Nipissing University AI Guidelines for Non-Academic Functions

Living Document Last Updated December 2025

Purpose

These guidelines support the responsible, secure, and effective use of generative AI tools in non-academic functions at Nipissing University. They reflect Canadian higher education and public sector best practices, focusing on productivity, efficiency, and risk mitigation while ensuring data privacy, ethics, and oversight.

Given the dynamic nature of AI, this is a living document and will be updated as needed.

Sector Benchmarking

The development of these guidelines was informed by a review of publicly available AI guidance from several Canadian post-secondary institutions and national public-sector resources. Relevant principles were adapted to support the administrative context at Nipissing University.

Consistent with Nipissing University's commitments to reconciliation, the guidelines also incorporate leading practice on Indigenous data sovereignty and responsible data governance (e.g., CARE Principles) when AI use may involve information about Indigenous Peoples, communities, or knowledges.

Scope

These guidelines apply to all Nipissing University employees, including faculty and academic leaders, when using generative AI to support non-academic or operational work. Scope is determined by the activity being performed, not by job title, appointment type, or unit affiliation. The technical, privacy, and data-handling requirements in this document apply to all employees whenever institutional data is used with AI tools.

For clarity, these guidelines apply to AI use in activities such as administration and service delivery, finance and budgeting, human resources, communications and marketing, procurement and vendor evaluation, policy and procedure drafting, and information technology operations.

These guidelines do not govern AI use undertaken primarily for teaching and learning (e.g., course design, instruction, assessment, grading) or research (e.g., research design, research data analysis, ethics submissions), which are addressed through separate academic guidance. If non-academic/operational work produces materials that may later be incorporated into academic activities (e.g., templates, reports, draft text for course outlines, IQAP materials, rubrics, or slides), these guidelines apply to the operational work and associated data handling. Where activities overlap (e.g., an academic unit conducting operational planning or administrative reporting), these guidelines apply to the operational component of the work.

Definitions

Non-academic functions (non-academic/operational work): Activities that support Nipissing University's operations and service delivery (e.g., administration, finance, human resources, communications, procurement, and information technology operations), as distinct from teaching and learning and research. Scope is determined by the activity being performed, not by job title, appointment type, or unit affiliation.

Institutional data (NU data): Any information created, received, stored, or processed by Nipissing University in the course of University activities, including information classified as public, confidential, or restricted (see Appendix I).

Artificial Intelligence (AI): The simulation of human intelligence in machines that are programmed to perform tasks that typically require human cognition, such as learning, problem-solving, reasoning, and decision-making. AI systems may use techniques including, but not limited to, machine learning, natural language processing, and computer vision.

Generative AI (GenAI): A subset of AI that generates new content (e.g., text, images, code) in response to prompts.

AI tool (including embedded AI capabilities): Any application, service, or feature that uses AI to generate content, automate tasks, or provide recommendations, including AI functionality embedded within other IT solutions.

AI-assisted output (AI-generated content): Any content produced with assistance from an AI tool (e.g., drafts, summaries, analyses). AI-assisted outputs must be reviewed, verified, and approved by employees before being shared, submitted, or published.

Institutionally approved AI tool: An AI tool that has been reviewed and authorized for use at Nipissing University through the approvals described in this document (e.g., departmental authority and, where required, UTS), for specified data classifications and use cases.

Public or unapproved AI tool/system: Any AI tool that has not been approved for use with institutional data under these guidelines.

Data minimization: The practice of using only the minimum amount of institutional data necessary for a given task, and avoiding unnecessary inclusion of personal, confidential, or restricted information in AI inputs.

Indigenous Data Sovereignty: The right of Indigenous Peoples and communities to govern the collection, access, use, sharing, and stewardship of data about their Peoples, communities, lands, and knowledges, consistent with self-determination and applicable protocols. (Adapted from FNIGC OCAP® resources; GIDA.)

Community-governed information: Information shared or held under Indigenous community governance, agreement, protocol, or cultural expectations that may restrict access, disclosure, reuse, or dissemination. (Adapted from FNIGC OCAP® resources; GIDA.)

