Guidelines for Generative AI Use at Brooklyn College

as of January 28, 2026

1. Purpose and Context

Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) has transformative potential for higher education, with opportunities for enhancing teaching, learning, and operational efficiency. However, the use of GenAI must be balanced with the protection of institutional data, intellectual property, and academic integrity.

This document establishes guidelines for the responsible use of GenAI at Brooklyn College. It is informed by current best practices across CUNY and higher education and is designed to ensure compliance with FERPA and CUNY's Academic Integrity Policy and Data Classification Standard.

These guidelines are subject to periodic change as CUNY-wide technology and academic policies evolve.

2. Guiding Principles

Our approach to GenAI is grounded in four core principles:

1. **Accountability:** GenAI is a tool, not an author. Humans remain fully responsible for all content generated, vetted, and submitted.
2. **Transparency:** The use of GenAI in academic work must be disclosed. Hidden use of GenAI to generate work submitted for credit or decision-making is prohibited.
3. **Data Privacy:** Sensitive and confidential institutional data (as defined in the CUNY Data Classification Standard) must never be exposed to public GenAI tools and models that harvest information for training purposes without legal protection.
4. **Ethical Use:** GenAI must be used in ways that uphold the institution's values and ethical standards.

3. Data Security

The CUNY Data Classification Standard classifies based on their sensitivity and the level of protection required. The main classification categories are: Public, Sensitive, and Confidential. Users must distinguish between **Licensed** (Enterprise) and **Public** (Free/Consumer) GenAI services when handling CUNY data.

3.1 Prohibited Use

Confidential data, as defined by the CUNY Data Classification Standard, must **NOT** be entered, shared, or processed using any GenAI platforms, including CUNY-licensed platforms, AI-assisted web browsers, and AI-powered search tools. Examples of such confidential data include:

- **Personally Identifiable Information (PII)**
- **Student records (FERPA-protected data)**
- **Financial or health-related data**

3.2 Licensed (Enterprise) GenAI Services

Microsoft 365 Copilot (accessed via your CUNY Login credentials) is currently the only licensed GenAI service that is approved for processing non-public, internal, and sensitive university data. Copilot used inside the CUNY Microsoft 365 tenant does not use your data to train its foundation models. Your prompts and responses remain logically isolated within the CUNY tenant as part of Microsoft's Enterprise Data Protection (EDP). Look for the "Green Shield" icon next to the chat/user profile to confirm you are protected. Although it is licensed, Copilot output must still be monitored for hallucinations, inappropriate, and inaccurate outputs.

3.3 Public (Free/Consumer) GenAI Services

Confidential and sensitive data must **NOT** be entered, shared, or processed using public GenAI services (e.g., Free/Plus versions of ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, Perplexity). These platforms lack the necessary data protection agreements with the University. Public data may be used in these tools, provided users assume no privacy expectations and treat any input as if it were posted to a public website.

3.4 Summary Table for GenAI Usage by Data Classification

Refer to the CUNY Data Classification Standard for more details and examples for each data classification.

Data Classification and Examples	**CUNY Licensed GenAI Platforms**	**Public GenAI Platforms**
Confidential: FERPA: Student grades, rosters, transcripts, exams, advising notes. PII: Social Security Numbers (SSN), EMPLIDs, Drivers Licenses. HIPAA: Health/Medical records, disability status. Financial: Bank account numbers, credit card info, tax forms. Legal: Attorney-client privileged communications.	PROHIBITED	STRICTLY PROHIBITED Violation of Federal Law and CUNY Policy
Sensitive/Internal: Meeting minutes, non-public email drafts, strategic plans. Intellectual Property: Unpublished research, grant proposals, draft manuscripts. Directory Info: Student names/emails.	PERMITTED	PROHIBITED Risk of data harvesting and IP loss
Public: Press releases, job postings, public website content, course catalogs. Published Work: Research already in the public domain.	PERMITTED	PERMITTED Do not use output for official business without verification

4. Rationale for These Guidelines

The distinction between "Prohibited" and "Permitted" use is based on the following risk factors:

1. **Data Protection:** Brooklyn College does not have broad data protection agreements with public GenAI tools, making any submitted data potentially unprotected and subject to harvesting.
2. **Liability:** Many GenAI tools require users to accept terms of service agreements individually. Accepting these terms for institutional work may create legal risks if done without institutional approval.
3. **Privacy Concerns:** Public GenAI tools do not guarantee data privacy. Entering sensitive data (such as student grades or personnel issues) poses a significant security risk and may violate federal law (FERPA).
4. **Intellectual Property Issues:** Users may not own rights to content generated using GenAI, and GenAI tools may inadvertently incorporate copyrighted material in their outputs.

5. Academic Integrity and Course Policies

This section outlines the instructor's authority to set course-specific expectations for GenAI usage in coursework, the need for transparency and proper citation, and other course-related issues.

5.1 Instructor Autonomy

In accordance with the CUNY Academic Integrity Policy, Brooklyn College adopts a "Course-by-Course" policy model. Instructors have the authority to determine the permissible level of GenAI use in their classrooms. Policies typically fall into three general categories:

1. **No GenAI Permitted:** Strict prohibition of GenAI for any stage of the assignment.
2. **GenAI Assisted:** GenAI may be permitted for certain aspects of coursework in disciplinary-appropriate or platform-specific ways. As a simple example, an instructor may allow the use of GenAI for brainstorming, outlining, but not for drafting or substantively editing the content of a paper.
3. **GenAI Integration:** GenAI use is required or encouraged as a core component of course assignments.

Faculty must clearly communicate their course policies to all students in the syllabus, and they are encouraged to reiterate the policies at appropriate times during the term (e.g., prior to a particular assignment). It may also be valuable to emphasize the policies and guidelines for GenAI usage are specific to the particular course and may be different than those of another course or instructor.

5.2 Citation and Attribution

When GenAI use is permitted, it must be cited and/or appropriately disclosed. GenAI cannot be listed as an author. Students should use the following framework for disclosure:

- **Citation:** Follow APA, MLA or other appropriate citation guidelines for citing GenAI.
- **Disclosure of GenAI Usage / Methodology Statement:** For substantial use, students may be required to append a statement or transcript detailing the prompts used and how the output was modified.

5.3 Grading and Assessment

Faculty **must not** upload student assignments to public GenAI tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude, Perplexity) for assessment. This potentially exposes student intellectual property and PII to third-party vendors, violating FERPA. GenAI-assisted grading must be conducted only within CUNY-licensed GenAI services, such as Microsoft 365 Copilot**,** that have enterprise data protection agreements.

5.4 GenAI Detection Tools

The use of GenAI Detection software as the sole basis for determining academic misconduct is discouraged. Research indicates that these tools can produce false positives and may not be reliable. Faculty are advised to use detection scores only as a signal to initiate a conversation with the student regarding their writing process.

5.5 Violations

Submission of content generated with GenAI as one's own work without acknowledgment constitutes **plagiarism** and/or **unauthorized assistance**. Such violations will be adjudicated under the CUNY Academic Integrity Policy.