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# How Are Educators Navigating the AI Revolution?



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# Key findings

- Educators are unsure how to handle generative AI. Most of them have neither explicitly allowed nor banned student use of this technology. Eighty per cent said they had not received any guidance or training from their institution.
- The need for training is top of mind among educators—both for themselves and for students.
- Most educators have not used generative AI in their teaching practice.
- Top concerns surrounding generative AI include its use for cheating and submission of unoriginal work and its potential impact on students' critical thinking skills and ability to learn for themselves.
- Educators are less likely to oppose student use of generative AI for secondary tasks like translation, general research and knowledge acquisition, and grammar assistance.
- Educators who use generative AI more frequently tend to be more optimistic about AI's integration in teaching and learning. However, they remain concerned about the ethical implications of this technology and its possible threats to the integrity and reliability of knowledge.



# Playing catch-up

With increasingly powerful generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools available to students, post-secondary institutions (PSIs) have been playing catch-up to adapt to a new reality.

In June 2023, six months after the release of ChatGPT, less than half of the world's top 50 universities (ranked by Times Higher Education) had publicly available guidelines addressing generative AI.<sup>1</sup> In Canada, only 23 per cent of public PSIs had guidelines in the fall of 2023.<sup>2</sup> Among these, 71 per cent let instructors decide whether and how to incorporate generative AI into their courses.

In this context of uncertainty, “old-school” forms of student evaluation, such as oral examinations and pen-and-paper tests, regained some popularity among educators.<sup>3,4</sup> However, there is an increasing push toward embracing generative AI in teaching and learning settings, with a parallel focus on the development of AI literacy and related skills.<sup>5,6</sup>

How are educators at Canadian PSIs responding to the ongoing AI revolution? In this data briefing, we investigate their perspectives on and experiences with generative AI use for teaching and learning. We draw on our national survey of 402 educators<sup>7</sup> fielded in December 2023 and January 2024 (see Appendix A) to provide data-driven insights for post-secondary leaders who want to better understand and adapt to the rapidly changing landscape of higher education.



1 Moorhouse and others, “Generative AI Tools and Assessment.”  
2 The Conference Board of Canada, “AI and the Future of Post-Secondary Education.”  
3 Gardner and Giordano, “The Challenges and Value of Undergraduate Oral Exams.”  
4 Cassidy, “Australian Universities Return to ‘Pen and Paper’ Exams.”  
5 Moorhouse and others, “Generative AI Tools and Assessment.”  
6 Holmes and others, *Artificial Intelligence and Education*.

7 Includes full-time and part-time professors and instructors as well as teaching assistants in universities, colleges, and polytechnics.

# Uncertainty in the classroom

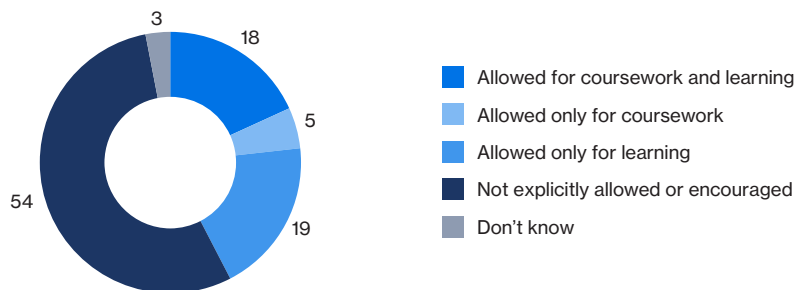
More than half of educators have not explicitly allowed students to use generative AI for coursework or learning (see Chart 1). One in five allow it for learning purposes only, and fewer than 20 per cent allow it for both learning and coursework.

However, most educators have not explicitly banned AI (see Chart 2) and there are differences between educators across fields of instruction. Up to 71 per cent of engineering educators allow students to use generative AI, compared with only 32 per cent of educators in the humanities.