CARE Principles: A recognized Indigenous data governance framework referenced in this document, emphasizing Collective Benefit, Authority to Control, Responsibility, and Ethics, used to guide respectful and ethical handling where AI use may involve Indigenous Peoples, communities, or knowledges. (Source: GIDA; Carroll et al., 2020.)

Departmental Authority: Person(s) who have signing authority within a unit under the Approval Authority Policy, 2.2.2012.B.

NU-Managed Device: A computing device that is centrally administered and maintained by UTS using a unified management system.

MS: Refers to the University's adopted enterprise productivity platform, currently Microsoft 365. The term MS is used in this document to reflect the current vendor but may be replaced in the future should the institution adopt a different enterprise system.

NU: Nipissing University.

UTS: University Technology Services.

Guiding Principles

The guiding AI use principles outlined in Table 1 are adapted from the Government of Canada's FASTER framework and leading practices in Canadian higher education. They guide the responsible, secure, and effective use of AI in non-academic functions at Nipissing University. These principles are intended to guide operational/non-academic use. Institution-wide principles for teaching/learning and research will be aligned where possible as those guidelines are finalized.

Table 1
AI Use Principles

Fairness	AI tools must be used in ways that promote equity and inclusivity. Staff should actively avoid generating or distributing content that could result in bias, discrimination, or the exclusion of individuals or groups. Units using AI for recurring or automated workflows should periodically review outputs for potential bias or disparate impacts (e.g., based on gender, race, age, disability, etc.). Where issues are identified, prompts, workflows, or choice of tools should be adjusted to mitigate inequities. When AI use may involve Indigenous Peoples or communities (including Indigenous knowledges, cultural materials, or community-governed data), users must respect Indigenous data sovereignty and applicable protocols, and apply recognized best-practice frameworks (e.g., CARE: Collective Benefit, Authority to Control, Responsibility, Ethics) to minimize risk of harm and support ethical governance.

Accountability	AI-generated content must always be subject to human oversight. Employees are responsible for reviewing, verifying, and approving any AI-assisted outputs before they are shared, submitted, or published. **All institutional decisions remain the responsibility of employees.** AI may inform decision-making but must not be treated as an autonomous decision-maker.
Security	Only institutionally approved AI tools may be used, and only on secure platforms. Confidential or restricted information must never be entered into public or unapproved AI systems, in accordance with university data classification guidelines and privacy policies.
Transparency	When AI tools are used to assist in drafting or generating content, this use should be clearly acknowledged to maintain trust and integrity when deemed necessary by the departmental authority. Where disclosure is required, a consistent format (e.g., the AID Framework) may be used.
Education	Users of AI tools should stay informed about the capabilities, limitations, and risks associated with these technologies. While no formal training is currently required, employees are encouraged to explore guidance materials provided by UTS.
Relevance	AI should be used where it meaningfully enhances productivity or streamlines routine tasks. It is not intended to replace human expertise, discretion, or decision-making, particularly in matters involving nuanced judgment or interpersonal communication.

Acceptable and Prohibited Uses

Acceptable uses while following appropriate guidelines (examples)

- Automating routine administrative tasks (e.g., templated communications, data-entry support, basic document formatting).
- Summarizing lengthy documents or meetings (with appropriate consent).
- Drafting and editing internal communications and forms.
- Supporting data analysis and reporting for internal administrative purposes.

Prohibited uses (examples)

- Using AI as the sole basis for decisions that significantly affect individuals (e.g., hiring, promotion, performance management, or access to services).
- Presenting AI-generated content as original human work where review or acknowledgement is required.
- Using public or unapproved AI tools to process restricted or confidential NU data.
- Using AI tools to generate, analyze, or disseminate content about Indigenous communities, cultures, histories, or knowledges in ways that bypass community governance, required approvals, or established protocols (including uploading community-governed or culturally sensitive materials into public/unapproved tools).

Responsible Generative AI Use – Quick Reference

- Always verify AI outputs for accuracy, completeness, and compliance with NU policies before use.
- Use AI to support, not replace, professional judgment and institutional decision-making.
- Disclose or document AI assistance, where appropriate, especially for externally shared or high-impact administrative materials.
- Where disclosure is required or advisable, use a consistent disclosure format (e.g., the AID Framework) so disclosures are clear and comparable across units.
- Obtain consent before using AI to record, transcribe, or summarize meetings, particularly where personal or sensitive information may be discussed.
- Use only institutionally approved tools and an NU-managed device (when provided); never input confidential or restricted information into public generative AI tools.

