

Responsible AI Use in Education

Accuracy, learner safeguarding, workload reduction and citations

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1 Purpose

This guide supports educators to use artificial intelligence responsibly, confidently and practically. It encourages AI use where it improves teaching quality, reduces unnecessary workload, supports differentiated learning, and prepares learners for a future workplace in which AI, data, cybersecurity, technological literacy, creative thinking and lifelong learning are becoming increasingly important.

The approach is not to ban AI, or to treat it as a shortcut. The better approach is to teach educators and learners how to use AI with judgement, evidence, care and transparency. UNESCO's AI competency framework for teachers places emphasis on a human-centred mindset, ethics, AI foundations, AI pedagogy and professional learning, which is a useful structure for school-level AI adoption. ([UNESCO](#))

For Springbot and Space STEM programmes, AI should sit alongside hands-on investigation, data collection, coding, physical computing and learner presentation. Springbot already supports curriculum-linked coding, IoT, data science, offline content, SD card data logging, WiFi-enabled projects and teacher support materials, making it a strong practical platform for teaching learners to combine real-world evidence with responsible digital tools.

2 Core principle

AI may assist the educator. It must not replace the educator.

Educators remain responsible for the quality, accuracy, age-appropriateness and fairness of any AI-supported material they use. The UK Department for Education states that teachers, leaders and staff must use professional judgement, check AI-generated content for appropriateness and accuracy, and remain responsible for final documents produced with AI support.

In practice, this means AI can help draft, summarise, translate, adapt, brainstorm, simplify, create examples and suggest lesson structures. The educator must still decide what is correct, what is suitable for the learners, what aligns with the curriculum, what is safe, and what should be removed.

3 Why educators should be encouraged to use AI

Responsible AI use can help educators reduce the repetitive parts of their work. Useful teacher-facing applications include lesson planning, creating educational resources, generating revision activities, drafting differentiated worksheets, creating rubrics, adapting explanations for different reading levels and supporting administrative tasks.

This matters because AI can free educators to spend more time on the work that only humans can do well: noticing learner confusion, encouraging curiosity, managing classroom relationships, asking probing questions, supporting inclusion, guiding practical work and building confidence. OECD guidance also emphasises that generative AI works best when it supports learning with a clear pedagogical purpose rather than replacing cognitive effort. ([OECD](#))

Educators also need first-hand experience of AI so that they can guide learners. Learners are entering a world where AI and big data are among the fastest-growing skill areas, alongside cybersecurity, technological literacy, creative thinking, resilience, curiosity and lifelong learning. ([World Economic Forum](#))

4 Appropriate educator uses

Educators may use AI to:

- Draft lesson outlines, experiment guides, discussion questions and extension activities.
- Adjust text for different grade levels, reading levels or language needs.
- Generate examples, analogies, quiz questions and marking rubrics.
- Create first drafts of parent letters, project reports and learner instructions.
- Suggest ways to link lessons to the curriculum, SDGs, local contexts and future careers.
- Summarise long documents into educator notes, checklists or learner-friendly explanations.
- Generate sample code, then test and correct it before using it with learners.
- Analyse non-personal, anonymised class trends where the data contains no learner names or identifying information.

For Springbot lessons, AI may help educators turn sensor data into guiding questions, compare learner hypotheses with actual data, suggest graphing tasks, or draft learner reflection prompts. The key is that the Springbot produces real measurements, while AI helps structure thinking around those measurements.

5 Uses requiring caution

Educators should use extra caution when AI is used for assessment, feedback, learner profiling or decisions that affect a learner's progress. AI should not make final decisions about marks, discipline, support needs, ability grouping, promotion, awards or learner wellbeing.

AI-generated feedback can be useful as a draft, especially for common patterns in learner work. The educator should personalise it, remove anything discouraging or inaccurate, and check that it reflects the actual task and marking standard.

AI detection tools should not be treated as proof of misconduct. A fair process should include discussion with the learner, evidence of drafting, version history where available, and the educator's professional judgement.

