

Executive summary

The University of Calgary's Students' Union (UCSU) is the independent representative of over 30,000 undergraduates. In written and verbal submissions to the Expert Panel on AI Impacts on Labour Markets and Educational Post-secondary Outcomes,¹ our student leaders gave their perspective on artificial intelligence (AI) in teaching and learning.

The majority of Canadian students now incorporate AI tools in their studies and want AI training from their post-secondary institution (PSI). Many employers similarly want PSIs to offer AI training, but the UCSU believes AI works best as a tool of convenience for users with well-established skills.

Our PSIs already teach the foundational abilities needed to use AI effectively without harming user cognition. All forms of post-secondary education can hone the research ability, critical thinking skill, and high standards of literacy and numeracy needed to creatively and critically engage with AI.

The UCSU is sharing recommendations to instill AI literacy in students and faculty, and to ensure AI is used with student input and informed consent. We call for stronger data and privacy protections, and for provincial government to support new assessment types at a time when faculty are turning to written exams to preclude cheating.

Most importantly, we urge the panel to ensure any application of AI in higher learning is necessary for legitimate learning aims, and that we do not adopt new technologies for adoption's sake.

President Gabriela Dziegielewska
supres@ucalgary.ca

Vice-President Academic Zoe Zeritsch
suvpaca@ucalgary.ca

Summary of recommendations

1. Avoid adoption for adoption's sake

Plenty of rhetoric surrounding AI's potentially 'revolutionary' impacts on education mirrors bluster around previous learning technologies that did not meet expectations. New technology in learning is not always useful, or even helpful. We urge the expert panel to emphasize less whether AI can be used in education and more on whether educators and students express a genuine need for it.

2. The importance of AI literacy

To use AI effectively and appropriately, staff, students, and faculty must understand AI's abilities and limitations. We recommend that the expert panel, in creating an AI literacy framework that works for Alberta, could incorporate shared foundational principles from frameworks already maintained by major international bodies and governments.

3. Aligning AI in learning with market needs

Though a rising number of employers expect graduates to possess AI skills, they are either unable or unwilling to provide AI training. PSIs already teach foundational skills that graduates will need to use AI responsibly and effectively; our campuses cannot be expected to carry the technical training burden alone. We ask the expert panel to explore methods of ensuring PSIs are compensated for any provision of AI training by the employers that will ultimately benefit.

4. AI's impact on academic assessment

Written exams are not the only way PSIs can stop AI being used to cheat. Many forms of alternative assessment promote better learning outcomes, but educators will need dedicated resources to develop them. AI should also not rob students of chances to develop independent skills. We ask the panel to endorse developing new forms of academic evaluation; we further suggest that students should be able to opt out of using AI tools unless it is required to meet a core learning objective.

5. AI and grading

AI cannot replace the expertise of instructors, nor can it adequately assess or factcheck work. We urge the expert panel to recommend prohibiting PSIs from grading work with AI, ensuring that students who suspect AI was used can request a reappraisal. We suggest enshrining a right for students to opt out of having their work input into AI.

6. Protecting student and faculty data

Suggestions made in 2025 by Alberta's Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner could enhance Alberta's existing Protection of Privacy Act and secure the data of PSI students and staff. We encourage the expert panel to ensure that, wherever possible, AI tools used for both AI training and general learning on our campuses are hosted locally.

7. Quality assurance and academic freedom

We champion instructors' right to use learning technologies as they see fit, but students should be assured that they can take control of their own data, and that only trained faculty will incorporate AI into classrooms. PSIs should disclose whether an AI tool has been assessed for institutional use and whether faculty have undergone AI training. We suggest giving students clear channels to report improper AI use, and for course materials to specify where and when AI will be used.

8. AI, accessibility, and wellbeing

While AI-powered learning technologies can be helpful to students with disabilities and other learning needs, PSIs must be vigilant to ensure they don't become hindrances. We ask the panel to review how PSIs can be supported to use AI accessibility tools responsibly, and only where the benefit to students is clear. We raise concerns with students relying on AI to replace mental health care and suggest that AI should not be incorporated into on-campus health services without provincial expert reviews.

Quick facts

- 73% of Canadian students now incorporate AI tools in their studies; 77% want their institution to offer AI training²
- 55% of North American faculty fear that AI “poses a serious risk” to education, while 42% of students feel that AI in the classroom does not enhance their learning³
- Although 42 percent of Canadians use AI at work, just 12 percent have taken formal training⁴

¹ Government of Alberta. <<https://www.alberta.ca/expert-panel-on-ai-impacts-on-labour-markets-and-post-secondary-outcomes>>

² KPMG. Generative AI boom among Canadian students raises dilemmas. (October 2025) <<https://kpmg.com/ca/en/media/2025/10/generative-ai-boom-among-canadian-students-raises-dilemmas.html>>

³ Digital Education Council. AI in Higher Education. (2026) <<https://www.digitaleducationcouncil.com/resource-library-items/ai-in-higher-education-global-survey-2026>>

⁴ Growclass. Majority of Canadians Using AI Without Proper Training, New Data Finds. (2025) <<https://www.growclass.co/post/most-canadians-using-ai-without-training>>