

Focus Group 4 (April 24, 2025)

00:00

**Interviewer:** Record to this computer. Yeah, so it should be recording now. Do you- does it tell you that it's recording?

**Sophia:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Perfect. Thank you. It used to do this red dot that was very prominent, and now it's sort of off to the side, so it always makes me wonder. Um, yeah, so I mean, just as a bit of a warm up question- I feel like in person it's nicer 'cause I get to kind of chat with you before the interview as you come in, but since we don't have that on Zoom, just wanted to ask what your plans are for the summer.

00:35

**Sophia:** *[Pause]* So I recently went to my first jazz bar, and it was so much fun. So now I just want to go to all the little different ones that are down in downtown Toronto, just so I can see, you know, the different vibes of all of them.

**Interviewer:** That's awesome.

00:54

**Aliya:** Yeah, for myself, I'm just going to be doing some summer school, and I'm going to be working too.

01:00

**Interviewer:** Less fun, but important. Okay, well, thanks for sharing that. Okay, so I think we can jump into our questions. So as you know, the project is about ISP100 and generative AI and how that's impacted your writing. But we also want to get a sense of what writing was like for you in high school. And by the way, you can speak in any order. And also sometimes I may call on you, in case, you know, I didn't hear from you, but just because I'm calling on you doesn't mean you have to say anything. You can also just say "nothing to add." But yeah, I just want to make sure I'm able to hear everybody's thoughts. So, yeah, so maybe you can tell me a bit about, before you came to university, what your experience writing essays was like.

01:53

**Sophia:** *[Pause]* So for me, it was the, I took uh... when you fast track your courses—so when I was in grade 10, I took grade 11 English, you know, when I was in grade 11, I took grade 12 English— so I always just had to be a little bit ahead of my peers, because they were all still taking the course that were supposed to be taking. So when I would come down, come and sit down to write my work, I would have to have like, uh, my teacher would like like an outline, so she wanted to outline our introduction, the three paragraphs, and the conclusion. So that's just, that's the basics that stuck with me, of like, how to write a paragraph, or like how to write an essay. So when I came to university and they were like, "Oh, you don't have to follow that anymore," I was like, it's kind of like you have to get used to a brand new way of writing and thinking.

**Interviewer:** Thank you for sharing that.

02:46

**Aliya:** You cut out when you asked the question, can you just repeat it again, please?

02:49

**Interviewer:** Yeah, so before you came to university, what was your experience like writing essays? So in high school.

02:55

**Aliya:** Yeah so I'd like to say I had a similar experience, where everything was- it was like the hamburger that was like, what they taught us. You need your topic sentence, you need your body and your supporting, and then you need your conclusion. So that was like, it was a very uniform method that we had to use. It never changed. It was always what you had to follow. So then coming to university, when you follow that method, and you get, like, not so good grade, and you're trying to figure out why they say, like, they don't follow that method anymore, you just have to put out your information and like, you basically have to change your whole knowledge that you've spent like, over 10 years working. So, yeah.

03:41

**Interviewer:** Yeah, thanks for sharing that. Definitely, I've heard similar things in other focus groups. And what did you find challenging about writing essays in high school?

03:55

**Sophia:** *[Pause]* I think that sometimes the guidelines were just way too strict. So if you deviated from it in any way, it would be like marks would be taken off. One time I wrote an essay, she asked us to write about her personal life. She wanted it to be like, sort of like a sob story type of thing. And I went like a different direction. I wrote in a more positive light. And I guess she didn't really like that, so she brought me and sat me down, and was like, "This is not the way I wanted it to go, and I want you to rewrite it for me." So she gave me, like, a few more days to change my essay and resubmit it, and I wasn't happy with the essay, because I didn't feel like- not everyone feels like, you know, trauma dumping on an essay. So I did what I needed to do for the grade, but I wasn't happy with the essay, but it was just how high school is, and in some university classes, that's how it is.

04:55

**Aliya:** Yeah, I think... when it came to writing in, you know, university, sorry, in high school, it was very different, because we had the system that we had to follow, right? So like, for example, one of my classes, we had this teacher who wanted to break away from that, and he basically, for assessments, he gave us, like a whole set of different like examples that we can use. So it doesn't have to be an essay, we have a choice, but it could also be like a podcast or a visual, like demonstration, something like that. So we didn't always have to write an essay exactly how it was expected, and it was interesting because it was different than what was expected of all of our other courses. Because if we tried to apply that method, or if we tried to discuss different ways of being assessed, that wasn't met, like, probably, right. A lot of teachers didn't want to be open- didn't want

to open up to that like approach. So I found it interesting that I did have one teacher that was willing to work with you and change the rubric and change like their method to meet your style of writing. So I think that was interesting, because throughout my entire high school experience, it was all about just following the rubric and aligning your like paper with as much as you can to the rubric so that you don't- so you can get the best grade possible.

06:29

**Interviewer:** Yeah. And maybe you can also speak a bit to things that you enjoyed about writing, which I think came out a bit in your answer, Aliya, you know, having some flexibility, but anything else that you enjoyed about writing in high school.

06:46

**Aliya:** *[Pause]* Writing in the high school, I think I enjoyed *[pause]* I mean, it depended on what it was that we were doing. For example, like I enjoy writing in like my civics course, because in civics, we had this assignment where we talked about current events happening. So I was able to talk a lot about what was happening at the time. For example, I think it was like Andrew something, like he was one of, like the Governors for like New York, or something like that, like he had a whole scandal, come on at that time. So I got to write about that. And then I got to write about, like women, domestic violence against women. And I knew some cases that had happened internationally, so I got to use that. So I thought it was really cool, because I got to talk about serious issues that often didn't align with our schoolwork. So I got some experiences to talk about things that I chose.

07:52

**Interviewer:** And Sophia, for you, is there anything that you want to share about what you enjoyed about writing in high school?

08:00

**Sophia:** Umm to be honest, not much *[laughs]*. It was just a course that needed to be done, and there was just nothing about it that sort of sparked any interest for me. It was just a credit I needed. But when it came to my other classes that weren't very essay heavy, like my law courses, we focus more on presentations and case reviews and those type of things which were more interesting to me than just sitting down researching for about an essay for hours.

08:36

**Interviewer:** Yeah. Thank you. And then, what about your expectations about what writing would be like in university. Was there anything that you heard while you were in high school about what writing in university would be like?

08:50

**Sophia:** *[Pause]* Um, yeah. So for me, there's the phrase that teachers say, like "This wouldn't- you can't do this in university and this wouldn't slide in university." And what surprised me is that so much actually slides, if you just ask your professor *[chuckles]*. The amount of times I've emailed my professors for help on anything, and they were more than happy to help me, or give me an extension or to re-explain something to me. And they kind of like ingrain a fear in you that in university, you

don't get any breathing room. It's do or die, basically. And for example, my English teacher, the one that I was talking about earlier, she said that your professors, if you don't submit it on the dot exactly when it's due, you'll get a zero, or they'll take off so many marks that you're going to, you're going to fail the assignment. And I think it was just a way to make sure that we submit things on time, but at the same time, so many professors, honestly, have so so much other things going on that if you submit it an hour too late, they're maybe not even going to notice. So it's just the fact that, um, they make university seem scarier than it is. And when that time came around to where you had to apply for universities and stuff, I was worried about UofT because, um, all the things I heard from her, UofT is going to be like, quadruple that. But it turned out not to be true, and it was actually pretty okay.