AI Tools

The following section outlines AI tools available for non-academic use at Nipissing University, along with the requirements, responsibilities, and approval processes that govern their use. These guidelines apply to both institutionally provided AI tools and AI capabilities embedded in IT solutions. All usage must comply with university policies, data classification rules, and the guiding principles set out in this document. Table 2 provides a quick reference guide. Further details can be found in the Appendices.

Technical Requirements

These tools may only be used on an NU-managed device (when provided) and when the user is logged in with official Nipissing University credentials.

All usage must comply with relevant university policies and procedures, including but not limited to those governing acceptable use, privacy, security, procurement, and copyright.

User and Departmental Responsibility

All users are ultimately responsible for ensuring their use of AI tools aligns with the guiding principles outlined in this document. All decision making remains the responsibility of employees. AI may support, but not replace, human judgment.

Departmental authorities are responsible for overseeing and tracking general AI usage within their respective areas. This information may be requested as part of institutional efficiency reviews or compliance assessments.

In addition, departmental authorities should:

- Define unit-level expectations around AI use (which tasks are permissible, which tools are authorized, and what review process is required).
- Ensure that staff are aware of these expectations, for example through onboarding or regular communications, and that they follow approved procedures.
- Facilitate access to training and support for AI use.
- Ensure that all required approvals are obtained prior to AI use, as outlined in this document.

Data Classifications

Nipissing University classifies data into three categories: public, confidential, and restricted (see Appendix I). Table 2 and Appendices II, III, IV and V outline which tools are approved for use with each data classification when following the requirements, responsibilities and approval processes outlined in this document.

Use of institutional data is prohibited when done without appropriate approvals, safeguards, or alignment with established policies and guidelines.

Data Handling and Security

- Use only the minimum amount of institutional data needed for a given AI-assisted task (data minimization).
- Retain any AI-related data or logs only as long as necessary, in accordance with NU's records-retention and privacy policies.
- Do not share NU data with external AI vendors without appropriate approvals and contractual safeguards, including data-use, data-ownership, and audit rights.
- Cross-check AI outputs against authoritative sources where outputs may affect institutional decisions, reporting, or public communications.

Required Approvals

Before adopting or purchasing any AI tools, employees must first consult with their departmental authority for approval. Approvals are intended for the adoption or procurement of new AI tools, or enabling optional AI features that process institutional data; they are not intended to require approval for routine use of ubiquitous consumer

operating-system features that do not involve institutional data. This includes new or existing IT solutions with known embedded AI capabilities.

Table 2 and Appendices II, III, IV and V outline approval requirements. If UTS approval is required, the requester must submit a Help Desk ticket at helpdesk.nipissingu.ca. The ticket must include confirmation of the departmental authority's approval. UTS will evaluate the tool to ensure compliance and communicate the decision via the ticket.

Procurement

For the procurement of Microsoft Copilot Plus or Pro versions, a Help Desk ticket must be submitted through helpdesk.nipissingu.ca. UTS will oversee the procurement and coordinate the annual chargeback of costs to the relevant department.

For the procurement of other AI tools and IT solutions with embedded AI capabilities, employees must follow the standard procurement process outlined in the Procurement Policy after receiving the necessary approvals from the departmental authority and UTS.

See Table 2 and Appendices II, III, IV and V for reference.

AI Tools-At-A-Glance

Use Table 2 as a quick reference for AI tools, approval requirements, data restrictions and payments.

