

Does artificial intelligence undermine academic integrity?

An anonymous Record poll found 2/3s of respondents use AI for schoolwork

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"AI is still so new, and it has so many different applications that we need to start having more open conversations in classrooms about how it should be used," Neeya Gupta (10) said. "It's not just a yes-or-no issue, there's a wide range of ways students might turn to AI, from generating practice questions to writing entire essays."

The Horace Mann School Family Handbook outlines the Upper Division (UD)'s prohibition of Artificial Intelligence (AI) use for schoolwork, "unless explicitly given permission to do so by their teacher." The section of the Family Handbook titled Use of Artificial Intelligence further explains: "Horace Mann forbids the use of Artificial Intelligence for writing assistance, including applications like Grammarly that suggest revisions to a student's language. The school's policies and practices regarding plagiarism may also apply."

Despite the school's policy, according to an anonymous Record

the school community, primarily uses AI to complete homework that feels tedious or time-consuming. For history assignments, Peach typically uses ChatGPT to summarize the reading and then answers the questions herself. "With sports, clubs, other homework, and studying for tests, it's hard to find the motivation to finish assignments that are only graded for completion when shortcuts exist."

While Peach's* approach directly violates the school's Honor Code, some students disregard it to an even greater extent. Hubert*, for example, who chose to stay anonymous due to the threat of repercussions from the school, uses AI regularly. "I use it mainly for humanities classes," he said. "Once you have created an outline, it's very easy to copy the outline and say, 'put this into an essay.' Once you have the idea, it's very easy to use Chat[GPT]."

Hubert* is well aware of the rules and consequences against the use of AI at school; however, he still finds a way to get around them. "I know that teachers have a way to detect if you copy and paste something into a doc,

critical thinking and writing skills, is a highly effective way to confront the challenges generative AI presents and to uphold the integrity of students' work," he said.

Regardless, Wilson acknowledges the drawbacks of this approach: students no longer get the chance to sit with an idea over time, write a draft, step away from it, and later return with a fresh perspective. "You miss that moment when, after thinking

that AI usually has a more mature voice than students, she said. "There's a veneer of professionalism, but it feels empty," she said. "There's nothing wrong with writing like a 10th grader, because that's how you learn how to write like an 11th grader."

Conversely, science and computer science classes view AI as a tool rather than a threat. Berry* finds AI extremely helpful and uses it for almost everything, especially in

students and they don't always feel like they have the time to complete everything on time, Claude* said. "Being able to shorten that time by using AI and using the time for a subject you might be struggling on may seem more important to most students."

Additionally, some students use AI as a tool to support, rather than replace, their thinking. Doe*, who chose to remain anonymous to avoid

"I know that teachers have a way to detect if you copy and paste something into a doc, but what I do is just type out what ChatGPT says into the document."

- Anonymous Student

about something for 24 hours, you realize exactly how to reshape a sentence or tweak a paragraph," he said. "In-class writing takes that away, and that's a vital part of writing."

To complement these in-class adjustments, departments have also codified AI-related policies. The current official syllabi for English and history classes now state that "students may not use AI (including consulting AI) to complete work for their classes unless explicitly given permission to do so by their teacher." To reinforce this policy, teachers require students to submit the version history of each of their graded assignments. "We've become very intentional about making sure we can see students' work develop over time, rather than just receiving a finished piece that appears all at once," History Department Chair Dr. Emily Straus said.

However, the tactics have proven ineffective as teachers underestimate how far students are willing to go to get a good grade, Berry*, who chose to remain anonymous to avoid penalization, said. "People are desperate to get good grades and are willing to open up a new document and type out the answers onto the official document just to avoid detection."

In classroom discussions, Straus explains to her students why they shouldn't rely on AI for anything, noting that it often flattens their voice by avoiding specific examples and lacks the nuance that comes from being in class, she said. "While I can usually tell when something sounds off, like when a student doesn't include examples, I'm sure I haven't caught every case," she said.

