2025

Provost's Artificial Intelligence Working Group

FINAL REPORT

AUGUST 2025

TRENT UNIVERSITY

Contents

Executive Summary

The Provost's Artificial Intelligence (AI) Working Group was established in 2024 to explore the opportunities, risks, and institutional readiness for adopting generative AI across teaching, learning, research, and administrative domains at Trent University. Building on the earlier work of the Trent Teaching Commons to develop guidelines for classroom use, the working group's mandate extended to the broader university context.

Through three university-wide surveys (948 responses), 22 focus groups (281 participants), and an environmental scan of Canadian and international institutions, the working group gathered diverse perspectives. Faculty, staff, and students expressed mixed attitudes toward AI, balancing enthusiasm for efficiency, accessibility and innovation with concerns about academic integrity, bias, privacy, job security, and environmental impact.

Survey results revealed varying adoption rates. Between 42-54% of respondents across groups have not used AI in their work, while 6-7% report extensive use. Common academic uses include brainstorming, summarizing, tutoring and course development. Administrative uses range from project planning to content generation and process automation. Stakeholders consistently highlighted the need for clear policies, ethical guidance, training opportunities, and access to institutionally approved AI tools.

The environmental scan results indicate that most universities are in formative stages of AI governance. Leading institutions pair guidelines and policy with targeted training opportunities, risk assessment tools, and expert support teams to enable safe and effective implementation.

Promising near-term opportunities for AI deployment include:

- Student support chatbots and virtual course assistants
- AI tools for research lifecycle support
- Workflow automation and analytics for administrative efficiency
- AI enhanced recruitment, alumni engagement and fundraising
- Cybersecurity and facilities management applications

Recommendations

1. Adopt a set of ethical principles to guide the selection, adoption, deployment, and evaluation of generative AI across teaching, learning, research and administrative domains.
2. Policy owners, senior administration and the University Secretariat monitor the emerging legislative and regulatory requirements for AI use and review existing policies and guidelines to ensure they adequately address the use of generative AI.

3. Establish a standing governance body with representation from across academic and administrative units, reporting to one or more VP level sponsors or champions.
4. Expand training opportunities and support resources for faculty, students and staff to enable safe and effective use of AI technology in their work.
5. Develop targeted, practical guidelines for stakeholder groups and expand support resources and infrastructure to enable safe and effective use of AI tools in teaching, learning, research and business operations.
6. Identify and evaluate pilot projects and provide supportive infrastructure including access to premium AI tools and expert support teams to enable successful implementation.

Background & Context

The Provost's Artificial Intelligence Working Group formed in 2024 following the work of the Trent Teaching Commons and the approval of the Trent Generative Artificial Intelligence Guidelines for instructional faculty, staff and students. Recognizing the need for complementary guidance to support the safe and effective use of generative artificial intelligence outside of the classroom, the working group formed to examine the impact and implications of AI tools in academic, research and administrative contexts.

Objectives

Our goals include:

- Explore and evaluate potential applications and implications of artificial intelligence within academic, research and administrative contexts at Trent University
- Build awareness, capacity, and knowledge across Trent to enable the safe and ethical use of AI tools in teaching, learning, research, and administrative contexts.
- Assess readiness for the adoption of AI at Trent in terms of skills, expertise, infrastructure, and potential applications or use cases.

Working Group Composition

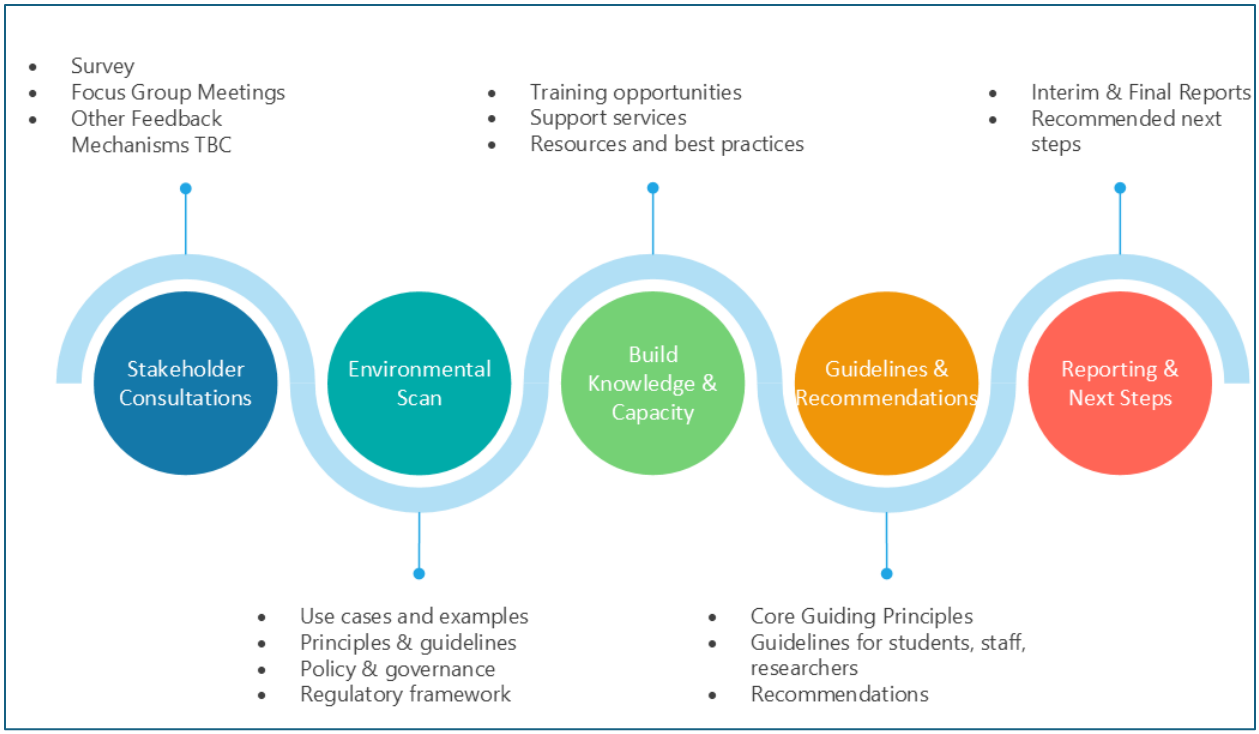
Drawing on diverse perspectives from across the institution, the working group includes:

- University Librarian – Emily Tufts (Chair)
- Associate Dean, Teaching & Learning, Acting Dean of Education – Fergal O'Hagan
- Associate Dean & Acting Dean, Durham – Wenying Feng
- Associate Vice President, Information Technology (Designate) – Ian Thomson
- Manager, College Academic Supports – Erin Stewart Eves
- Manager, Research Engagement – Jamie Elcombe
- Assistant Director, Research Support – Inna Seviaryna
- TUFA Members – Michael Hickson (PHIL), Kirk Hillsley (BIOL), David Riegert (MATH)
- CUPE Member – Michael Bruder (PHIL)

Activity

Our work plan maps key phases:

- Stakeholder Consultations
- Environmental Scan
- Building Knowledge & Capacity
- Guidelines & Recommendations
- Reporting & Next Steps



Findings

We undertook extensive stakeholder consultation across the university, including the distribution of three separate surveys and focus group consultation meetings with various groups across campus. In addition, we conducted an environmental scan to better understand the emerging legislative and regulatory framework for AI adoption and to explore best practices in the higher education sector regarding AI governance, policies and guidelines, resources and supports, and promising use cases.

Surveys

We developed three separate survey instruments and distributed to the Trent community in November 2024, receiving 948 responses in total:

- Faculty & Instructional Staff – 177 responses
- Students – 563 responses
- Non-instructional Staff & Administrators – 208 responses

Survey results reveal a range of attitudes and behaviors related to generative artificial intelligence at Trent. Highlights from the surveys are provided below, and full reports on survey results are included in the appendices of this report.

Faculty and Instructional Staff Survey Highlights

AI use in Teaching

Incorporation of AI Tools:

- 58% of respondents have not incorporated AI tools into their teaching practices.
- 28% have incorporated AI to some extent, and 6% have done so extensively.

Applications of AI in Teaching:

- Common uses include course development (35%), preparing lecture materials (35%), and requiring students to use AI in assignments (37%).
- AI is also used for creating case studies (33%), detecting plagiarism (31%), and classroom discussions about AI (57%).

