

Technology Acceptance of Generative AI Among Digital Media Arts Students in a Sino-British Higher Education Partnership Institution

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Abstract

The rapid development of text-to-image and text-to-video AI-generated content (AIGC) is reshaping the visual courses in higher education. There is limited evidence about how students in Sino-British partnership institutions understand and use these tools navigating both UK and Chinese approaches to copyright and academic integrity rules. This study analyzed responses from 97 Digital Media Arts students at the Birmingham Institute of Fashion and Creative Art (BIFCA) in Wuhan, China. This questionnaire integrated the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). It found that perceived usefulness and perceived creative legitimacy each independently and significantly predicted future behavioral intention and current usage. Perceived usefulness was the stronger predictor of behavioral intention, consistent with Davis's original findings on information systems adoption. Students doubted that AIGC currently improves efficiency or creative practice yet rejected the view that AI art is merely a novelty and believe that ethical debates were resolved. BIFCA should provide AIGC literacy education responsive to a global platform and challenge students' belief that copyright questions are settled.

Keywords: Generative Artificial Intelligence; AIGC; Technology Acceptance Model; Higher Education; Sino-British

1. Introduction

The development of generative artificial intelligence has dramatically changed visual content creation, offering digital media art education both previously unprecedented opportunities and difficult challenges. Text-to-image and text-to-video AI technologies have developed from experimental tools into accessible resources that are changing how people approach creative video production (Pellas, 2023). These technologies can produce complex visual content from simple textual descriptions (Xie et al., 2025). Students now have greater access to platforms like Midjourney, Stable Diffusion, Runway, etc., as well as Chinese platforms like Kling, Jimeng, and Liblib, etc., but it is still unclear how these platforms should be incorporated into academic curricula (Liu et al., 2024).

Digital media art students enrolled in video post-production modules at the Birmingham Institute of Fashion and Creative Art (BIFCA), a Sino-British cooperative institution, face a distinctive set of challenges in the educational setting. While tutors must adapt to the situation that AI technology is a cooperator rather than an assistant (Zhai, 2025), tutors are required to guide students to fit in different regulatory environments—UK copyright and intellectual property law versus Chinese regulations. These students therefore navigate a challenging environment where AI-generated content (AIGC) raises unresolved questions about academic integrity, copyright law, and pedagogical best practices while simultaneously offering compelling production advantages within both Chinese and UK educational frameworks (Wtu.edn.cn, 2025). Consequently, there are more cases to define the boundaries between acceptable use and problematic reliance on AI assistance because the technical capabilities of these tools require further development of clear institutional guidelines for students in the complex environment at the beginning of the AI integration era.

Thus, it is important to evaluate student perspectives for several related reasons. First, BIFCA and similar organizations must establish explicit policies regarding AIGC integration that are both pedagogically sound and legally compliant across various jurisdictions as they develop curricula for modern media production. Second, as

they must be ready for professional employment in a field that is rapidly adopting new technologies, they expect and require education that encourages both technical competency with AI-generated tools and critical judgment regarding their ethical and effective application. Third, as the further discussion about AI-generated art develops, integrating these discussions into the practical realities of students actively learning video post-production provides important insights that can direct policy development.

This study examines the attitudes, adoption patterns, and perspectives of BIFCA digital media art students toward text-to-image and text-to-video generative AI technology in their video post-production curriculum. It reveals a notable gap in higher education, which is that educational institutions must develop guidelines for the appropriate incorporation of AIGC tools that balance academic purpose and innovation as these tools become more prevalent and sophisticated. This study aims to understand how digital media art students utilize these technologies and what support they need to use them creatively and responsibly. It accomplishes this by using a structural questionnaire that evaluates artistic views, tool familiarity, usage frequency, and ethical issues.