10:22

**Aliya:** For myself, I think the one sentence, along with that, that I also heard was that “everything we're doing for you now is preparing you for university,” and I don't think that could be any more of a lie, because a lot of what they did was so different than what we were expected of in university, as we talked earlier about the writing. But even just in all aspects, like the professors and how strict they are, that is not necessarily true. Some professors, yeah, are more on the strict side, but some are more lenient, and as long as you're just honest with them, they'll understand, and that's how it is. Another thing that was... that didn't prepare me was exams. Exams in high school were very different, where teachers went over all the content, like the week before the exam, and they did everything to prepare you for it and stuff like that. Exams here are not only like, worth more, they're also a lot more content. And not often will a professor go over that content with you or go in depth with it. That's like, kind of your responsibility. So I thought it was really odd that they say “we're preparing you for university.” And another thing is, like, when you're writing in university, we use many different types of forms of citations depending on which you've done. Like, there's Chicago, APA, ASA, MLA, stuff like that. In high school, we really only used APA and MLA. So I think they could have done more preparing us for, like, the different writing styles and the different expectations of the university, because they say they were preparing us, but it didn't feel like that once we entered university.

12:14

**Interviewer:** Yeah, thank you, that's really informative. I think we can also jump into ISP100. So I believe you both have taken it as a sort of requirement for participating in the study. And before we talk about ISP100 itself, I'm also wondering if there were any other writing courses that you have taken so far.

12:43

**Aliya:** *[Long pause]* I took a creative writing course in my first semester, but that was it.

12:49

**Interviewer:** And how did you find it?

12:52

**Aliya:** It was very different, because it was still trying to follow that uniform style in a way, but also it was trying to get us to branch out our vocabulary. Like our homework assignment every week was find like 20 different verbs for like one word and stuff like that. So it was a very different style of writing. I wanted to like it, but I didn't because a lot of what I was learning was not applicable to my actual major, like the different writing style that I was using there was not what was expected of me as like a Crim and Soc major. So I felt like that was one of the reasons why I probably didn't do as well as I expected in the course. So it was different to see a different perspective of writing, but in the end, I didn't feel it was as valuable as I expected it to be.

13:47

**Sophia:** *[Pause]* So I don't know if this one counts but I took an English course and it was *[name of course]*, and it's where we focus on different books every, every few weeks, and we would write about those books, and it was very essay heavy. Um, but I did enjoy the actual content of the of the books and talking about my opinion of the books, but when it came down to the way the professor wanted the essays to be structured and um... the professor's rubrics were by like decimals. So if got- if you didn't 100% follow the the requirement, it would be like a 1.45 or 1.42 and so the marking was very different to what I'm used to. And, the rubrics were also very unspecific, and so you kind of just had to go with the flow of what was given to you, and then when the grades would come back, it wouldn't be what you expect, but then it would also be the fact that she wanted more, but she didn't tell you what exactly she wanted. So it was kind of hard to kind of guess which way she would go with the marking.

15:06

**Interviewer:** Right, yeah. Okay. And then in terms of ISP100, do you remember which term you took the course in?

15:15

**Sophia:** Yeah, I took it first semester, fall.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

15:21

**Aliya:** So I took it the fall semester of my first year.

15:24

**Interviewer:** Okay, so both in the fall. What do you think about the timing was- was it the right timing to take it in the fall?

15:31

**Sophia:** I think so, yes, 'cause when I took it, it was like the middle of the week. So when I would come in, she would state that she didn't expect us to know much about university writing, so the expectations were very low, and that's when she sort of built on and told us to forget everything that they taught us in high school. And she was like, we're going to start fresh, and don't think about the five paragraphs just we're going to focus on this new way of writing. And she explained citations,

which I used in all my other four courses after she taught us, which was very helpful, because all the other courses were like, “Okay, look at Owl Purdue, and it'll show you how to do this.” But she actually went through what needed to be in each citation and which helped me with my other courses, and also just how to structure a paragraph in general, which also helped in my other classes.

16:29

**Aliya:** I also think I took it at the right time, because it was just heading into university. So like my writing during that semester, it was like uphill, it was gradually growing. So like my grades for my writing material in that specific semester were probably not the best but I did see an improvement in my second semester where they were much stronger. So I think if I had waited to take that course, even if I had just waited like one semester, it probably would have significantly impacted my grades, because I wouldn't have had the knowledge, or preparation I needed to succeed in these courses.

17:13

**Interviewer:** Thank you. And you already started speaking a bit about how you found the course, so maybe you can speak, yeah, in general, how did you find the course?

17:30

**Aliya:** *[Long pause]* I found the course very insightful. I think my professor was very supportive. She was very kind, and I really liked that she had an honest input. I liked the detail of her feedback, and I liked how she structured the course. A lot of times we had peer feedback. It was a bit difficult sometimes, because a lot of people would not come into class, but those that did, we were able to work off of each other and we were able to work off of the professor too. So I think she organized the course in a pretty successful manner. And, yeah, I think I had a pretty good experience overall.

18:12

**Sophia:** I would say the same thing. She also constantly reminded us that it's okay to feel imposter syndrome, especially at like just starting university and at UofT, it's very- kind of when you get a bad grade you kind of feel like you shouldn't be there or things in that sense. And she said that it's also okay to not have a program picked yet, you could be undecided 'cause there's no reason to move through university too fast 'cause you can change your mind at any second. And just having that reassurance that you, that it's okay to change your mind, that it's okay to change what you've planned your whole high school life for, it was very comforting, in a way, and at the same time, she was also a great professor when it comes to teaching about how essays are marked, how she marked her essays, and the commentary she gave on the essays was very insightful, because she also encouraged you, but also gave you constructive criticism. Rather than, like, you know, the “question mark” or the “And, question mark,” it was she, she was giving you what you needed to hear in order to actually get through the course.

19:20

**Interviewer:** That's great. Yeah, that's, I think, the most positive feedback I've heard so far in in the focus groups I've done. Okay so I think you spoke a bit about this, but have you found that in second

year, or even just in the winter term after ISP, you've used the specific knowledge and tools that you got in ISP100?

19:48

**Sophia:** Um, yes, especially when it comes to, like I said, the citation, because that's the one- those are the things that really I have to use for the rest of my life basically, you know, so she set up this very good foundation. But at the same time, I feel like just teaching us about discourse communities and genres in general, because all my courses focus on different genres. So just being able to understand it from that point of view and that perspective and how each community has its own terminology and has its own expectations of behaviour, it helps you sort of move through your courses in an easier way.

20:30

**Aliya:** *[Long pause]* Yeah, I think the course overall definitely helped me in some way. My writing got stronger 'cause I knew how to form my paragraphs to align with my expectations of my courses. So that definitely helped me, and just kind of like a flow of ideas, I think the course was very beneficial, and that, like I said, helped me in my second semester, and it kind of carried through up to the point I'm in right now where I don't think I would do as well as I am if I didn't have that course.