Reasons for Not Using AI:

- Key reasons include uncertainty about effectiveness (61%), privacy and data security concerns (47%), and pedagogical opposition (45%).
- Other reasons include lack of knowledge or skill (26%) and lack of time to learn AI (39%).

AI Policies in Courses

Classroom Policies:

- 62% of respondents have a policy on acceptable AI use in their courses.
- Policies commonly address AI use for research, brainstorming, note-taking, summarizing lectures, and creating outlines.

Communication of Policies:

- Policies are communicated through course syllabi (69%), class discussions (64%), and academic integrity modules in Blackboard (26%).

Attitudes Towards AI

Concerns About AI:

- Concerns are rated on a 1 to 10 scale, with 10 representing greater concern.
- High concern about students submitting AI-generated work as their own (mean score: 8.67).
- Concerns about students not learning important skills (8.77) and over-reliance on AI tools (8.23).
- Ethical concerns (8.27) and biases in AI technology (7.87) are also significant.

Perceived Benefits:

- Enhanced student learning outcomes (35%), improved accessibility (48%), and increased efficiency (35%).
- AI is seen as beneficial for teaching skills needed in disciplines or professions (35%).

AI use in Research

Incorporation of AI Tools:

- 52% have not incorporated AI tools into their research practices.
- 22% have done so to some extent, and 3% extensively.

Applications of AI in Research:

Common uses include literature searching (45%), coding (48%), summarizing content (55%), and research data analysis (30%).

Reasons for Not Using AI:

- Concerns about research integrity (66%), copyright and intellectual property (49%), and uncertainty about tool effectiveness (46%).
- Other reasons include lack of purpose or utility (57%) and privacy and data security concerns (39%).

Student Survey Highlights

Usage Rate:

- 48% of students have used AI tools to some extent.
- 6% have used AI tools extensively.
- 46% have not used AI tools at all.

Popular AI Tools:

- OpenAI ChatGPT-3 (free version): 84%
- AI Writing Assistants (e.g., Quillbot, Grammarly): 63%
- Microsoft Copilot: 29%
- Google Gemini: 28%
- AI Features in Other Products (e.g., Adobe): 32%

Common Uses of AI:

- Brainstorming: 70%
- Summarizing readings or documents: 57%
- Personal tutoring: 52%
- Searching for information: 51%
- Editing or revising written work: 46%
- Barriers to AI Use Among Students

- Concerns About Academic Misconduct: 83%
- Ethical Concerns: 77%
- Concern About Negative Impact on Learning: 72%
- Uncertainty About Effectiveness or Usefulness of AI Tools: 63%
- Concerns About Data Privacy and Security: 57%
- Lack of Knowledge or Skill: 17%
- Lack of Training to Learn How to Use AI: 13%
- Lack of Time to Learn How to Use AI: 11%
- Limited Access to AI Tools or Infrastructure: 9%

Additional Insights

Future Intentions:

- 62% of students who have used AI tools plan to continue using them.
- Among those who have not used AI tools, 76% do not intend to use them in the next 6-12 months.

Training and Support Needs:

- 77% of students indicated a need for clear guidance on acceptable AI use.
- 67% wanted a list of AI tools approved for use at Trent.
- 64% expressed a need for training on how to use AI tools ethically and effectively.

Non-instructional Staff & Administrator Survey Highlights

AI Use

- 58% of respondents have used AI in their work to some extent (51%) or extensively (7%)
- 42% of respondents reported not using AI in their work at all

Attitudes towards AI

Concerns about AI Use in Higher Education:

Concerns are rated on a 1 to 10 scale, with 10 representing greater concern.

- Students may submit AI output as their own work (mean score 8.76)
- Students not learning important skills (mean score 7.73)
- Students not learning how to effectively and ethically use AI (mean score 7.69)
- Copyright and intellectual property concerns (mean score 7.68)
- Over-reliance on AI tools (mean score 7.60) and decline in critical thinking skills (mean score 7.52)
- Ethical concerns (mean score 7.34), biased technology and algorithms (mean score 7.22) and data privacy concerns (mean score 7.13)

- Labour impacts (mean score 6.61)

Perceived Benefits:

- Improved efficiency: 57%
- Improved accessibility: 54%
- Creative modes of assessment: 52%
- Provision of real-time feedback: 46%
- Teaching skills students need in their discipline or profession: 44%

48% of respondents believe that the impact of AI on their work in the next 2-5 years will be significant (37%) or transformative (11%). 13% of respondents believe AI will have low (11%) or no impact (2%) on their work.

AI Tools

- 26% of respondents who report using AI tools have used AI embedded in other products or platforms, for example Adobe and Canva.
- Respondents who used AI tools have used Chat GPT, either the paid (21%) or free (67%) versions.
- 52% of respondents who have used AI tools report using Microsoft Copilot
- Other tools used by Trent stakeholders include Google Gemini (7%), Anthropic Claude (1%) and DALL-E (10%)
- 12% of respondents who have used AI tools identified other tools not listed including Apple AI, Google Notebook LM, Elevenlabs, Notion, Glean, Otter.ai, Vebit, Grammarly, Stable Diffusion, Gorq/LLAMA-70b, GPT-4o and LM Studio
- 9% of respondents who use AI tools report using custom- or purpose-built AI applications

AI Use Cases

Commonly reported use cases identified by respondents who are using AI in their work include:

- Brainstorming (61%)
- Academic or professional writing (57%)
- Searching for information (39%)
- Summarizing documents or web content (36%)
- Generating other types of content - job postings, budgets, work plans etc. (35%)
- Project planning (23%)

Other use cases include creating media (18%), meeting transcripts and minutes (14%), translating written content (12%), analyzing data (12%), process automation (11%) and writing or debugging code (7%)

83% of respondents who use AI tools in their work plan to continue using them.

Barriers to AI use

Respondents also identified reasons for not incorporating AI tools into their work:

- Concerns about privacy and data security (53%)
- Lack of knowledge or skill (46%)
- Lack of time to learn how to use AI effectively (45%)
- Uncertainty about the effectiveness or usefulness of tools (41%)
- Lack of training or support to learn how to use AI (41%)

Respondents identified concerns about labour displacement, copyright infringement and environmental concerns as other barriers to AI use.

AMOD 5640 Survey Data Analysis

A group of AMOD students analyzed our survey as part of their capstone research project. Yangwenxin Qin, Junhao Liu, and Jianneng Huang carried out quantitative analysis of multiple choice and Likert scale questions using Kruskal-Wallis tests for within-group, between-group and between-dimension analysis of responses. The group employed BERTopic modeling for qualitative analysis of free-text responses to reveal differences in attitudes and beliefs about the benefits and challenges of AI in higher education.

AI Attitude Scores

The student researchers found significant differences across our three stakeholder groups with respect to general AI attitudes. Non-instructional staff respondents tended to view AI more positively than students and faculty or instructional staff (Fig. 1).

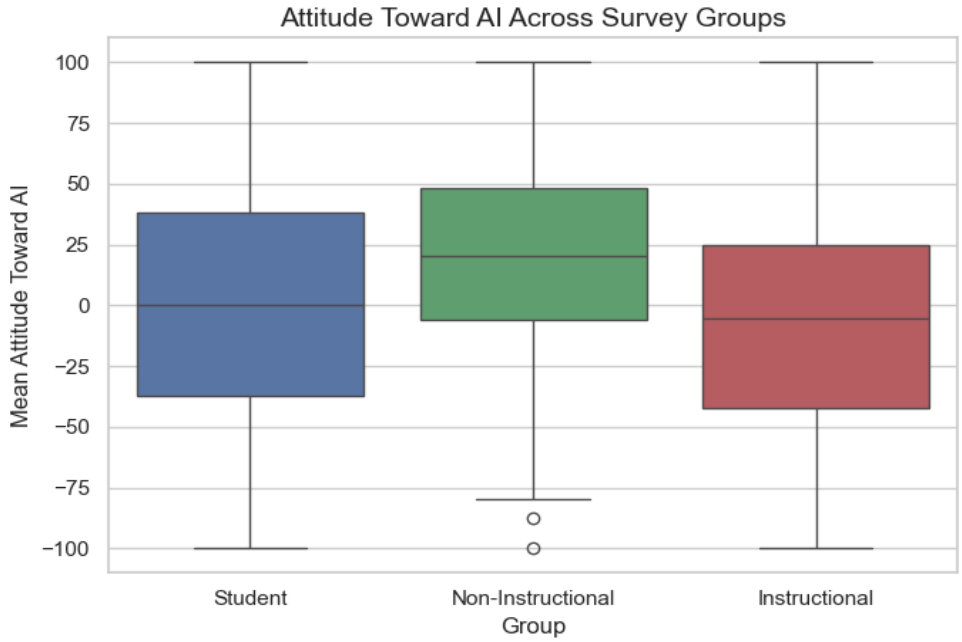


Figure 1 Overall attitude scores across three stakeholder groups

Likewise, the quantitative analysis revealed significant variations in perceived impact of AI across four dimensions: student learning, faculty teaching, faculty research, and employee workload (Fig. 2)

