

2025

Emerging Technologies Brief: Artificial Intelligence



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Artificial Intelligence in Post-Secondary Education

Conversations about artificial intelligence in post-secondary education tend to focus on generative artificial intelligence (GenAI). The 2025 Emerging Technologies Survey, conducted by the Canadian Digital Learning Research Association (CDLRA), found that feelings about GenAI are complex. Survey respondents continue to foresee GenAI becoming a normal part of education, and an increasing proportion recognize its potential as a study tool. At the same time, concerns that GenAI will make teaching more challenging are also rising.

This research brief provides an overview of the GenAI-related survey findings from the 2025 Emerging Technologies Survey.

The 2025 Emerging Technologies Survey asked respondents about the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements (see the table below). This same question was asked in 2023 and 2024, enabling a comparison of the findings. Notably, there was a rise in the proportion of respondents who agreed to some extent (agreed or strongly agreed) that students will use GenAI as a study tool.

Percentage of respondents who agreed to some extent with the following statements.

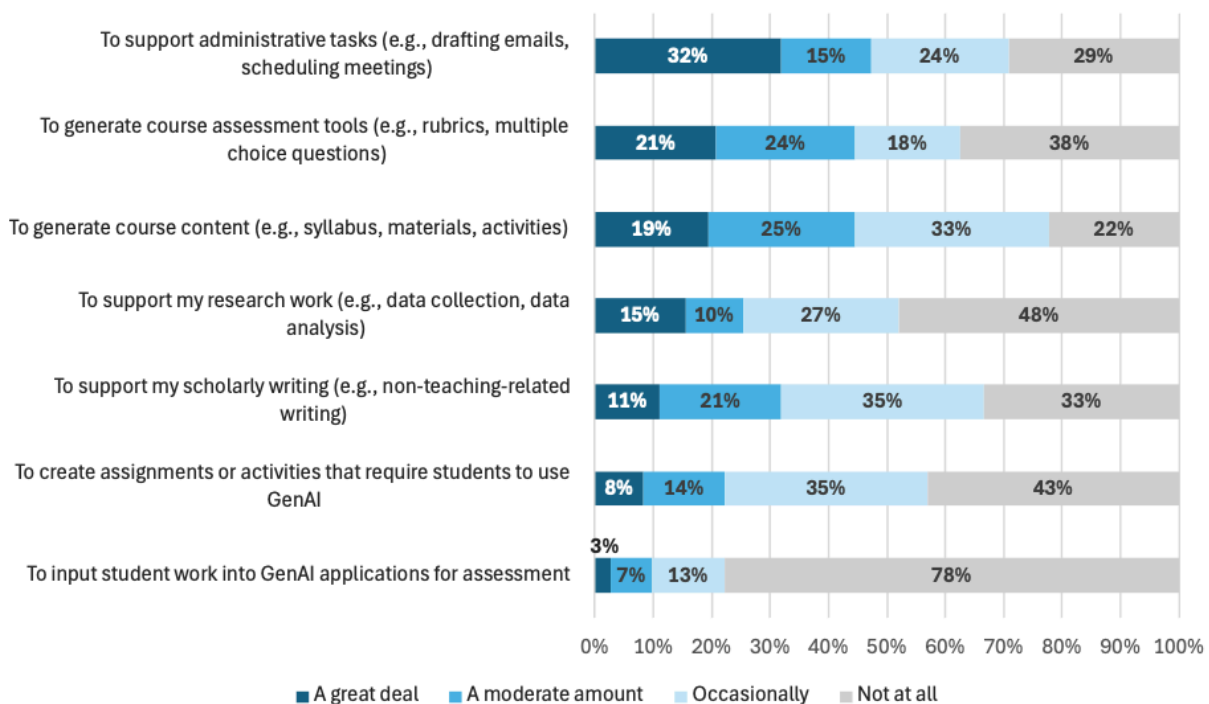
	2025	2024	2023
Students will use GenAI as a study tool	94%	80%	86%
Within a few years, GenAI use will become a normal part of education	87%	85%	92%
GenAI will make teaching more challenging	84%	73%	72%
Students will use GenAI to cheat	77%	83%	76%
GenAI will make teaching more efficient	56%	46%	59%
GenAI will make teaching more engaging	43%	35%	49%
GenAI will make teaching more effective	39%	34%	48%

The 2025 Emerging Technologies Survey also asked several new questions about AI practices.

First, the survey asked respondents who had taught over the past 12 months two questions about AI use in their practices as instructors and as scholars:

1. To what extent are you currently using GenAI tools in your teaching and scholarly practices?
2. Do you encourage student use of GenAI tools and platforms?

