

Cairns SDE AI Policy

1. Purpose, Scope, and Accountability

The purpose of this policy is to provide clear and practical guidance for the ethical, secure, and effective use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies within our school community. This policy supports our school's strategic direction – **Curiosity, Leading, Learning, and Connecting** – by encouraging the thoughtful integration of AI into teaching, learning, and school operations.

Distance Education Considerations

As a distance education provider, Cairns School of Distance Education operates within unique learning environments characterised by asynchronous engagement, varied home learning conditions and differing levels of digital literacy among families and home tutors. The integration of AI therefore requires clear protocols for verifying student learning processes, supporting family AI literacy, ensuring academic integrity in remote context and promoting equitable access to AI-enabled tools.

This policy with the *Australian Framework for Generative AI in Schools*, and ensures AI use:

- Promotes **Curiosity** through inquiry and critical thinking.
- Fosters **Leading** by preparing students to engage with and direct emerging technologies.
- Strengthens **Learning** through personalisation, accessibility and enhanced engagement.
- Encourages **Connecting** by supporting collaboration among geographically dispersed learners.
- Upholds privacy, security and safety while maintaining accountability.

The safe adoption of AI at Cairns SDE reinforces our expectations that all community members act responsibly, show respect for others and themselves, and build resilience in digital learning environments.

Commitment

Cairns School of Distance Education is committed to the safe, ethical and purposeful use of AI in ways that reflect both our statewide obligations and the realities of distance learning. AI will be implemented in ways that:

- Enhance teaching and learning while preserving academic integrity.
- Be used transparently, with human oversight in all decision-making.
- Promote fairness and inclusion, ensuring no member of the community is disadvantaged.
- Be used in compliance with Australian legislation and the *Australian Framework for Generative AI in Schools*.

AI use at Cairns SDE will reflect our school values:

- **Responsibility** through informed, ethical use by students, staff and families.
- **Respect**, through protecting privacy, dignity and cultural perspectives represented in data.
- **Resilience**, by developing learner' capacity to think critically, question AI outputs and persist through challenges.

Scope and Definitions

This policy applies to all members of the Cairns School of Distance Education community, including:

- Students
- Teachers and education support staff
- School leadership
- Administrative and technical staff
- Parents, carers, and Home Tutors

This policy covers a range of AI systems currently used or emerging in distance education, including:

- **Large Language Models (LLMs)** – AI systems that generate or interpret text and support tasks such as inquiry, planning, drafting and feedback (e.g., ChatGPT).
- **Text-to-Image or Multimodal Generators** – tools that create images or other media in response to text prompts (e.g., Canva AI).

- **AI-Enabled Educational Platforms** – learning tools that incorporate AI to provide personalised support, feedback or analytics (e.g., Corella).
- **AI Tutoring and Adaptive Learning Systems** – platforms that adjust learning pathways, difficulty levels and feedback based on student responses.
- **AI Accessibility Tools** – tools that support inclusive learning through speech-to-text, text-to-speech, translation or captioning functions.
- **AI-Mediated Communication Tools** – systems that enhance communication and collaboration in distance education environments, such as automated transcription, summarisation or meeting-support AI.
- **Any future AI systems introduced at Cairns SDE following risk assessment and approval.**

This list will continue to evolve as AI tools develop and are formally evaluated for school use.

The policy applies across all learning environments – classrooms, remote learning, and home school rooms – as well as in assessment, administration, communication, and co-curricular activities.

Definitions

Artificial Intelligence (AI) - Artificial Intelligence refers to computer systems or technologies that can perform tasks that would normally require human intelligence, such as recognising patterns, understanding language, or solving problems.

AI is already part of many tools we use every day – like search engines, translation apps, and voice assistants – and it can also support learning by helping personalise feedback and access information more efficiently.

Generative Artificial Intelligence (Generative AI) - Generative AI is a type of Artificial Intelligence that can create new content – such as text, images, music, or video – based on patterns it has learned from large amounts of existing data.