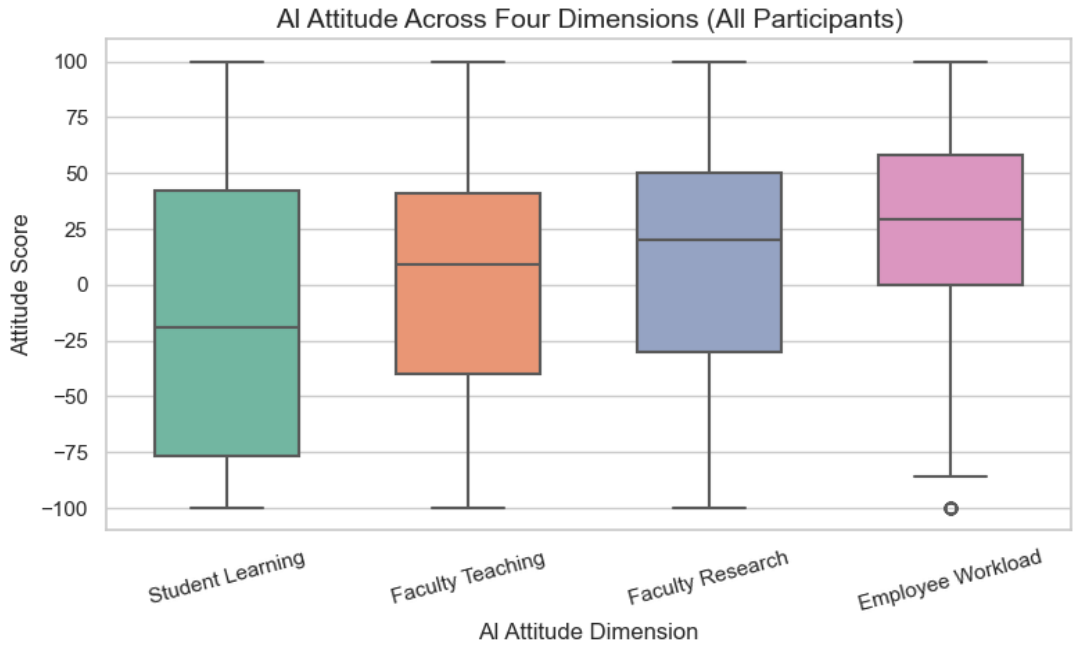


Figure 2 Attitude scores across four dimensions

Benefits & Challenges

Qualitative analysis using BERTopic modeling revealed nine common themes focused on perceived benefits of AI and six themes related to challenges presented by the technology.

Benefits	Challenges
Topic 0: Explain & Understand	Topic 0: Plagiarism & Academic Integrity
Topic 1: Efficiency & Timesaving	Topic 1: Writing Skill
Topic 2: Search & Summarize	Topic 2: Critical Thinking
Topic 3: Critical Thinking	Topic 3: Over-reliance
Topic 4: Teaching Support	Topic 4: Ethics
Topic 5: Brainstorming	Topic 5: Job Displacement
Topic 6: Spelling & Grammar Check	
Topic 7: Accessibility	
Topic 8: Editing & Outlining	

The student researchers examined the percentage share of each topic cluster within the three stakeholder groups, observing significant differences between the three groups of respondents. Non-instructional and administrative staff tend to prioritize efficiency and time saving as a benefit, while students emphasize the value of AI in explaining concepts

and increasing understanding. For faculty, benefits focused on AI applications in searching and summarizing information as well as time saving efficiencies.

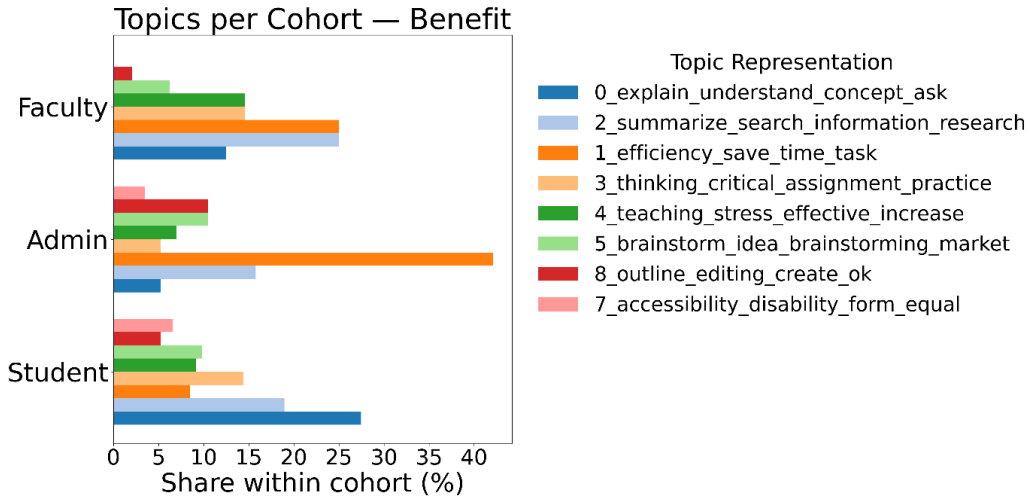


Figure 3 Stakeholder perceived benefits

All three stakeholder groups highlighted academic integrity as the most significant challenge presented by AI technology, followed by impact on writing skills. Non-instructional and administrative staff reported higher concern about job displacement than either students or faculty and instructional staff.

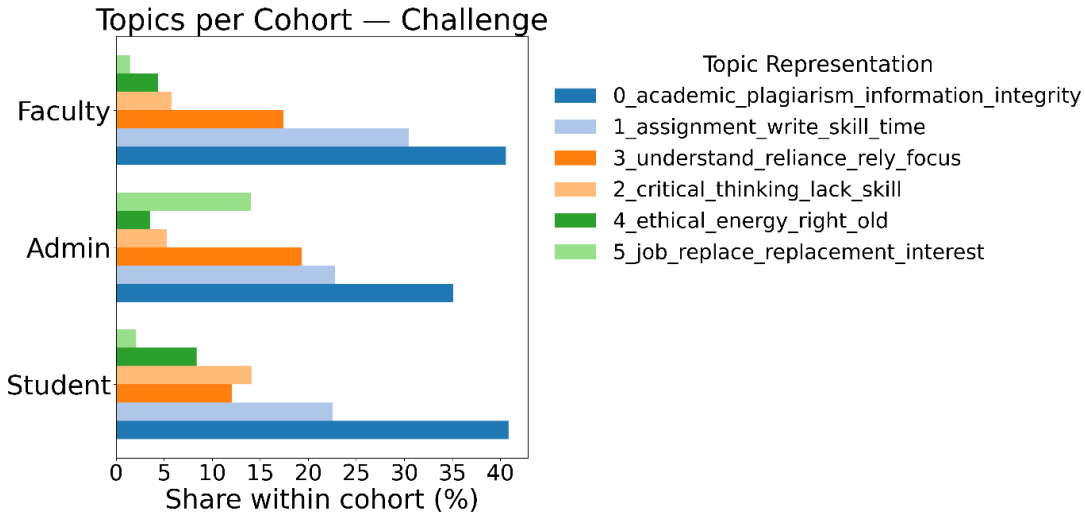


Figure 4 Stakeholder perceived challenges

Recommendations

The AMOD researchers offered five recommendations to enable successful integration of AI at Trent, which echo the recommendations of the working group:

1. Develop tailored training for various stakeholder groups to address unique needs and use cases.

2. Establish clear policies and guidelines for acceptable AI use, particularly regarding academic integrity.
3. Build supporting infrastructure, including investment in physical computing resources and human expertise to provide advice and technical support.
4. Conduct AI pilot projects focused on non-instructional and administrative users who report more positive and receptive attitudes.
5. Establish stable and continuous feedback mechanisms and leadership structures to guide implementation and adjust priorities as new challenges and opportunities emerge.