Table 2
AI Tool Reference Guide

Tool	Approvals Required Prior to Use	What NU data can be used?	Who pays?
MS Copilot Standard (included) *See Appendix II*	No prior approval required; consult your departmental authority where appropriate.	Public Confidential Restricted	Included with the institution's MS 365 license paid by UTS
MS 365 Copilot (subscription) *See Appendix II*	Departmental authority where appropriate (e.g. procurement).	Public Confidential Restricted	User departmental funds
ChatGPT (free) *See Appendix III*	Departmental authority	Public	Free
ChatGPT (subscription, all versions) *See Appendix III*	Departmental authority UTS	* Public	User departmental funds
Other Free AI Tools *See Appendix IV*	Departmental authority UTS	* Public	Free
Other Subscription AI Tools *See Appendix IV*	Departmental authority UTS	* Public	User departmental funds
Embedded AI Capabilities *See Appendix V*	Departmental authority UTS	* Public	Varies depending on product

**Unless otherwise approved by UTS via a Help Desk ticket*

Relevant Legislation and Intellectual Property

As of January 1, 2026, **Bill 149** Working for Workers Four Act, 2024 (Ontario) will require public institutions and employers with 25 or more employees to disclose when they use AI in publicly advertised job postings to screen, assess, or select candidates.

In addition to legislative requirements, staff must also ensure responsible use of AI with respect to intellectual property. Staff should not submit third-party copyrighted or licensed content (e.g., articles, images, code, proprietary material) into AI tools unless their licensing terms explicitly permit such use.

Outputs generated by AI should not be presented as original human-authored work where this would infringe intellectual property rights. When in doubt, consult the appropriate university authority before using AI-generated content in external communications or publications.

Support and Continuous Improvement

Employees are strongly encouraged to enhance their understanding of AI capabilities, limitations, and risks by consulting the resources listed in Appendix VI, in addition to other credible and verified sources.

Given the rapidly evolving nature of AI technologies, these guidelines will be updated as institutional needs and best practices evolve. The University may periodically review AI use across administrative units. Concerns about AI use can be brought forward through existing institutional channels. Any issues will be managed in accordance with the applicable University policies.

For support, questions, or feedback regarding AI use, please submit a ticket through the UTS Help Desk at helpdesk.nipissingu.ca.

Note: *AI was used to assist with the development and editing of this document; however, all content has been reviewed and validated by University Technology Services (UTS) and other departmental authorities.*

Appendix I – Nipissing University Data Classifications

To manage risk and ensure compliance with applicable laws and policies, all data at Nipissing University must be classified into one of the following three categories:

1. **Public Data**

   Definition:
   Public data refers to information that is intentionally made available for open access and distribution. Its disclosure carries minimal to no risk to the University, its community members, individuals, or external partners, and therefore does not require access restrictions or special handling.

   Examples:
   - Official university website content
   - Public social media posts
   - Press releases
   - Job postings and event advertisements
   - Published course catalogs or calendars
   - Approved promotional or marketing materials
   - Institutional research or reports designated for public release

2. **Confidential Data**

   Definition:
   Confidential data encompasses information that is not intended for public disclosure and is restricted to authorized individuals within the University. Unauthorized access, use, or disclosure of such data could adversely affect the institution, its employees, students, or external partners, and must be handled with appropriate safeguards to ensure its protection.

   Examples:
   - Student and employee ID numbers
   - Internal emails, memos, or meeting minutes
   - Non-public financial reports
   - Personnel files and HR documents
   - Draft policies or procedures
   - Internal training materials
   - Departmental planning documents
   - Non-disclosure or contract-sensitive communications
   - Unpublished academic work or faculty research not protected by intellectual property

3. Restricted Data

Definition:
Restricted data is highly sensitive information that, if exposed, altered, or destroyed without authorization, could result in significant harm to the University, individuals, or its affiliates. This includes information protected by legislation (e.g., FIPPA, PHIPA, or PIPEDA) or contractual obligations. To safeguard sensitive assets, the most stringent levels of security and access control must be implemented. This may also include information subject to community governance or cultural protocols, where disclosure or reuse is restricted by agreement or expectation.

Examples:

- Social Insurance Numbers (SINs)
- Credit card or bank account numbers
- Health and medical records
- Login credentials and passwords
- System administrator or domain admin accounts
- Server backup files or security logs
- Protected research data under grant or ethics agreement
- PCI (Payment Card Industry) data
- Confidential donor records or funding agreements
- Information protected under a legal confidentiality clause or non-disclosure agreement
- Indigenous cultural knowledge or community-governed information shared under agreement, protocol, or expectation of restricted handling.

Appendix II – MS Copilot Questions and Answers

As features are regularly updated, it is important to consult the official product website for the latest information (Your AI Assistant for Work | Microsoft 365 Copilot).