Generative AI tools, like ChatGPT or image generators, can understand instructions and produce meaningful content. These tools are rapidly developing and can be valuable for learning when used responsibly, with human judgment and critical thinking.

Governance and Accountability

The school leadership team is responsible for overseeing the implementation of this policy, ensuring that AI use across the school aligns with legislative, ethical, and educational standards. All new AI tools must undergo an appropriate risk and privacy impact assessment before being introduced into teaching, learning, or administrative practices. Any breaches, concerns, or instances of misuse must be reported promptly to the relevant Learning Area Head of Department for investigation and follow-up. To maintain transparency and continuous improvement, the policy will be reviewed annually in consultation with staff, students, and parents.

Cairns School of Distance Education values open and ongoing communication with families and the wider community regarding the use of Artificial Intelligence in learning. The school will ensure that parents, carers, and home tutors are kept informed about how AI tools are used to support teaching and learning and will provide resources and guidance to promote safe and ethical AI use at home. Regular updates will be shared through established communication channels to build awareness and understanding of responsible AI practices. Feedback from parents, students, and community members will be actively sought and considered as part of policy reviews and continuous improvement, ensuring our approach to AI remains transparent, inclusive, and aligned with community expectations.

Guiding principles

AI use across the school must:

- Respect dignity, rights, and wellbeing.
- Ensure transparency, fairness, and informed consent.
- Protect privacy, data security, and digital safety.
- Promote equitable access for all learners, including those with diverse needs.
- Maintain human oversight and accountability in all decisions.

Reviewing and updating the policy

- This policy will be reviewed annually and updated as needed to reflect emerging technologies, legislation, and national guidance.
- Reviews will include consultation with staff, students, parents, carers, and home tutors.
- Updates will be documented, archived, and communicated transparently.

Roles and Responsibilities

Roles and responsibilities across the school community are defined below to ensure shared accountability for ethical and effective AI use.

Stakeholder	Responsibilities
School Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maintain and oversee the policy, resourcing, and compliance.• Manage risk and accountability for AI-related incidents.
Teachers and Support Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Integrate AI responsibly into curriculum delivery.• Model ethical AI use and guide students in critical evaluation.
Administrative and Technical Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure secure deployment of AI platforms.• Maintain compliance with privacy and cybersecurity standards.
Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Demonstrate responsibility by using AI ethically and verifying accuracy.• Show respect by acknowledging sources and protecting the rights of others.• Build resilience by reflecting on feedback and improving learning through human effort
Parents, Carers, and Home Tutors	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Monitor responsible AI use at home and in home school rooms.• Engage with the school on expectations, training, and feedback.

Parental consent for AI use by students

In cases where AI tools collect, store, or require access to student information, parental consent is required before the tool can be used with students. The school will ensure full compliance with all departmental data protection and privacy requirements.

The use of any AI tool that requires students to create an account, provide personal information, or engage with the tool independently is only permitted if the tool has been formally approved through the school's annual Online Consent and risk-review process. This process – overseen by the designated Deputy Principal, with consultation from relevant Heads of Department – determines which tools are added to the school's Online Consent Register for the following school year.

Teachers cannot independently approve or introduce new AI tools for student use during the school year. Only tools already listed on the Online Consent Register may be used with students.

2. Use, Assessment and Integrity

The following sections outline how AI is used in learning, assessment, and daily practice at Cairns SDE.

Acceptable Use

Artificial Intelligence (AI) can enhance learning, creativity, and critical thinking when used responsibly. At Cairns School of Distance Education, AI is used to support meaningful learning while upholding academic integrity, ethical conduct, and the authenticity of student work.

Acceptable Use

AI may be used to assist with learning and skill development, but it must never replace genuine student thinking or effort.