2. Literature Review

2.1. The Evolution of Generative AI in Video Production

Since the introduction of non-linear editing tools, the development of artificial intelligence (AI) in visual generation has been one of the most revolutionary technological developments in video creation. From early neural style transfer experiments to current text-to-image and text-to-video conversion systems, this technology has advanced quickly, condensing decades of gradual evolution into explosive growth in just five years (Xie et al., 2025). Analyzing this growth trajectory is necessary for the current discussion regarding the use of Artificial Intelligence Generated Content (AIGC) in education.

Text-to-image generation technology gained widespread attention after OpenAI's DALL-E was released in 2021 (OpenAI, 2021). The commercially successful Midjourney platform (Midjourney, 2022) and the open-source Stable Diffusion model (Stability AI, 2022) followed. Then, in 2025, the advanced Seedance model (ByteDance Seed, 2025) and Nano Banana (Google, 2025) emerged on the market. Based on transformer designs and diffusion models, these systems have previously demonstrated revolutionary abilities to generate coherent, visually complex images and respond to descriptive natural language prompts (Anantrasirichai & David, 2021). The accessibility of the technology requires neither specialized hardware nor technical expertise beyond writing effective prompts, democratizing image creation in ways traditional digital art tools could not achieve, and doing it very quickly. With only textual description processed through natural language processing, a college student without any formal training in digital painting, photography, or 3D modeling could now create visual assets of production quality (Orak & Turan, 2024).

The video production increasingly incorporates AIGC into its workflow. However, professional adoption is a more strategic supplement rather than a replacement of human expertise (Tang, 2024). Concept art creation, background asset creation, texture synthesis, rough animatics, and pre-visualization are among the workflow elements that studios usually employ AIGC for. Final polishing, quality assurance, and creative direction are still performed by human artists and engineers (Gao & Leong, 2024). This illustrates an expertise model that can direct instructional strategies, where AI-generated content (AIGC) serves to increase productivity rather than take the place of human expertise.

Though at a slower rate, text-to-video conversion technology is developing along similar lines. Platforms like Runway, Pika, and Kling are expanding their generation capabilities to spatiotemporal media, allowing users to generate short video clips or still picture animations from text descriptions (Karshakova et al., 2025). The rapid development indicates that the current limitations of text-to-video systems, such as temporal coherence, motion smoothness, and artifact presence, are temporary rather than fundamental, even though they are more severe than

those of their image-generating counterparts (Liu et al., 2024). Therefore, how AI technology can be integrated into traditional video post-production courses requires further research as technology and time progress.

For students studying video post-production at higher education like BIFCA, these technologies present both promising opportunities and formidable challenges. Traditional video production pedagogy has emphasized pre-production planning, asset development, editing, and post-production refinement. Integrating AIGC into this methodology provides a scientifically grounded method for incorporating neural network technologies to the film production workflow (Karshakova et al., 2025). Visual effects production at once required extensive 3D modeling and rendering, which can now be created in a matter of minutes. Text prompts can construct background settings, objects, and even animated elements without the need for traditional approaches (Xiang et al., 2025).

2.2. The Controversies Surrounding the Application of AI in Higher Education

The rise of AI-generated content (AIGC) presents unique challenges to higher education of video post-production. Compared to traditional digital tools taught in universities like Adobe Photoshop or Maya, which require high technical skills, generative AI systems can produce high-quality visual outputs with relatively little user input. Thus, higher education is reevaluating the focus of video production curricula (Cheng, 2025). Granted, students often embrace AIGC technologies enthusiastically because they recognize their potential to realize creative concepts beyond their technical capabilities. Sometimes they overlook the drawbacks of AI-generated content, such as issues with a lack of scandalization (Yin et al., 2023). However, this raises concerns about over-reliance because students can utilize AI-generated information as a substitute for developing their own skills rather than to do so (Farrelly & Baker, 2023). Some argue that AIGC's curriculum now encourages more creative generation, prompt engineering, and curatorial judgment—those skills that are becoming increasingly crucial in creative industries (Guetalla et al., 2024). Students who avoid basic technical skills may end up with surface-level competencies, which would leave them failed to adapt to professional environments that prioritize deep creative understanding (Reindl, 2025).

