

ATU AI Guiding Principles

This document lays out Arkansas Tech University's guiding principles for AI across teaching, learning, research, and operations. It also supports ATU's strategic plan by improving academic delivery, protecting institutional trust, supporting employees, and guiding responsible decisions about AI tools and infrastructure. AI is already part of daily work at ATU, whether we use it directly or it is built into the tools we rely on. These principles set clear expectations for students, staff, faculty, and administrators. The goal is straightforward: to support the appropriate use, protect people and trust, and ensure that AI aligns with ATU's mission and responsibilities. Taken together, these principles support ATU's mission and vision by protecting academic quality, expanding access, and building the AI and information literacy students need for long term success. They also provide the foundation for more specific rules and procedures in areas like academics, student services, operations, and vendor platforms.

A core expectation throughout is AI and information literacy. That means understanding what AI can and cannot do, checking sources and outputs, verifying claims, recognizing limits and bias, and not treating AI-generated content as automatically correct. These habits help to build core skills for students, faculty, staff, and administrators, including critical thinking, clear communication, and responsible use of information. This matters because ATU's mission and vision depend on accuracy and trust, and these principles protect that trust by setting clear boundaries, requiring human responsibility, and safeguarding accuracy, fairness, and data security. University-wide coordination runs through the ATU AI Ethics, Governance, and Implementation Committee, and the governance expectations that follow are meant to make this practical. Because AI will keep changing, our guidance and review must keep up.

Part I: Guiding Principles

This section states the core expectations for AI use at ATU. It is written to be broadly understandable and to set the baseline for everyone, regardless of role or department.

1. Human Stewardship and Accountability

AI can be a tool that helps faculty, staff, and students work more efficiently and make sense of information. However, it is not an independent decision-maker. Final authority and responsibility must stay with people. ATU will not use AI as a justification to eliminate essential human oversight, reduce needed services, or weaken academic or other programs that support student success. If AI helps produce an output, the person using it is accountable for what it says and how it is used. If the work was requested, responsibility is shared between the requester and the person who used the AI. Supervisors and leaders are accountable for the words, work, and actions of their subordinates, just as students are accountable for the words, work and actions they submit for grades.

When AI is used in ways that can seriously affect someone's academics, opportunities, job, standing, or the University, there must be a transparent and accessible way for a person to make final decisions and be accountable for those decisions. A human must be able to review and understand AI processes, override and correct mistakes, or harmful outcomes. The level of human review must increase as the impact and risk increase, and the person responsible must have real authority to act. Anyone impacted by an AI mediated decision must have a straightforward, transparent process for requesting human review and a fair path to arbitrate disputes.

2. Clear Boundaries for AI Use

ATU will set clear boundaries for what university activities AI is allowed to support and what it is not allowed to support. AI may be used only within that approved scope. ATU will not require employees to use generative AI to perform their duties, and any required student use of AI must be clearly disclosed and include a reasonable alternative when appropriate. If a proposed AI use falls outside the approved scope, it may proceed only when that use is explicitly authorized, documented, and communicated with those affected by the outcome.

3. Purpose and Proportionality in AI Adoption

AI systems will be used only when ATU has determined that the benefits clearly justify the risks. Risk decisions are set by ATU policy and the responsible offices, not left to individual judgment. As a practical rule, risk goes up when AI uses sensitive or personal data, drives a consequential decision, affects access to resources or opportunities, or creates outcomes that are difficult to undo. Adoption of AI technologies is neither necessary nor beneficial in all cases, and the university will prioritize minimizing risk exposure when assessing potential use of AI. This will follow applicable federal and state requirements and ATU policy and guidance.

4. Transparency and Notice

AI use at ATU must be transparent, governed, and open to review. Everyone at ATU has an ethical responsibility to disclose the use of AI if presenting, publishing, or submitting work as their own. When AI meaningfully impacts a decision or outcome for an individual, a program, or a department, the university will provide clear notice to the people affected and to the relevant groups involved. ATU will document who owns and oversees the AI use and why key decisions were made. AI-generated materials used for official purposes will be retained and managed in line with applicable federal and state requirements and ATU policy and guidance.

5. Information Literacy and Verification

AI can produce confident-sounding claims that are incomplete, biased, or simply wrong. When AI is used to generate, summarize, or interpret information for teaching, learning, research, advising, operations, or public communication, users must verify key facts, check sources, and apply basic information literacy. This includes distinguishing primary from secondary sources, confirming quotations and citations, and recognizing when the AI is guessing. If something matters, it must be checked.

