhanced, personalized and in-depth learning is shadowed by ethical concerns that are raised by almost all authors writing about the use of AI in education. An extensive systematic literature review that generalized the findings of 41 studies discovered that, while GenAI can enhance educational engagement and efficiency, it also poses significant risks of academic dishonesty (Bittle & El-Gayar, 2025). Thematic analysis of the literature revealed the reoccurring topical categories: risks of academic dishonesty and cheating; pedagogical implications – reducing critical thinking and engagement and undermining the entire learning process (Ibid.).

In addition to traditional concerns about issues surrounding plagiarism/ academic integrity, assessment methods, and the appropriate use (Rajabi et al., 2023; Pikhart & Al-Obaydi, 2025), risks of using generative AI in higher education include transparency, user privacy, data confidentiality, data integrity, and the validity of AI-generated data. (Schaeffer et al., 2024; Doğan et al., 2025; Pikhart & Al-Obaydi, 2025). On the education process side, reduced interaction between academicians and students (Doğan et al., 2025), limitations of AI in replicating human interaction and addressing students' emotional and behavioral engagement, the potential for AI to undermine critical thinking, as well as data misuse, system availability/ disparities in technology access (Rajabi et al., 2023; Pikhart & Al-Obaydi, 2025).

Other authors add concerns about broader social implications of AI, finding that students are worried that AI will increase economic inequality, and 40 % believe that extinction risk from AI should be treated as a global priority with the same urgency as pandemics and nuclear war. (Hirabayashi et al., 2024). There were apprehensions concerning shifts in workforce dynamics and the impact of AI on the role of teachers and the potential for job displacement.

(Pikhart & Al-Obaydi, 2025; Doğan et al., 2025). Many authors note that the lists of risks they provide are non-exhaustive.

The psychological state resulting from uncertainty in ethicality of using AI is the phenomenon of AI guilt. AI guilt, introduced as a term by Chan (2024), describes the moral discomfort students experience when using GenAI for tasks traditionally performed by humans. Individuals feel guilt or moral discomfort when using AI tools, fearing that reliance on these technologies might be perceived negatively or as disingenuous. Chan (2024, 2025) also identifies three dimensions of AI guilt: perceived laziness or inauthenticity, fear of judgment, and identity and self-efficacy concerns.

AI guilt causes moral discomfort and inhibits the use of AI (Qu & Wang, 2025), diminishes both utilitarian and hedonic benefits of AI use and reduces its use and promotion (Jo, 2025). Qu & Wang (2025) explicitly connect AI guilt with the lack of clear institutional policies, describing it as "a psychological experience students must navigate when institutional guidelines remain unclear" (P. 2090 – underlined by TA, GS). The authors that discuss generative AI risks, consistently emphasize the need for clear guidelines and transparent GenAI policies to ensure responsible usage and mitigate potential drawbacks (Rajabi et al., 2023), with calls for ethical guidelines, critical evaluation, and the preservation of human elements in education (Pikhart & Al-Obaydi, 2025). As a possible solution, researchers suggest the need for enhancing digital literacy and developing robust detection tools (Bittle & El-Gayar, 2025).

Thus, extensive literature analyses reveal dual impacts of generative AI on higher education:

- On the one hand, it has positive impacts by increasing productivity and demonstrates potential to enhance learning by fostering creativity, developing soft skills such as problem-solving, communication, collaboration and critical thinking, and providing personalized adaptive learning experiences. AI-driven assessment is envisioned as not only the tool to reliably measure higher cognitive skills such as inference, originality, communication clarity, but also but also way to enhance critical thinking, creativity and positive emotions.
- On the other hand, the use of AI in higher education draws on criticism of validity of AI-generated data and concerns over integrity/ plagiarism/ academic dishonesty, as well as risks of decreased critical thinking, emotional engagement and human interaction. Other possible risks include increased inequality due to access to technology, future job insecurity, data privacy and confidentiality breaches and data misuse.

Uncertainties of the individuals (both educators and students) if their use of AI is ethical, results in the negative phenomenon of AI guilt – moral discomfort experienced when using GenAI for tasks traditionally performed by humans. AI

guilt inhibits the use of AI in education, thus limiting the educators, students and institutions in using today's technology and disconnecting the students from the advancements in the industries and workplaces.

As follows from research findings, providing clear guidance on AI use in academic institutions will be beneficial for reducing the risks of academic dishonesty, AI guilt, data insecurity and other potential risks of generative AI use. Developing clear policies and guidelines may provide a firm foundation for developing solutions that will promote ethical use of AI to enhance learning, stimulate creativity and individualize learning experiences, thus contributing to self-directed learning, while effectively managing the risks.

To analyze the scope of the problem, possible approaches, stakeholders in developing AI policies and solutions suggested by institutions of different levels, this study analyzes generative AI policies from supranational level to syllabi policies, seeking to establish the main topics and patterns for coherent recommendations that may help the institutions and educators clearly design their policies for ethical and beneficial use of AI in higher education. AI policy documents and publications are analyzed to determine (1) the scope of AI definition they cover, (2) the fields of AI use/applications in higher education, (3) the involvement of parties/stakeholders in policies development, (4) the general principles and practices of AI use policies emerging through the themes and patterns in AI policy documents.

