

# Proposed documentation for assessing AI tools for use in higher education:

Evaluating an artificial intelligence tool for use in a higher education course requires a systematic approach to ensure its effectiveness and suitability for the educational context. Here's a step-by-step guide to evaluating such a tool:

- This draft review will cover Almanack – an AI tool that creates lesson plans and unit level activities for courses at various levels of education.
- For the purposes of this draft review, I created an advanced, college level Grief and Loss course with liberal learning attributes.
- This is a Canadian company

## Pedagogy:

1. **Define Learning Objectives:** Determine how the AI tool can complement or enhance the achievement of your course learning objectives.
  - o I created a Grief and Loss course as a test case (lower and advanced level) – commonly taught in Social Work/Psychology/ Human Services/Allied Health fields. It is unclear how AI will influence be integrated into social work, human services, and counseling fields. That said, instructors in the field should be fluent in emerging use cases particularly as its application to case notes, field work, etc., is yet undetermined. The content generated is aligned with content in field – see below for example of common course taught to students in this area.
2. **Trial and Pilot Testing:** Conduct a trial or pilot test of the AI tool with a small group of students or colleagues. Gather feedback on its effectiveness and usability.
  - o I tested it as did a colleague from my home campus. We both found this tool easy to use and intuitive. We tested it relative to courses we have developed at our home campus and the suggested units/ topics/ assessments were aligned with what we have created. Tool was able to establish lower and advanced level assessments. It generates learning outcomes aligned with unit topics and appropriate for level of instruction. We could see no significant barriers to usage.
3. **Learning Analytics:** Assess the tool's ability to provide valuable learning analytics and insights for instructors and students. Analytics can help identify areas for improvement and measure learning outcomes.
  - o Analytics were not evident
4. **Feedback and Assessment:** Collect feedback from students who used the AI tool and assess its impact on their learning experience and outcomes.
  - o n/a as we are prestart of term
5. **Integration with Curriculum:** Ensure the AI tool can be integrated seamlessly into the course curriculum without disrupting the overall flow of the course.
  - o Website notes that it will soon be integrated with Brightspace
6. **Comparison with Traditional Methods:** Compare the AI tool's effectiveness with traditional teaching methods to gauge its added value.

- o Includes capacity for grading assistance, lesson planning, unit level learning, learning outcomes. It can create quizzes, worksheets, slide decks, video recommendations. It can also add a sample schedule based on dates given. Simple drag and drop reorganization capabilities.
- 7. **Support for Multimodal Learning:** Verify if the AI tool supports multimodal learning, allowing students to engage with content using various formats, such as text, audio, video, and interactive elements.
  - o Almanack supports and can suggest videos and other interactive tools
- 8. **Long-Term Viability:** Assess the long-term viability of the AI tool, considering its potential for future updates and scalability.
  - o Predicting the long-term viability/validity of any AI tool is evolving. This tool seems to have potential for scalability as it is fairly easy and intuitive to use.

## Technology:

1. **Research and Identify AI Tools:** Conduct thorough research to identify various AI tools that align with your course goals. Look for tools with good reviews, user feedback, and proven track records in education.
  - o According to its website, it generates curriculum-aligned lesson plans and other resources such as worksheets and assessments.
2. **Assess Features and Functionality:** Review the features and functionalities of each AI tool. Ensure that they align with your specific learning objective(s) and enhance the learning experience.
  - o Almanack uses conversational, text-based prompts and suggests what to ask and how to phrase the questions to create desired results. It is a smart course content and lesson plan creator and can generate discrete learning outcomes and aligned activities.
3. **User Interface and Experience:** Test the user interface of the AI tool to ensure it is intuitive and user-friendly. A complicated interface can hinder student engagement and learning.
  - o Almanack is free. Users create an account and lesson plans and other inputs are saved. The interface is clean and easy to use.
4. **Data Privacy and Security:** Evaluate the AI tool's data privacy and security measures. Ensure that student data is protected and that the tool complies with relevant privacy regulations.
  - o Terms of Service: <https://almanack.ai/terms-of-service/>
  - o **Data Collection and Storage:** Determine what data the AI tool collects from students and how it is stored. Ensure that personally identifiable information (PII) and sensitive data are handled securely and that data retention policies comply with relevant regulations.
    - See above.
    - Determine if the data collected is used to train the tool and the potential impacts this may have on your teaching practice or students.
  - o Data and prompts are used to further refine and train the tool.
  - o **Vendor Policies and Agreements:** Carefully review the privacy policy and terms of service of the AI tool provider to understand how they handle student data and what responsibilities they hold.