**Chart 1**

Most educators have not allowed students to use generative AI

Q: Have you explicitly allowed or encouraged student use of generative AI for coursework or learning purposes? (n = 402)  
(per cent)

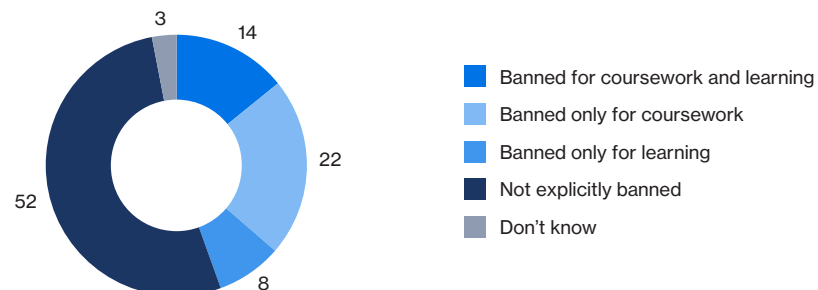


Source: The Conference Board of Canada.

**Chart 2**

Most educators have not banned student use of generative AI

Q: Have you explicitly banned student use of generative AI for coursework or learning purposes? (n = 402)  
(per cent)



Source: The Conference Board of Canada.

## The need for guidance

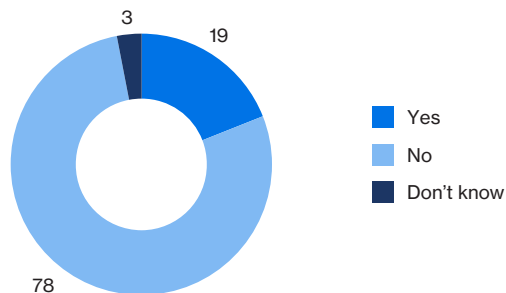
The vast majority of educators have not received guidance or training on generative AI from their institution or may be unaware of resources available to them (see Chart 3). This suggests that most educators are not prepared to make confident decisions about how to bring these new tools into the classroom.

Indeed, educators are keen to receive generative AI training, and few of them believe they have the knowledge and skills needed to effectively use these new tools (see Table 1). They also stress the need for student training.

**Chart 3**

Most educators have not received formal guidance or training

**Q:** Have you ever received formal guidance or training from your institution on how to effectively use generative AI for academic purposes? (n = 402) (per cent)



Source: The Conference Board of Canada.

**Table 1**

Training is top of mind among educators

**Q:** On a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree), indicate your level of agreement with the following statements: (n = 402) (per cent)

	Strongly disagree				Strongly agree		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Educators should receive formal training on how to effectively use generative artificial intelligence.	3	2	4	13	19	22	36
Students should receive formal training on how to effectively use generative artificial intelligence.	5	3	8	17	21	16	30
I have the knowledge and skills needed to effectively use generative artificial intelligence in my teaching practice.	21	13	15	19	16	9	6

Source: The Conference Board of Canada.

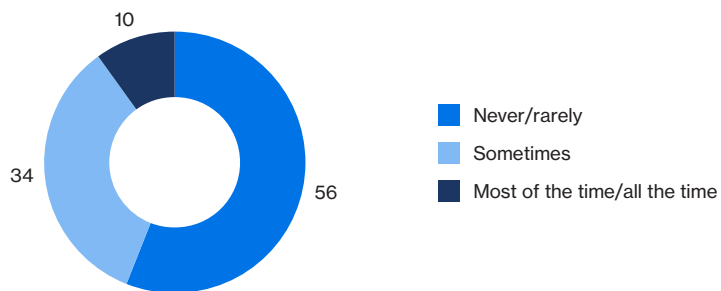


Most educators report rarely or never using generative AI tools (see Chart 4). Interestingly, those who use AI more frequently are more likely to agree on the need for formal training compared with those who use it less (see Chart 5).