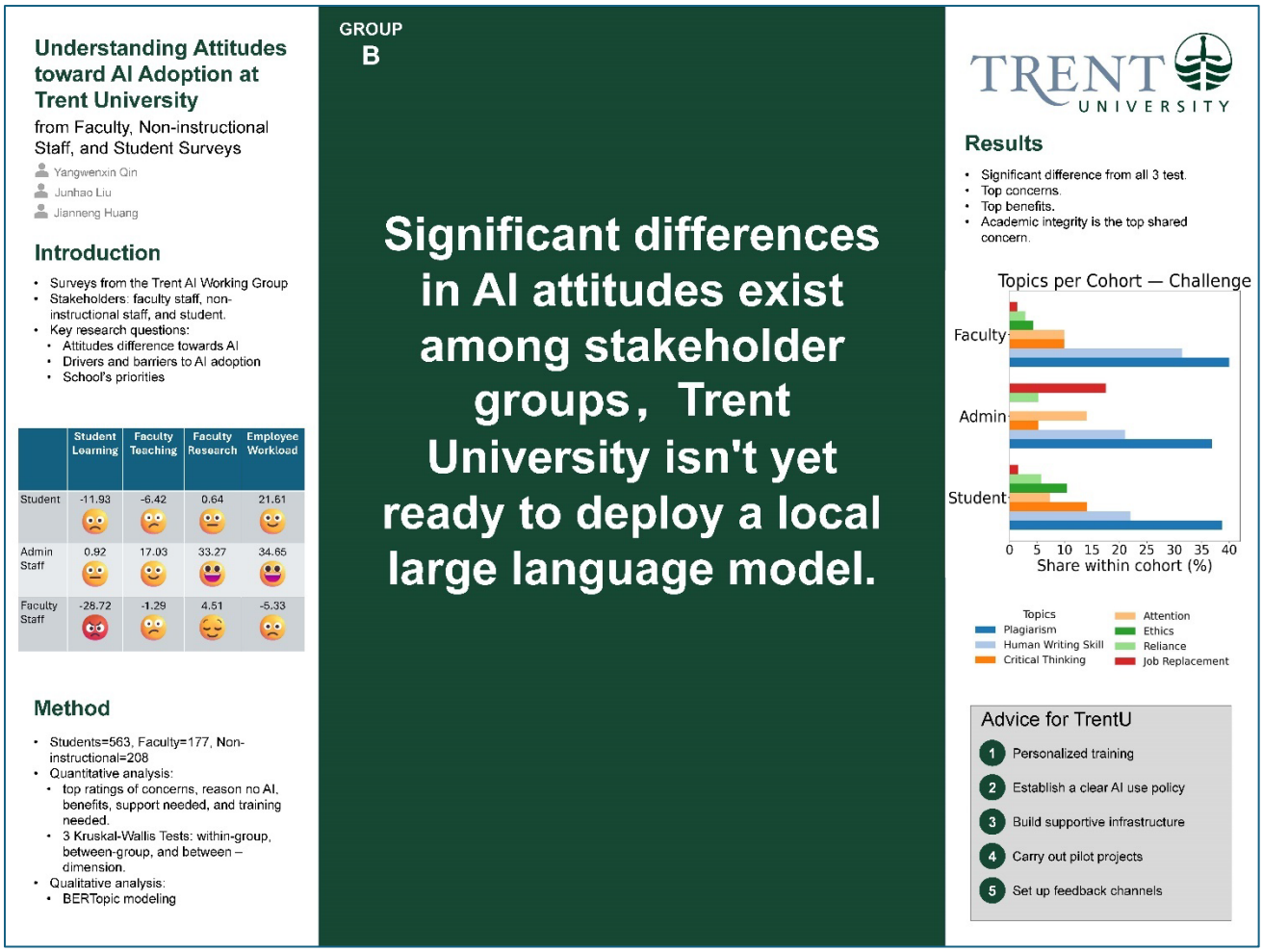


Figure 5 AMOD Student Poster Presentation

Focus Groups

Working group members conducted 22 focus group consultations with a total of 281 participants from across the university, including students, staff, faculty and administrators. During these meetings we provided participants with an overview of the working group's mandate, objectives, and deliverables. We gathered information about current practices and promising use cases. Participants shared their concerns about AI in

higher education and their needs related to support or resources that enable safe and effective AI use on campus.

Focus Group	Date	Number of Participants
Humanities & Social Science Decanal Council	November 1, 2024	17
Science Decanal Council	November 1, 2024	13
Durham Campus Decanal Council	April 3, 2025	13
Dean of Nursing	December 6, 2024	1
Collaborative Programming Group	November 19, 2025	Not reported
Colleges and Student Services Committee	November 6, 2024	15
Registrar's Office	April 4, 2025	19
Communications	December 5, 2024	13
Enrollment and Admissions Team	December 2, 2024	Not Reported
Advancement & Alumni Directors	January 7, 2025	7
Human Resources Managers Meeting	April 16, 2025	73
Human Rights & Equity Office	February 26, 2025	4
Trent International	December 2, 2024	Not Reported
Careerspace	December 13, 2024	2
Student Accessibility Services Associate Director	December 4, 2024	1
Facilities Management	June 5, 2025	Not Reported
Teaching and Learning Advisory Committee	November 28, 2024	7
Faculty Board	October 11, 2024	70
TUFA Leadership	November 27, 2024	3
OPSEU Leadership	January 23, 2025	Not Reported
Library & Archives	November 25, 2024	18
College Principals	January 23, 2025	5

Focus Group Results

Common themes emerged from the focus group meetings:

- Attitudes towards AI are mixed, with excitement about the benefits and potential use cases for AI technology alongside concerns about ethical implications and job security. Stakeholders recognized that this technology is an inevitable part of future careers and education.
- A recognition that AI is having a transformational impact on higher education, and common concerns about the impact on academic integrity, student learning, and critical thinking skills. All stakeholder groups expressed a desire for clear guidance on the appropriate use of AI technology.

- All focus group consultations highlighted ethical and social considerations, with concerns about bias and fairness, environmental impact, and data privacy and security raised repeatedly.
- AI tools to increase efficiency in administrative tasks, enhance accessibility and support for ESL students, improve student service through intelligent chatbots, and for generating ideas and organizing or summarizing information were all highlighted as practical applications for exploration.
- Some stakeholder groups are actively engaging with AI tools and platforms. Careerspace is leveraging AI capabilities in the Big Interview platform to help students prepare for job interviews. The Library has trialed AI research assistant tools in licensed databases including Clarivate's Web of Science and ProQuest One Business, and leverages AI capabilities in the Confluence platform for querying procedure documentation and meeting minutes.
- Some stakeholder groups are exploring opportunities for AI integration in existing systems and processes, including Advancement's Raiser's Edge platform and predictive maintenance, building system automation and energy use tools in Facilities Management.

Concerns identified by the focus group participants also crystallized around common themes, including:

- Academic integrity and the fear of accidental plagiarism or misuse of AI tools by students in their coursework.
- Bias and fairness and the potential for AI tools to replicate and magnify society's biases.
- Job security and the need to protect workers from technological disruption because of AI implementation.
- Privacy and data security concerns emphasized the need to protect personal information from data breaches.
- Copyright and intellectual property concerns focused on training datasets that include copyright infringing material, questions about authorship and ownership of AI generated content, and the need to stay up to date on evolving legal frameworks and case law.
- Environmental impact of AI tools and the need to address the energy consumption, water use, and carbon footprint of the technology.
- The rapidly evolving AI marketplace and shifting dominance of commercial interests make it difficult to predict which tools, vendors and platforms will remain viable in the future.

Needs

- Clear guidelines and explicit policies on acceptable use of AI tools in academic and administrative contexts.
- Regular and ongoing training and education for faculty, staff and students on effective and ethical AI use.
- Resources and support for integrating AI into teaching, learning and administrative tasks and processes.
- Support for faculty to investigate and address academic integrity violations related to AI use, and support for adapting pedagogical and assessment practices.
- Mechanisms for addressing ethical considerations in AI implementation and transparency in the use of AI tools and systems at the university.
- Access to institutionally approved premium tools for use with Trent data, and individualized support for implementation.
- Accountability and recourse for contesting decisions made with AI tools including grade appeals, admission decisions, scholarship awards, hiring and employee performance evaluation.
- Platforms and forums for sharing knowledge, best practices and use cases across departments.