1. **Microsoft Copilot Standard** (included)

Questions	Responses
What approvals are needed?	Departmental authority approval is required prior to the use of this tool.
What NU data use is approved?	Approved for use with public, confidential or restricted data.
What NU data use is prohibited?	Use of institutional data is prohibited when done without appropriate approvals, safeguards, or alignment with established policies and guidelines.
What about data privacy?	Queries and responses are not used to train the AI model. When accessed using Nipissing University credentials on NU-managed devices (when provided), Copilot is protected by Microsoft Data Protection. This tool **does not** have access to any organizational data, including that within the Microsoft 365 environment (e.g., Outlook, Teams, OneDrive, Word, Excel, PowerPoint) unless explicitly shared with the AI during use.
How much does it cost?	Copilot Standard is included as part of the NU Microsoft 365 license.
What AI model does it use?	MS 365 Copilot Overview
What are some things it can do?	Copilot Standard accepts input via text, voice, files, the current webpage in Edge, and Windows content (e.g., open apps or clipboard). It responds with text, spoken replies, and AI-generated images.

What are some things it can't do?	Copilot Standard is not integrated with Nipissing University systems or data. It cannot access Microsoft 365 services or content, including Outlook, Teams, OneDrive, Word, Excel, and PowerPoint, unless data is explicitly provided by the user during a session
How do I access it?	Once signed in with Nipissing University credentials, Copilot can be accessed via Microsoft Edge or by logging in through office.com.

2. **Microsoft 365 Copilot** (subscription)

Questions	Responses
What approvals are needed?	Departmental authority approval is required prior to the use of this tool.
What NU data us is approved?	Approved for use with public, confidential or restricted data.
What is NU data use is prohibited?	Use of institutional data is prohibited when done without appropriate approvals, safeguards, or alignment with established policies and guidelines.
What about data privacy?	Queries and responses are not used to train the AI model. When accessed using Nipissing University credentials on NU-managed devices (where provided), Copilot is protected by Microsoft Data Protection. The data stays within the secure enterprise environment. This tool **does** have access to any organizational data within the Microsoft 365 environment (e.g., Outlook, Teams, OneDrive, Word, Excel, PowerPoint). It does not have access to other organizational services or data.
How much does it cost?	$290.47 CAD per user per year (education pricing). UTS will charge the department annually.
How can it be procured?	See the Procurement section of this document.
What AI model does it use?	MS 365 Copilot Overview

What are some things it can do?	MS 365 Copilot is embedded within Microsoft 365 apps such as Word, Excel, Outlook, PowerPoint, and Teams. It provides secure access to your Microsoft 365 data, including emails, files, calendars, and chats.
What are some things it can't do?	It does not integrate with NU services or data outside of the MS 365 environment without UTS enabled integrations.
How do I access it?	Once UTS has enabled the procured subscription and the user is logged in with NU credentials, Copilot will be accessible across the Microsoft 365 environment and via office.com. Users can expect to see Copilot integrated into supported Microsoft 365 applications such as Word, Excel, Outlook, PowerPoint, Teams, and OneNote.

Appendix III - ChatGPT Questions and Answers

As features are regularly updated, it is important to consult the official product website for the latest information.

By default, user inputs into ChatGPT Free, Plus and Pro are used to train the AI model. This setting must be disabled before using the tool at Nipissing University. Disabling this setting helps ensure compliance with Nipissing University's privacy and data protection standards.

To turn off this feature:

- Click your user icon in the top-right corner.
- Select Settings.
- Navigate to Data Controls.
- Toggle off the option labeled "Improve the model for everyone."

ChatGPT (Free, Plus, Pro, Teams)

Questions	Responses
What approvals are needed?	ChatGPT Free: Departmental authority approval is required prior to use. All other ChatGPT versions: Both departmental authority and UTS approval is needed prior to using these tools.
What NU data use is approved?	* Only approved for use with public data.
What is NU data use is prohibited?	* Not approved for use with confidential or restricted data. Use of institutional data is prohibited when done without appropriate approvals, safeguards, or alignment with established policies and guidelines.
What about data privacy?	All inputs in the Free, Plus and Pro versions are used to train the AI model by default. This default must be turned off prior to use at NU (see above).
How much does it cost?	ChatGPT Pricing | OpenAI Free - no cost. Plus - $20/month USD for a single use license. All fees paid by user department.