**Chart 4**

Most educators never or rarely use generative AI

**Q:** Over the past year, how often have you used generative AI tools to help you with tasks related to your teaching? (n = 402) (per cent)



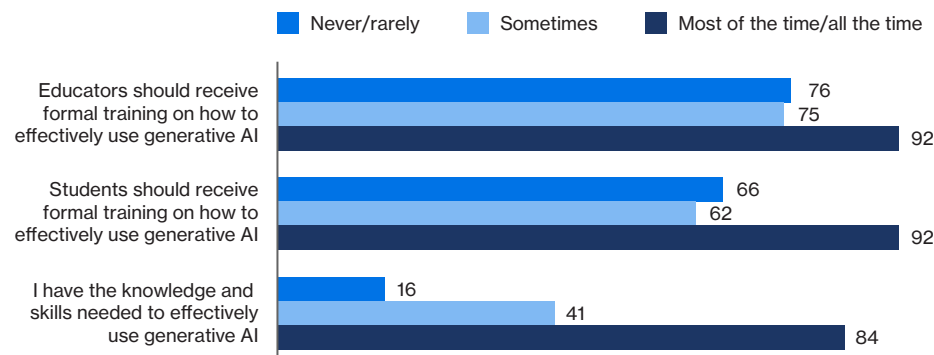
Source: The Conference Board of Canada.

Educators who use AI more frequently are also more likely to say they have the knowledge and skills needed to use these tools in their teaching practice.

**Chart 5**

Educators who use AI more frequently emphasize the need for training

(percentage of educators who agree with the statements, by how frequently they use AI; n = 402)



Source: The Conference Board of Canada.





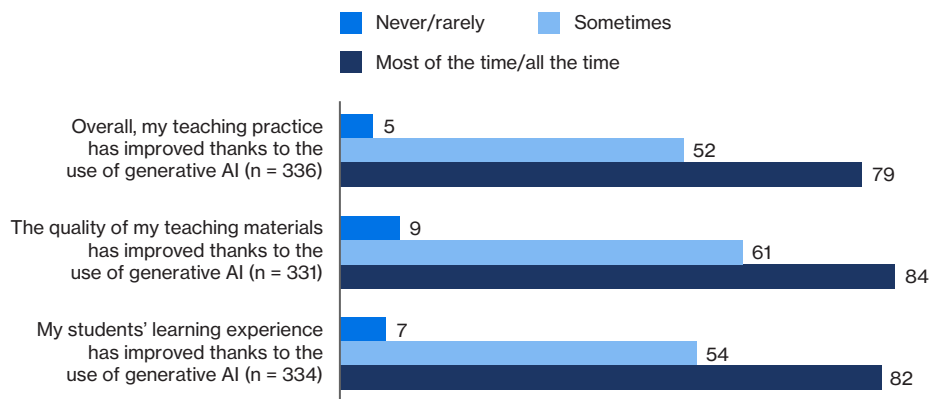
# AI use improves teaching

Educators who use generative AI more frequently are more likely to say that their teaching practice and materials improved and that their students' learning experience improved thanks to this technology (see Chart 6).<sup>8</sup>

The rise of generative AI in the sector is still recent, and educators are gradually becoming aware of the ways that AI tools can assist with their teaching practice, including grading short-answer questions and creating lesson plans, presentations, syllabi, and quizzes.<sup>9</sup>

## Chart 6

Educators who frequently use AI report better teaching outcomes (percentage of educators who agree with the statements, by how frequently they use AI)



Source: The Conference Board of Canada.

<sup>8</sup> "Not applicable" answers were excluded from these comparisons.

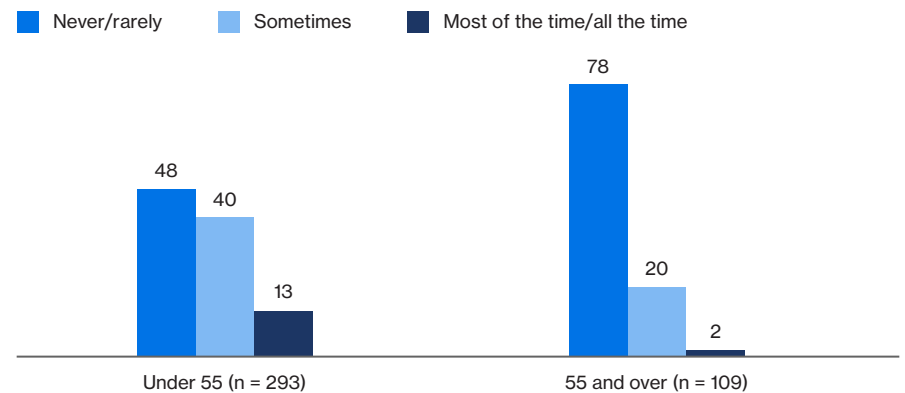
<sup>9</sup> Grassini, "Shaping the Future of Education."