Environmental Scan

The environmental scan was undertaken to inform recommendations to support responsible adoption of AI at Trent. The focus was on assessing how AI is being governed, supported, and integrated across peer institutions, both in Canada and internationally. Our scan reviewed external and internal policies, supports, guidelines and use cases. We focused on three main areas:

1. Governance and Oversight Structures
2. Principles, Policies and Guidelines for AI use
3. Support, Resources, and Institutional Readiness

Summary of Findings

Governance models are emerging and varied.

Most institutions are in a formative stage, with task forces, advisory committees or distributed stewardship models to coordinate AI governance.

Principles and guidelines emphasize risk, responsibility and transparency.

We found broad alignment around key principles to guide AI use and development, including transparency and accountability, ethical use, privacy and data security, equity and sustainability.

Policy responses range from incremental to comprehensive.

Some institutions (McGill, Harvard) are adapting existing digital and research integrity policy frameworks and governance structures. Others (McMaster, UAlberta, UBC) are developing dedicated policies, risk assessment protocols and disclosure norms.

We found that federal and provincial governments offer useful frameworks to guide local policy responses.

Support and training are key to successful adoption.

Leading institutions are investing in AI literacy training for faculty and staff, risk assessment toolkits and access to secure third party or locally developed AI systems to manage compliance and data security concerns.

Tailored guidance and support services can enable successful adoption in research and teaching, and many institutions have created specific guidelines and FAQs for graduate supervision, data handling or proposal writing.

Discussion

Ethical Guiding Principles

Foundational ethical guiding principles are useful for ensuring that AI adoption and deployment, as well as any guidelines, resources and services that support AI use, are consistent with our academic mission and values.

We propose that Trent adopt the following ethical guiding principles:

1. **Mission Alignment**: All uses of AI at Trent must be consistent with the university's core mission: to foster critical inquiry, inclusive education, interdisciplinary learning and meaningful contributions to society. Any adoption or deployment of AI technology must be consistent with Trent's commitments to academic excellence, Indigenous knowledge, environmental sustainability, global citizenship and the flourishing of individuals and communities.
2. **Literacy & Informed Engagement**: Decisions regarding the adoption and use of AI at Trent must be grounded in robust, evolving knowledge of the technology's capabilities, limitations, benefits, and risks. Ongoing development of AI literacy is essential, enabling critical engagement with technology in ways that reflect Trent's educational mission. Every member of the Trent community has:
    a. A **right** to transparent and comprehensible information about AI tools in use at the university.
    b. A **responsibility** to understand the utility, benefits, limitations and ethical concerns of AI.

3. **Transparency**: Any adoption, implementation or deployment of AI systems at Trent must be disclosed, explained, and justified. All members of the Trent community have a right to know when an AI system is being used in a process that involves them, including clear explanations of the system's purpose, functionality, limitations and potential impact. Likewise, all community members have a responsibility to disclose their use of AI systems in teaching, learning, research, and administrative activities.
4. **Privacy & Data Security**: AI use at Trent must respect the privacy, autonomy and dignity of all individuals. The development and deployment of AI systems must be in accordance with principles of Indigenous data sovereignty, informed consent, and cybersecurity. AI users must ensure that personal information and intellectual property are collected, stored, shared, and reused in compliance with Trent's information governance framework and relevant legal and regulatory requirements.
5. **Human Oversight & Accountability**: Human beings must be accountable and ultimately responsible for decisions and outcomes involving AI systems. AI is not a replacement for human judgement in teaching, learning, assessment, research, and administrative decisions. There must be clear mechanisms for appeal and recourse when AI decisions lead to harm or error.
6. **Justice**: Any adoption or deployment of AI systems must be consistent with Trent's commitments to equity, diversity, inclusion, social justice, environmental sustainability, and fair access to education and services. Members of the Trent community must be aware of and vigilant against algorithmic bias, systemic discrimination, digital divides, and the marginalization of individuals or groups that result from AI deployment and use.
7. **Safety & Risk Mitigation**: Individuals, communities and the university must not be harmed by AI systems in use at Trent. This includes avoiding physical, psychological, and reputational harm. Trent must ensure the safety of AI systems with rigorous pre-deployment testing, ongoing monitoring, mechanisms for reporting concerns, and clear protocols for responding when AI causes harm.

Recommendation 1: *Trent adopts a set of ethical principles to guide the selection, adoption, deployment, and evaluation of generative AI across teaching, learning, research and administrative domains.*

Legal & Regulatory Framework

Canada's existing legal and regulatory framework informs Trent's decision-making around AI deployment. Trent must monitor changes to the legal and regulatory environment to ensure that our policies and practices are aligned with federal and provincial requirements.

The following are of particular importance when considering the implementation of AI systems:

Federal Policy & Legislation

- **Canadian Copyright Act** protects works of original authorship and aims to balance the rights of creators with the rights of users. Copyright case law is emerging to regulate the use of copyright protected material in the training of AI systems, as well as the authorship and associated copyright protection for AI generated works.
- **Canadian Human Rights Act** (CHRA) prohibits discrimination, and while it does not contain specific AI provisions, the principles apply to any system that affects individuals' rights. As Trent looks to adopt AI generative AI systems, we must ensure these technologies do not produce or reinforce discriminatory outcomes. This includes assessing AI systems for bias, ensuring human oversight in high-impact applications, and monitoring emerging AI governance frameworks for compliance.
- **Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act** (PIPEDA) governs the collection, use, and disclosure of personal information in business. Any AI systems that handle personal data must comply with privacy principles including consent, limited data collection, and accuracy.
- **Voluntary Code of Conduct on the Responsible Development and Management of Advanced Generative AI Systems** (2023) provides Canadian organizations with standards for responsible AI development and use, in the absence of federal AI regulation.

Provincial Policy & Legislation

- **Strengthening Cyber Security and Building Trust in the Public Sector Act** Introduces significant new requirements for public sector organizations including universities, around cybersecurity, privacy and the tracking and transparent use of AI systems. Additional specific compliance requirements around AI systems are forthcoming. Trent must continue to assess compliance with emerging regulations for any AI systems deployed for administrative, academic or research purposes.
- **Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act** (FIPPA) regulates the collection, use, and disclosure of personal information by public organizations including universities. Deployment of AI systems must comply with privacy standards and provide access to individuals' personal information.
- **Responsible Use of Artificial Intelligence Directive** sets requirements for the transparent and responsible use of AI within the Government of Ontario. While this directive does not require compliance from public sector organizations like universities, it offers a useful set of principles to support responsible AI use in any organization.

Trent Policy Framework

Generative AI can be useful when used appropriately, for example in making learning more accessible or automating administrative processes, but it raises issues around data privacy, intellectual property, academic integrity, and fairness. Many existing policies were written before the widespread use of large language models and do not anticipate these risks.

Trent's policy framework includes policies which outline "principles, values and key provisions governing decision making at the university, and establish the position of the university on key aspects of operation or direction" (Trent University Policy Framework and Approval Hierarchy, 2023). These policies are supported by companion procedures and guidelines, which outline operational processes and best practices necessary to implement and comply with institutional policy.

While it may not be necessary or desirable to add AI provisions to all relevant Trent policies, the policy review process should include an evaluation of Trent policies in the context of artificial intelligence. Where appropriate, policy owners should update policies and related procedures and guidelines to clarify expectations for compliance with respect to artificial intelligence tools.

***Recommendation 2**: Trent policy owners, senior administration, and the University Secretariat monitor the emerging legislative and regulatory requirements for AI use and review existing policies and guidelines to ensure they adequately address the use of generative AI.*

Risks & Mitigations

There are risks involved in the deployment of artificial intelligence systems in higher education contexts. It is important to consider and implement strategies to mitigate these risks:

- **Accuracy:** Generative AI is known to produce incorrect or misleading information, which can affect learning. It is essential to cultivate AI literacy among students and faculty so that they can critically evaluate AI generated outputs and verify information from trusted sources.
- **Bias:** AI models perpetuate and amplify existing biases in the training data, which can lead to unfair outcomes. AI systems deployed at Trent must be trained on robust and representative datasets, and systems should be audited regularly for biased outputs.

