

CHAPTER 48.

**AI-POWERED RESEARCH AND
CITATION PLATFORMS WILL
ENHANCE ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**
✦ *GENERATIVE AI TECHNOLOGIES
EMPHASIZE THE ROLE OF
ENGAGEMENT IN INTEGRITY*

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**LIMITED NOTIONS OF ACADEMIC INTEGRITY
AND RELATIONSHIPS TO GENAI PLATFORMS**

As the number of publicly accessible writing-related generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) platforms continue to increase, we've heard claims that such systems will undoubtedly enhance academic integrity. Indeed, generative AI writing-platforms often boast commitments to “upholding academic integrity” (Jenni, Inc., 2024), “ensur[ing] your writing and reputation shine” (Grammarly, Inc., 2025) “help[ing] you avoid plagiarism” (PackBack, 2025) However, the idyllic promises made by emerging GenAI platforms tend to ignore the complex processes required for writers to establish and maintain academic integrity.

Although websites for GenAI platforms invoke the term “integrity,” we argue that these claims focus on machine-based interventions that cannot, on their own, equate to academic integrity because artificial systems are not capable of the moral and structural integrity that are integral to academic integrity. Furthermore, we show that, within academic settings, authorship is a particular emphasis for discussions of academic integrity as a significant goal of academic communities is to generate or acquire new knowledge and writing is a means of articulating such knowledge. Claims about the abilities of GenAI-powered platforms often rest on a problematic understanding of academic integrity and a limited notion of the role that writing processes play in knowledge development.

This chapter highlights the context in which AI-powered research writing tools often challenge the very notions of academic integrity that they purport to

foster. If relegating academic integrity to generative AI systems is a bad idea, a better idea is to engage generative AI systems as part of the larger structures that can either support or inhibit human engagement in the processes and practices that enable individuals to develop and maintain academic integrity.

MORAL INTEGRITY IN ACADEMIC SETTINGS

At the heart of academic integrity are concerns about moral values—what’s right or good in an academic context. The concept of moral integrity describes exemplary character and right action (Beever, 2021, p. 231) in line with fundamental values and is essential to a robust understanding of integrity. To demonstrate the limitations of GenAI platforms in having moral integrity on their own or enhancing the integrity of writers as a default, we will evaluate GenAI platforms against—honesty and trust—two of the six values for academic integrity as identified by the International Center for Academic Integrity (ICAI 2021).

Writers often demonstrate honesty in the writing process through the ways that they offer credit for others’ ideas by quoting, paraphrasing, and referencing other scholars and source material. AI-powered platforms often tout their ability to help writers provide correctly formatted citations; but, even if true, these claims miss the fact that citations on their own aren’t enough to establish integrity or the value of honesty. Citations stand as a representation of a process that readers expect. Citations signal a writer’s interaction with a text and, in turn, the ideas presented in that text. Citing with honesty connotes verification of the source of an idea or quotation, recognition of its relevance to the topic at hand, and articulation of the connection between the external source and the writer’s own ideas (see Eaton, this volume, for more on the pitfalls of AI summaries). Therefore, in most academic writing situations, it is not considered honest or acceptable for a writer to include a citation—appropriately formatted or not—for a source that they have never directly engaged. Certainly, human writers aren’t perfect and their interpretations can sometimes be imperfect. Yet, human writers are capable of and taught to strive for honesty, whereas AI platforms are not so capable and cannot so strive.

Trustworthiness, closely linked to honesty, is likewise fundamental to moral integrity. The ICAI lays out six ways to demonstrate trust: “clearly state expectations, promote transparency . . . , trust others, give credence, encourage mutual understanding, and act with genuineness” (2021). Trustworthiness in writing allows readers to expect that when a writer reports on data collected or an idea they have developed, they are doing so in a way that evidences substantial engagement with, and, in turn, relevant understanding of the topic at hand. A software developer recently described to us the ways that relying on generative AI platforms can jeopardize trustworthiness. When interviewing internship candidates,

he found that many of them could not meaningfully discuss software code that had been presented in their portfolios of sample work. The developer learned that the software code had been AI-generated, and the applicants had not only neglected to disclose their use of gen-AI platforms but also neglected to engage with the outputs substantially enough to discuss the possibilities and limitations. This situation could just as easily affect writers. If a writer is relying on an AI-powered platform to identify what information is relevant to their topic and/or to integrate it into the writer's own text, the writer may be compromising their trustworthiness by offloading the process of substantial engagement and the knowledge-making that occurs through that engagement. GenAI-powered actions such as ensuring appropriate citations, providing references for AI-generated content, or offering credibility scores for potential sources may, indeed, be beneficial; however, these are no substitute for the ongoing, negotiated processes that allow an individual to establish moral integrity (see Comi, this volume, for further discussion of such processes in technical writing).