21:12

**Interviewer:** Yeah, thank you. One thing I've heard from students in the focus group so far is some comments around the length of the lectures. So how did you find the length of lectures for this course?

21:30

**Sophia:** *[Pause]* Um, so this was my longest course, three hours, and um, but what my professor would do is she would give us a 10 minute break between each hour, which was helpful because it gave you time to go and get a snack, or, like, stretch your legs. And she would also just completely sometimes cut out the last hour of class so we would finish the lecture in two hours. And it was helpful because I wasn't used to that being sat for that long, so I kind of felt my attention like, you know, I stopped paying attention by like, the second hour, and she noticed that in all the students and she was like, "Let's get most of the work done in the first hour, so that everyone's still focused on me. And then second hour, you get time to work on your essay, and then third hour, if you don't have any questions or anything, you can leave." So it was helpful in the sense that I didn't feel overwhelmed by the three hours because it was a big chunk of my schedule, but it was also my only class that day, so I was, I kind of felt like I had to sit through the three hours, because what else am I going to be doing if I'm not in class? But she also understood that the class was also very small, and there was no natural lighting coming in, so it was just very tiring to be in the classroom. But she understood that, and she said, it's okay. She also said she hates three hour lectures. So she was like, "We're gonna end it at two hours every- we're gonna try and end it at two hours every single week and if you guys have any questions, just email me." So she was very flexible in that way, and it also made just the class way easier.

23:03

**Aliya:** Yeah, my professor, she definitely used the majority of the three hours [*chuckles*] at least for half of the course, I wanna say; for half or three fourths of the course, she definitely used all three hours. And, um, three hour courses, those have been the longest length of courses I have taken. I've only taken a few of those. I'm a EDS minor, so I also have—that's the majority of my EDS classes, three hours—but the difference between the EDS courses is that most teachers- most professors would work through two hours and then give us like or even like an hour and a half sometimes, and then we would just be able to leave after that. But I had ISP100 9 am on Monday, so it wasn't like my favorite course, and I did have a class after and I had like a gap between my classes so I genuinely didn't like that my layout was like that for the Monday. My courses were long, it felt long, ISP, because she did have a lot of content to go through, and she definitely wanted to incorporate some sort of engagement aspect, so it did feel long, and after like, an hour and a half, I slowly lost interest, and then I began to do like, other things on my computer and stuff like that, because I was just not listening anymore, especially since all the content she was talking about was on the slides that she posted it. I didn't see any purpose for me to like, you know, necessarily engage at all times, if I'm just gonna be able to review it later on for like an assignment, or something like that. But yeah I definitely found it very long and I didn't engage for most of it, but I did show up because it at least let me like force myself to work a bit.

24:57

**Interviewer:** Yeah, thanks, yeah, your comments definitely echo a lot of what I've heard. 'Cause your reviews of ISP100 were so positive, and I thought, you know what [*laughs*] I've definitely heard from students that the length of the lectures is a bit excessive. So, yeah, that definitely does mirror what I've heard. Umm, okay, and then in terms of, you know, we can think of ISP100 as a writing support, but there's other sort of programs in the university or other sources of support for writing. So I'm wondering if you've used the Robert Gillespie Academic Skills Center?

25:33

**Sophia:** Yes, I have. I've used it recently for my political science essay. I went in and they just looked through it and gave me any commentary or any ways to actually stick to the guidelines of the essay. And I also went in for, well... I actually did go in once for ISP, where they went through your essay with you, and, um... actually I went for a bunch of my courses, oh now that I think about it, yeah, and it was very helpful. And it's just also just a quiet place to work if you want, if you end up just wanting to sit and work with you on your essay, and there's always someone there to ask, for you to ask questions, which I found very helpful, because sometimes going to your friends and ask them, asking them to look over your essay, isn't the same as someone who understands the guidelines of your course.

26:23

**Aliya:** I also used the Center quite a few times, but I used it more so in my first year. I used it for a majority of my courses, 'cause, like, pretty much all my courses were writing heavy. So I would try and schedule it a day or two before my assignments were due, and I would meet with somebody mostly online because it just worked best with my schedule, and I wanted to limit the amount of

hours I was on campus so I did meet with people online and they were relatively helpful. I mean, I found some professors more helpful than others, for sure, but I used it more in my first year. I didn't use it as that's just my second year, because I didn't find like, it didn't work with my schedule to fit in those meetings, so I didn't meet with anybody in my second year. And I just kind of trial and error, I guess, to figure out the assignments. But, yeah, I think if they had more time and flexibility then I would schedule more meetings for that.

27:27

**Interviewer:** Yeah, thank you for sharing that. And I think you spoke a bit about peer editing so maybe you can talk to me a bit about whether you've used your peers as a source of support or editing with writing.

27:42

**Sophia:** Yeah, so I would do that when we would have the same course. So in one of my, some of my sociology classes, I would share with my peers, and we would like give each other commentary, and then give each other a chance to look through it and fix whatever we can. And we do another round, another day in the week, just to see how much change we've made from the commentary. But also in some of my courses, that was, like a required part of your assignment. So we would have, like, scaffolding assignment where they would like make you do an outline, and then make you write the, like, a annotated bibliography, and then the second part of the assignment would be giving it to a peer and asking them to review it, and then you would submit their commentary as part of your assignment. So just having that assignment showed me that it is sometimes helpful to go to a peer and ask them to help you out and like review your work, because fresh eyes that haven't sort of read the essay over and over again can give you information that you maybe haven't thought of and... but I do like going to professors or like TAs to read over my essay rather than peers just because, umm... I think that they would give me more beneficial commentary.

29:00

**Aliya:** For me, peer editing only occurred when it was mandatory or an activity throughout the course. The main reason why is because I noticed my writing timeline was a lot different than my peers. For example, when I like to do- when I have to do writing assignments, I like to mentally prepare to start a week before, and then I'll just do like, little things slowly, slowly, like, set up the document, come up with the topic, write one paragraph a day up until, like, the assignment is due, so it doesn't feel overwhelming. And by the time I was done, sometimes I'd end up finishing early. I'd finish, like, a day or two early, and most of my peers hadn't even started yet. A lot of them had waited until the day it was due to start. So then peer editing didn't make sense, because they were just trying to rush to get their assignment in. So it made no sense to like ask them for help, or for them to ask me. So a lot of peer editing that occurred was not by choice. So yeah, and I also agree that if I had- if I wanted to, I probably wouldn't go to my peers anyways, 'cause, like, my peers are on the same level as me, right? You know what I mean? Like, I can always use their advice, and I can, I would just see how their advice would fit with like the expectations. If I saw if it was beneficial, then I would see how I could implement it. But sometimes I wouldn't, because I would just refer to like the essay, I mean the TA or the professor, because they have more knowledge about both the content and how I'm integrating it, and just overall writing skills.