Definitions and Scope

Generative AI and Generative Pre-Trained Transformers

Generative AI is a subset of artificial intelligence (AI) that focuses on creating new data or content rather than analyzing and interpreting existing data (McKinsey Consultant, 203). Generative Pre-trained Transformers (GPT) are a type of generative AI model that use deep learning techniques to generate natural language text. The latest versions of GPT, GPT-3.5 and GPT-4, large language models which are trained on a large corpus of text data, are capable of producing human-like text with high levels of coherence, complexity, and diversity. GPT-3.5 and GPT-4 are both examples of artificial general intelligence (AGI), which is the ability of AI systems to perform any intellectual task that a human can do.

Key Policy Domains for Generative AI in Higher Education

According to the *2024 EDUCAUSE Action Plan: AI Policies and Guidelines*, higher education institutions are urged to develop comprehensive generative AI

policies through three interconnected lenses: governance, pedagogy, and operations (Robert & McCormack, 2024). These perspectives provide a framework for institutions seeking to implement responsible, equitable, and sustainable AI integration.

1. Governance. Governance encompasses the ethical, legal, and cultural frameworks that guide institutional AI use. Because generative AI tools depend on probabilistic models, they are prone to hallucinations, factual inaccuracies, and cultural bias in text generation. As recent scholarship notes, governance policies must therefore emphasize transparency, accountability, and data protection, while mitigating algorithmic bias (Pinho et al., 2025). EDUCAUSE cautions that institutions should prohibit entry of sensitive or personal data into public AI platforms, as these inputs may be retained and used for model training, risking breaches of privacy or data-protection laws (Robert & McCormack, 2024). Recent reviews also reveal that fewer than 60 percent of U.S. research universities explicitly address issues such as diversity, equity, and inclusion in their AI policies, signaling a critical governance gap (McDonald et al., 2024).

2. Pedagogy. Pedagogical policy focuses on how generative AI transforms teaching, learning, and assessment. Instructors are encouraged to set clear course-level expectations for AI use—defining when and how students may employ AI tools and what constitutes academic integrity. The University of California, Los Angeles, for instance, suggests that faculty ask students to "fact-check" AI outputs by consulting primary or secondary sources, fostering AI literacy and critical reasoning (EDUCAUSE, 2024). Empirical research further supports this approach: Chan (2023) found that faculty-driven frameworks combining ethics education with guided experimentation help cultivate student discernment and responsible AI use. International studies also reveal that AI policies emphasizing academic integrity and reflective engagement can turn generative AI from a perceived threat into a pedagogical opportunity (Yusuf et al., 2024).

3. Operations. Operational policy addresses the institutional systems and infrastructures that support AI adoption. Universities must ensure technical readiness, provide staff training, and establish secure infrastructures to host or integrate AI tools. The Association of Pacific Rim Universities' 2025 whitepaper highlights that sustainable AI operations require governance models, staff capacity building, and collaborative institutional networks that share best practices (Liu & Bates, 2025). Similarly, EDUCAUSE (2024) underscores that operational policies should promote both innovation and accountability by defining roles, responsibilities, and mechanisms for risk management and data security.

Beyond these three domains, policy development should occur across four interrelated levels of action:

- Individual: Engage students and faculty to assess ethical perceptions and patterns of AI use.
- Departmental: Identify how AI supports program goals and foster collaboration across disciplines.
- Institutional: Establish an AI governance body to oversee responsible use and equitable access.
- Multi-institutional: Partner with other universities and industry to exchange strategies and resources (Robert & McCormack, 2024; Ghimire & Edwards, 2024).

Finally, institutions should implement feedback and evaluation mechanisms—for instance, brief surveys or focus groups—to measure the effectiveness and acceptance of generative-AI policies, ensuring continuous improvement.

Stakeholders in AI Policies Development

The studies of perspectives and stakeholder involvement in developing AI policies demonstrated a dynamic and rapidly changing nature of this area. While 2024-2025 studies provide insights into the situation at the time of data collection, they also highlight the direction of ongoing changes.

Extensive research involving over one hundred institutions (81 High Schools (HS) and 21 institutions of higher education) has been done by Ghimire & Edwards (2024) to establish the main parties to be involved in the development of AI policies. According to the data of 102 complete survey responses, the researcher found that the prevailing sentiment among administrators was a critical need for AI policies. This was in sharp contrast with the current status that Ghimire & Edwards (2024) observed – only 5 % of higher education institutions reported that they already have an AI policy in place, with over 80% actively developing such a policy, and 15 % having no plans to enact one. On the other hand, only 50 % of high schools reported that they are in the process of policy formulation, while approximately 45 % neither have a policy nor plans to develop one.

Summarizing the approaches of over 100 top universities in the US, Wang et al. (2024) note that 36.5 % universities have undecided or unclear AI policies. They observe that universities tend to show a generally open but cautious stance with a strong tendency towards encouraging instructors to manage the use of ChatGPT according to their own teaching contexts (Wang et al., 2024, p. 5), due to the uncertainty and complexity of adopting AI in higher education practices.

In a study published a year later based on the data of 116 education institutions, McDonald et al. (2025) found that majority of universities (73, 63 %)

encourage the use of GenAI, with many offering detailed guidance for its use in the classroom (48, 41 %). Over half the institutions provided sample syllabi (65, 56 %) and half (58, 50 %) provided sample GenAI curriculum and activities that would help instructors integrate and leverage GenAI in their teaching.