6. Privacy and Security

ATU will prioritize the privacy of students, faculty, staff, and administrators when adopting AI technologies or using them. AI systems and AI-assisted workflows will be treated as institutional infrastructure and assessed for data, privacy, and security risks. They must follow applicable federal and state requirements, as well as ATU policy and guidance. ATU will apply appropriate security and safety controls and will suspend or retire systems that no longer meet ATU standards for security, privacy, or governance.

7. Ethical Integrity and Institutional Values

ATU must uphold fairness, non-discrimination, accessibility, academic integrity, and respect for intellectual property when using AI. The same policies that govern traditional work apply here. AI must not be used to

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deceive, manipulate, exploit power differences, or hide authorship or work. Academic freedom in AI use is supported within these ethical boundaries.

8. Continuous Evaluation

ATU will regularly assess the short-term and long-term effects of AI adoption on teaching and learning quality, workloads, trust, and institutional well-being. AI tools adopted by ATU will also be regularly evaluated for inaccuracy, bias, data security, and quality. Findings will be used to improve practice, select or cancel tools, and update policy over time.

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Part II: Governance and Standards

This section captures implementation requirements that support the guiding principles above. These items describe governance structures, operational standards, and compliance requirements.

A. Scope and acceptable use

- ATU will define the operations and areas that AI is permitted to support, and those it is prohibited from supporting. Uses outside the approved scope require explicit justification and authorization.
- AI will not be the final decision-maker for admissions, financial aid, grading, discipline, employment actions, promotion/tenure, access to services, or other consequential outcomes.

B. Human review, override, and remedy

- High-impact, consequential, or difficult-to-reverse AI uses must not be used to steer decisions through scoring, ranking, or recommendations unless explicitly authorized, reviewed by a human with authority to override, and documented at key decision points (for example, admissions decisions).
- When the use of AI meaningfully influences a consequential decision or action, ATU will provide a clear process to contest the outcome, obtain human review, and correct errors, bias, or unfair impacts.
- Every individual is responsible for their use of AI and its output, and any output used officially by ATU should be assessed, evaluated, and verified by humans as impact and risk increase.

C. Risk-based adoption and data minimization

- ATU should use AI only to advance a clear institutional purpose and to achieve a documented, defensible benefit. Convenience alone is not sufficient justification for high impact uses.
- ATU will use the least risky and least intrusive approach reasonably available to achieve a documented outcome. Higher risk uses require stronger justification and safeguards.
- ATU will use the minimum data necessary for an approved purpose. Requirements for sensitive data and approved tools are addressed in the Security, Privacy, and Retention section below.

D. Notice and documentation

- ATU will provide clear notice when AI is used in ways that materially affect students, employees, applicants, or other individuals.
- ATU will maintain clear ownership, clear standards, and documented decisions for AI governance, including decision rationales where appropriate. For each approved AI system or workflow, ATU will document the purpose, data sources, known limitations, validation/monitoring approach, and the person or office responsible for ongoing review.
- Individual ATU employees will disclose their use of AI assistance in any professional publication, presentation, or product created at ATU or using ATU-licensed materials.

E. Security, privacy, records, and retention

- AI systems and AI-enabled workflows will meet ATU security requirements appropriate to risk, including security controls, access control, and monitoring.

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- ATU will include contractual obligations for vendors regarding data handling, retention/deletion, breach notification, subcontractor controls, and material changes that affect risk.
- ATU will train staff, faculty, and administrators using AI to comply with applicable privacy obligations, copyright and intellectual property regulations, and ATU records requirements. AI-generated materials used for official purposes will be retained and managed in accordance with applicable laws and ATU guidance.
- Sensitive or non-public ATU data will not be entered, uploaded to, or exposed to unapproved AI tools or systems. ATU will define sensitive data categories and maintain an approved tools list.

F. Training and competence

- AI use for university work requires role-appropriate training and competence. High-impact systems will not be deployed unless responsible personnel are prepared to supervise them, evaluate them, and respond to failures.
- ATU will create personnel training that raises awareness of its limitations, including bias and misinformation.
- ATU will not require personnel to use a generative AI system or the generative AI components of an existing tool to perform their duties.

G. Information quality and content integrity

- ATU will set clear expectations for AI-assisted content used in official communications, instructional materials, and decision-support, including clear responsibility for the final version.
- When AI is used to draft, summarize, or transform information that others will rely on, the employee responsible must check the key facts and provide sources when appropriate.
- AI-generated citations and quotations may be used only when verified against the original source, and material errors must be corrected promptly when discovered.

H. Conflicts of interest

- Individuals involved in selecting, approving, evaluating, or purchasing AI systems will disclose potential conflicts of interest and recuse themselves when appropriate.

I. Monitoring and sunset

- ATU will maintain an inventory of AI uses, review them regularly, monitor high-impact uses, and suspend or retire systems that no longer meet ATU standards for security, privacy, governance, or institutional norms.