## AI use by age, field, and institution type

Studies show that technology adoption varies across individuals with different sociodemographic characteristics.<sup>10,11</sup> We found no differences in use rates between educators identifying as women and those identifying as men.<sup>12</sup> Older educators (ages 55 and over) report lower use of generative AI compared with their younger colleagues (see Chart 7).

## Chart 7

Older educators use generative AI less frequently (per cent)



Source: The Conference Board of Canada.

<sup>10</sup> Owens and Lilly, "The Influence of Academic Discipline, Race, and Gender on Web-Use Skills."

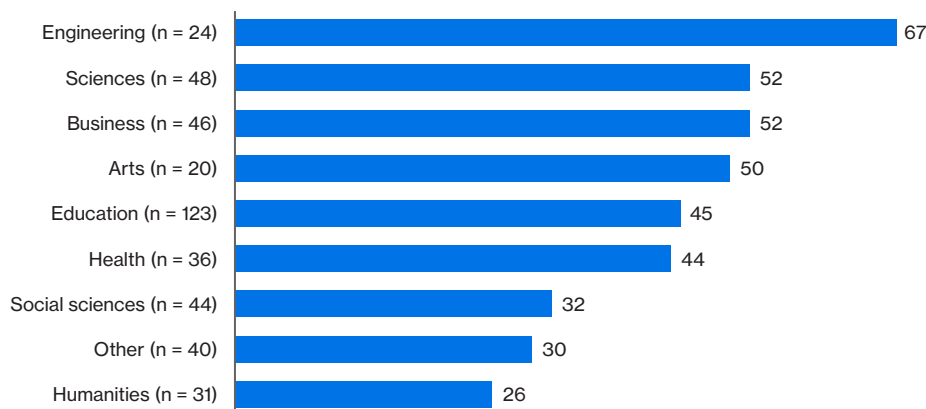
<sup>11</sup> Qazi and others, "Gender Differences in Information and Communication Technology Use."

<sup>12</sup> Only 1 per cent of individuals in our sample did not identify as men or women. A meaningful comparison with other gender identities was therefore not possible.

In addition, generative AI uptake is significantly higher among educators in some fields, such as engineering, compared with others, like the humanities (see Chart 8). AI use is also less common among educators at colleges and polytechnics than among those at universities (see Chart 9).

**Chart 8**

Uptake of generative AI is highest among educators in engineering, lowest in humanities  
(percentage of educators who report using generative AI sometimes, most of the time, or all the time, by field of study)



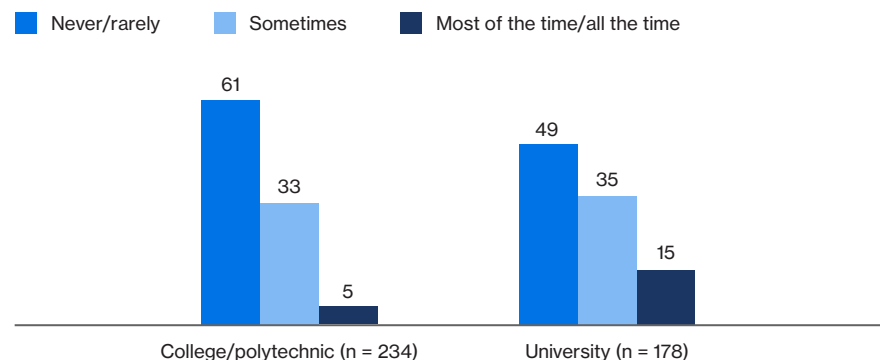
Source: The Conference Board of Canada.

**Impact on educators with disabilities**

The World Economic Forum argued in May 2024 that there is great potential for generative AI to help individuals with disabilities.<sup>13</sup> Educators in our sample who identified as having a disability (n=37) report similar use rates compared with those not reporting a disability. Around half said that generative AI supported them in their teaching practice, and less than one in three stated that generative AI had negatively impacted them. A better understanding of why generative AI supports some but not all educators with disabilities is needed. This is particularly important at post-secondary institutions that are actively seeking to promote the use of these tools.