More than half of all institutions in the analysis provided suggested sample syllabi for faculty (65, 56 %). More than half stipulated syllabus statements for a range of use (64, 55 %); by contrast, more than half (63, 54 %) provided guidance on designing assignments that discouraged use of GenAI by students and more than one in five (27, 23 %) provided guidance on using GenAI detection tools.

These findings, although based on a different sample, may be demonstrating the tendency to developing a more defined stance of the universities towards establishing rules and policies for AI use between 2024 and 2025.

For the crucial question, who should be responsible for creating AI policies, the responses indicate a diverse perspective on who should be responsible and involved for formulating the policies governing the use of emerging technologies like ChatGPT in education. School administrators are seen as the most responsible entities, followed by teachers and students, along with school board and parent-teacher association (Ghimire & Edwards, 2024). However, in higher education practices, Wang et al. (2024) found that the majority (57, 54.8 %) of US top universities give the decision-making agency in determining AI policies to individual instructors, while a modest 9.6 % had implemented conditional use policies in place (p. 4). In McDonald et al. (2025) study, 58, 50 % universities suggested that teachers reflect on their approach to teaching and evaluating students, leaving it open as to how they approached AI for their classroom and thus making the instructor a final decision-maker.

The focus areas of AI policies identified by school administers were identified as 'Ethical Considerations' and 'Stopping Plagiarism' as the top two areas, with over 80 % of responses, followed by ensuring students' safety and compliance with regulations (Ghimire & Edwards, 2024). The Wang's et al. (2024) data revealed higher attention to issues such as plagiarism (n = 35, 33.7 %), inadequate proper attribution and citations (n = 38, 36.5 %), and the limitations of AI tools (n = 31, 29.8 %). On the other hand, topics related to professional research writing, such as intellectual property (n = 13, 12.5 %) and data privacy (n = 28, 26.9 %), have received comparatively less attention in these policies (p. 5).

The fact that almost 60% institutions in both studies entrusted the instructors with developing the AI policies and determining the measure to which AI can be used in their classes despite strong ethical considerations, testifies, on the one hand, to academic freedom and empowerment of faculty as the main actors in decision-making, indicating a "contextualized and faculty-centric approach" (Wang et al., 2024, p.4). On the other hand, the findings emphasize the importance of multi-stakeholder dialogues for creating

governance mechanisms that are robust yet flexible enough to accommodate rapid technological changes (Ghimire & Edwards, 2024). Active role of university or school boards, administration and broader society, including parents and/or students, would ensure inclusion of all perspectives, more informed decision-making and shared responsibility of the policies that are developed.

Researchers emphasize that the advancements in Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) can provide opportunities for enriching educational experiences, but at the same time raise concerns regarding academic integrity The findings provide four practical pedagogical implications for educators when considering GenAI in teaching practices: 1) accepting GenAI presence, 2) aligning GenAI use with learning objectives, 3) evolving curriculum to prevent misuse of GenAI, and 4) adopting multifaceted evaluation strategies (Wang et al., 2024). Other recommendations for effective and ethical use of AI in academic institutions include evaluating GenAI through special student activities, using use of GenAI in STEM related courses and research, encouraging instructor use of AI for lesson planning and ensuring the institutional guidance around GenAI to exclude biases (McDonald et al., 2025).

Alongside best practices and recommendations, the authors underscore critical gaps in policy adequacy and the necessity for policies to evolve alongside educational technologies (Ghimire & Edwards, 2024; Wang et al., 2024). This invoked our interest in exploring the general principles and practices of AI use policies emerging through the themes and patterns in AI policy documents, with a specific focus on the discrepancies between institutional and syllabi policies.

Educational Leadership and Benefits of AI Integration

Generally, educational institutions still are having difficulty integrating a codified approach to the implementation and use of AI. This can be due to many factors such as legacy system integration, budgetary constraints, and lack of knowledge pertaining to AI systems and its strategic application into the educational ecosystem. The goal of AI in higher education is to provide a lattice for improving teaching and learning practices, decision-making, student services support, governance and compliance (Sposato, 2025).

Administrative efficiency has become a focal point among educational leaders. Specifically, the transformation of educational leadership precipitated by AI has become a point of contention that persists today and in the foreseeable future. This concern has been offset by notable improvements in how resources are allocated that improve the efficacy and management of administrative tasks (Abayomi et al., 2021). Evidence of improved scheduling systems using machine learning (ML) algorithms have decreased the

administrative workload by as much as 40 % while concurrently improving resource management (Kuleto et al., 2021).

A precursor for educational leadership's ability to adopt AI technologies as a support mechanism for making strategic, and fastidious strategic decisions. Predictive analytics and modeling (used in conjunction with ML) can accurately estimate how policy changes can influence both student performance and institutional performance (Wang, 2021).

For example, AI predictive analytical tools can evaluate policy changes among various student populations, aiding in promoting more equitable student learning outcomes (Zhang et al., 2022).

