ASCILITE 2026

The Future is Connection:

Collaboration, Creativity and Compassion in a Digital Society

Building creativity with generative AI through reflective practice

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Generative AI poses a risk to students' creative thinking when it is adopted without critical reflection (Elgammal, 2026). These tools are marketed as collaborators and tutors, offering constant and largely uncritical encouragement (Chow & Celis Bueno, 2025; Walsh 2025). This presentation holds the promise of AI partnership alongside evidence that these tools displace cognitive and creative effort (Gerlich, 2025; Temler 2026).

This problem is widely recognised, but proposed responses remain inconsistent, vague or untested. Many calls to address the use of generative AI correctly identify the problem or alternatively show singular approaches and case studies. What is needed is a discipline-agnostic framework on building students' awareness of their own creative processes in the context of these tools. The approach offered here to develop creativity with AI has two theoretical foundations: Margaret Boden's theory of creativity and art, and the Kolb Experiential Learning Cycle (2011) as a pedagogical approach.

Boden (2004 distinguishes combinational, exploratory and transformational creativity: the recombination of existing ideas, movement within a conceptual space, and alteration of that space's defining dimensions. Novelty can be either new to the individual or new more generally under this view. Boden argues that novelty may come about in several ways, including combining existing ideas in new ways, exploring or changing existing ideas, or transforming dimensions of those ideas. The two frameworks do different work. Boden supplies the criteria students apply when judging whether their output is genuinely novel, surprising and valuable; Kolb supplies the cycle through which that judgement is made repeatedly and acted upon. Without Boden, reflection has no object; without Kolb, the criteria are applied once and forgotten.

Students work through Kolb's (2011) four stages in their learning: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation, and active experimentation. These each serve a cumulative purpose in developing the students' collaborative process with generative AI. In the first phase, the student does their first draft of a creative process, using AI in any way they want to experiment with. Afterward, they reflect on that experience, considering questions about what skills they developed (or did not), whether the draft did what they wanted it to do, and how they felt about the AI tool use. Based on this reflection, they can then develop and express a personal set of beliefs on practical use of generative AI. Finally, they can try out a new approach based on these conclusions – which then become the next concrete experience. It is an ongoing and cyclical process of practical experimentation and personal reflection.

The framework is adapted from the "Creativity and AI" module of Sage's *Digital Literacy* course (Zaphir & Henrickson, in press). Its purpose is to be discipline agnostic; a framework which can be broadly applicable across cohorts and disciplines. Critical AI literacies require the development of students' own ethical ideas and practical skills in using the tools; this process is designed to be adaptable in any context.

Creativity has different implications and different applications in each discipline. AI can act as a useful collaborator if the user can state what and why they want to do it. Students will all benefit in the exercise of deliberately choosing which skills to offload and which to augment, and then reflecting on their choices with each use.

The presentation works through one complete turn of the cycle using a worked example: the initial AI-assisted draft, the reflective prompts applied to it, the position statement the student produced, and the changed approach taken on the next attempt. Slides alternate between student artefacts and the framework stage they illustrate.

Attendees will leave with the reflection prompts used at each stage and a one-page cycle template they can adapt to their own discipline and cohort.

Keywords: cognitive offloading, generative AI, creativity, critical thinking, reflective practice

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