6 Learner-facing AI use

Learners may use AI when the educator has set a clear learning purpose, explained the rules, and is able to supervise the activity. The Department for Education guidance states that pupils should use generative AI in education settings only with appropriate safeguards such as close supervision, safety features, filtering and monitoring.

Learner-facing AI use should support thinking rather than replace thinking. Good learner uses include asking AI to explain a difficult concept in simpler language, generating practice questions, suggesting ways to improve a paragraph, helping debug code, comparing two possible explanations, or asking for feedback on a draft. Learners should then check, rewrite, test, cite and explain what they changed.

Learners should not use AI to produce work that they submit as their own without acknowledgement. They should not use AI to avoid reading, thinking, experimenting, coding, calculating, measuring or writing. In STEM lessons, they should not replace real measurements with AI-generated claims.

7 Accuracy checks

AI can generate content that sounds confident and convincing while being wrong. Known risks include inaccurate, unsafe, biased, out-of-context, unreliable, low-quality or fabricated content. Generative AI may also present false information as fact, a problem often called hallucination.

Educators should use the following accuracy check before sharing AI-assisted content with learners:

- Check the curriculum: Does the content match the grade, subject, terminology and required level?
- Check the facts: Verify claims against trusted sources such as official curriculum documents, textbooks, peer-reviewed sources, government sources, reputable science organisations or project-approved resources.
- Check the calculations: Recalculate numerical answers manually or in a trusted calculator or spreadsheet.
- Check the code: Run the code on the actual device or simulator before giving it to learners.
- Check the safety: Remove any unsafe practical instructions, unsuitable content, harmful stereotypes or inappropriate examples.
- Check the context: Replace generic examples with local, relevant examples where possible.
- Check the language level: Make sure learners can understand the task without losing the subject challenge.
- Check citations: Make sure any factual claims, images, data or quotations are traceable to reliable sources.

A practical classroom rule is: “AI may suggest. Humans must verify.”

8 Learner safeguarding

Safety comes first

Any school or programme using AI should decide which tools are approved, who may use them, for what purpose, under what supervision, and with what data restrictions. The intended use should have clear benefits that outweigh the risks, with stronger safeguards for learners under 18.

Supervision

Educators should avoid open-ended unsupervised AI use by younger learners. They should use educator-controlled demonstrations, approved school accounts, filtered tools, pre-written prompts and guided activities where possible.

Privacy

Learners should be taught never to enter personal, private or sensitive information into AI tools. This includes full names, addresses, phone numbers, ID numbers, school login details, medical information, family circumstances, marks, photographs, videos, private messages or information about another learner.

Safety

Schools should also consider cyber safety. AI can be used to create convincing scam messages or misleading content, so AI literacy should include spotting manipulation, checking sources, recognising impersonation and asking a trusted adult when something seems suspicious.

9 Privacy and POPIA

In South Africa, responsible AI use must align with POPIA and school privacy requirements. The Department of Basic Education's POPIA guidelines state that POPIA aims to give effect to the constitutional right to privacy and requires personal information to be processed lawfully and reasonably in a way that does not infringe privacy.

For school use, the safest rule is: do not enter learner personal information into public AI tools. Use anonymised examples such as "Learner A", "Group 3", "Grade 6 class average" or "a learner who struggled with graph labels". Avoid uploading learner work, photographs, videos, marks, consent forms

or school records into AI systems unless the school has formally approved the tool, checked the data processing terms, obtained any required consent, and confirmed that the use is lawful and necessary.

The Information Regulator provides specific guidance on processing children's personal information, which reinforces the need for careful handling of learner data.

10 Bias, inclusion and fairness

AI systems can reflect bias in their training data. Educators should check whether AI-generated examples reinforce stereotypes, exclude rural or under-resourced contexts, assume expensive equipment, overrepresent wealthy countries, or use names and scenarios that do not reflect the learners in front of them.

For South African education, this is especially important. AI-supported material should be checked for local relevance, language accessibility, offline realities, school resource constraints and cultural respect. AI should help widen participation, not make already-advantaged learners even more advantaged.