Integrating AI into Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) can have a significant impact and influence on many aspects of higher learning including andragogical and instructional design. The alignment of leadership initiatives with AI adoption, accountability, and governance is critical for the success of such initiatives. The promotion, cultivation and fostering of an environment that provides a stable construct that is supportive of AI adoption and successful integration. Logically, leadership should adopt a transformational role in HEIs across three key domains. Academics can provide AI-enabled adaptive learning capabilities, personalized curriculum, and automated grading. Administration can automate processes such as enrollment, record-management, and financial aid. While leadership can use AI to perform data analytics, aid in making fastidious policy decisions, strategic planning and resource optimization (Khairullah et al., 2025).

While much research has been generated and dedicated to the development and adoption of AI, some studies have revealed that the benefits of AI in HEIs may not be the technological panacea that is forecasted. Research may have revealed a concerning paradox involving the use of AI and undergraduate students. It was revealed that while 89 % of students use AI tools for completing academic assignments, only 39.7 % report that these same AI tools significantly improved the understanding of course material (Li et al., 2025).

Results and Discussion

Institutional and Syllabi Policies: Results of Thematic Analysis and Their Discussion

To determine the general principles and practices of AI use policies, an array or AI political statements from international educational and accrediting bodies were analyzed, along with the syllabi policies for a range of university courses.

UNESCO guidelines on the ethical use of AI technologies emphasize the key idea of human-centeredness and hence, human rights and values laid out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) are advised to be adopted as the necessary foundation to further promote beneficial and appropriate use of AI technologies (UNESCO, 2021b, 2023). Yet, as the UNESCO's *AI and Education: Guidance for Policy-Makers* was written before the availability of GPT 3.5 and 4, the recommendations would not have fully addressed the current opportunities and threats of the advances in the GPT technologies for education (Chan, 2023).

The Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) provides suggested guidance for accrediting organizations and institutions employing AI platforms, including: (1) human control of the decision-making process; (2) deployment and documentation of authentic data; (3) adherence to ethical guidelines of transparency and accountability; (4) protection and security of data and content; (5) reliability of AI systems (Council for Higher Education Accreditation, 2024).

Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP) focuses its *Guidance for Prudent and Ethical Use of AI in Business Education* on (1) human-centric teaching and learning; (2) integrity, ethics, and academic honesty; (3) transparency and disclosure; (4) access and fairness across learning environments; (5) data privacy and security; (6) ai literacy and competency development; (7). evaluation and continuous quality improvement (ACBSP, 2024).

The data from these and other documents were analyzed using thematic coding to identify key policy domains, applying a hybrid approach with deductive categories derived from established international principles such as accountability, transparency, equity, and human-centeredness, and new themes revealed inductively from institutional-level policies. This approach ensures both alignment with global frameworks and sensitivity to institution-specific practices. Thematic analysis followed the flexible framework outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), which supports both theory-driven and data-driven identification of patterns across qualitative datasets.

As an empirical basis for this study the *Crowdsourced Syllabus Statements on AI Tools* Google Spreadsheet (Eaton, n.d.), an openly available and collaboratively maintained resource where educators contribute examples of institutional and course-level policies on the use of generative AI, is used with the explicit permission of the database creator Lance Eaton. The spreadsheet contained 192 entries at the time of access (retrieved on September 14, 2025). Because it is a living, evolving document, the data used in this study reflect only the version accessed on that date.

The dataset was used as a qualitative sample of policy statements across institutions and disciplines. Statements were coded thematically to identify

patterns in how higher education programs frame the role of AI in teaching, learning, and academic integrity.

For establishing common themes and patterns, the available two categories of data – (1) global bodies and international organizations' recommendations; and (2) disciplinary syllabi AI policy statements – this study employed thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework.

As the first step, initial codes were developed from the following texts of global and international organizations' recommendations, including UNESCO for generative AI in education and research (2023), CHEA (2024) and ACBSP (2024) recommendations, as well as EDUCAUSE (2024) guidance. Thirteen codes were developed deductively based on the empirical analysis of the policy documents, and inductively refined during analysis (see Table 1).

Table 1
Initial Codes in International Organizations' Generative AI Policy Recommendations

Code	Definition	Example Excerpt
Ethical Principles	References to fairness, justice, and moral responsibility in AI policy frameworks.	"Generative AI policies should address such issues of ethics, equity and accuracy." (EDUCAUSE, 2024)
Accountability	Mentions of ensuring responsible human oversight and documentation in AI decision-making.	"Ensure AI actors are held responsible for the AI systems' functioning and adherence to ethical principles." (UNESCO, 2023)
Transparency	Requirements to disclose AI use and decision processes for clarity and trust.	"The use of AI in the classroom and across the institution must be clearly disclosed by and to students, faculty, and stakeholders." (ACBSP, 2024)
Privacy and Data Protection	Statements emphasizing security of sensitive data and compliance with legal regulations.	"Putting sensitive personal data such as Social Security and credit card numbers into a public generative AI application could violate federal and state privacy and data protection laws." (EDUCAUSE, 2024)
AI Literacy and Competence Development	Promotion of training and skill-building for faculty and students to use AI	"Business programs are encouraged to foster AI literacy among faculty, staff, and students

