

AI Ethics in College Assignments

Stop asking "Did students use AI?" Ask whether they learned.

Course AI Policy

Allow

Disclose

Protect

Assess

case

principles

policy

assessment

One vague rule creates three different classrooms

"Use AI responsibly" is not enough guidance.

- Paid-model advantage
- No-AI student faces time/access tradeoff
- Unauthorized material upload
- Polished work, uncertain learning

Student A

Paid model; polished report; weak defense

Student B

No AI; slower work; possible disadvantage

Student C

Uploads course notes, feedback, peer comments

Professor

Good writing, vague disclosure, uncertain learning

"Did they use AI?" is the wrong endpoint

The ethical target is accountable learning.

- Did the student learn?
- Can they defend the work?
- Was assistance disclosed?
- Was private material protected?

Did they use AI?

detection endpoint

Did they learn?

explain
verify
defend

Four papers give the policy map

Principles -> governance -> concerns -> lived reality and power.

- Jobin: shared principles
- Corrêa: governance documents
- Giarmoleo: rules plus formation
- Groen: principles, lived realities, power

Jobin 2019

recurring principles

Corrêa 2023

governance documents

Giarmoleo 2024

rules + formation

Groen 2026

lived realities + power

A principle is not a policy

Shared ethics vocabulary still needs local implementation.

- Transparency: what must be disclosed?
- Fairness: who gets access?
- Privacy: what cannot be uploaded?
- Responsibility: who owns the failure?



Governance needs teeth

Rules without implementation are soft promises.

- Course policy must define duties
- Approved tools and access matter
- Privacy rules must be explicit
- Appeals and enforcement cannot be vague

Soft promise

Use AI responsibly
Disclose assistance
Avoid misuse

Operational policy

- ✓ Allowed uses
- ✓ Approved tools
- ✓ Privacy boundary
- ✓ Evidence required
- ✓ Appeal path

Clear rules are necessary; trained judgment is necessary too

Act-centered and agent-centered responses belong together.

- Act-centered: policies, standards, procedures
- Agent-centered: habits, education, judgment
- Colleges need both to avoid policing-only policy