30:47

**Interviewer:** Yeah, thank you. I also know Grammarly is a popular tool for editing help. Do do you use it?

31:00

**Sophia:** *[Pause]* So I do use Grammarly, but it's mostly for punctuation and for, like, finding different ways to say my, my words. So for example, it would give me... What's the word again... synonyms, synonyms for the words that I'm already using because, because sometimes it helps to sound more professional. So I would ask it, like you would double click on the word, and it would give you a bunch of synonyms that come up underneath the word that you're choosing. So I would see which word fits into my sentence, and I would add that in there. And its also not really helpful if you don't have Grammarly Pro, which is why I kind of don't like it, so I refuse to purchase it, but I use it for punctuation and stuff like that.

31:50

**Aliya:** I personally don't use Grammarly, but I have used Quillbot, and I've used Quillbot not for punctuation, more for when I had an idea of what I wanna say, but I don't know how to say it so. But, like, I haven't used it as much in recent, I want to say in the recent six months, because I have found the way it words things is just really odd. Like, it's not- it doesn't flow properly. They just throw synonyms in and just kind of like, put it together. But, yeah, I don't use Grammarly, but I have used Quillbot before.

32:26

**Interviewer:** Thank you. And, Sophia, maybe you can tell me a bit about the difference between Grammarly, I guess, the unpaid version, versus the pro, paid version.

32:37

**Sophia:** So for the Grammarly, unpaid version, it gives you- so when you paste in your your paragraph, it gives you the minimum amount of commentary. So if I were to maybe post my introduction paragraph on there, it would give me a bunch of suggestions. And then once those suggestions—they're very simple ones, like, "Oh, add a comma here," or maybe "Change get cut this word out." But when it came to actually like the structure of the sentence itself and how it may be like a run on sentence, or there may be a different way to say it, it would be hidden behind a paywall that says, like, "Pro suggestion, try one month free." And so I would just once I get all the limited suggestions I can get, I just go back to my essay and try and figure it out on my own, because it also, even though the actual commentary was hidden behind a paywall, it would highlight the sentences that would be, that the suggestions would be on. So I would look at those sentences and see, okay, what is it- what should I change? Because it highlighted it so there's something wrong with the sentence. So I would just go through it and try and figure it out on my own. So I would take suggestions it can give me, but at the same time, I would fix what I could fix, because I didn't wanna pay.

33:57

**Interviewer:** Right. And so I hear, Aliya, you talking about Quillbot having some issues in the sense that it's not necessarily helpful, but for both of you, whether it's Grammarly or Quillbot, do you feel like you're able to learn from the suggestions that it's given you?

34:18

**Aliya:** Sorry, yeah, I think it has been able to help me, because it has opened my vocabulary for sure, um, so I'm just able to learn new synonyms that I can implement. And it's not like synonyms, like sophisticated words that just sound nice when you throw them in an essay. No, it's just like words that are different from my normal vocabulary that either try to convey what I'm saying better, or is just like a different way of trying to say what I want to say. Like, I feel like the synonyms have been really useful, because I feel like if I'm stuck in the same like words that I'm using, then I'm just not writing as effectively as I could, so it has helped me learn about new words that I can use in that specific paper and other papers like throughout my entire writing.

35:17

**Interviewer:** *[Pause]* And Sophia, do you have anything to add?

35:22

**Sophia:** About Quillbot?

35:25

**Interviewer:** No, in terms of Grammarly. Sorry, it sounds like, you know, sometimes when there's something highlighted, but you don't know why, because it's sort of behind the paywall. You're trying to figure out yourself what it is you could improve. So do you feel like when you use Grammarly, you're able to learn from you know how to improve your writing in general?

35:41

**Sophia:** Yes. So I noticed that I do have the same issue a bunch of times when I'm writing on my essays and I submit it onto Grammarly, it would tell me that the sentence, so it would give you, like, a little bit of a peek into what the suggestion would be. So it would be like, "Remove this phrase or reword the sentence," but it wouldn't tell you what exactly you need to change. So I would go through it, and my issue would be the fact that my sometimes my sentences would be way too vague, and I wouldn't be like, kind of focusing on what my topic sentence is. So once I realized that that's sort of my issue, I go and correct it, and then I bring it back onto Grammarly, and then the highlighted part would disappear. So I kind of reach the conclusion with like the little hints that Grammarly gives me.

36:27

**Interviewer:** That's really interesting. So listening to both of you speak, I wonder how this sort of help that you get from these tools, like Quillbot and Grammarly, how do you think that compares to the help that you maybe get through the Writing Center, like in terms of the suggestions that you know, a human would be giving you for your writing?

36:44

**Sophia:** I was actually gonna- I was thinking about that because they give you actual, like, what you should change, and there is not, there's no limit to how much they can get, how much information and help they can give you. So I do prefer going in to the RGASC, because, um, it's also the fact that I'm paying for it, so might as well use it so I don't wanna pay, also pay for Grammarly. Grammarly is sort of like a last resort, when it's like a few hours before the deadline, and I just want to review it one last time. So, but the um, when I'm actually being... I'm not being, I'm not procrastinating, and I'm not working on it last minute, my first place to go would be the Center over Grammarly.

37:33

**Aliya:** I think it's interesting, because the Center, I feel like is because it's people you're talking to, you get different type of interactions, they would be able to, like, if they don't understand what you're saying, they can always follow up type of thing. So I think the Center has more educated people in the sense where you can rely on it more. But like I mentioned, I haven't used it in a while, and I think, like I said, scheduling, right, is the reason, because, like, I have two jobs and I'm at school, so, like, it's really hard to, like, go and physically go into *[Recording cuts off]*.

00:00

**Interviewer:** And I really hope it's saved. Okay, so we were talking about not using the Skills Centre because of not enough appointments available. So, Aliya, that was you discussing that. I'm sorry you kind of got cut off for me. Is there anything you wanted to add in terms of, yeah, the lack of availability of support?

00:24

**Aliya:** Um, no, I was just gonna finish by saying it was just more convenient to use online tools than the centre, because it just is there at all times when I need it.

00:37

**Interviewer:** Yeah, thank you. Boy, oh boy. Okay, hopefully no more tech issues. Okay. So just to sort of get us back on track, we talked about writing in high school, ISP100, and supports that you've used for writing. So it's really helpful when I ask students to think about their last writing assignment and go with them- go through the process with them, for me to understand how you go through writing a writing assignment. So, yeah, maybe you can talk to me about, you know, the last writing assignment that you remember, and you know your process, how that went for you, challenges, things that went well.

01:22

**Sophia:** So um, so the last one I remember was from my political science class. I was writing about NATO and how it was basically an organization that was beneficial. So my process is that I had like two prompts to pick from whether if NATO wasn't beneficial and should be basically shut down, or if it was beneficial and should continue to be an organization. So I chose that it should continue to be an organization. So after I pick the point of view that I'm going to be working on, I start first writing my thesis, which explains, okay, this is my point of view and then I write a road map of what I'm going to be talking about on my essay. And then after I get the thesis and the road map down, I write the introduction paragraph. And then once I write the introduction paragraph, I plug it into

Grammarly, and it checks my punctuation, and then I plug it and then I move on to the next paragraph. And I keep doing that until I get to my conclusion, and then by the time I get to my conclusion, I went to my professor's office hours, and I asked him to just read over my introduction and my conclusion and ask him if there's anything that I should add. And he told me, "Oh, your conclusion could be a little bit more... your introduction could be a little more specific about why it's beneficial." So I went back, revised my thesis, my introduction, tweaked all my paragraph, and then I plugged it back into Grammarly, after getting my professor's commentary. And then, so usually when I would be writing my essay, it would either be my professor, my TA, or the Centre, and then Grammarly would be for little things like punctuation. And then after I completely finished writing my essay, I looked over my citations, my conclusion paragraph, and then I read it over one more time, and then I plugged the whole thing into Grammarly one last time, just so you can tell me if there's any issues with the flow between the paragraphs and then I submit.