Other scholars have challenged the view that AIGC undermines traditional video post-production techniques, arguing that using AIGC itself requires and cultivates a unique set of skills that can only be mastered through practice. Prompt engineering in the visual arts is not an intuitive skill. It requires users to be able to judge the quality of prompts with critical judgments and professional vision, but they often lack the specific stylistic vocabulary needed to generate high-quality results. Conversely, users with stronger AI literacy produce more effective prompts than those with weaker AI literacy (Oppenlaender et al., 2024). This implies that prompt writing should be considered a learnable skill, rather than ability students are assumed to have. Since generative models can produce an almost infinite number of candidate results, users' judgment in filtering these results is the primary source of authorship and creative responsibility (Chung, 2021). This perspective is also supported by a recent survey, in which art students indicated that they actively form new aesthetic judgments about AI-generated material rather than passively accepting the generated results (Zhang & Xu, 2025). Integrating AIGC into the curriculum should not be confined to framing it as a threat to basic skills. Instead, curriculum design can revolve around teaching specific competencies, such as prompt writing and critical evaluation of generated results, which are precisely the abilities needed to use these tools effectively and responsibly (Zhang & Magerko, 2025). These skills are becoming increasingly critical in creative industries especially as most of them are actively integrating AI (Guetalla et al., 2024).

2.3. The Issues of Copyright and Ownership for University Students

One of the most significant issues for educators and students is the ambiguous legal status of AIGC. The applicability of copyright rules in China and the UK to AI-generated content remains open to question, because these rules were developed for human-made works. This legal ambiguity makes it particularly difficult to educational institutions to create clear policies about permitted use. Historically, human creation has been a prerequisite for copyright protection in the UK. The UK Intellectual Property Office states that work generated only by AI and lacking sufficient human input might not be protected by copyright (Geiger, 2024). However,

what constitutes “sufficient human input” remains open to debate (Mammen et al., 2024).

This legal ambiguity presents difficulties for students at Sino-British institutions located in China, whose courses often blend Chinese legal and cultural backgrounds with British academic norms. Students who include any AI-generated content into their artwork, for instance, might not know if they are the legitimate owners of the finished piece or whether using it in portfolios or commercial applications is allowed. Relevant considerations include the extent of human modification, the terms of service of the AI platform, and the degree of creative control retained by the student (Watiktinnakorn et al., 2023). Most students are not yet well placed to assess these factors adequately (Wang, 2023). China’s own legal system offers little extra clarity here, despite one relevant case.

China’s copyright law presents a similarly complex environment, although its approach differs. According to a 2023 ruling by Beijing Internet Court, AI-generated images might be protected by copyright if the human user demonstrated sufficient creative input, such as prompt design and selection (Li v. Liu, 2023). This decision was case-specific and does not represent a broad legal precedent (Cao & Ma, 2024). Individual platforms rules add yet another layer of complexity to this unsettled legal issue.

Platforms also differ in how they handle ownership and commercial use. Some platforms, for example, Stable Diffusion, grants users’ full rights to outputs (Stability AI, 2022), while others, such as Kling, retain partial or full ownership (Liang, 2025). This is especially problematic in transnational institutions, where students may be subject to both Chinese and UK legal interpretations. None of this legal uncertainty can explain how students decide whether or how to use these tools. This is where a behavioral framework becomes useful.

2.4. Technology Acceptance Frameworks for Generative AI Adoption

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) explains why individual adopt or resist a new technology, providing a more precise perspective than general attitude surveys for assessing AIGC adoption in students group (Davis, 1989). TAM points that perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use shape users’ attitudes, intentions, and actual use. In the TAM validation study, perceived usefulness predicted both current and predicted future usage more strongly than ease of use. Researchers later integrated TAM with seven other adoption theories into the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (Venkatesh et al., 2003). Both frameworks have found conducted into research on AIGC specifically.