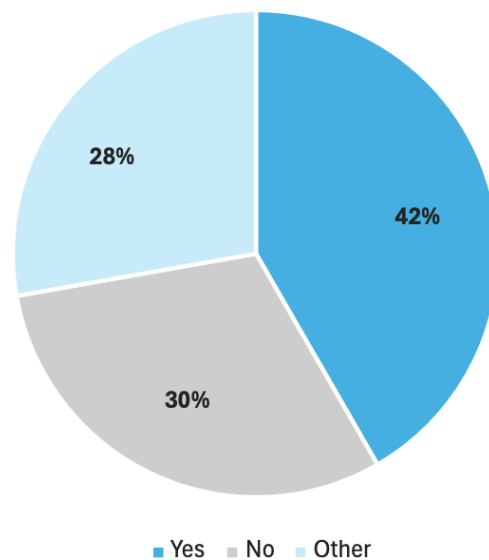
To what extent are YOU currently using GenAI tools in YOUR teaching and scholarly practices?



The most common uses of AI among those who had taught over the past 12 months were to support administrative tasks and to generate course assessment tools and content.

Secondly, the survey asked respondents who had taught in the past 12 months whether they encourage students to use GenAI tools and platforms. These responses were divided: 42% said “yes,” 28% said “no,” and 30% said “other.”

Do you encourage student use of GenAI tools and platforms?



For respondents who selected “other,” there was a place to leave an open-ended comment. Respondents who left comments made remarks that tended to fall into one of two categories:

1. They stated that their encouragement of student use of AI was context-dependent.
2. They stated that they encouraged student AI use, but with guardrails or conditions, and with guidance.

Finally, there were two open-ended questions about GenAI use.

The first open-ended question asked respondents to suggest improvements for how GenAI platforms could be better suited for teaching and learning. The comments mentioned issues such as the need for features to ensure ethical practices (e.g., built-in tools to flag and protect intellectual property), rigour, and academic integrity. Respondents also noted that they would like to see greater transparency on how GenAI is trained. They would like to limit certain features or have a way to switch on “education modes” that shift the nature of GenAI-student interactions to better support the development of critical thinking skills.

The second open-ended question asked respondents whether they had any concerns about the use of GenAI at their institution. The concerns that respondents listed aligned with their comments about improving GenAI platforms for teaching and learning. Many of the open-ended responses about concerns emphasized student competency development. Some respondents stated that GenAI use would hinder competency development (e.g., GenAI use would lead to academic dishonesty and a lack of critical thinking skills), whereas other respondents remarked that limiting GenAI use would disadvantage students by preventing them from developing the technology-related competencies they will need for their future careers. Respondents also raised concerns about security, ethical practices, and the accuracy of AI. Lastly, respondents called for the development of institutional policies and guidelines, as well as practical supports for instructors on how to apply them and use GenAI appropriately.

Closing Thought:

Together, all the GenAI survey findings indicate that GenAI continues to be a significant issue at Canadian post-secondary institutions, wrought with tensions and inconsistencies. As one respondent wrote:

“Perceptions and opinions on genAI are still very polarized. I think we need to move to more nuanced and pragmatic discussion about both the implications of genAI on the curriculum and programs, as well as how to respond and utilize GenAI.” (Teaching and Learning Leader)

Acknowledgements

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The CDLRA recognizes that, as a remote team, we live and work in many different locations on lands taken from Indigenous peoples. As a team, we seek to better understand the ongoing impacts of colonial systems and structures, particularly within the Canadian post-secondary education sector.

We thank the many individuals who have met with our team to discuss potential survey topics, provide feedback on our findings, and share insights from the field. These perspectives have been critical in shaping our research initiatives.

We also thank the CDLRA team members and contractors who perform the tasks that support our day-to-day operations and enable us to conduct our research studies.

Most importantly, we thank our survey respondents.

Sponsors and Partners

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Methodology

Information for this report comes from the 2025 Emerging Technologies Survey, which is part of the CDLRA's Pan-Canadian Digital Learning Survey Project. The project is longitudinal and includes gathering data from two annual surveys. More details about the project and the methodology can be found here:

<https://cdlra-acrfi.ca/methodology-for-the-pan-canadian-digital-learning-survey-project/>

Specific to the 2025 Emerging Technologies Survey:

- The survey was open from August 18 to October 17, 2025.
- 178 participants from 91 unique institutions responded to the survey, representing all provinces and one territory.
- Participant roles included administrators (e.g., senior administrators, deans, and directors), teaching and learning leaders, instructional designers and educational developers, institutional researchers, library services staff, student support staff, and educational technology specialists.

We have compared some of the 2025 findings with those from previous years. More information about past surveys can be found in the respective annual reports on the publications page of the CDLRA website: www.cdlra-acrfi.ca/publications

Copies of the survey instruments for each year are available upon request.

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