03:23

**Aliya:** For myself, my last writing assignment, I wouldn't call it unconventional, but it was a bit different, because we had special circumstances. So, like, our professor, I don't want to say stopped teach- an unfortunate thing happened, and our professor could no longer teach our course, like the last, I want to say, like the last month of class almost. So she was not able to continue teaching, so we had to get a fill-in professor. So it was really difficult to adjust to that. So that itself was just a bit complicated, and I think she kind of had a bit of sympathy for us, so she kind of... whatever our last assignment was supposed to be, she changed it so we only had to write, like, two paragraphs, and we wrote it on a discussion post. So we had to answer these two questions. We didn't necessarily have to use any resources, but I did include one reading, and that was pretty much it. So it I just looked at the two questions, I thought of like, how I would answer the question. Like it was simple questions. It was like, it was about, like the lifespan. So if something like, what type of workshop method, you like, some sort of experience that you would provide to a certain age group, and could it be a traditional workshop? How would you do it, why was it beneficial? Something like that. So I just literally answered what my example was. So, like I did, like escape room. So I talked about the escape room, and how it would work, and then I said why it would be beneficial in the next paragraph. So it didn't take- I wrote it in like two hours, like it didn't take long for me to do. So then when I was done, like, coming up with my ideas, I wrote out what I was thinking, and then I just kind of threw it into Chat and asked it if my answer is aligning with what is being asked from me. I think it was because it was a lot of last minute, umm... it was a lot of uncertainty around the assignment and the ending of the course, so I just wanted to make sure I could align myself with the rubric as much as possible.

05:38

**Interviewer:** Yeah, thank you for sharing that. Okay, and I think that's a nice segue to the next section which is about generative AI. So you probably know this much better than me, but there's a lot of different programs that people can use. So that would be things like ChatGPT or Microsoft Copilot, and there's many new tools that are always being developed. So yeah, I just wanted to reiterate that the goal of asking these questions is to learn from you and remember that your answers are confidential. So to start off, I just want to ask you about UTM students' use of

generative AI in general. So to what extent do you think UTM students use generative AI in their coursework?

06:29

**Sophia:** So, I, you know, when you're around other students, you're not really worried about sort of saying what you do with AI. So in one of my CCT classes, we have like, a 10 page essay due. And the amount of people I've heard state that ChatGPT wrote the entire thing for them is sort of concerning, because at the same time they were just talking about it when our TA was still in the room. So it was, it wasn't the smartest conversation to have in front of a teacher, but at the same time, all of my friends do use ChatGPT to, like, explain a concept to them- my friends use ChatGPT for punctuation, which I haven't thought of doing, but maybe it's a good idea. But for the most part, I know that UTM students do overly rely on ChatGPT to write their essays, to make outlines for them. I feel like it just sort of takes away from the fact that you are actually learning from what you're writing.

07:37

**Aliya:** *[Long pause]* Yeah, sorry. I agree. Based on the conversations I have heard a lot of UTM students do rely on ChatGPT and other forms of AI. I have also overheard in quite a few classes, um, students admitting that they had no time to write the assignment, so they just put the prompt to Chat, and whatever they got, they pasted and they submitted. That also applies to... so, yeah, they use it for that type of stuff, and I know some people use it to clarify concepts and stuff like that, but I would say a lot of UTM students use it and they rely on it. And I've known, I know many people say that they don't think they can complete an assignment without the use of Chat, like they feel like they're useless or like they can't think to that extent, and they just, they want to do well, they want to get a good grade, so they just end up asking Chat. Also on like, on like, student, like, Reddit groups and stuff like that, you'll see so many people post about how they use Chat, and they either got caught, or they used Chat and they didn't get caught. Like they are so openly admitting to the way they use it. So yeah, it's definitely used a lot in the community.

09:02

**Interviewer:** Yeah, thank you. And you both spoke a bit about the kinds of uses students have for AI in terms of writing. So can you talk to me about that a bit more? So, in what ways are students using AI? And of course, you know, generating an entire assignment, that's one of them, outlines is another one. How else do you think students are using AI?

09:30

**Sophia:** So for my- I took a Stats course in the start of the semester, and so many of them used Copilot to for it to explain like, different statistical concepts. And it would, they would go like, "Oh, could you look at this question, and how would you answer it as a student?" So- or, like, my friend would use it for her resume, where she would tell them the experience, experiences that she has, and then she would ask them to sort of list out, um... skills that she gained from that position, and then she would just copy-paste it into her resume, which I honestly think is a good idea, because at the same time, um, ChatGPT can sort of phrase it better than... a student would in some situations, but at the same time, um, you should sort of know the skills that you're gaining from from, uh, sorry,

my, my brain's blanking out, but *[laughs]* you should sort of know the skills that you're gaining from an experience that you're being a part of. But at the same time *[pause]* yeah, that's it. That's all I've got *[laughs]*.

10:41

**Interviewer:** Yeah, don't worry. For me, it's also, it's been a long day already. So if you notice me blanking, that's the reason.

10:50

**Sophia:** Yeah, so when it comes to different uses of AI, if we're talking in the entire like school, like, aside from academics, too, I know a lot of people in like clubs, they also use it to come up with ideas for events. I know this because I'm also in a club, so like, I know, I see it firsthand. They use it for like events, marketing, and like logistics, for like facilitating events and things like that. So that, aside from academia, that is how it's used in our community, too. When it comes to courses and workload, I know a lot of people use it so to clarify concepts. I am guilty of that, too, because oftentimes my professor, I feel like, isn't explaining something in a way that I can understand it. So I do look it up to see if I can get them- I call it a more dumbed down, like version of what I'm trying to learn, so I know what I need to know, type of thing. So I know clarifying concepts... definitely writing entire paragraphs and entire portions or an entire essay. I know a lot of them use it for even, like, small assignments, so like discussion posts and stuff like that. They just say they don't have time, so they just do that and then put it in. I know I had taken an anthropology course a while back, in my first year, and those tests are online, and a lot of students admitted that it was multiple choice, so they just use Chat, and they basically use the answers they got from Chat, and that's how they answered, because I don't know if it didn't pick up them switching or like how it was programmed, but a lot of people admitted to cheating on that test using Chat and stuff like that. So yeah, definitely tests and all sorts of different assignments and to clarify concepts.

12:48

**Interviewer:** Thank you, that was very helpful. Um, and then what have your professors said about their expectations around AI use?

12:59

**Sophia:** I think that many professors have just come to terms with the fact that students will always use AI in some type of way. So they do state the expectations of, "I don't want ChatGPT to write your entire essay for you," because they state that they can tell when you do that. So the expectation is that you can use it for punctuation, for like, the structuring of your sentences, but not for the entire assignment, to where you don't have a single piece of, like, your own personal add ons to the assignment.