Appropriate use, as informed by the Cairns SDE AI Assessment Scale, includes:

- Using AI tools to explore ideas, clarify understanding, or enhance creativity.
- Evaluating, editing, and acknowledging AI-generated content.
- Following teacher guidance on when and how AI tools may be used.
- Respecting privacy, copyright, and school digital conduct expectations.
- Ensuring AI use is inclusive, equitable, and enhances—not replaces—human interaction.

Unacceptable Use

AI must not be used in ways that compromise learning, assessment, or safety.

Unacceptable use includes:

- Submitting AI-generated content as one's own work.
- Using AI to bypass the effort or intent of assessment tasks.
- Entering or sharing personal, confidential, or sensitive information.
- Generating or accessing offensive, discriminatory, or inappropriate content.
- Using unapproved or high-risk AI tools that collect personal data.

Students and staff must use AI in ways that demonstrate responsibility for their learning, respect for all people and communities represented in data, and resilience when AI produces inaccurate or biased content.

Assessment and Academic Integrity

All assessment work must reflect the student's own understanding and skills. AI can support learning processes, but it cannot produce work that is presented for formative or summative assessment unless explicitly permitted by the teacher, and informed by the Cairns SDE AI Assessment Scale.

Teachers will clearly outline expectations for AI use in each task, following the Cairns SDE AI Assessment Scale.

AI use in assessment must be:

- Transparent and appropriately acknowledged.
- Limited to permitted tasks or components as directed by the teacher.
- Excluded from supervised, controlled, or oral assessments unless explicitly allowed.
- Open to verification through teacher questioning, submission of drafts, or transcript evidence of AI interaction.

Breaches of these expectations will be managed in line with the Cairns SDE's Assessment Policy and/or QCAA's Academic Integrity requirements.

Assessment design at Cairns SDE will continue to promote higher-order thinking and authentic demonstration of student learning.

Academic integrity reflects our shared values of responsibility for original work, respect for authorship and intellectual effort, and resilience in developing ideas and skills through genuine learning.

Cairns SDE AI Assessment Scale

AI Use Option	AI Use Status	When to use	Student expectation/task statements
Level 1 – No AI	AI is prohibited for this assessment.	High-stakes supervised exams, oral/viva tasks, controlled conditions.	“You must complete this task entirely without the use of AI tools. All work submitted must be your own. Any use of AI will be treated as academic misconduct.”
Level 2 – AI for Planning	AI is permitted only for early-stage planning, brainstorming or ideation (e.g., generating ideas, structuring).	Essays/projects where core content must be student-generated.	<p>“You may use AI to brainstorm ideas or to organise your thoughts, but the final work must be entirely your own.</p> <p>You must declare any AI use and attach a brief statement: ‘I used AI for brainstorming/outlining; all content is my own writing.’”</p>
Level 3 – AI Assisted Editing / Structuring	AI is permitted for editing/improving student-drafted content (e.g., grammar, clarity, structure), but not for generating substantive new content.	Tasks where writing/creation is central but supportive editing is appropriate.	<p>“You may use AI to improve your draft (editing, rephrasing for clarity, structure) but you must provide your original draft and the AI prompts/responses in an appendix.</p> <p>Declaration: ‘I used AI to edit and clarify my draft; the content, structure and ideas are my own.’”</p>
Level 4 – AI Task Completion + Human Evaluation	AI is permitted for substantive parts of the work (e.g., drafting content, generating media, datasets) but the student must critically evaluate, adapt, integrate the AI output and demonstrate their own reasoning.	Advanced projects, design tasks, where the focus is on student evaluation of AI-generated content.	<p>“You may use AI tools to generate initial drafts, media, or data; you must keep a log of prompts used, show the AI outputs, and then evaluate and adapt them in your submission.</p> <p>Declaration: ‘I used AI to generate initial content; I reviewed, modified and integrated this content in line with my own reasoning and subject knowledge.’”</p>
Level 5 – AI Exploration / Co-creation	AI is permitted as a collaborative tool – student and AI work together. The use of AI is expected, and the student’s skill lies in directing the AI, evaluating output, iterating creatively, and demonstrating higher-order thinking.	Capstone tasks, innovation projects, project-based learning, real-world problems where AI equals co-pilot.	<p>“You are encouraged to use AI throughout this task as a collaborative tool. You must document your prompts, iterations, decision-making, and critically reflect on the AI’s role and output.</p> <p>Declaration: ‘I used AI as a collaborator/co-designer and took responsibility for directing, evaluating and refining the AI outputs to produce the final work.’”</p>