Act-centered

rules
standards
procedures
audits
privacy policy

Agent-centered

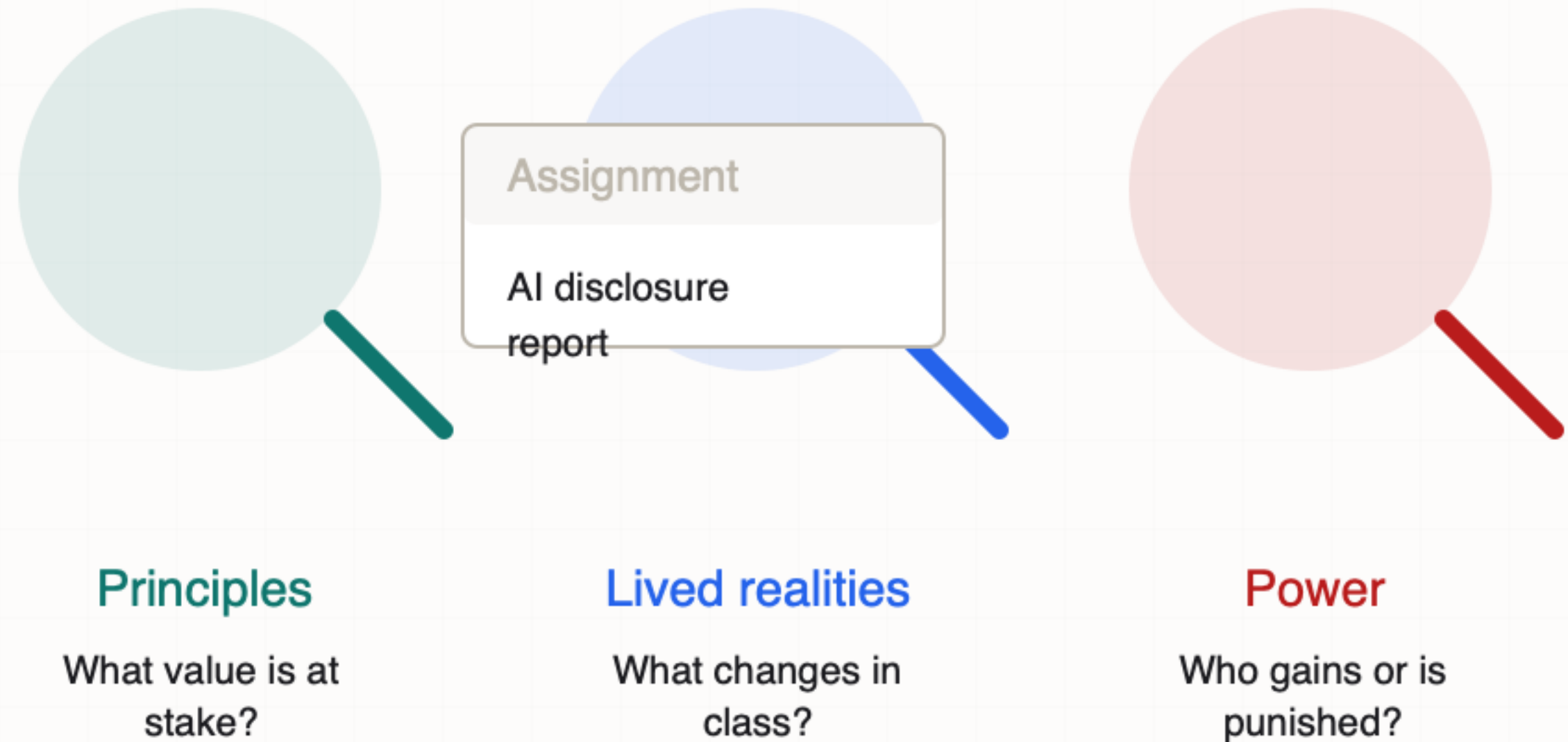
education
habits
case judgment
verification
disclosure culture

college needs both

Test every policy through three lenses

Principles alone miss lived reality and institutional power.

- Principles: what value is at stake?
- Lived realities: what changes in class?
- Power: who benefits and who is punished?



The boundary is learning labor

The question is whether the student can explain, verify, adapt, and defend.

- Allowed: discuss, plan, revise, verify
- Borderline: AI proposes; student owns
- Prohibited: AI completes; student cannot explain

Allowed

AI helps discuss, plan, revise, verify

Borderline

AI proposes; student owns and defends

Prohibited

AI completes; student cannot explain

Can the student explain, verify, adapt, and defend?

A fair course policy has four verbs

Allow. Disclose. Protect. Assess.

- Allow learning support
- Disclose meaningful assistance
- Protect private material
- Assess understanding