- **Data Security & Privacy:** The collection and use of personal data by AI systems and vulnerability to data breaches require strong data governance and security protocols, and transparency regarding data usage.
- **Copyright & Intellectual Property:** AI generated content can infringe on existing copyright and intellectual property rights. The use of AI systems with proprietary or licensed data may expose the university to risk if the use violates license agreements or legal requirements.
- **Academic & Research Integrity:** Generative AI tools can facilitate plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct, and unauthorized use of AI tools for manuscript preparation may impact publication for Trent research outputs. Ongoing education and clear guidance for students and researchers, including disclosure norms and protocols, are essential to protect the integrity of scholarship at Trent.
- **Assessment Integrity:** AI generated content may compromise the fairness and validity of traditional assessment methods, making it difficult to evaluate student learning. It is important to provide resources and support for faculty to adapt pedagogical and assessment practices.
- **Student Learning & Skill Development:** Over-reliance on AI tools can hinder the development of foundational academic skills and domain expertise. We can encourage the balanced use of AI tools and integrate AI literacy into the curriculum while emphasizing the importance of skill development and domain knowledge for students.
- **Environmental Sustainability:** AI systems require significant energy and water resources and contribute to global carbon emissions. Rapid obsolescence and the resources required to produce AI hardware have environmental impacts. Prioritizing AI systems that leverage renewable energy sources, carbon offsets, or low-carbon data centres can mitigate the environmental impacts of AI technology. AI use on campus should be a factor for calculating and reporting sustainability metrics.

These risks are significant and must be considered in the selection, implementation, and deployment of AI systems at Trent. However, inaction also carries an inherent risk, as we may miss opportunities to enhance learning, research, and operational effectiveness, impacting our ability to remain competitive in the sector.

Governance & Oversight

Governance and oversight models in higher education institutions appear along a continuum of centralization and range in purpose from advisory to enforcement bodies. From the environmental scan, we have identified five governance models in use across the sector which may be suitable for implementation at Trent.

Centralized Models

AI Steering Committee – A single, university-wide AI committee, chaired or sponsored by one or more senior executives, with a focus on identifying and directing high-impact use cases on campus, coordinating support for AI use through service providers including IT, Teaching & Learning, Library, and the Research Office.

- **Pros**: Unified strategy, strong executive sponsorship and visibility across the organization, clear direction and consistent enforcement of policies and standards.
- **Cons**: May be seen as top-down and disconnected from grassroots AI experimentation and innovation, risk of slowing pace of adoption, heavy executive commitment.
- **Examples in Practice**: University of Alberta Steering Committee

Oversight & Audit Committee – Led by CIO, Provost or similar executive portfolio, with a focus on risk management, ethics and compliance audits, vetting and deployment of approved AI tools and related infrastructure, ensuring training and awareness across the university.

- **Pros**: Strong risk mitigation focus with structured and centralized vetting of approved tools and applications, clear accountability framework for responsible use, reduces risks of unvetted adoption.
- **Cons**: May be perceived as restrictive and compliance heavy, may slow the pace of adoption and innovation, reliant on specialized expertise and technical infrastructure which may not be available.
- **Examples in Practice**: McGill University, York University

Decentralized Models

Cross Functional AI Council – Senior executive co-sponsorship across relevant portfolios including Research, Academic, Finance and Administration. Subcommittees or work teams composed of staff, faculty and administrators from across the institution to support AI projects and initiatives at the operational level.

- **Pros**: Promotes collaboration across silos. Flexible and adaptive with focused subgroups for different stakeholder groups. Enables both strategic oversight and grassroots innovation.
- **Cons**: Slower consensus building and risk of diluted authority. Requires strong coordination and clear mandate to avoid duplication of effort.
- **Examples in Practice**: McMaster University AI Advisory Committee

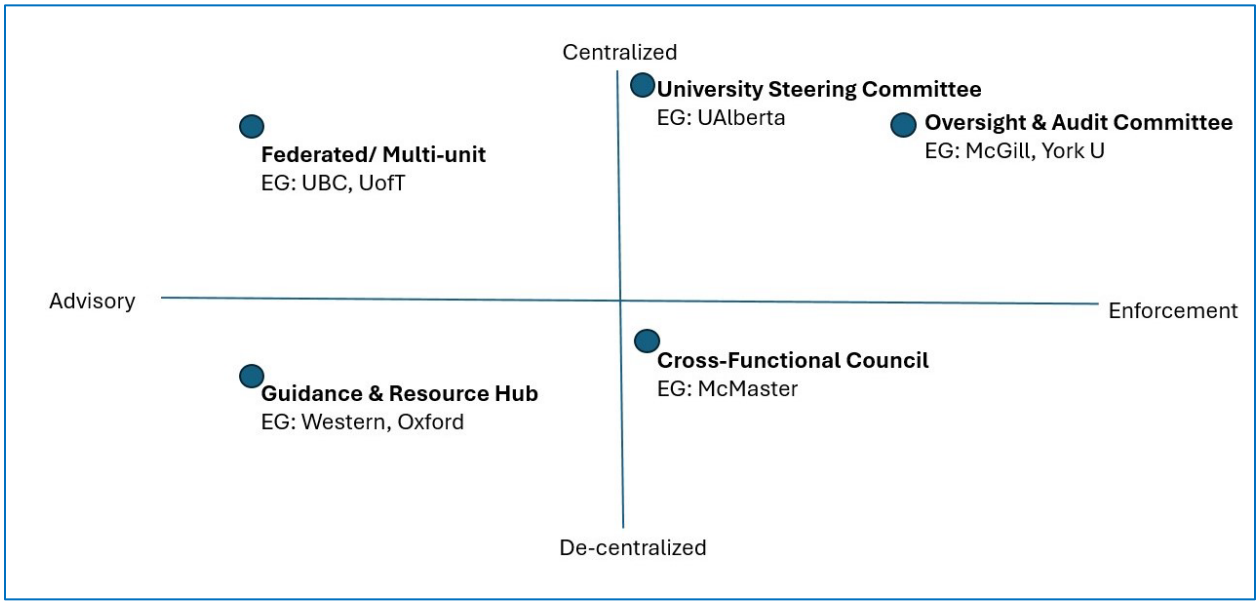
Federated or Multi-Unit – A central body defines guiding principles, frameworks and policies, but implementation and decision-making are delegated to faculties, departments, or administrative units.

- **Pros**: Encourages local innovation and ownership, scalable approach suitable for large, complex, or decentralized organizations.
- **Cons**: Risk of inconsistency in the local interpretation of policies, harder to track and share initiatives, potential silos.
- **Examples in Practice**: University of British Columbia, University of Toronto

Guidance & Resource Hub – A centrally coordinated hub, led by Provost, CIO or a new leadership position dedicated to AI strategy and implementation. Includes expert teams that support AI deployment, training, and knowledge-sharing across units.

- **Pros:** Focused on enabling and empowering, rather than restricting AI use. Central repository of trusted resources and best practices, dedicated team of experts can support capacity-building and professional development at all levels. Flexibility to enable rapid innovation, while ensuring compliance with standards and principles.
- **Cons:** Limited enforcement power relies on voluntary adoption of guidelines and tools. Requires ongoing investment in staff expertise and resources, may not adequately address complex risks and oversight requirements associated with AI misuse.
- **Examples in Practice:** Western University, Oxford University AI Competency Centre

Mapping AI Governance Models



Recommendation 3: *Form a standing governance body with representation from across academic and administrative units,*

reporting to one or more VP level sponsors or champions. The role of this group is to:

- Provide guidance, resources, training and support for ethical and effective AI use at Trent across academic and administrative domains.

- Monitor emerging risks, opportunities, and regulatory changes to ensure that Trent is compliant and proactive in our AI practices.

- Evaluate and champion AI-related initiatives and investments that align with institutional goals and values.

- Foster communication and coordination among departments, serving as a central hub for AI-related knowledge and resources.

- Serve as an advisory body to senior administration on AI policy and strategic direction.

Awareness & Education

The working group has undertaken initiatives to build knowledge and capacity to engage with AI tools at Trent.

Working Group Website

Launched in late November 2024, the AI at Trent website (https://www.trentu.ca/ai-trent/) brings together guidance, resources, and information related to AI from various support units including the Library, the Centre for Teaching and Learning, IT Services and Academic Skills. Guidance is organized by user groups, gathering existing guidance for faculty, staff and students in a single location. The only approved tool for use with Trent data, Microsoft Copilot, is featured on the website, with links to IT guidance on how to use the tool effectively.

The website also includes a feedback form where members of the community can request information and support or suggest a promising use case or AI tool.

Events & Workshops

The inaugural Groarke Debate on October 10, 2024 focused on artificial intelligence, with Dr. Makhan Virdi and Dr. Lai-Tze Fan debating the benefits and challenges that AI presents for society. 140 students, staff, faculty and community members attended the event.

In November, Academic Skills offered a workshop on AI Literacy in the University, designed to give students the knowledge and skills to effectively prompt, evaluate and articulate their authorized use of AI tools. The workshop covered institutional policies, prompting techniques, evaluating responses and the limitations of generative AI tools. Five students attended this workshop.