	ethically and effectively.	to improve student success outcomes." (ACBSP, 2024)
Academic Integrity	Mentions of maintaining honesty, authenticity, and originality in AI use for learning and assessment.	"Institutions are encouraged to implement AI systems and tools in ways that uphold and ensure academic integrity." (ACBSP, 2024)
Human-Centered AI	Policies emphasizing human judgment, creativity, and mentorship as central to AI implementation.	"AI should enhance, never replace, the essential role of faculty, who remain central to curriculum design, instruction, and mentorship." (ACBSP, 2024)
Institutional Governance	Establishing AI oversight committees, guidelines, and policies that promote ethical and equitable use.	"Establish an AI governing body for oversight and guidelines that foster equity and accuracy." (EDUCAUSE, 2024)
Collaboration and Multi-Institutional Engagement	Encouraging institutions to consult other universities and sectors to share best practices.	"Consult with other universities and private sector organizations to find out how they are handling generative AI challenges." (EDUCAUSE, 2024)
Human Rights Alignment	Ensuring AI systems and policies align with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and promote human well-being.	"Human rights and values laid out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are advised to be adopted as the foundation for AI use." (UNESCO, 2023)
Reliability and Robustness	Focus on the technical reliability, safety, and security of AI systems used in education.	"The reliability of AI systems should be vetted by an authoritative source and approved by the organization using the information." (CHEA, 2024)
Evaluation and Continuous Improvement	Regular review and refinement of AI systems and policies to ensure ethical compliance and alignment with goals.	"Systematic evaluation and ongoing review can help ensure these technologies align with ethical practices and institutional goals." (ACBSP, 2024)
Policy Implementation Levels	Levels at which AI policy operates (individual, departmental, institutional, inter-institutional).	"Engage students and faculty to find out how they use generative AI and how they feel about ethics and the impact on learning." (EDUCAUSE, 2024)

These initial codes were synthesized into 5 overarching, analytically grounded themes, each representing a conceptual dimension of AI policy development in higher education: (1) Ethical and Human-Centered Governance; (2) Data Integrity, Security, and System Reliability; (3) Pedagogical Transformation and Human Agency; (4) Multi-Level Governance; (5) Continuous Evaluation and Capacity Building.

Theme 1: Ethical and Human-Centered Governance focuses on ethics, accountability, and human oversight as being foundational to responsible AI adoption in higher education. It includes codes: Ethical Principles; Accountability; Transparency; Human Rights Alignment

From across documents, a consistent emphasis emerges on *ethical stewardship* and *human-centered AI governance*. Policies highlight fairness, inclusivity, and transparency as prerequisites for legitimate AI use. This theme underscores the philosophical orientation of education toward *responsibility and human rights*, aligning AI governance with universal ethical standards rather than purely technical or efficiency-driven goals.

Theme 2: Data Integrity, Security, and System Reliability. Policies articulate a strong institutional duty to protect personal and private data, ensure system reliability, and maintain compliance with privacy laws. Codes related to this theme are: Privacy and Data Protection; Reliability and Robustness.

The analyzed policy documents, in particular, EDUCAUSE (2024) and CHEA (2024), emphasize the vital importance of protecting sensitive personal data and verifying the reliability of AI systems before institutional deployment. This theme represents the *risk management* dimension of AI policy, combining cybersecurity, auditability, and legal compliance. Policies frame these measures as essential for preserving institutional trust and aligning with international standards like GDPR and FERPA.

Theme 3: Pedagogical Transformation and Human Agency underscores that AI policies should aim to balance technological integration with pedagogical augmentation, preserving the central role of educators and promoting AI literacy. Integrity is central to pedagogical dimension of educational AI policies. This theme is developed based on the following codes: AI Literacy and Competence Development; Academic Integrity; Human-Centered AI.

Guidance from international educational and accrediting organizations calls for *human-in-the-loop* teaching practices, emphasizing that AI should enhance, but never replace the faculty expertise. This theme reflects higher education's pedagogical negotiation between *innovation and authenticity* of teaching and learning. Institutions are urged to promote AI literacy, ethical awareness, and academic honesty while fostering creativity, empathy, and critical reflection.

Theme 4: Multi-Level Governance focuses on conceptualizing AI policies as a multi-layered system involving individual, departmental, institutional, and inter-institutional collaboration. It integrates such codes: Institutional Governance; Collaboration and Multi-Institutional Engagement; Policy Implementation Levels.

EDUCAUSE (2024) presents governance as a distributed process: from faculty-level experimentation to cross-institutional partnerships. This theme highlights the *multiple-level-stakeholder governance* of AI, where leadership extends beyond compliance toward participatory policymaking. Collaboration among universities, accrediting bodies, and industry partners is viewed as essential for adaptive and equitable policy design.

Theme 5: Continuous Evaluation and Capacity Building defines effective AI policy as requiring ongoing assessment, feedback loops, and professional learning to ensure sustainability and alignment with evolving technology. It synthesizes the codes: Evaluation and Continuous Improvement; Institutional Capacity Building (implied across policies).

Generative AI policy sources, specifically, ACBSP (2024) and EDUCAUSE (2024) emphasize evaluation and iterative improvement as signs of policy maturity. This theme focuses on *continuous improvement* within institutions based on learning and evolving their AI frameworks through data-driven feedback, training, and reflective review. Sustainability is not just technical but organizational: maintaining ethical vigilance and pedagogical coherence amid rapid innovation.

As the next step in analysis, the codes and themes were established using the same methodology in the AI Syllabi Policies dataset (Eaton, n.d.). The summary of codes with representative examples is presented in Table 2.