Allow

learning support

Disclose

meaningful assistance

Protect

private material

Assess

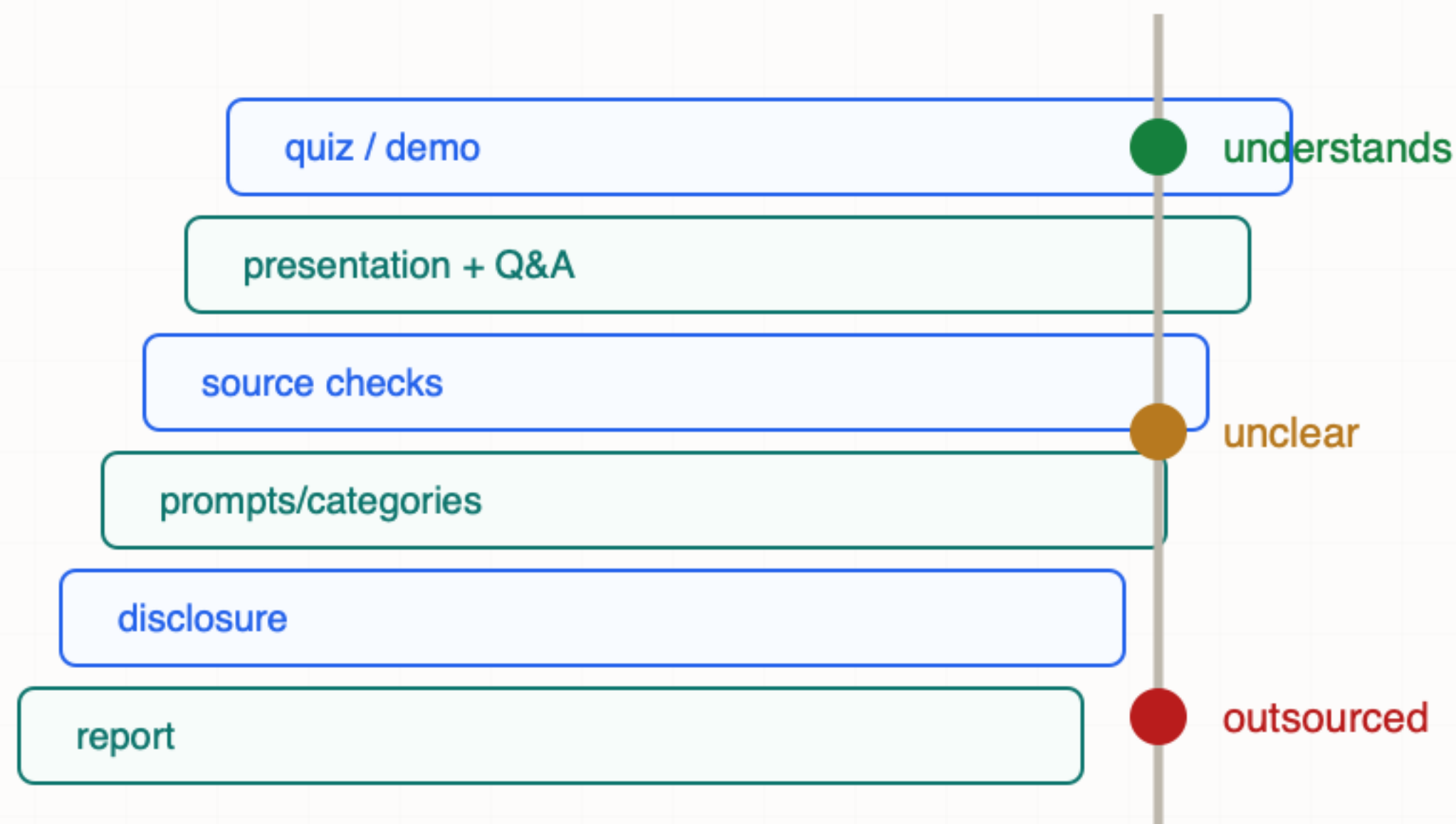
understanding

ASSESSMENT

Grade evidence, not polish alone

AI-resistant assessment is evidence-rich assessment.