Similarly to Straus, Head of Upper Division Dr. Jessica Levenstein finds

science and programming, where teachers tend to be more accepting of its use, he said. "Teachers in the Computer Science department see it as more of a tool that students should learn how to adapt to," Berry* said. "You can either get hit by the force of AI and get caught off guard, or embrace the changes and learn to adapt."

Several students noted that AI usage has become more prevalent among students. Gemini*, who chose to remain anonymous for fear of judgment from her peers, knows that many people in her grade use AI for schoolwork and essays, typically to make time for other subjects, she said. While AI was more stigmatized before, it has gradually become normalized with students using it out in the open, showing their friends, or even using it in class, she said. "Especially at a school like Horace Mann, where it's very competitive, students want to strive to get the best grades possible and they rely on AI in order to do so."

There's a mutual understanding that everyone is just trying to manage their workload as best they possibly can, especially given the rigorous nature of the school, Peach* said. "We go to a school where the workload can be overwhelming: constant assessments, extracurriculars, and the expectation to always perform at your best," they said. "Using AI isn't about cutting corners; it's about staying afloat and being efficient."

Moreover, Claude*, who chose to remain anonymous for fear of potential repercussions, believes that AI usage is fueled not by the difficulty of assignments, but rather how time consuming they can be. Humanities classes usually limit homework to 45 minutes, but the time varies among

recognition from teachers, uses AI to help articulate his ideas. When writing essays, he often compiles a list of bullet points based on his own thoughts and then asks ChatGPT to shape them into full paragraphs. "When you attend such a demanding school, the reality is that you sometimes have to get creative," he said. "I always use my own ideas—I just rely on AI to help me express them clearly."

As attitudes toward AI have shifted, so have the ways students talk about it: AI isn't just used in private or in secret; it's often joked about openly in casual conversations, Peach said. "There are constantly jokes flying around, like if someone's struggling with a question or assignment, people will just say, 'Why don't you ask ChatGPT?'" she said. "It's become so ingrained in how we talk about schoolwork that no one really bats an eye when it comes up."

What stands out to Peach* is not just how commonly AI is used, but how openly students are willing to discuss it. "It's very normal for me to have a conversation with my friends where we're all just casually talking about how we've used AI," she said. "One of my friends might say, 'oh, I used it to make an outline,' or 'I had it rephrase a paragraph for clarity,' and nobody judges each other."

Still, according to the poll, a notable 33% say they've never used AI for a range of reasons, from concerns



Sarah Cohen/Art Director

poll with 119 responses, 67% of respondents admitted to using AI to assist with their schoolwork. From brainstorming essay ideas to proofreading written work, explaining concepts, completing homework, and even writing full essays, students admit turning to AI for a variety of tasks.

Peach*, who chose to remain anonymous to avoid judgment from

but what I do is just type out what ChatGPT says into the document," he said. "It's longer, but you still get the appeal of using ChatGPT."

In order to minimize the use of AI, English teacher Vernon Wilson has significantly increased his amount of in-class writing for major assessments this year. "In-class writing, where students must depend on their own

Continued on
page 4...

Continued from page 1: Students’ use of AI for schoolwork

AI for a range of reasons, from concerns about academic integrity and ethical implications to simply preferring to do the work themselves without relying on external tools.

Brianna Wells (12) avoids using AI because she’s concerned about a dependence on it, she said. She’d rather self-develop the skills AI might otherwise shortcut, such as proofreading an essay, creating a study guide, or summarizing a reading. “Even though I don’t really like textbook readings, I’d rather push through them and figure out the content on my own,” she said. “There’s value in grappling with an idea until you understand it because that’s how you learn to problem solve.” Instead of AI, she turns to resources like CrashCourse videos, Khan Academy lessons, or meeting with a teacher when she needs extra support.