There is multiple recent evidence to prove that TAM has been applied directly to AIGC adoption among art and design students. For instance, one of them examined art and design students in Chinese universities (Wang et al., 2024). Then the other one investigated intentions to use AIGC-assisted design tools (Zhong et al., 2024). There is also one added ethics and trust as moderators and framed AIGC acceptance as a multi-stage cognitive assessment rather than a single attitude judgment (Bai & Yang, 2025). These studies demonstrate that perceived usefulness and ease of use remain significant predictors of AIGC behavioral intention, while ethics, trust, and AI literacy also matter.

However, the above-mentioned studies did not include students under two different copyright and regulatory regimes, as is the case with BIFCA students under Sino-British cooperation. This study therefore uses TAM to examine whether BIFCA students’ perceived usefulness and perceived creative legitimacy predict their behavioral intentions and usage consistent with prior technology-adoption research. And whether their confidence in current ethical and legal discussions is justified given the ambiguities identified above.

3. Research Design and Result

3.1. Methodology

This study employed a quantitative survey approach to investigate digital media art students' familiarity, attitudes, and usage patterns of AIGC tools in their video post-production course in BIFCA. The study was conducted during the 2024–2025 academic year and focused on students enrolled in video post-production courses who were actively integrating emerging AIGC technology into their creative practice. It addresses a critical gap in understanding how students adapt to AIGC technology as a collaborator rather than merely an assistant in creative workflows.

The questionnaire contained 15 questions, divided into four thematic dimensions: tool familiarity (Q1-Q2), current usage patterns in creative practice (Q3-Q4), perceptions of artistic legitimacy and creative value (Q5-Q7, Q9-Q10), and career integration considerations (Q8, Q11-Q15). The five-point Likert scale items (Q3–Q15) were coded in the order presented to respondents: 1 = strongly agree, 2 = agree, 3 = neutral, 4 = disagree, 5 = strongly disagree. For ease of interpretation, all Likert scale responses reported below have been recoded so that higher values represent stronger agreement (5 = strongly agree, 1 = strongly disagree), conforming to the convention adopted by Likert-scale studies.

The study surveyed 97 BIFCA Digital Media Art students who enrolled in video post-production module. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, reliability analysis (Cronbach's alpha), Spearman's rank correlation, Wilcoxon's variables, and ordinary least squares regressions.

3.2. Results

3.2.1. Tool Familiarity and Platform Ecosystem (Q1–Q2)

Platform familiarity (a multiple-choice item, unaffected by the Likert-direction issue described below) shows Midjourney as the dominant text-to-image platform, recognized by 46 respondents (47.4%), followed by the Chinese platform Liblib (19 respondents, 19.6%) and Kling (10, 10.3%). Runway leads text-to-video recognition (24, 24.7%), with a substantial "Others" category (16, 16.5%) indicating fragmented exploration. Averaged across categories, Western platforms show a 15.0% mean recognition rate versus 7.9% for Chinese platforms.

3.2.2. Current Usage Patterns (Q3–Q4)

On the corrected scale in the table 1, regular use of text-to-image tools (Q3) shows mean = 3.02 (SD = 1.21, median = 3, mode = 3): 35.05% (n = 34) agree they use these tools regularly, 29.90% (n = 29) are neutral, and 35.05% (n = 34) disagree. Text-to-video usage (Q4) is nearly identical: mean = 3.03 (SD = 1.29), with 34.02% agreeing, 36.08% neutral, and 29.90% disagreeing.

A Wilcoxon signed-rank test confirms no statistically significant difference between image and video usage frequency ($W = 341.00$, $p = .865$, $n = 97$). A chi-square test of association between platform ecosystem familiarity (Western vs. Chinese/Other) and text-to-image usage level found a significant relationship, $\chi^2(2) = 10.43$, $p = .005$: Western-platform-familiar students clustered in the neutral-to-high usage range (35.8% high use, 41.5% neutral, 22.6% low use), while Chinese/Other-platform-familiar students showed a more polarized pattern (34.1% high use, 15.9% neutral, 50.0% low use).