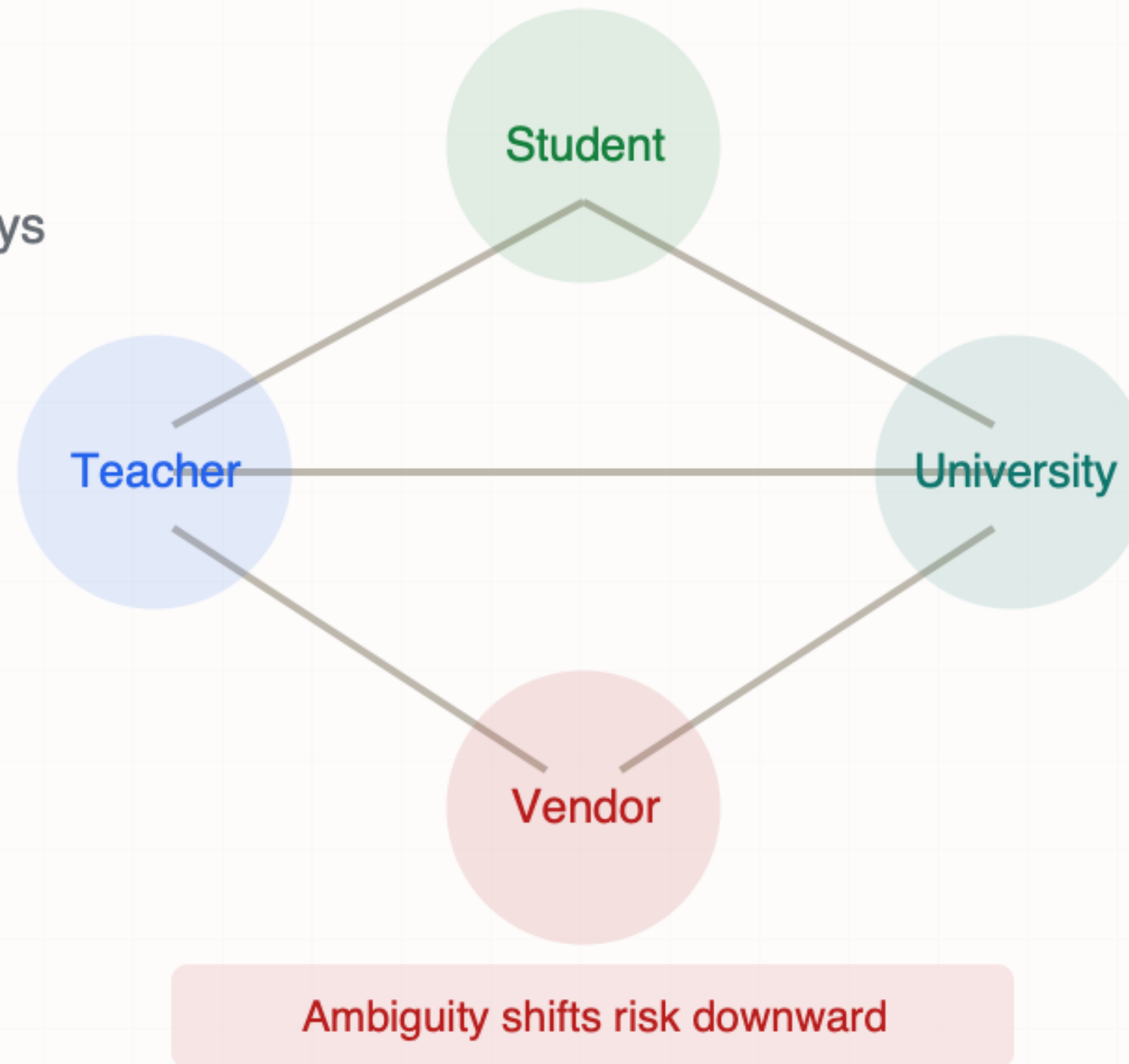
- Final report
- AI disclosure and selected prompts
- Source verification checklist
- Presentation, Q&A, quiz, or demo



Ambiguity reallocates advantage

Unequal access becomes invisible when policy stays vague.

- Paid models and AI fluency compound
- Students carry punishment risk
- Vendors gain data and dependency
- Universities must define access and appeals



Homework: use AI as a thinking partner

The final product must still prove student understanding.

- 900-1200 word report
- Disclosure appendix
- Three prompt excerpts or summaries
- Verification checklist
- Five-minute presentation

Assignment packet

- Final report
- AI disclosure appendix
- 3 prompt excerpts / summaries
- Source verification checklist
- Reflection on learning
- 5-minute presentation

Use AI to think better, not to stop thinking

Allow. Disclose. Protect. Assess.

Allow

Disclose

Protect

Assess

- Universities define fair rules
- Teachers guide AI-supported learning
- Students build judgment and disclose help
- Assessment proves understanding