Informed by QCAA, DoE, and ‘The AI Assessment Scale’ (Perkins, Furze, Roe & MacVaugh, 2024)

Referencing and Acknowledging AI Use

When using Generative AI tools, it is important that students and staff acknowledge their use clearly and responsibly. Acknowledging AI use shows respect for creators and responsible transparency in learning. Because Generative AI produces new material that cannot be retrieved or verified by others, its outputs cannot be cited as recoverable sources (like books or websites). Likewise, because AI tools are not people, their responses cannot be treated as personal communication.

Instead, users should:

- Explain how the tool was used, such as for brainstorming ideas, summarising information, checking grammar, or creating an image.
- Provide an in-text acknowledgement within the work.
- Include a reference list entry for the tool itself, following APA 7th referencing conventions.

If quoting or reproducing content generated by AI, use quotation marks or block quotes as you would for any other quoted material.

Example Citations – Text generation	
In-text acknowledgement	I used ChatGPT (OpenAI, 2025) to generate ideas about how technology influences health behaviours. The final response is written in my own words.
Reference list entry (APA 7th)	OpenAI. (2025). <i>ChatGPT</i> (version GPT-5) [Large language model]. https://chat.openai.com/
If quoting directly:	“Technology can shape individual and community health choices through access, convenience, and communication” (OpenAI, 2025).
Example Citations – Image generation	
In-text acknowledgement	The background image was created using DALL·E (OpenAI, 2025) based on the prompt “a stylised illustration of a healthy community environment.”
Reference list entry (APA 7th)	OpenAI. (2025). <i>DALL·E</i> [AI image generation model]. https://openai.com/dall-e/

Good practice

- Always check that AI-generated content is accurate, ethical, and appropriate.
- Review the school’s Assessment policies for expectations about originality and acknowledgement.
- Where AI tools are used collaboratively (e.g., in class activities), the use should still be declared.

Copyright and Attribution Considerations

All staff and students must comply with copyright laws and the licensing terms of any AI-generated content used or created. It is important to understand that copyright ownership and usage rights may differ between AI tools. Teachers and students should familiarise themselves with the terms and conditions of each platform before using AI-generated material in teaching or learning resources.

Ownership and licensing

For newly created works, some AI tools:

- assign copyright in the generated material to the user (for example, the Department of Education or Cairns School of Distance Education), or
- grant a licence to use the material under specific terms (for example, a Creative Commons licence).

If you create or modify existing third-party content using AI to make learning materials more accessible, this should only be done:

- where an educational licence or exception under the Copyright Act 1968 (Cth) applies, or
- with permission from the copyright owner.

Any modified material must include an appropriate copyright notice under the educational provisions of the Copyright Act.

Labelling and attributing AI-generated content

All AI-generated content used in teaching and learning materials should include clear attribution.

Attribution should identify the tool used, the purpose of its use, and the relevant copyright or licence information. This information should also be included in the reference list when citing or acknowledging AI-generated works.

AI Generated Content	Attribution
Example for new works – copyright assigned to the user	This work has been generated using Artificial Intelligence. Any copyright subsisting in this work is owned by the Queensland Department of Education.
Example for new works – copyright under licence	This work has been generated using Artificial Intelligence. Licensed under [insert licence type, e.g. <i>Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0)</i>].
Example for modified versions of existing third-party works	This version has been generated using Artificial Intelligence and has been copied or made available under the educational provisions of the <i>Copyright Act 1968 (Cth)</i> . Any further reproduction or communication of this material may be subject to copyright protection. Do not remove this notice.