At the Fall 2024 Open House event three members of the working group delivered a panel presentation to prospective students and their families on artificial intelligence in higher education.

In early December, Dr. Michael Bruder gave a presentation to the Trent Durham Computer Science Club on ethical and societal implications of artificial intelligence. Also in December, the Teaching Commons hosted a First Year Caucus 2024 meeting, which included presentations on artificial intelligence the classroom.

Throughout the fall and winter semesters, the *AI Hopes and Fears* speaker series explored the implications of AI for our work and society. The speaker series included 10 lunch hour webinars featuring Trent scholars and practitioners tackling questions around ethics, democracy, social justice, environmental impact and accessibility. These webinars reached 514 participants from within Trent and the broader community. The speaker series culminated with a hybrid conference event featuring keynote speakers from higher education and industry, as well as a panel discussion with Trent faculty and students sharing their experiences integrating AI into the classroom. The Between Hope and Fear AI Mini Conference reached 28 in-person and 55 online attendees.

The Trent Teaching Commons continues to expand their support and resources for faculty to adapt their assessment and teaching practices in the context of artificial intelligence. Some highlights from the 2024-25 academic year include:

- AI Assessment category added to the Trent Teaching Exchange
- Guidance for instructors investigating AI related academic misconduct distributed to all faculty via email and the Teaching Commons website
- Spotlight video series on the impact of AI in higher education
- Webinar on adapting assessment practices in the age of AI featuring Dr. Kirk Hillsley (BIOL) archived on the Teaching and Learning Resource Hub
- Faculty discussion group on adapting assessments for AI

During the 2025-26 academic year members of the Trent Teaching Commons, College Academic Supports and the Library are participating in the American Association of Colleges and Universities' (AACU) Institute on AI, Pedagogy, and the Curriculum. This online institute aims to support colleges and universities "respond effectively to the challenges and opportunities artificial intelligence presents for courses, curricula, and higher education in general" (AACU, 2025).

We will benefit from structured mentorship, access to peer institutions' insights and practices, and collaborative workshops that support AI-informed innovation in curriculum and pedagogy. Our participation will empower key service providers on campus to develop coordinated, evidence-based action plans to reinforce academic integrity, enhance AI literacy on campus, and foster a culture of responsible AI adoption across teaching, learning, research and administrative domains.

Guides & Learning Resources

The Library has created an Artificial Intelligence Research Guide, which includes information and guidance for using AI tools for library research. The guide includes links to citation guides for attributing AI use along with other considerations such as IP and copyright, prompting techniques, evaluating outputs for accuracy and bias, and protecting privacy and data security. The guide also includes links to self-directed learning resources from the Library's O'Reilly Learning platform.

IT Services staff have created a knowledgebase article about Microsoft Copilot which includes information about accessing the tool, data privacy and protection measures, guidance on prompting and tips for using Copilot to perform various tasks. The IT Security Assessment process for enterprise technology systems now includes evaluation of artificial intelligence systems, so the technology can be evaluated and safely deployed as part of the application onboarding process.

The team in Academic Skills have updated their guide on protecting academic integrity to include information about the use of AI tools in assessments and tips for how to avoid academic integrity violations. The documentation guides for various citation styles have also been updated to include guidance on citing AI generated content.

Recommendation 4: *Trent should expand training opportunities and support resources for faculty, students and staff to enable safe and effective use of AI technology in their work. This could include a combination of:*

- General AI literacy and safety training as part of mandatory cybersecurity training for all faculty and staff

- Expanded student-facing training on acceptable and effective use of AI in learning tasks

- Targeted, role-specific, and practical training for researchers, instructors, and staff in administrative roles

- Communities of practice for knowledge sharing

- Ongoing proactive and coordinated communication with stakeholders at all levels to expand knowledge, skills and awareness.

Institutional Guidelines

Trent Teaching Commons led the development of Trent's Generative Artificial Intelligence Guidelines (2024) in consultation with the Teaching and Learning Advisory Committee. These guidelines support faculty and students to make informed decisions regarding the use of AI tools in assessment contexts.

During the working group's consultation process, stakeholders across the university indicated a desire for clear guidance on acceptable use of AI tools in contexts outside of classroom assessment, including student learning, research and administrative operations.

Our environmental scan examined institutional guidelines that support safe and effective use of AI tools in teaching, learning, research and administrative domains. Below is a summary of comparator institutions and key features of their guidance and support for AI implementation:

Institution	**Key Guidance Themes**	**Support Resources & Infrastructure**	**Notable Features**
McMaster University	Experimentation, cautious adoption	Risk assessment tools, conversation guides, custom training, use case repository	Staff-led experimentation and knowledge sharing encouraged
University of British Columbia	Ethics, content ownership, privacy, social & environmental impact	Online training courses, prompt libraries, teaching support and privacy assessments	Strong emphasis on AI literacy and sustainability
McGill University	Accessibility, usability, security and digital standards	Toolkits, training libraries	AI governance and guidance provided centrally by IT services

Institution	Key Guidance Themes	Support Resources & Infrastructure	Notable Features
University of Toronto	Accuracy, misinformation, privacy, user responsibility	Teaching guidelines, thesis guidance, copyright support and syllabus templates	Strong risk awareness and cautious integration of generative AI tools
University of Alberta	Equity, transparency, sustainability, Indigenous perspectives, risk assessment	Instructor guidance, research supervision tools, syllabus statements	Focus on environmental and social ethics, student code of conduct and academic honesty
Oxford University	Transparency, human creativity, ethical communications	AI good governance principles, communication templates, central AI/ML competency centre to support adoption, access to premium commercial AI licenses	Global AI governance and leadership
Harvard University	Content review, security, misinformation, responsible tool selection	AI tool vetting, IT policy compliance support, research use FAQs	Emphasis on security, practical guidance for stakeholders

Institution	Key Guidance Themes	Support Resources & Infrastructure	Notable Features
Western University	Responsible experimentation, transparent use, accountability for outputs, compliance with existing policy framework.	Role-specific guidance, data governance considerations in tool selection, Do's and Don'ts including disclosure norms, regular workshops and training events.	No separate AI policy, relies on existing policy instruments (academic honesty, privacy)

Across institutions, effective guidelines share key features:

- **Principle-based**: Guidelines are grounded in shared institutional values including transparency, accountability, equity and inclusion, privacy and data security, sustainability and emphasis on human judgement and control. Guidelines should connect AI use to broader institutional priorities such as sustainability, teaching excellence, equity and inclusion.
- **Lifecycle Integration:** Effective guidelines are practical and embed AI considerations across the full life cycle of institutional activities, supporting the application of foundational ethical principles in various contexts.
- **Stratified Risk Levels:** Some institutions classify AI use cases as low-, moderate- or high-risk with associated guidance. Under these guidelines, low-risk activities are generally permitted, moderate-risk use is permissible with disclosure, and high-risk activities are generally prohibited.
- **Concrete Tools and Support Infrastructure:** Leading institutions back their guidelines with resources to support application including use case repositories, risk assessment tools and discussion guides, targeted training resources, and access to premium AI tools supported by expert advice and assistance for users.
- **Iterative and Adaptive:** Universities often release guidelines as living documents and frame AI guidance as provisional to reflect the evolving AI landscape. Guidelines are reviewed and updated with oversight from interdisciplinary working groups or standing committees.

Inspired by guidelines developed at other institutions, we recommend a framework of specific and practical guidance to address the needs of specific stakeholder groups and support the application of Trent's ethical guiding principles for AI use in various contexts:

1. **Teaching**: Review and update existing guidelines for AI use in the classroom to ensure alignment with recommended Ethical Guiding Principles, continue to develop support services and resources for faculty to adapt pedagogy and assessment practices, and communicate course AI policies and disclosure requirements to students.
2. **Learning**: Develop complementary guidelines for students to support ethical and effective use of AI in assessments and other non-assessment learning tasks and enhance resources and services to support students' development of critical AI literacy and competencies.
3. **Research**: Create guidelines for researchers mapped onto phases of the research life cycle from idea generation to dissemination, with a specific focus on risk mitigation, documentation, and compliance with funder and publisher requirements. Develop support resources and services to assist researchers to implement best practices in labs, institutes and research teams including documentation and ethics protocols.
4. **Administration & Business Operations**: Create guidelines for staff in administrative units including a use case assessment tool that integrates risk and privacy assessment and embeds IT review into AI adoption process. Develop resources and services to support AI use in workflow and task automation and encourage pilot adoptions and knowledge sharing across departments.