Similarly, Gupta refrains from using AI on any submitted or graded assignments but sees its value as a study tool. After completing review packets for chemistry or math, she sometimes inputs the material into ChatGPT and asks it to generate similar practice questions with an answer key to check her work. “I don’t think that should violate academic integrity,” she said. “Ultimately, my grade is based on how I perform on in-class assessments, and using AI for additional practice is just a way to reinforce what I’ve already learned.”

On the contrary, some students feel like they aren’t losing their skills by using AI on tasks, especially when aiming to increase productivity and save time. “When I use AI, I don’t feel like I am losing my skills in writing or research, but rather learning from AI and even improving on those skills,” Berry* said.

While Gupta uses AI for academic reinforcement, others believe the school should take a more supportive stance on its educational potential. Claude* is surprised that different departments vary in their support for AI usage, especially for research. Last year, during the end-of-year Biology project, students were allowed to use AI to

the test, and I’d rather study from that than something AI generates.”

Levenstein hopes that teachers emphasize the negative implications of AI and the benefits of learning how to write and gain confidence in the ability to express oneself, she said. Students should certainly understand where the line lies and what the consequences of AI usage are, Levenstein said. “But more powerful would be for students to understand why it’s worth working really really hard to acquire the skills that are necessary to accomplish your work on your own.”

While the academic integrity policy draws a clear line, not all students interpret the rules the same way. Some, like Peach*, take a selective approach to AI use, often turning to AI to brainstorm arguments for essay prompts. “A lot of our essay questions are so complex, and I just want to make sure I’m considering every possible angle before I start writing,” she said. Once the brainstorming is done, Peach* doesn’t use AI for writing or editing, believing that teachers can usually tell when AI has been used, she said. “Getting the ball rolling is the hardest for me, but after that, I can handle it myself.”

However, teachers are especially opposed to students using AI to generate the initial ideas for their essays, Wilson said. Wilson believes using AI for that purpose undermines the most important part of English and history classes: learning how to form and develop one’s own arguments and opinions. “Students need to work through complex problems independently if they’re going to build real critical thinking abilities,” he said.

Gupta, like Wells, avoids using AI for essays altogether, believing that it’s important to develop and express her own ideas and opinions when forming an analytical argument. “Relying on AI to write, edit, or even inspire your argument is really problematic because it limits your ability to fully engage with or understand the material,” she said. “You’re using someone else’s idea and running with it, which takes away from the creative process that’s so highly valued at our

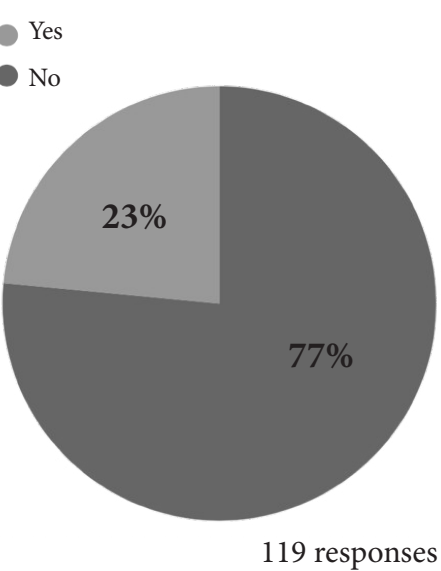
or English, a clear protocol is followed. If a teacher in the history department suspects that a student has used AI on an assignment, they bring the work to the department chair, and the two review it together. “This ensures there are two sets of eyes on the situation, rather than just one,” Straus said. After that, the teacher meets with the student to discuss the work and hear their explanation. If the student admits to using AI, the case is then referred to the Dean. “There has to be a series of conversations because these situations aren’t always black and white.”

Penalties for AI and the discussion of harms of AI have mainly been in the English and history departments, but it is important to consider the impacts and the current ideology on AI in the science department as well. Claude* feels there should be a larger integration of AI into the curriculum, especially about teaching students how to use AI responsibly or figuring out the capabilities of the tool. “AI usage in science and comp sci classes differ so greatly compared to humanities classes in terms of research and content generation that the school should have separate rules [for] English and history.”