How can it be procured?	See the Procurement section of this document.
What AI model does it use?	OpenAI Models
What are some things it can do?	ChatGPT Features Across Plans
What are some things it can't do?	ChatGPT Features Across Plans
How do I access it?	ChatGPT | OpenAI from an NU-managed device (when provided) when signed in with NU credentials. Create an account using the appropriate Nipissing University email address and a **unique** password. **DO NOT use your NU login password.**

**Unless otherwise approved by UTS via a Help Desk ticket*

Appendix IV – Other AI Tools - Questions and Answers

Other Free or Subscription AI Tools

Query	Answer
What approvals are needed?	Both departmental authority and UTS approvals are needed prior to using these tools.
What NU data use is approved?	* Only approved for use with public data.
What NU data use is prohibited?	* Not approved for use with confidential or restricted data. Use of institutional data is prohibited when done without appropriate approvals, safeguards, or alignment with established policies and guidelines.
What about data privacy?	Varies but typically all inputs are used to train the AI model by default.
How much does it cost?	Varies.
How can it be procured?	See the Procurement section of this document.

**Unless otherwise approved by UTS via a Help Desk ticket*

Appendix V – Embedded AI Capabilities

This does not include the use of MS 365 embedded AI capabilities.

Query	Answer
What approvals are needed?	Both departmental authority and UTS approvals are needed prior to using these tools.
What NU data use is approved?	* Only approved for use with public data.
What NU data use is prohibited?	* Not approved for use with confidential or restricted data. Use of institutional data is prohibited when done without appropriate approvals, safeguards, or alignment with established policies and guidelines.
What about data privacy?	Varies but typically all inputs are used to train the AI model by default.
How much does it cost?	Varies.
How can it be procured?	See the Procurement section of this document.

**Unless otherwise approved by UTS via a Help Desk ticket*

Appendix VI – Support Resources

To support responsible and effective AI use, the following resources are available. As with AI tools themselves, these materials are subject to ongoing development and updates by their respective providers.

Resources for MS Copilot (all versions)

- Your AI Assistant for Work | Microsoft 365 Copilot
- Get started with Microsoft 365 Copilot - Training | Microsoft Learn
- Learn how to use Microsoft 365 Copilot | Microsoft Learn
- AI Tools for Administrative Professionals - Smart Events International
- Craft effective prompts for Microsoft 365 Copilot - Training | Microsoft Learn
- A Road Map for Leveraging AI at a Smaller Institution | EDUCAUSE Review

Resources from Other Universities

- University of Toronto - Guideline on the Use of Artificial Intelligence by University Administrative Staff
- University of Saskatchewan - Administrative Guidelines for Use of Artificial Intelligence

Indigenous data governance and reconciliation-informed AI use

- RussoCarrollEtalDSJ2020TheCAREPrinciplesForIndigenousData.pdf
- Guidelines-GenAI_TL.pdf

Disclosure and documentation frameworks

- Weaver, K. D. – Artificial Intelligence Disclosure (AID) Framework

Governance and implementation resources (higher education)

- AI Playbook for Teaching and Learning Leaders: A Community Guide – Simple Book Publishing

Resources for Other AI Tools

Chatbots / Language Models

ChatGPT (OpenAI): https://chat.openai.com

Claude (Anthropic): https://claude.ai

Gemini (Google): https://gemini.google.com

Perplexity: https://www.perplexity.ai

Image Generation

Midjourney: https://www.midjourney.com *(used via Discord)*

DALL·E 3 (OpenAI): Available in ChatGPT: https://chat.openai.com

Adobe Firefly: https://www.adobe.com/sensei/generative-ai/firefly.html

Leonardo AI: https://leonardo.ai

Video & Animation

Runway ML: https://runwayml.com

Pika Labs: https://pika.art

Synthesia: https://www.synthesia.io

Audio & Voice

ElevenLabs: https://www.elevenlabs.io

Voicemod: https://www.voicemod.net

Murf AI: https://www.murf.ai

Appendix VII – References

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