Recommendation 5: *Trent develop targeted, practical guidelines for stakeholder groups and expand support resources and infrastructure to enable safe and effective use of AI tools in teaching, learning, research and business operations.*

Communicate guidance and share resources proactively across the institution, coordinate efforts of Research Office, Teaching Commons, Libraries, and Academic Supports.

Opportunities for AI Implementation

Canadian and international universities are beginning to pilot and deploy AI tools. Here we propose some promising use cases for Trent, and outline priority actions and structural elements necessary for successful implementation.

Success Enablers

These conditions are foundational to any successful implementation of AI tools at Trent:

1. **Governance**: Clearly defined decision making and approval pathways for AI adoption.
2. **Policy Alignment**: Review and update as necessary any policies and guidelines that address data use, copyright and intellectual property, academic and scholarly integrity, and acceptable technology use.
3. **Support Infrastructure**: Technical expertise, assistance, training and access to technology that supports AI development and use, including access to premium AI tools and physical infrastructure for the development of local language models.
4. **Data Governance**: Robust data stewardship practices to ensure consistent, accurate, interoperable data access across systems and departments, with associated security and access protocols.
5. **Cultural Readiness**: Open dialogue, stakeholder engagement, ongoing learning, to enable responsible and safe experimentation with AI tools.
6. **Transparency and Equity**: Clear documentation, reporting, and inclusive, consultative processes for AI selection, implementation and evaluation.

Promising Use Cases

The following categories represent areas of near-term opportunity:

- **Student Support & Advising:** Virtual course assistants and student service chatbots offering 24/7 support and referrals in multiple languages. Examples: York's AURA, UMichigan's MAIZEY, Trent's TARA, Cognitii, Clarivate Alethea, Khanmigo
- **Research Lifecycle Support:** Tools to support literature reviews and knowledge synthesis, ethics review, coding, data analysis and visualization, risk assessment and grant compliance. Examples: Elicit, Scite.AI, Research Rabbit, LitMaps, UCalgary SARA
- **Administrative Support and Workflow Efficiency:** Automation tools for routine workflows, scheduling, form processing, transposing data between systems to reduce manual workload in HR, finance, operations. Local Language Models trained on institutional policies, guidelines and collective agreements can support administrative efficiency for Managers, Deans and Chairs. Examples: MS Copilot Pro, Power Automate, Copilot Studio, ChatGPT Edu
- **Institutional Analytics and Planning:** Natural language query tools with Retrieval Augmented Generation (RAG) capabilities enabling access to enterprise data systems, predictive analytics for enrollment modeling and resource allocation. Examples: Microsoft Fabric, UMichigan Policy Review MAIZEY
- **Advancement, Alumni Engagement, Student Recruitment**: AI-enhanced CRM and personalized communications for targeted donor engagement, prospect research. Examples: Blackbaud AI

- **Cybersecurity and Facilities Management:** AI tools for threat detection, energy efficiency and predictive maintenance in IT and facilities. Examples: CrowdStrike Charlotte, Microsoft Security Copilot, Research partnership with Siemens Canada

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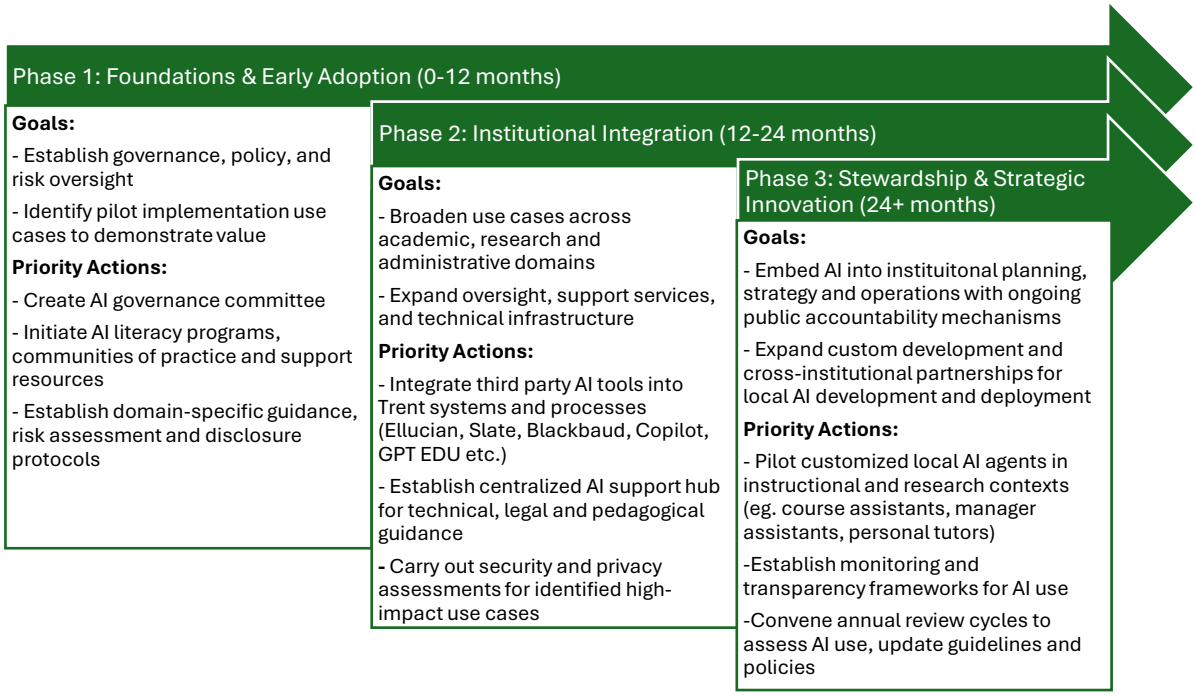
***Recommendation 6**: Identify and evaluate pilot projects and provide supportive infrastructure including access to premium AI tools and expert support teams to enable successful implementation.*

Implementation Roadmap



Conclusion

The results of our work over the past year underscores both the opportunities and the challenges of AI adoption in higher education. Across surveys and focus groups, the Trent community expressed that generative AI is already influencing teaching, learning, research and administrative functions. While adoption rates vary, we noted widespread interest in the potential of AI technology to enhance efficiency, improve accessibility, and catalyze innovation. This hopeful optimism is tempered by significant concerns around academic and research integrity, student learning outcomes, equity, environmental sustainability, data security and job security.

This balance of hope and fear reflects the broader state of AI governance and adoption in the postsecondary education sector. Like many universities, Trent is at a critical turning point that requires us to adapt and evolve our practices in the face of radical technological change. We have the advantage of entering this space with strong ethical principles, a culture of cross disciplinary collaboration and critical inquiry, and an engaged campus community that is already experimenting with AI tools in meaningful ways. At the same time, our consultations revealed an urgent need for clear policies, practical guidance, coordinated governance, and targeted training and support resources to meet the diverse needs of faculty, students and staff.

Next Steps

To maintain our momentum and move from planning to action, we recommend the following immediate steps in the next 12-18 months:

1. **Establish Governance Body**: Form a standing governance body with VP level leadership and broad representation with a clear mandate, authority, and reporting structure to oversee AI strategy, policy, guidance and implementation. Develop feedback mechanisms to gather stakeholder input, track adoption and outcomes, and adjust strategies to respond to emerging risks, opportunities, and regulatory requirements.
2. **Adopt and Communicate Ethical Guiding Principles**: Endorse the proposed ethical framework and disseminate it widely across the university. Embed these principles in decision-making processes, training materials and guidelines for all stakeholder groups.
3. **Review Policies and Develop Guidelines**: Initiate a coordinated review of existing policies and develop targeted, practical guidelines for teaching, learning, research and administrative operations with regular review cycles.
4. **Expand Training and Capacity Building**: Expand AI literacy and training opportunities for all community members, integrated into existing professional development, academic skills, research compliance, and cybersecurity programs. Cultivate communities of practice to share learning and promising use cases.
5. **Pilot Projects and Infrastructure**: Identify a small number of high-impact pilot projects and associated resources, infrastructure, premium tools, and expert support necessary to implement and evaluate the projects.

Trent is ready to take a leadership role in the thoughtful, ethical, and effective adoption of generative AI in higher education, leveraging the technology to advance our mission, while preserving the values that define our institution. The road ahead requires adaptability, collaboration, and sustained commitment, but we are well-prepared to find our way forward together.