**Chart 9**

Generative AI usage is less common among educators at colleges and polytechnics  
(per cent)



Source: The Conference Board of Canada.

13 World Economic Forum, "Generative AI Holds Great Potential for Those with Disabilities."

# Educators worry about academic dishonesty

More than half of the educators we surveyed said the use of generative AI for cheating is a major challenge (see Table 2). They're also worried about students using AI to submit unoriginal work, AI's potential to negatively impact students' critical thinking abilities, and the risk that these tools will prevent students from learning for themselves.

Educators are relatively less worried about AI's possible lack of specific subject expertise, users' low levels of familiarity with these tools, or the use of personal data as training material. However, responses across all items show that educators are apprehensive about this new technology, despite its promises to revolutionize teaching and learning.<sup>14,15</sup>

**Table 2**

Academic dishonesty is a major concern

**Q:** On a scale from 1 (not a challenge) to 7 (major challenge), to what extent do you think the following pose a challenge toward the use of generative AI in teaching and learning? (n = 402) (per cent)

	Not a challenge						Major challenge	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
It could be used for cheating	1	2	2	9	11	18	57	
It might lead students to submit unoriginal work	0	2	3	12	13	18	52	
It could inhibit students' critical thinking abilities	0	2	3	13	19	20	42	
It could prevent students from learning for themselves	0	2	5	15	16	20	42	
The possibility of AI generating false or incorrect information (or "hallucinations")	2	3	6	18	20	19	34	
It could impact human engagement and interaction in the learning process	1	2	6	18	22	20	31	
It could provide biased or controversial responses to prompts	1	2	5	20	21	20	30	
It might not provide expert enough subject experience	1	3	4	19	24	20	28	
Users might not have appropriate familiarity with generative AI	1	5	5	21	25	18	25	
It uses people's personal data as training material	1	4	7	27	21	16	24	

Source: The Conference Board of Canada.

14 World Economic Forum, "How AI Can Accelerate Students' Holistic Development."

15 Chen, "AI Will Transform Teaching and Learning."

## Some educators had a negative experience

While most educators reported no negative experiences with generative AI, 26 per cent of those we surveyed did (see Chart 10). In the open-ended follow-up question, most educators specified student plagiarism, unoriginality, and the production of false information (“hallucinations”) as the cause of their negative experience. An additional 13 per cent of educators said they did not know whether they had a negative experience, which could potentially reflect difficulties in identifying inappropriate uses of the technology.

## Generative AI can't be used for all tasks

Educators are more likely to oppose student use of generative AI for essay writing, problem-solving, and literature review (see Chart 11). This reflects concerns that AI could hinder the development of key skills traditionally acquired through higher education, such as formal writing, creativity, critical thinking, and critical reading.<sup>16,17,18</sup>

Educators are less likely to oppose student use of generative AI for secondary tasks like translation, language and grammar help, and general research and knowledge acquisition. This is not surprising, as older tools like Google Translate and Wikipedia have been used for years to support these tasks.

16 OECD, “Fostering and Assessing Creativity.”

17 Holmes and others, *Artificial Intelligence and Education*.

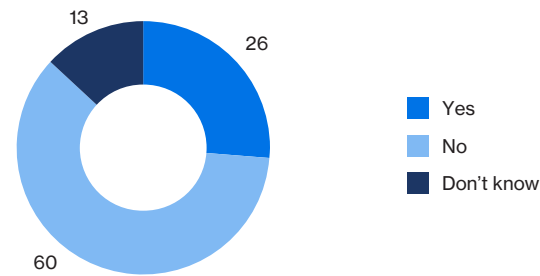
18 Le and others, “Critical Reading in Higher Education.”