13:36

**Aliya:** I have also heard similar things. I've experienced both sides where like, one professor is like, "You cannot use it at all." And this like professor would not even like, allow like devices in the class. So you weren't allowed to write like, notes on your laptop and stuff like that, you'd have to hand write it. So this professor was very heavy on not using AI. And if it was detected, of course, they

would be like, academic offence, and you go through the whole process. And then on the flip side, you have other professors who are like, we know it's gonna happen. It's like, for every assignment, at least one person gets caught using it, like, we know it's gonna happen. Just don't again, like, like was mentioned, do not use it for the entire thing. Just use it to build on your learning. A lot of professors say, just use it if you don't understand concepts, it's okay to clarify and it's okay to gain ideas, but just like, don't let it do your entire work for you.

14:37

**Interviewer:** Thank you. And we also spoke about this a little bit, but I'm wondering what you think could be some drawbacks to using generative AI for coursework and writing.

14:50

**Sophia:** So sometimes when I even ask ChatGPT to reword something or to explain something to me, there's a sort of guilt that comes with it. 'Cause I sort of feel like I'm paying for university, why am I having ChatGPT do my work for me? And also the fact that so many people have been talking about all the environmental issues that come with ChatGPT, so when you click enter on the search bar, kind of feels- there's guilt that comes with it 'cause you're at the same time wasting your time in university, and you're also hurting the environment. So there's two downsides to it that are bigger than you just getting the mark you deserve for the work that you actually worked on. So I try and stay away from ChatGPT as much as I can and just stick to my Grammarly. But I do know that Grammarly also, like, I should be able to see where my punctuation issues are, or, like, just you utilize the Centre. So I've been trying to sort of distance myself from using AI, because it also doesn't help you in the long run, where you have a very, very strict guidelines and like people's personal information, like when you go into healthcare, into law, and things like that, ChatGPT isn't going to be as helpful. You're going to have to know what you're doing. You're going to have to know how to write case briefings. You're going to have to know how to do all those things. And ChatGPT isn't built for that type of, like, very extreme fields of work. So not being able to sort of think for your own and understand when it's time for you to sort of sit down and just work on an essay, it's sort of difficult to kind of wrap your head around, because a few years ago, we were all sitting down for hours working on an essay without any help of any on the internet. But now it can write the whole entire paragraph for you, and you don't need to even, like, lift a finger. So it's scary, but also you should kind of know when to and when to not use AI.

16:48

**Aliya:** Yeah, I think there are both long term and short term impacts of using Chat. For example, like the obvious short term ones would be, you know, getting caught. And getting caught, you're, you're using this platform for free to do your work while you're paying a university X amount of 1000s of dollars, and now that you've gotten caught using it, you might get expelled, and then it's like, all that money goes away, so, you know. So like, that's a very short term- it can also be long term, but you know what I mean. It's like a very immediate response to using that. Um, long term, it definitely, um... Chat can't give you the necessary knowledge you need to succeed 5, 10 years down the line. Like, if you want to be a lawyer or something like that, it can't, it can't beat law school, you know what I mean? Like, it can't just substitute the learning that you want or you need. So, um, yeah, I think it, it can impact our world a lot in the next five to 10 years. Like, um, just the way, the

knowledge that we have now might not be the same knowledge we have down the line, because instead of absorbing it through the traditional methods such as school, a lot of people are just going to rely on these AI formats to give them that knowledge. So they're going to think that they have all the knowledge, and it's no point in going to university and stuff like that. So I think it can definitely change the trajectory of our society in the next few years.

18:28

**Interviewer:** Thank you for sharing that. Okay, so to me, it sounds like you're, both of you are pretty light users of AI compared to maybe a lot of your peers. I'm wondering how you learned how to use ChatGPT or other AI, because it sounds to me from other focus groups, so there's a bit of a learning curve to learning what would be effective prompts, and basically, you know, how to get the most out of those tools. So maybe you can talk to me a bit about your learning process of how to use these tools.

19:05

**Sophia:** *[Long pause]* Um, so, for me, when I would want, um, ChatGPT to sort of, like, explain something to me that I don't quite understand- I know you can't just say, "Oh, explain this." You could say, like, "Explain this to me like I'm a five year old," or "Explain this to me in simple terms," so, it- or like "Explain this to me in bullet points." And it's just ways, little, tiny hints that you give ChatGPT in order for it to sort of give you the best answer that you want. Especially when it comes to, like, my Stats course, when I was asking Copilot for help with some of the assignments, you kind of have to make sure you word it in the right way, because you could say 'Oh, but utilizing this method', because there's different ways to solve Stats questions, so you have to sort of say, "Oh, solve this for me using this formula, making sure you have this method in mind, in simple terms," and then it would give you the the explanation that you want. So it's kind of just tweaking your prompt until you get the answer that you're actually looking for.

20:06

**Aliya:** Yeah, I agree. I use a similar method. It's like, you have to be very direct, I guess, with how you're asking. Like, because sometimes when you ask ChatGPT a question, it'll give you your answer and then some, but like, you don't want that "and then some," you just want your answer, right? So then you'd be like, "Can you please explain to me this concept in this amount of words, and these are, like, the sub concepts under that domain that you want to know," stuff like that. You just have to be very like, direct with it, and if you notice it's not comprehending your information the way you want it to, you just have to keep, like, playing with it until it gets to that point. And that can be annoying in some sense, because, like, for ChatGPT there's, like, only a certain period of time you can use, like, it's like the 4.0 like version or something like that, right? It's like, their good version, where you could upload stuff and things like that. So like, uploading course content and giving you questions and things like that, there's only a certain point in time where it can do that. So you have to be very particular with how you're wording things, because you basically only have a certain window to put in that information, and if you can't do it by then, then you have to wait a certain period of time before you can try again.

21:32

**Interviewer:** Thank you. And then, have you had any negative experiences with using AI, or did you ever have any hesitations about using it? *[Long pause.]*

**Sophia:** Sorry, you cut out for me. What was the-

**Interviewer:** Oh, okay, yeah. The question was have you had any negative experiences using AI, or if you have any hesitations around using AI?

22:07

**Sophia:** So for me, I've heard from many friends, like, when ChatGPT sort of hallucinates sources, or hallucinates facts, or, like, just makes up random facts, basically things that they would think that you want to hear. So just the fear of being misinformed by ChatGPT sort of kind of keeps me away from it, because your professor knows what they taught you. They know what you should know, and they know what's right from wrong when it comes to their course. So if you just put in a random fact that has nothing to do, or a random source that doesn't exist, you, um, it's sort of like, raises a red flag, and it's, I would rather avoid that situation completely, rather than having to double check after ChatGPT and make sure that what they're giving me is the truth, because I might as well just do the research myself, you know.

22:59

**Sophia:** I've also had quite a few negative experiences. So when it came to my Stats course it was whether it was doing the method I needed it to follow. On top of that, was it getting the answer that I needed it to get? Because sometimes I get an answer and then it would get a different answer, but I know my answer is the right answer because I've checked with other people. And then I'd be like, but I got so and so, and it'd be like, "Oh, you're right." And then it would show me that method. So it was like, you know, sometimes it wasn't necessarily right. Um *[pause]* another experience I had is, yeah, so, like, misinformation, I guess. I had something else I wanted to say, but I forgot, I forgot what it was.

