

Artificial Intelligence at Cape Breton University

AI with Purpose



ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AT CAPE BRETON UNIVERSITY - AI WITH PURPOSE

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is rapidly transforming how universities teach, research, operate and engage with the world. As these technologies evolve, they present both opportunities and risks across academic disciplines, administrative functions and public life. Cape Breton University's (CBU) commitment to inclusive education, ethical research, responsible innovation and community engagement requires a clear and adaptable framework to guide how AI is introduced, used and governed across the institution. We have developed a strategy entitled, AI with Purpose, that establishes that foundation. It sets out core institutional principles, identifies priority actions across key domains and outlines an accountability model to support shared responsibility and continuous learning.

CONSULTATION PROCESS

Our strategy was informed by a consultative process. It began with university wide sessions with faculty, staff, students and administrators. A small working committee of faculty, staff and administrators was then formed to review feedback received through group sessions, host small meetings with researchers and staff and examine existing artificial intelligence literature and insights. The working group drafted a document that was further developed by the working group chairs—the Chief Information Officer and Associate Vice President Academic & Research. Additional insights were offered by department leaders. Finally, the strategy was reviewed by CBU's President and senior executive team.

Here, we share with you the foundational assumptions and guiding principles that shape our approach to artificial intelligence.



FOUNDATIONAL ASSUMPTIONS

CBU is located on Unama'ki, one of the seven traditional and unceded districts of the Mi'kmaq Nation. As a university dedicated to truth, reconciliation and meaningful relationships with Mi'kmaw communities, CBU affirms that any institutional engagement with AI must respect Indigenous knowledge systems.

The impacts, applications and perceived value of AI vary widely across the University. Some academic and administrative units are already experimenting with AI in pedagogy, research and service delivery; others are still in early stages of awareness and adoption. These differences reflect CBU's diversity and must be acknowledged in any institutional response.

Further complicating the landscape, AI technologies remain in a formative and unstable phase. Legal, regulatory and technological standards continue to shift globally, driven by rapidly evolving corporate platforms and contested public debates. In this context, it is neither practical nor appropriate to impose rigid, universal rules. Instead, our strategy offers a principle-based and context-sensitive approach that supports responsible experimentation, protects institutional values and allows for iterative adaptation.

AI with Purpose provides institution-wide direction while acknowledging that complete regulation of every AI scenario is neither feasible nor desirable. Instead, it establishes principles and actions that apply across all faculties, departments, programs and administrative units. It is intended as a living document that reflects current knowledge and practices while remaining responsive to new developments in technology, regulation, pedagogy, research, and community needs. It will require regular review and revision to ensure continued alignment with CBU's academic mission, social responsibilities and strategic priorities.



PRINCIPLES

Our strategy sets out core principles that guide CBU’s institutional stance on AI.

Cape Breton University’s approach to AI is grounded in a set of guiding principles that provide a consistent foundation for decision-making across the Institution. These principles are designed to support thoughtful, ethical and responsible engagement with AI technologies in a rapidly evolving environment. They inform the actions outlined in this document and serve as an interpretive lens for policy development, risk assessment and governance across all institutional activities.

“PEOPLE FIRST” PRINCIPLE

The recognition that people—not machines—remain at the center of all institutional decisions, processes, and relationships.

- AI is used to support and enhance human judgment, expertise, and interaction across teaching, research, administration, and service. It may assist with analysis or automation of routine tasks, but strategic and evaluative decisions remain under human authority.
- CBU upholds the value of human interaction as a key component of effective teaching, learning, and service and operations
- AI will not diminish CBU’s commitments to accessibility and inclusion.
- AI systems cannot replicate the cultural, emotional, and contextual awareness embedded in human relationships. CBU will welcome debate and discussion regarding the evolution of artificial intelligence and maintain space for human discernment, dialogue, and care in all institutional activities.

“PRUDENCE” PRINCIPLE

The ability to make decisions with reason, logic and good judgment.

- Cape Breton University exercises prudence when considering the use and implementation of artificial intelligence.
- Students, faculty, and staff are expected to mutually respect each other’s intellectual property and private information.
- CBU upholds current standards of academic integrity and educational values when considering the role of artificial intelligence in teaching and learning.
- Cognitive and critical thinking development are prioritized when determining the role of artificial intelligence in the learning process across varying disciplines.



“ACCOUNTABILITY” PRINCIPLE

The obligation of individuals and institutions to act transparently, lawfully, and responsibly in the use of AI.

- As a public university, CBU operates within a complex regulatory environment, including provincial and federal privacy legislation, Tri-Agency policy requirements, academic integrity frameworks, and sector-specific standards. All uses of AI must be consistent with these obligations.
- The university acknowledges its multiple roles—as an academic institution, an employer, a steward of public trust and funding, and a partner to Indigenous communities and local interest holders. AI governance must reflect the unique accountability attached to each role.
- Users are responsible for how they input data into AI systems and how they interpret and apply AI-generated outputs. CBU employees are fully responsible for any inaccuracies or unverified content when using AI tools. AI content can be incomplete, inaccurate, or biased and must not be treated as authoritative.
- CBU employees are expected to remain mindful of the environmental impact of AI technologies. The environmental footprint of AI technologies is substantial, including high energy demands, data center emissions, and contributions to electronic waste.
- Legal and ethical concerns regarding the use of copyrighted content in training large language models (LLMs) remain unresolved. Until further clarity is provided, the university advises caution in using outputs derived from these systems.
- Privacy is not guaranteed when data/information is entered into AI applications.

Guided by our core assumptions and principles, we have identified initial actions, and have already begun to implement them across the key university domains of: 1) Teaching & Learning, 2) Research, 3) Operations & Administration, 4) Student Supports, and 5) Community Engagement.

AI with Purpose provides a clear direction for how CBU will meaningfully and responsibly integrate AI across the Institution. Our specific actions will continue to develop over time, and our commitment to thoughtful implementation will remain constant. To support this work, CBU has established an AI Strategy Accountability Committee, which will ensure we uphold the priorities and responsibilities outlined in the strategy as we move forward together.