**Chart 10**

Some educators report negative experiences with generative AI

Q: Have you had any negative experiences with using generative AI in your teaching practice? (n = 402)

(per cent)



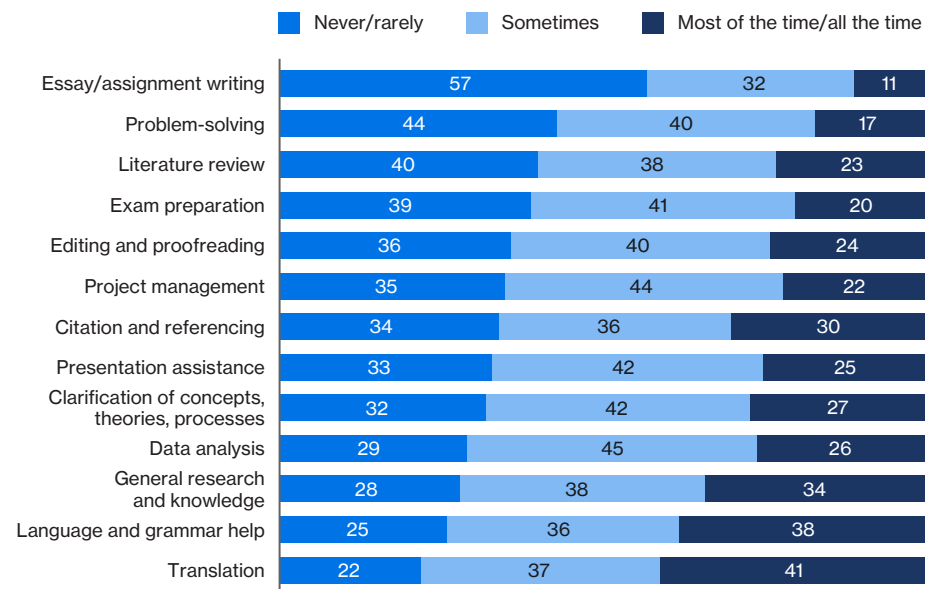
Source: The Conference Board of Canada.

**Chart 11**

Educators favour generative AI use for some tasks more than others

Q: How often do you think students should use generative AI tools for the following purposes? (n = 402)

(per cent)



Source: The Conference Board of Canada.