Table 2
Initial Codes in Syllabi Policies Recommendations

Code	Definition	Representative Example
Ethical and Academic Integrity	References to honesty, originality, and ethical AI use in academic work.	"Students must ensure that any use of AI tools upholds principles of academic integrity and does not constitute plagiarism."
Transparency and Citation	Mentions of disclosure or citation when AI tools are used in assignments.	"If AI tools are used to draft or edit your work, this must be clearly disclosed in your submission."
Privacy and Data Security	Focus on data protection, confidentiality, and compliance with laws (e.g., FERPA).	"Do not input personal or university data into AI systems without instructor approval to protect privacy."

Permitted Use of AI	Policies outlining conditions under which AI may be used to support learning.	"AI tools may be used for brainstorming or grammar checking but not for generating full assignments."
Prohibited Use of AI	Statements banning AI use for unauthorized purposes or full text generation.	"Use of ChatGPT or other AI systems to produce full essays is prohibited."
Instructor Discretion	References to professors' authority to set AI rules within their own courses.	"Each instructor may set specific rules for AI use in class activities or assignments."
Learning Enhancement	Statements that recognize AI as a pedagogical support or learning aid.	"Students are encouraged to explore AI tools for study support, provided use aligns with course goals."
Assessment and Evaluation	Policies linking AI use to assessment criteria, grading, or academic honesty in submissions.	"Assignments generated with unauthorized AI assistance will receive a grade of zero."
AI Literacy and Skills	Mentions of developing awareness, competence, and critical understanding of AI.	"This course aims to enhance your AI literacy and critical understanding of emerging technologies."
Student Accountability	References to student responsibility for ethical tool use and the accuracy of AI outputs.	"Students are accountable for verifying all information generated with AI tools."
Consequences of Misuse	Mentions of disciplinary or academic consequences for AI misuse.	"Improper use of AI tools will be treated as a violation of the academic integrity policy."
Fairness and Access	References to inclusivity, bias mitigation, and equitable access to AI technologies.	"AI tools adopted in this course should be accessible to all students, regardless of financial means."
Institutional Alignment	Mentions of consistency with university or departmental policies.	"This course follows the university's institutional guidelines on responsible AI use."

The themes presented in the table emerged through an iterative thematic analysis of syllabus statements addressing AI use in higher education. Initial coding focused on identifying recurring meanings, policy orientations, and pedagogical intentions embedded in the language of the syllabi. Codes were then clustered into higher-order themes based on conceptual similarity, functional purpose, and normative intent, rather than surface-level wording.

Theme 1: Ethics and Governance

Codes under *Ethics and Governance* (Ethical and Academic Integrity; Transparency and Citation; Privacy and Data Security) were grouped together because they all regulate normative boundaries of AI use. These codes reflect institutional concerns with moral responsibility, compliance, and trust in academic processes.

- *Ethical and Academic Integrity* was generated from statements emphasizing honesty, originality, and avoidance of plagiarism, signaling AI as a potential ethical risk that must be governed.
- *Transparency and Citation* emerged as a distinct but related code, capturing disclosure practices that operationalize integrity through accountability.
- *Privacy and Data Security* was coded separately due to its focus on legal and institutional obligations (e.g., FERPA), yet conceptually aligned with governance and oversight.

Together, these codes form a coherent theme centered on protecting academic values and institutional legitimacy in the context of AI adoption.

Theme 2: Teaching and Learning

The *Teaching and Learning* theme aggregates codes that describe AI primarily as a pedagogical tool, regulated through instructional intent rather than moral sanction.

- *Permitted Use of AI and Prohibited Use of AI* were generated through contrastive coding, distinguishing acceptable supportive uses from disallowed substitution of student work.
- *Instructor Discretion* reflects decentralization of authority, highlighting faculty agency in shaping AI use at the course level.
- *Learning Enhancement* captures statements framing AI as a resource for cognitive support and skill development when aligned with learning outcomes.
- *Assessment and Evaluation* was included in this theme because it links AI use directly to grading practices and learning validation.

Collectively, these codes reveal a pedagogical logic in which AI is positioned as conditionally supportive, contingent on instructional goals and assessment integrity.

Theme 3: Student Development

Codes grouped under *Student Development* focus on the learner as an ethical and competent agent, rather than on institutional control or instructional design.

- *AI Literacy and Skills* emerged from forward-looking statements emphasizing critical understanding and responsible engagement with AI technologies.
- *Student Accountability* was coded separately to capture expectations that students verify outputs and take ownership of AI-assisted work.
- *Consequences of Misuse* reflects a developmental framing of discipline, where accountability mechanisms reinforce ethical learning rather than punishment alone.

This theme reflects a shift from compliance-based discourse to capacity-building and responsibility formation, positioning AI use as part of students' professional and ethical development.

Theme 4: Equity and Institutional Policy

The final theme captures structural and systemic considerations that extend beyond individual courses or students.

- *Fairness and Access* was generated from statements addressing inclusivity, bias, and unequal access to AI tools, indicating awareness of social justice implications.
- *Institutional Alignment* reflects efforts to harmonize course-level practices with broader university policies, signaling governance consistency.

Together, these codes form a theme emphasizing equitable implementation and policy coherence, situating AI use within institutional values and infrastructural constraints.