Privacy Policy: <https://almanack.ai/privacy-policy/>

- o **Data Sharing:** Check if the AI tool shares student data with third parties or if it aggregates data across institutions. Be cautious about tools that may share data without explicit consent or for purposes beyond the scope of the educational context.
  - [Data sharing policy above.](#)
- o **Data Anonymization and De-identification:** Verify if the AI tool anonymizes or de-identifies student data to protect their privacy. This is essential to prevent data breaches and unauthorized access.
- o **Access Controls:** Check the access controls and permissions for the AI tool. Instructors should only have access to the data necessary for teaching, while students should have appropriate control over their personal information.
- o **GDPR and Compliance:** If the AI tool operates in or collects data from users in the European Union, ensure that it complies with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and other relevant data protection laws.
- o **Security Audits and Certifications:** Inquire whether the AI tool provider undergoes regular security audits and holds relevant certifications to ensure that their data protection practices meet industry standards
- o **Incident Response and Data Breach Policies:** Understand the AI tool provider's incident response plan and data breach policies. Be confident that they have processes in place to handle any potential security breaches promptly and responsibly.
- o **Data Ownership and Portability:** Clarify who owns the data generated through the AI tool and ensure that students have the right to access and export their data if needed.  
[To safeguard Almanack. We'll look at logs and metadata as part of our work to ensure the security of your data and the Services as a whole. If necessary, we may also access accounts as part of an abuse report investigation.](#)

[To the extent required by applicable law. As a Canadian company, we only preserve or share customer data if compelled by a Canadian government authority with a legally binding order or proper request under Canadian law. If a non-Canadian authority approaches Almanack for assistance, our default stance is to refuse unless the order has been approved by the Canadian government, which compels us to comply through procedures outlined in an established mutual legal assistance treaty or agreement mechanism. If Almanack is audited by a tax authority, we only share the bare minimum billing information needed to complete the audit.](#)

5. **Compatibility and Integration:** Check if the AI tool can integrate seamlessly with the existing learning management system or that it can be easily accessed.
  - o [Almanack homepage notes that Brightspace integration is a forthcoming feature](#)
6. **Vendor Reputation and Support:** Research the reputation of the AI tool's vendor. Consider factors like customer support, ongoing updates, and responsiveness to issues or concerns.
7. **Instructor Training and Support:** Consider the training and support provided to instructors in using the AI tool effectively. If no training is available from your campus, determine how you will support your own learning of this tool.
  - o [Personal instructions on setting up can be found here: https://docs.midjourney.com/docs/quick-start](#)
8. **Institutional Approval and Policy Compliance:** Ensure that the AI tool meets institutional policies and guidelines for educational technology adoption.
  - o [Our institution does not have a particular policy for personal tool adoption.](#)

## Accessibility and DEI:

1. **Cost-Benefit Analysis:** Evaluate the cost of the AI tool against its potential benefits and impact on student learning outcomes. Consider long-term costs and the value it adds to the course. Consider what an achievable cost to a student is.
  - o While midjourney does have a “free” tier of service, for the amount of prompts possibly needed for a large project, a paid account may be necessary. The free version should be sufficient for classroom needs if not assigned a particular project.
2. **Accessibility and Inclusivity:** Check if the AI tool is accessible to all students, including those with disabilities. Consider its usability for diverse learning styles and needs.
  - o While midjourney relies on a text-based interface for creating images, Discord is fully compatible with screen reader software and other accessibility software. Midjourney also has the ability to “describe” any image fed to it, which could assist in creating accessible image descriptions for projects.
  - o **Accessibility Features:** Assess the AI tool's accessibility features, such as support for different languages, text-to-speech options, closed captioning, and adjustable font sizes. These features are essential for accommodating diverse learning needs.
  - o **User Interface Design:** Ensure that the AI tool's user interface is designed with inclusivity in mind. It should be intuitive and easy to navigate for all students, including those with disabilities.
3. **Representation and Bias:** Evaluate the AI tool for potential bias in content, examples, or data used in its algorithms. Ensure that the tool represents diverse perspectives and avoids reinforcing stereotypes.
  - o **Inclusive Content:** Check if the AI tool offers content that reflects diverse cultures, experiences, and identities. It should cater to students from various backgrounds and not exclude or marginalize any group.
  - o **Language and Communication:** Verify that the AI tool can accurately understand and respond to diverse accents and communication styles to avoid excluding certain students.
  - o **Cultural Sensitivity:** Assess whether the AI tool demonstrates cultural sensitivity and avoids using content or examples that might be offensive or inappropriate for certain cultural groups.

**Re above:** Almanack resources note goal to create nuanced and “harmless” explanations to user queries - It seems to maintain context in ongoing dialogue and can build/ scaffold curricular suggestions. It has a simple, conversational language interface. Straightforward. It is unclear whether it is globally inclusive. Initial use suggests that it is “neutrally inclusive” and did generate lesson plans with DEI lens. Inherent bias in data inputs may replicate biased algorithms.

**Alignment with DEI Initiatives:** Ensure that the adoption of the AI tool aligns with the institution's broader DEI initiatives and commitment to creating an inclusive learning environment. **See above.** **Multiple course/ unit / content creation is needed to measure this attribute. Assessment criteria should also be evaluated.**