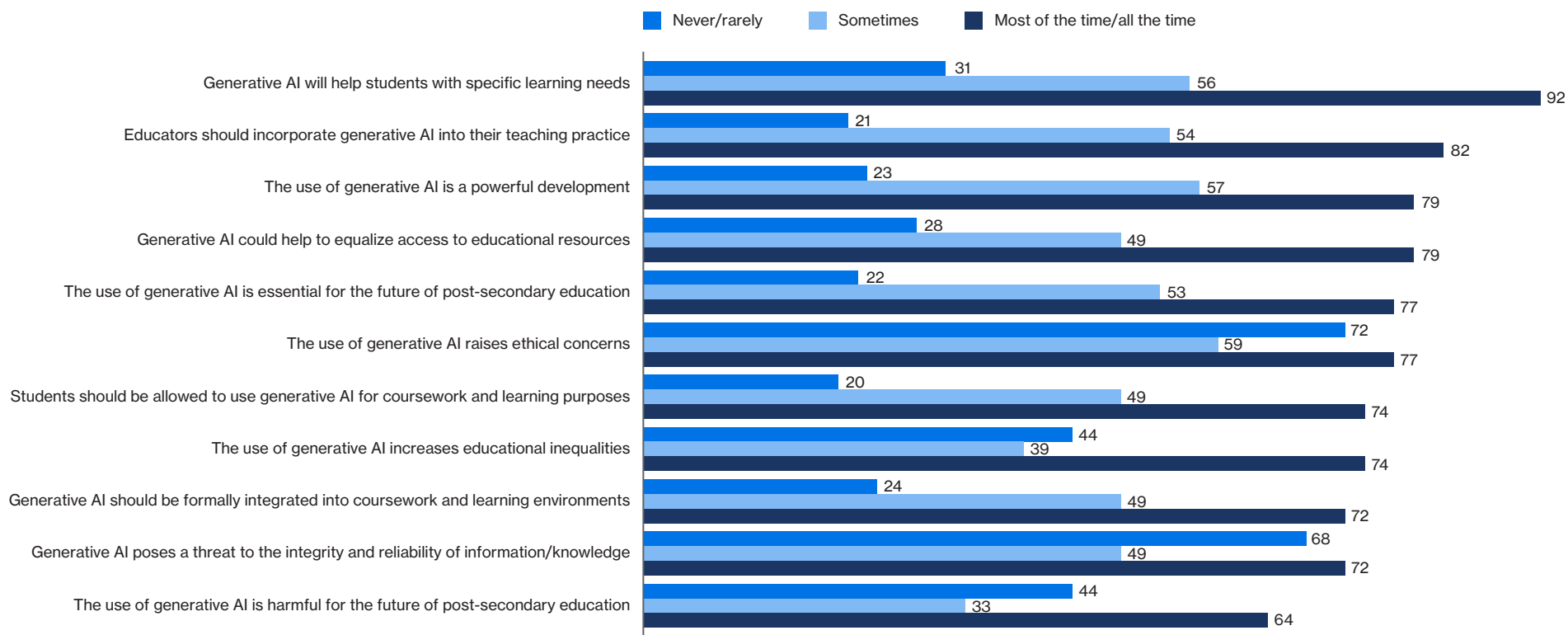
# Optimism and concern

Educators who use generative AI more frequently tend to have more favourable attitudes toward the technology (see Chart 12). For example, they are considerably more likely to agree that it will help students with specific learning needs and that educators should incorporate AI into their teaching practice.

However, frequent users are also more likely to say that generative AI increases educational inequalities and that it is harmful for the future of post-secondary education. Frequent and infrequent users have similar levels of concern surrounding the ethics of generative AI and its potential threat to the integrity of knowledge. Perspectives on generative AI integration in post-secondary education are therefore nuanced and complex.

## Chart 12

Educators who use generative AI more frequently have more favourable attitudes toward the technology (percentage of educators who agree with the statement, by how frequently they use AI; n = 402)



Source: The Conference Board of Canada.



# Implications for post-secondary institutions

Given the current uneven use of and familiarity with generative AI among post-secondary educators, appropriate training and guidance is critically needed. Without it, instructors won't be able to make the best use of AI tools in their classrooms.

If they have not already done so, PSIs that want to harness AI's potential should train educators so they are better informed about its appropriate uses and best practices. The risks of missed opportunities for teaching and learning are too great to ignore.

General guidance is a good place to start, but a one-size-fits-all approach should be avoided.<sup>19</sup> Varying professional practices and disciplinary needs require specific approaches to using these tools.

AI is here to stay, and PSIs can consider exploring ways to positively integrate it into higher education while also addressing the important concerns raised by educators. If they have not already begun, there is still time for PSIs to turn AI into an ally, rather than an enemy, of post-secondary teaching and learning.

<sup>19</sup> Janzen and Pizarro Milian, "How Are Canadian Postsecondary Students Using ChatGPT?"

## Appendix A

# Methodology

This research was conducted through an online survey on experiences, attitudes, and challenges surrounding the use of generative AI among post-secondary students and educators. To achieve a national sample, we used the services of Leger, a Canadian market research firm, which distributed the surveys in December 2023 and January 2024. We reached 2,401 students and 402 educators. To maximize representativeness of the data, sociodemographic quotas were established for province, gender, age, institution type, program of instruction (college/polytechnic program, undergraduate, graduate, professional program, or other), mode of instruction (in-person, online, or hybrid), instructional role (full-time instructor/professor, part-time instructor/professor, teaching assistant, or other), field of instruction, language of instruction, and cultural background. This data briefing draws exclusively on data collected from educator responses.

The survey included a mix of Likert-scale questions, multiple-choice questions, and open-ended questions on the use of generative AI in PSE. There were overlapping and distinct sets of questions for students and educators. The survey also captured demographic information for between-group analyses (gender, cultural background, region, age, etc.). This research project was reviewed by Veritas, an independent research ethics board. All instruments were approved. Survey responses were anonymous and participants were guaranteed confidentiality.