Overall, across themes, the coding process demonstrates a progression from normative regulation (*Ethics and Governance*) to pedagogical structuring (*Teaching and Learning*), learner-centered responsibility (*Student Development*), and institutional and equity-oriented framing (*Equity and Institutional Policy*). The most frequently occurring in the database that included 192 syllabi sample, the most common themes were *Ethics and Governance* (15), *Student Development* (15), *Teaching and Learning* (10), *Equity and Institutional Policy* (9). This thematic structure suggests that AI-related syllabus language functions simultaneously as ethical guidance, instructional policy, developmental scaffolding, and institutional signaling, rather than as a single-purpose regulatory guidance.

As the next step in the analysis of the statements for Gen AI usage made by regulatory supranational and national bodies vs syllabi policies implemented in the teaching process by individual instructors and institutions, we compared the established themes and codes for alignment or discrepancies, to allocate the

areas where more coherence is needed. The results of the thematic comparison are presented in Table 3.

Table 3
Thematic Comparison of International Organizations' and Syllabi AI Policies

Global Policy Theme	Matching/ Related Syllabi Theme	Degree of Alignment	Observed Gap / Divergence	Illustrative Example
Ethics, Accountability & Human-Centered AI	*Ethical & Academic Integrity; Student Accountability*	**Moderate**	Syllabi mention integrity but lack explicit reference to human-centered or rights-based principles.	"Students must ensure AI use follows academic honesty" (syllabus) vs. "AI should uphold human rights and dignity" (UNESCO).
Transparency, Explainability & Disclosure	*Transparency & Citation*	**Moderate**	EDUCAUSE and ACBSP emphasize institutional transparency; syllabi focus only on student disclosure of AI use.	"AI use must be cited" vs. "Institutions must disclose AI use in decision systems."
Privacy, Data Protection & Security	*Privacy and Data Security*	**High**	Strong alignment—both stress safeguarding sensitive data; syllabi express it at a classroom level.	"Do not upload course content to ChatGPT" vs. "Protect personal data in AI systems."
Pedagogical Integration & Innovation	*Learning Enhancement; Assessment & Evaluation*	**High**	Syllabi operationalize global recommendations by embedding AI	"Use AI for study support" vs. "Integrate AI for equitable

			as a learning tool and clarifying assessment norms.	learning innovation."
Faculty Empowerment & Discretion	*Instructor Discretion*	**High**	Both levels affirm faculty agency, though syllabi operationalize it case-by-case rather than through formal policy.	"Each instructor decides how AI is used."
Equity, Inclusion & Access	*Fairness and Access*	**Low to Moderate**	Syllabi rarely address algorithmic bias or inclusion—major gap from UNESCO/ACBSP frameworks.	"Ensure equal access to AI tools" absent in most syllabi.
Institutional Governance & Oversight	*Institutional Alignment*	**Low**	Institutional governance structures emphasized globally are rarely mirrored in syllabi; policies appear fragmented.	Global: "Establish AI governing body"; Syllabi: "Follow university policy."
AI Literacy & Capacity Building	*AI Literacy and Skills*	**Moderate**	Both address education on AI, but syllabi usually refer to awareness rather than systematic literacy development.	"Students will learn to use AI responsibly" vs. "Build institutional AI competency."

As a result of comparison, the strongest alignment between the regulators' and syllabi policies was observed in *Pedagogy, Teaching and Learning* and *Student Development*. The area of strongest alignment is allowing faculty discretion in developing, applying and enforcing the AI polices. While honoring academic freedom and empowering educators, this also implies the need for clear guidance that would be used by the faculty in their decision-making process.

Moderate alignment was observed for *Ethics, Transparency, Privacy, AI Literacy*. While international organizations underscore human-centered or

rights-based principles in using AI for education, advocating human oversight and accountability, syllabi policies focus on avoiding plagiarism and students' disclosure of AI use. The gap here lies in ethics being framed as *organizational responsibility* in policy recommendations, while academic integrity clauses and AI disclosure requirements in syllabi focus on *student conduct* and *plagiarism prevention*.

The weakest alignment is observed between approaches to *Equity & Institutional Governance:* while institutional-level frameworks emphasize *governance, accountability, and ethical design systems,* syllabi focus on *student behavior* and *course-level implementation.*

A comparative thematic analysis of global AI policy guidance (EDUCAUSE, UNESCO, CHEA, ACBSP) and institutional syllabi policies reveals substantial alignment in ethical intent but notable gaps in pedagogical and operational implementation. Both datasets emphasize *ethical governance*, *transparency*, and *academic integrity* as foundational principles, reflecting a shared concern for accountability, data privacy, and fairness in AI use. However, while global policy frameworks prioritize *macro-level governance*, including regulatory oversight, inclusivity, and human-centered design (UNESCO, 2023; CHEA, 2024), syllabi policies operate primarily at the *micro-instructional level*, focusing on classroom guidance, permissible AI uses, and integrity clauses. Pedagogical innovation, collaboration, and AI literacy, central in EDUCAUSE (2024) and ACBSP (2024) guidelines, appear less systematically developed in syllabi, where emphasis often rests on restriction rather than critical engagement. Moreover, while international frameworks encourage *AI literacy, equity, and institutional accountability*, syllabi rarely reference these broader educational goals explicitly. This divergence suggests a policy-practice gap: higher education institutions have begun operationalizing AI ethics, but the translation of global principles into course-level pedagogy remains partial and uneven; AI governance in higher education remains decentralized, with most policies materializing only at the instructor level.