Educators should deliberately ask AI for inclusive alternatives, then apply their own judgement. For example: "Rewrite this Grade 7 coding activity so that it works in a classroom with no internet and limited devices," or "Give examples from South African township, rural and urban contexts."

11 Citations and acknowledgement

Learners and educators should acknowledge AI assistance honestly. This does not need to be complicated. A simple statement can be enough for ordinary classroom work.

Suggested learner acknowledgement:

- "I used AI to help me understand the topic and improve my draft. I checked the information against my class notes and the sources listed below. The final answer is my own work."
- Suggested educator acknowledgement:
- "This resource was drafted with AI assistance and reviewed, corrected and adapted by the educator before use."

When AI provides factual claims, learners should not cite the AI tool as the source of the fact. They should use AI to find possible leads, then verify the information in reliable sources. Final work should

cite the original source, such as a textbook, NASA page, DBE document, peer-reviewed article, reputable news source, dataset, or project-provided material.

For images, diagrams and generated media, learners should state whether AI was used and should not present AI-generated images as photographs or real evidence.

12 Academic integrity

The purpose of schoolwork is learning, not merely producing an answer. OECD warns that generative AI can improve apparent performance without real learning gains when learners outsource the task instead of engaging with the thinking. ([OECD](#))

Assessment design should therefore shift towards process evidence. Educators can ask learners to submit:

- Their question or hypothesis.
- Their raw data or observations.
- Their first draft or planning notes.
- Their prompt, where AI was used.
- A short reflection explaining what AI suggested, what they accepted, what they rejected and what they verified.
- A final answer with citations.

For Springbot projects, this is highly practical: learners can submit their sensor readings, graphs, code blocks, photographs of the setup, explanation of anomalies, and final conclusion. AI may help them improve the explanation, while the evidence remains rooted in their real experiment.

13 Practical classroom rules for learners

- Use AI to learn, not to hide.
- Do not enter personal information.
- Do not copy and paste AI output as your own work.
- Check every important fact.
- Cite real sources.
- Say when AI helped you.
- Ask your educator before using AI for assessed work.
- Use your own data, your own observations and your own reasoning.

14 Practical rules for educators

- Start with teacher-facing AI before learner-facing AI.
- Use approved tools and follow school policy.
- Do not upload learner personal information.
- Check every AI-generated resource before use.
- Test all code, calculations and practical instructions.
- Keep the teacher-learner relationship central.
- Use AI to reduce workload, not to lower professional standards.
- Teach learners how to question AI, not merely how to prompt it.

15 Suggested implementation approach

Phase 1: Educator productivity

Begin with lesson planning, resource drafting, rubrics, differentiated explanations, parent communication drafts and administrative summaries. This gives educators confidence and immediate workload relief while keeping risks lower.

Phase 2: Educator-supervised demonstrations

Use AI live in class to show how to ask better questions, check answers, identify weak reasoning and improve writing. Keep the educator in control of the device and prompts.

Phase 3: Guided learner use

Allow learners to use AI for specific, supervised tasks such as simplifying a concept, generating practice questions, debugging code or improving a reflection paragraph.

Phase 4: AI literacy and future work readiness

Teach learners how AI works at a basic level, where it fails, how bias appears, how to verify information, how to cite sources, and how AI may change careers.

16 Conclusion

Artificial intelligence is a useful assistant for educators and learners when it is used with care, accuracy checks, safeguarding and transparency. In this programme, AI may be used to support planning, explanations, feedback, coding assistance, data interpretation and learner reflection. AI must not replace practical investigation, educator judgement, learner thinking or real evidence.

Educators remain responsible for all AI-assisted materials shared with learners. Learners remain responsible for the work they submit. Personal learner information must not be entered into public AI tools. Any AI-assisted work should be checked against reliable sources and acknowledged honestly.

The goal is to prepare learners for a future in which AI is part of work and society, while strengthening the human capabilities that matter most: curiosity, reasoning, creativity, evidence-based thinking, collaboration, ethical judgement and problem-solving.