## Survey questions

### **Have you explicitly allowed or encouraged student use of generative artificial intelligence for coursework or learning purposes?**

1. Yes, for both coursework and learning
2. Yes, but only for coursework
3. Yes, but only for learning
4. No
5. Don't know

### **Have you explicitly banned student use of generative artificial intelligence for coursework or learning purposes?**

1. Yes, for both coursework and learning
2. Yes, but only for coursework
3. Yes, but only for learning
4. No
5. Don't know

### **Have you ever received formal training or guidance from your institution on how to effectively use generative artificial intelligence for academic purposes?**

1. Yes
2. No
3. Don't know

### **On a scale from 1 (not a challenge) to 7 (major challenge), to what extent do you think the following pose a challenge toward the use of generative artificial intelligence (e.g., ChatGPT, Bard, DALL-E) in teaching and learning?**

- The possibility of AI generating false or incorrect information (or “hallucinations”).
- Generative AI could inhibit students’ critical thinking abilities.
- It might lead students to submit unoriginal work.
- It uses people’s personal data as training material.
- It could impact human engagement and interaction in the learning process.
- It could prevent students from learning for themselves.
- It could provide biased or controversial responses to prompts.
- It might not provide expert enough subject experience.
- It could be used for cheating.
- Users might not have appropriate familiarity to use generative AI.

**How often do you think students should use generative artificial intelligence tools for the following purposes? (Response options included never, rarely, sometimes, most of the time, and all the time.)**

- essay/assignment writing
- essay/assignment editing and proofreading
- clarification of concepts/theories/processes
- problem-solving
- data analysis
- literature review
- general research and knowledge
- citation and referencing
- language and grammar help
- translation
- exam preparation
- presentation assistance
- project management

**On a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree), indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:**

- The use of generative artificial intelligence is essential for the future of post-secondary education.
- The use of generative AI is a powerful development in my own disciplinary field or professional practice.
- Generative artificial intelligence should be formally integrated into coursework and learning environments.
- I have the knowledge and skills needed to effectively use generative artificial intelligence in my teaching practice.
- Students should be allowed to use generative artificial intelligence for coursework and learning purposes.
- Educators should incorporate generative artificial intelligence into their teaching practice.
- Generative artificial intelligence will help students with specific learning needs.

- The use of generative artificial intelligence is harmful for the future of post-secondary education.
- The use of generative artificial intelligence raises ethical concerns.
- The use of generative artificial intelligence increases educational inequalities.
- Generative artificial intelligence poses a threat to the integrity and reliability of information/knowledge.
- Students should receive formal training on how to effectively use generative artificial intelligence.
- Educators should receive formal training on how to effectively use generative artificial intelligence.
- Generative artificial intelligence could help to equalize access to educational resources.

**Have you had any negative experiences with using generative artificial intelligence in your teaching practice?**

1. Yes
2. No
3. Don't know

**Over the past year, how often have you used generative artificial intelligence tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Bard, DALL-E) to help you with tasks related to your teaching?**

1. Never
2. Rarely
3. Sometimes
4. Most of the time
5. All the time

**On a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree), indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:**

- Overall, my teaching practice has improved thanks to the use of generative artificial intelligence.
- The quality of my teaching materials (e.g., presentation slides, assignments) has improved thanks to the use of generative artificial intelligence.



**How would you describe your gender?**

1. Woman
2. Man
3. Non-binary
4. Two-spirit
5. I prefer to identify as:
6. Prefer not to say

**What is your age?**

1. Under 25 years old
2. 25–35 years old
3. 36–45 years old
4. 46–55 years old
5. Over 55 years old
6. Prefer not to say

**Which of the following best describes your main area of instruction?**

1. Arts and communication technologies
2. Business
3. Education
4. Engineering
5. Health
6. Humanities
7. Sciences
8. Social sciences
9. Other, please specify:

**Do you identify as a person with a disability?**

1. Yes
2. No
3. Prefer not to say

If 2 or 3, thank and conclude survey.

**Does generative artificial intelligence support your ability to do tasks related to your teaching practice?**

1. Yes
2. No
3. Prefer not to say

**Does generative artificial intelligence negatively impact your ability to do tasks related to your teaching practice (e.g., AI tools are not always accessible)?**

1. Yes
2. No
3. Prefer not to say

## Appendix B

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Adam Vanzella Yang and Daniel Akira Stadnicki

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Email: [accessibility@conferenceboard.ca](mailto:accessibility@conferenceboard.ca)

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