Conclusions and Practical Recommendations for Institutional AI Policy Development in Higher Education

This article contributes to scholarship on knowledge systems by examining how higher education institutions develop generative AI policies as frameworks for organizing, sharing, and applying information responsibly. By synthesizing international guidelines, survey data, and institutional practices, it highlights the governance mechanisms that mediate between technological innovation and

human-centered values. The study advances understanding of how universities function as laboratories for knowledge governance, shaping ethical AI use and influencing broader societal approaches to emerging technologies.

Based on the comparative thematic analysis effective AI governance in higher education requires intentional alignment between macro-level policy frameworks and micro-level instructional practices. Based on the research findings, as well as the analysis of relevant literature, the following recommendations are suggested to address the observed policy–practice gaps while preserving academic freedom and pedagogical flexibility.

1. Active Stakeholder Engagement. Identifying all the parties that may be engaged or impacted by the use of AI in institutions of higher education is absolutely necessary to ensure the inclusion of multiple perspectives, promote an open dialogue and create a sense of shared ownership. The stakeholders, according to different authors, may involve faculty, students, staff and administrators (Mangan, 2024; Palmer, 2024); teachers, students, parents, administrators, technology staff, and members of the larger community (Horn, 2023), experts (DerSimonian, & Montagnino, 2025). Obviously, the scope of stakeholders should be determined based on the level and impact of the institution. Active engagement of stakeholders of different levels will be also a prerequisite of conscious and willing adoption of, and abidance by, the developed policies by the respective parties.

2. Developing AI Policies in alignment with Broader Societal Trends. AI policies should be developed, adjusted and implemented as a response to the general scientific progress of the society and a support of effective and ethical use of the new tools. Palmer (2024) accentuates preparing students for the future workforce as one of the goals of integrating AI into curricula. "Nurture AI literacy skills" (EDUCAUSE, 2024) is the way for the educational institutions to equip students with the skills needed to thrive in an AI-driven economy. Thus, the development of AI policies should set the standards of ethical AI adoption for a broader society, in alignment with the general moral principles of humanism, respect for individuals, authorship and creativity.

3. Establishing Clear Expectations of Institutional AI Policies

Institutions should move beyond fragmented, syllabus-level AI statements by developing clear frameworks of the fields regulated by the respective policy, basic ethical principles to be followed and the scope of regulation/flexibility of the policy implementation. This work may proceed from the assessment of the current policies and needs, as well as gaps in AI adoption (EDUCAUSE, 2024; DerSimonian, & Montagnino, 2025). To ensure that AI initiatives are achieving their intended outcomes, Palmer (2024) suggests establishing clear metrics (KPIs) for assessing effectiveness, such as educational outcomes (improved retention rates, higher graduation rates, or enhanced learning outcomes),

reduced administrative workload or faster service delivery, ethical compliance: reduction in algorithmic bias and increased data transparency. Understanding the goals of AI adoption in an educational institution and measuring is results can provide data for further improvement of the policies and more efficient AI use.

4. Developing AI Policies to Support Pedagogical Innovation

AI policies should explicitly enable experimentation and innovation, rather than primarily restricting use. Creating the culture of ethical experimentation, ongoing professional learning and open communication is crucial to the role of educational institutions as the promoters of knowledge. This is coherently emphasized by policy recommendations (Horn, 2023; Palmer, 2024), however, not clearly stated in the institutional policies and many syllabi emphasize limitations over learning potential, creating a compliance-oriented culture. Frame AI policies as pedagogical enablers should encourage reflective, project-based, and collaborative uses aligned with learning outcomes and promoting pedagogical research and innovation.

5. Framing AI Policies as a Faculty-Focused Decision-Making Guidance

While faculty discretion provides academic freedom, empowerment and faculty agency, it should be supported by clear, principled guidance rather than left entirely to individual interpretation. The absence of shared criteria risks creating additional challenges, inconsistency, inequity, and confusion for students. Providing faculty with sample syllabus language aligned with institutional values, decision-making trees or checklists for evaluating AI use in assignments, as well as best practices and scenario-based guidance would ensure faculty confidence in developing syllabi policies, better alignment and final outcomes.

These recommendations suggest that the future of AI policy in higher education lies in coherent vertical alignment: global ethical principles must be translated into institutional governance, which in turn should inform faculty guidance and course-level implementation. Without this alignment, AI governance risks remaining reactive, fragmented, and overly focused on student compliance rather than educational transformation.

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Tatiana Andrienko-Genin: Conceptualization, Methodology, Software, Validation, Formal Analysis, Resources, Data Curation, Writing – Original Draft, Writing – Reviewing & Editing; **George Sayegh**: Conceptualization, Software, Validation, Investigation, Resources, Data Curation, Writing – Original Draft Writing – Reviewing & Editing.

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As the author of this paper and member of the Advisory Board of the EEJPL, Tatiana Andrienko-Genin declares that she has recused herself from all editorial discussions and decisions concerning this manuscript.

Generative AI Statement

The authors declared that they used ChatGPT (OpenAI, GPT-5.2) as an assistive tool to support the organization of codes and refinement of thematic descriptions. All substantive analytical judgments, interpretations, and conclusions were made solely by the authors.

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