Further information

For more guidance, see:

- *Using Generative AI Platforms in Schools* – [Smartcopying: The Official Guide to Copyright Issues for Australian Schools and TAFE](#)
- *Copyright Act 1968 (Cth)*
- Department of Education (Qld) resources on copyright and digital learning.

Teacher Responsibilities

Teachers play a central role in ensuring that AI is used safely, ethically, and effectively. As facilitators of learning, teachers will model responsibility, respect, and resilience in AI use, guide students to adopt these behaviours in all digital environments, and ensure students understand both its potential and limitations.

When using AI with students, teachers will:

- Use only school-approved and risk-assessed AI tools.
- Provide clear instructions and boundaries for student use of AI.
- Ensure AI use aligns with curriculum intent and enhances engagement and accessibility.
- Protect student privacy and ensure compliance with data and child protection regulations.
- Discuss the limitations, biases, and ethical implications of AI to foster critical thinking.
- Attribute and label any AI-generated content used in teaching materials in line with copyright and referencing requirements.

Professional Development

- Staff will receive training in AI literacy, ethics, and pedagogy.
- Professional learning will focus on curriculum design, assessment adaptation, and safe AI integration.
- Staff will collaborate and share best practices.

Critical Evaluation of AI Outputs

Generative AI tools can sometimes generate false or biased information, a phenomenon known as *hallucination*.

Students and teachers are expected to think critically about AI outputs – questioning accuracy, credibility, and relevance – before using them in their work. AI-generated content should never replace evidence-based research or professional judgment.

Developing the ability to evaluate and refine AI-generated material is an essential skill for learning, teaching, and responsible participation in an AI-enhanced world.

3. Guiding Documents

The following documents inform and guide the development, implementation, and ethical use of AI at Cairns School of Distance Education.

Australian and International Frameworks	
Guiding Document	Reflected in Cairns SDE AI Philosophy & Framework
Australian Framework for Generative AI in Schools	Focus on transparency, student agency, educator support, and clear expectations
Australia's Artificial Intelligence Ethics Principles	Principles of fairness, accountability, transparency, reliability, and safety.
Australian Human Rights Commission – Human Rights and Technology	Focus on algorithmic fairness, human oversight, and rights protections.
UNESCO Guidelines	Human rights-based approach, teacher training, equity and inclusion
Queensland Department of Education Guidance	
Guiding Document	Reflected in Cairns SDE AI Philosophy & Framework
QLD DoE Generative AI Principles	Clear articulation of ethical use, pedagogy-first integration, and digital wellbeing
Queensland DoE Information Privacy & Information Security (IS18)	Security requirements for digital tools and data.
Queensland Government Information Privacy Act 2009	Expectations for handling personal and sensitive information.
Safety and Wellbeing Guidance	
Guiding Document	Reflected in Cairns SDE AI Philosophy & Framework
eSafety Commissioner - AI and Online Safety Guidance	Emphasis on consent, age-appropriate use, privacy, and misinformation
eSafety Commissioner – Toolkit for Schools	Broader digital citizenship and technology safety expectations.
Curriculum and Assessment Guidance	
Guiding Document	Reflected in Cairns SDE AI Philosophy & Framework
QCAA & ACARA AI Guidance	Academic integrity, task design, and support for curriculum-linked AI use
Australian Curriculum – Digital Literacy Capability	Skills for algorithmic thinking, digital literacy, and responsible digital participation.

This AI Policy ensures that Cairns School of Distance Education balances innovation with **responsibility**, guiding students and staff to engage with emerging technologies in **respectful** and ethical ways, and to approach challenges with **resilience**. It safeguards wellbeing, integrity, and community trust while empowering our school to lead confidently in an AI-enhanced future.