Although trustworthiness is a term that is being used to outline strategies for ethical AI development (Deloitte, 2025; IBM, 2024; ITU, 2025; NIST, 2025; United States, Executive Office of the President 2023), these accounts fall short of its equivalent for human agents because the AI systems are not being held accountable for their outputs. The sort of trustworthiness we expect from human writing agents anticipates their individual responsibility and an expectation that others hold them accountable for their writing. Telling evidence of this moral divide is in the recent benchmark for artificial general intelligence (AGI) set collectively by Microsoft and OpenAI. Once seen conceptually as a performance goal (i.e., that AGI would surpass human performance across any intellectual task), the recent benchmark defines AGI as “the ability to generate \$100 billion in profit” (Ferguson, 2024). Such goals remind us of the ways that profit, not process, drive the push to AGI. Despite the similarity in terminology, it is important to remember that when organizations like the National Institute for Standards and Technology (NIST, 2025) describe their strategies to understand “trustworthy and responsible AI,” they are focused on values expected of and capable of artificial systems, which are not necessarily the same as those we expect of humans. Although academic scholarship has begun to call for more attention to the accountability of AI actors (e.g., Díaz-Rodríguez et al., 2023) currently, this facet of trustworthiness remains relegated to human agents.

STRUCTURAL INTEGRITY IN ACADEMIC SETTINGS

Moral integrity cannot hold up without external support. Hence, academic integrity rests on the interplay among moral and structural components.

Structural integrity describes the ways that a system can do what it is designed to do: a bridge or computer has structural integrity just if its parts come together such that it functions as it was designed to do. When it comes to the academic integrity of human writers, structural integrity connotes the relational supports or barriers to an individual's responsibility, like the support of good mentorship or the barrier of socio-economic disparities. Structural integrity is the characteristic that enables morally-right resistance against challenges such as external pressures, power relations, and socioeconomic privilege (Beever, 2021). Objectivity, a characteristic sometimes touted as a strength of AI-powered systems, is often used a way to describe one's ability to resist such external pressures. Although some assume that machine-based systems can attend to objectivity in ways that humans cannot, we would argue that many GenAI platforms fall short here. In particular, the black-boxed neural network connections inherent in the large language models that undergird the generative AI systems most often used in writing make objectivity impossible to claim. Black box models are those that have been "created directly from data by an algorithm, meaning that humans, even those who design [the models], cannot understand how variables are being combined to make predictions" (Rudin & Radin, 2019). If a system is black boxed, we cannot presume objectivity because no one knows how outputs are generated and cannot, in fact, verify whether they are objective or not.

Furthermore, the structural integrity of GenAI platforms is further complicated by the problem of hallucinations, or responses by GenAI platforms to prompts that made no sense or were pure non sequiturs. Hallucinations were obvious shortcomings of first-generation large language model (LLM)-driven. Although newer GenAI platforms now advertise fewer such hallucinations, these contemporary systems perpetuate the risks of simulation without resolving any of the concerns at the heart of academic integrity: the structures on which they are built are mere analogies to or simulations of human creative and reasoning processes. These systems emulate, not create, only mimicking processes that writers should take seriously as integral to knowledge development.

REDEFINING RESPONSIBILITY AND THE RELATIONSHIPS OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE TO INTEGRITY

AI-powered research writing tools can encourage (or in inadvertently allow) writers to offload the practices and processes required to establish and maintain the moral and structural components required for academic integrity. Therefore, higher education stakeholders will need to resituate understandings of academic integrity in writing as an ongoing process of negotiation that is not just about singular practices such as correct citations but rather including sustained

responsible engagement with the processes of writing and knowledge development. Such a redefinition can reinvigorate conversations around the roles of citation and critical engagement in research and knowledge-generation. This redefinition can also counter other bad ideas about writing that are not necessarily related to AI-powered platforms but also don't enhance academic integrity. For example, it can expose the potential bad ideas inherent in writing assignments that sometimes require students to cite a certain number of sources rather than only those relevant to the research topic or data collection process. Such assignments without significant scaffolding can actually undermine integrity by encouraging students to integrate unrelated material in order to meet minimum requirements or to add citations for materials with which they are not familiar.

Within the generative AI context, academic integrity becomes even more complex, not less so, as writers must make choices about whether and how they engage with AI-powered platforms in the first place and then must know how to record and disclose the scope of their use. Recognizing the interplay between moral and structural components of integrity can push individuals to recognize anew their roles and responsibilities within the research process and to closely examine the ways that AI-powered platforms can enhance or detract from those roles. It is not AI platforms that inherently enhance academic integrity but rather the individual who must do so despite, within, and through their use of AI. Higher education stakeholders will play a key role in defining academic integrity in an AI-infused landscape and such stakeholders can help ensure that integrity is in its fullest sense with both moral and structural components.

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