23:43

**Interviewer:** No worries. Okay, I'm just writing those points down. I wonder, then, how do you navigate, sort of that fear or concern that you might have in terms of getting the most out of these tools and sort of not getting wrong information, or not even necessarily wrong information, but information that's maybe not tailored to your course and what you're learning in it. *[Long pause.]*

24:23

**Aliya:** So to answer your question, I'm also going to add on, I remember what I was going to say earlier. So one of the methods I would sometimes use when I'm using like formats like ChatGPT, would be uploading readings and asking it to give me information on the readings, or to pull out quotes from the readings. And sometimes, if I just, if I don't have the actual file, it can't do it because it can't, like access it. But then that is a difficulty I would run into when using it. It just can't give me an answer, which is kind of irritating, because usually when I'm asking for it, it's like, because I don't have like the time. So that was to add on to the other question and to like, avoid it was like, to avoid like, it not working properly. Like negatives, right? Honestly, it's trial and error. The entire process is trial and error, just seeing what works and what doesn't work. And if it doesn't

work, it's just like, do you have enough time to, like, do what you really need to do? Like, do you have enough time to go through 20, 30-page readings to actually, you know? So it's just like, there's nothing you can really do to, like, avoid it. You can just try to minimize it as much as you can, and then if it doesn't work, you just always need a backup plan. Like to do it yourself.

25:53

**Sophia:** Um, so I...Could you repeat the question one more time?

25:58

**Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah, no, it's okay. I know. It sounds interesting to me, because, first of all, it sounds like there's a learning curve to AI, so you have to learn how to kind of use the correct prompts. But then, not only that, you also have to sort of navigate, you know, what is the correct output or a useful output to you? And so kind of, how do you think about that? Like having to, you know, it's not a tool that you just put a question and get the information you need and run with that, you know.

26:26

**Sophia:** Yeah. So for me, I just avoid asking anything that's sort of extreme in like, oh, write this introduction paragraph for me, or write this thesis for me, or give me an outline, or even just give me or summarize this, reading for me, I don't trust it to do any of that. So the maximum I'll get from it is to maybe give me, like, a very simple outline for an introduction, because that's something that sort of everyone knows how to do. And when you're sort of at like the writing block, where you don't know where to start, having an outline is sort of a good idea. So the most I'll ask it is for either punctuation help or an outline, because I know it'll either give me wrong information or hallucinate things. So there's no point of me asking it to do things that I should just do myself.

27:18

**Interviewer:** Thank you. And Aliya, for yourself, it sounds like you're maybe a bit more comfortable with using AI. I'm wondering if you've used that for things like background research, synthesizing sources, coming up with an argument, or drafting an outline. Would you want to maybe comment on whether you've used AI for those things?

27:40

**Aliya:** Yeah, I can. So I have used it for synthesizing information, especially if I have really lengthy readings and I'm only like really needing to pull out one quote, I will sometimes highlight a section of a reading and ask it to give me the most valuable information. *[Unclear]* look for an argument, I would like to say I have the basis of my argument most of the time. Sometimes, when I feel like my argument can be stronger, or I've have gotten feedback where my argument can be stronger, I'll ask it like, what ways can I make this better, or, like something along those lines. Or I'll tell it exactly what my argument is and the aspects I'm going for, but I want it worded in a way that is, like fluent, like I know what I want to say, but I don't know how to say it, type of thing. So I'll ask it to do that. That's the most for the argument. And sometimes it depends on, really, what the assignment is. If I'm really struggling, then I would ask it to give me, like, an outline, not an outline like a draft. Because sometimes, when you ask Chat for an outline, it would like, give you, like, "Do you want me

to do a whole draft?" I wouldn't ask it for a draft. I would just ask it for like, three main points, and then I would kind of base my like, do my work from then where I would like, do my research and stuff based off of like, those points, or make those points stronger. I would just use it like as a foundation sometimes when I'm really stuck, and then I would just kind of build off of it.

29:20

**Interviewer:** Thank you. And do both of you feel comfortable talking to your peers about your use of AI?

29:31

**Sophia:** Since I don't use it that much in comparison to them, it's mostly them telling me about their experiences with AI and how for the majority of the time it's not really helpful. So I've had many of my friends just stop using it altogether, or minimize their usage of it, similar to what I'm doing, to where they just use it for light, things like punctuation and and outlining. So I feel like people are some of my friends starting to realize that it's really not worth the risk of getting caught using AI and the risk of you just not learning from university. So they sort of are reeling back on its usage, and I honestly do support that, because AI genuinely stresses me out. So I just, I also, whenever they bring it up to me, I try and tell them to like, okay, let's let's try and figure this out on our own. 'Cause I, it's really, like the fact that you can just be completely kicked out of university for this, it's not a risk that I want me or them to be taking. So kind of just try and push them away from using it too much.

30:39

**Aliya:** When it comes to my peers, none of my peers that I know of use it to write like full papers. They will only use it to again give them a baseline to work off of. A lot of the reason a lot of my peers would use AI is because of its convenience. Um, so like I mentioned, like having multiple jobs and balancing school, a lot of them are in that position where they are struggling to find time to, like, go through the actual readings and stuff like that, right? So that at that point is when they would rely on AI. And when AI comes up in conversation, it's a very open conversation, like we talk about it. There are certain instances where we'll use it, whether it be for school or personal life, but some of my peers definitely rely on it more than myself and others, and that's just all situational, right? It's just everybody is different in how they do it. I try my best to not have to rely on it, because what I've heard a lot of my friends say is that they just feel stupid without it. They just feel like, you know, they got into U of T, this is supposed to be a prestigious school, they're supposed to be this and that, and they feel like their grades could be better or they're not up to their expectation. So they feel the need to prove to maybe themselves and to their graders that they are as smart as they think they are. So at that point is when they would rely on AI. But yeah, it's usually open conversation where both, like my group of friends, are okay with talking about it, but yeah, some definitely use it more than myself than others. It just, it all depends.

32:35

**Interviewer:** Thank you. And something that I've heard in another focus group interview was that AI is to be everywhere, and it's sort of this trendy thing. And so there's maybe this implicit pressure for

people to be using it. Do you feel like that rings true to you, that there's sort of, kind of, AI is in the air, and everybody's using it and so it's kind of like encouraging students to use it. *[Pause.]*

33:06

**Aliya:** Uh, yeah, I think that's definitely true. Personally speaking, ChatGPT got really popular when I was in 12th grade. So that was a couple years ago, and at that point, a lot of people were using it. A lot of people have learned about it, and a lot of people were using it. It got even to a point where a student used it to write its full essay, and the teacher found out, and the student basically told the teacher that, well, everybody in the class does it, so it's okay. So the teacher docked everybody's marks, even though he had no proof that the rest of us used it, which was kind of unfair. So a lot of people were using it at that time, um, and I started using it later in, like, my last few months, maybe, of high school. Um, it was just to solve a simple math question. But then after, like, you know, once you use it, then you're like- because, like, throughout the whole year, when I was complaining about, I have this to do, and I have this to do, and I have schoolwork, like, "Oh, just use Chat, just use Chat, it's okay. Like, you can just use it and it'll do your work." And I'm like, "No, I want my assignment to be my assignments. Like, I want it to be my writing." And I had that mentality, but then it was just like a math question. I didn't like math, so I just like used it for that, and then slowly I started to use it for other things that I found challenging. And I guess that's where it kind of came from.