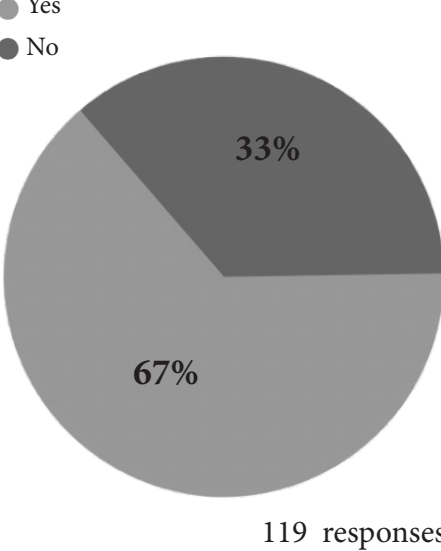
To this end, there is a continuous discussion on how AI can be better integrated amongst departments, Upper Division Dean of Students Michael Dalo said. “The main concern is figuring out how [the school] can harness AI and encourage students to use it in a productive way.”

Since AI is still so new, the school’s policy, unfortunately, isn’t entirely clear to students, Wells said. While the official stance is essentially ‘don’t use AI,’ the policy doesn’t clearly define what exactly qualifies as a violation of academic integrity, she said. “There are so many different ways to use AI, like studying for assessments or generating practice problems, and I don’t see why those should necessarily count as violations,” she said. “I think the policy is too unclear given the wide range of ways AI can be used.”

Do you think school rules implemented to prevent student AI use are working?



Have you ever used AI to help with an assignment?



“Students need to work through complex problems independently if they’re going to build real critical thinking abilities.”

- English teacher Vernon Wilson

come up with an experiment, Claude* said. The students gave the AI a prompt detailing their background and budget limitations as a high school student and a request to create an experiment that focused on testing a specific effect on algae. “It was really effective and I think that was the first time the school really allowed us to use AI,” Claude* said. “I’d love to see more of that in the future, because I think it is really helpful and a necessary skill to learn.”

However, while using AI for non-submitted work like study guides, practice problems, or initial research may seem effective, it has its limits. AI doesn’t always create problems that reflect the material taught in class, Wells said. Since it’s not in the classroom, it can’t reliably predict what will be on an assessment and may include irrelevant information or ask overly complicated questions, she said. “It’s more effective to meet with a teacher or just rely on your class materials,” Wells said. “For me, whatever’s on my packet, I trust to be on

school.”

Levenstein believes that students lose out when they use AI. Students may be completing an assignment, but they aren’t putting it into language or an original idea that feels successful and persuasive, she said. Many students fail to recognize that writing is about communicating their own voice, and that there are many voices that can get high grades, she said. “[Students] are missing out on the enormous satisfaction of being able to express their ideas in exactly the right way,” Levenstein said.

Moreover, students who use AI to write are missing out on an incredible opportunity to learn and grow, Levenstein said. “Students at the school have an incredible privilege, which is a very experienced and devoted faculty who are here in order to help students grow intellectually,” she said. “You have to go through the stages of your development as a writer in order to get to that place organically.”

For students caught using AI in history

———— Poll responses ————

Why I use AI:

- “Homework cause I was lazy”
- “It prepares students for the real world”
- “Forcing kids to do their work without AI is like forcing students to do complicated math without a calculator”
- “I hate busy work”
- “My engineering teachers agrees that AI allows you to complete menial tasks better”
- “Because I have no time”
- “It’s the equivalent of a classmate giving you feedback”

Why I don’t use AI:

- “I realized [AI] took all the personality out”
- “Cheating is bad”
- “Because I’m better than a damn robot”
- “I find it a disrespect to our core values”
- “AI is terrible”
- “I should lowkey”
- “It defeats the whole purpose of school”
- “It’s too much work”
- “I like learning, the environment, and value the fact that I have a functioning mind :)”