34:40

**Sophia:** For me, I think it's not the fact that it's more of a trend. It's the fact that, like, um, like Aliya said, when it comes down to something being difficult, or you being in a time crunch, it's sort of an escape to get to the answer faster. So for me, I had, my essay was due- my essay was already a day late, and I spoke to my professor about it, and he was okay "I'll give you a few more days to work on it," but I had other essays to work on. It was like end of the semester, where I had just assignments piling on top of one another. So I just asked—well, I think it was Copilot—I had a stats assignment due, and I asked Copilot to help me with some of the questions. And then after like, one or two questions, I was like, I'm going to have a final exam, and it's doing the question for me, so there's no reason for me to be doing this. So I kind of, like, just took a minute to kind of just think about, is it really worth me not knowing what to do in the exam, just for this assignment. So I turned it off, and I started trying to work on it on my own, but just from it helping me with those two questions, I was able to, kind of like, get my bearing on how to do the rest of the questions, which was helpful for the assignment and for the final exam.

35:58

**Interviewer:** Thank you. That actually brings me to kind of my next question, and we'll be wrapping up soon. What tips would you give to others so that they can use generative AI well. So you don't have to repeat yourself, but if there's anything else that you'd like to add, you know, to tell others, how would you use AI well or wisely?

36:19

**Sophia:** Just to not use it [*laughs*]. If I had the chance to never touch AI, I would. Umm, honestly, it's not worth like, like I said before, it's not worth the consequences. It's not worth you not actually learning anything. My thing would just be not to use it.

36:39

**Aliya:** Yeah, I would say try and avoid it the best of your ability. But if you do find yourself in a position to use it and you want to know how to use it, just be direct, just be direct with it. And try to limit the amount of questions, I guess, you ask for it, because there is an environmental aspect. If you do find yourself that you have to use it just be smart and effective, about the way you use it. Just don't abuse it, if that makes sense.

37:08

**Interviewer:** Yeah, it does. Thank you. Okay, and then some summing up questions. What advice would you give to instructors about AI use in the classroom?

37:22

**Sophia:** Mine would be that don't expect that everyone's using it. So the fact that, um, some students do use it to write their entire essay, it'll be very obvious to you because there are certain typing styles that AI likes to use, like that one dash that it has in every single one of its responses, that's kind of a giveaway if a student isn't aware that that's just a thing that ChatGPT uses, and a university student doesn't really use that punctuation in any way. So if you're that smart to change the punctuation of the entire essay and to change sentencing, might as well write the essay yourself, you know. So for teachers, it's just always assume that students... assume that students aren't using it unless there is a like an active like red flag in their writing that says "Oh, they're they've used it," then you can sort of ask questions and ask them for- because for me that's why I like to use Google Docs, because it's kind of like sort of timestamps whenever I write anything in my document, so it kind of shows proof that I actually worked on my on my essay. So whenever I submit an assignment, I'm kind of at peace knowing that if they ever do question if I'm using AI, I can just send them all those timestamps and when I worked on my essay and all the stuff I've done with my essay to show them that it was genuinely my work. Which, um, it's also just sort of safeguarding yourself, because it's fair for your professor to assume that you use AI because it's all around us now, and, um, it's just them being safe and wanting to make sure that you're actually gaining something from their course. So for me, yeah, it would be to assume to not assume the worst. And if you do assume something, just ask the students, and if they do have proof that they haven't used it, they'll show it to you.

39:10

**Aliya:** Yeah, I agree. Just go with the expectation that students aren't using AI to, like, draft their entire thing, just like, assume that we are not using it, I guess. I don't know, like, just don't go ahead and accusing people. Because I have also, in like high school, have been accused of using it, and it had, like, escalated to, like, the higher authorities in the school board, because, like, the teacher had no proof she was just using this unauthorized like AI thing, and she took my answer and she put it in and she said it said it was AI-written, even though I testified multiple times like I did not, I didn't even know like to use it, like, stuff like that. So it- that like made me feel like terrible about the

course. Because then it always made me second guess my writing, like, was I writing too much like Chat, even though I wasn't trying to, or was I just trying to sound professional? I thought that was just an interesting experience, and I had to feel the need at the end to prove myself. So I had to prove to the teacher like, I actually know what I'm talking about, I'm not lying. Like I did the reading, I did the assignment, you know. So I think that is just unfair to students who are innocent of using it. I think they shouldn't go in with the expectation that everyone is using it, but also be aware that there are students that use it and abuse it, and just to like, look out for those things, but don't go under the suspicion that everybody is using it, because there are people out there that are really trying and are putting their best effort in to get the grade that they want.

40:52

**Interviewer:** Yeah. Thank you. And then I wonder whether you would like some more explicit guidelines from instructors regarding what is an acceptable use of AI and any more information that you would like to get from instructors about AI in general?

41:09

**Sophia:** I believe that the professor can sort of say, "I don't want any AI use in my course," because a few years ago, there wasn't any. And for the professor, it's strange for them too, because now they have to keep an eye out for this technology that's sort of ruining their course in a way, because students aren't really experiencing the course in the way that the professor wants them to. So I think that, sure, if you do, if you're okay with AI use- from one of my CCT courses, the professor stated that AI was a helpful tool, and it could help you with writing your essay and giving you ideas and things, but just to use it in a limited way. So her only expectation was that it shouldn't write any of your essay for you. It can give you ideas. It can fix up your paragraph for you, but it can't write it for you. And she's the only one that sort of gave those expectations. Everyone else, in their syllabus, it was stating that they don't want any AI use at all. And I believe that both ends of the spectrum are acceptable, because it's up to the professor sort of decide if they want any or if they don't.

42:16

**Aliya:** Yeah, I think professors can just be clear. I've had professors who are clear, like, "You can use it for clarifying concepts, just don't use it for, like, your entire work." I think that's fair and a good expectation. But they should also know that not everybody's going to listen, because some students are going to be like, "What, I can get away with it. Like, nobody's going to know, duh duh duh." So, like, put out the expectation that you don't want it or you want it used to a limited amount, but also be aware that not everybody is going to obey that.

42:49

**Interviewer:** Right, thank you. Umm, yeah. Is there anything that we haven't discussed with regards to AI and writing that you would like to mention? *[Long pause.]*

43:07

**Sophia:** Um... honestly, I think we've covered everything that's coming to my mind currently.

**Aliya:** I agree.

43:17

**Interviewer:** Great, yeah. And I know we also discussed ISP100, but is there anything that we haven't discussed about ISP100 that you would like to mention?

43:32

**Aliya:** I don't think so.

**Sophia:** Yeah, no.

43:34

**Interviewer:** Okay, great. So that means I asked all the things. Okay, so let me stop the recording.