Table 1. Current usage patterns, corrected direction

Metric	Q3 (image)	Q4 (video)	Difference	Test	Result
Mean (SD)	3.02 (1.21)	3.03 (1.29)	0.01	Wilcoxon	$W=341$, $p=.865$
Agree % (4–5)	35.05%	34.02%	+1.03pp	—	n.s.
Disagree % (1–2)	35.05%	29.90%	+5.15pp	—	n.s.

3.2.3. Construct Reliability

Before combining any items into composite scores, Cronbach's alpha was calculated for each proposed thematic cluster in the table 2. An initial four-item legitimacy scale (Q5, Q6, and reverse-scored Q9 and Q10) returned unacceptable reliability ($\alpha = .439$). Item-level diagnostics showed that Q5 and Q6 alone form a reliable two-item scale ($\alpha = .835$), while Q9 (perceived threat to human creativity) and Q10 (perceived novelty status) are conceptually and statistically distinct and are reported as standalone items.

Table 2. Reliability analysis for composite constructs.

Construct	Items	Cronbach's α	Interpretation
Perceived creative legitimacy	Q5, Q6	.835	Acceptable — used as composite
Perceived usefulness	Q8, Q12, Q15	.836	Acceptable — used as composite
Future behavioral intention	Q13, Q14	.725	Acceptable — used as composite
Current usage	Q3, Q4	.883	Acceptable — used as composite
(Rejected) broad legitimacy	Q5, Q6, Q9r, Q10r	.439	Unacceptable — not used

3.2.4. Perceptions of Artistic Legitimacy and Standalone Attitude Items (Q5–Q7, Q9–Q10)

The two-item Perceived Legitimacy scale (Q5+Q6) shows a mean of 2.64 (SD = 0.96), indicating a lean toward skepticism. Individually: only 35.05% agree AI art is as creative/authentic as human-made art (Q5; 39.18% disagree), and only 5.15% agree AI can revolutionize visual storytelling (Q6; 49.48% disagree, the strongest disagreement pattern in the survey). Among standalone items: 43.30% perceive bias against AI art in the broader art world (Q7); on whether AI undermines human creativity (Q9), 25.77% agree, 36.08% disagree, and 38.14% are neutral (the highest neutral share of any item); on novelty framing (Q10), 68.04% disagree that AI art is “merely a novelty” — the strongest consensus in the dataset.

3.2.5. Professional Integration Perceptions (Q8, Q11, Q12)

Only 4.12% of respondents agree AIGC positively contributes to VFX efficiency (Q8; mean = 2.25), while 62.89% disagree — the strongest area of consensus in the entire survey, in the skeptical direction. Confidence that AI does not compromise artistic quality (Q12) is similarly low: 20.62% agree, 52.58% neutral, 26.80% disagree (mean = 2.91). On ethical discourse adequacy (Q11), 56.70% agree that current discussion has already adequately addressed AI-related ethical issues in art, versus 10.31% who disagree (mean = 3.46).

3.2.6. Future Behavioral Intention and Overall Assessment(Q13–Q15)

Future intention to increase text-to-image use (Q13) shows only 5.15% agreement versus 70.10% disagreement (mean = 2.28). Text-to-video intention (Q14) is less negative: 20.62% agree, 31.96% neutral, 47.42% disagree (mean = 2.66). The image/video gap in future intention is statistically real, not just descriptive noise (Wilcoxon $W = 54.00$, $p < .001$): intention to increase video-generation use is significantly higher than intention to increase image-generation use. The overall assessment item (Q15) shows only 4.12% agreement versus 71.13% disagreement (mean = 2.21) that AIGC integration overall benefits VFX creative practice.

3.2.7. Relationships Among Constructs: A Technology-Acceptance Model

As shown in the table 3, Spearman correlations among the four validated composite constructs were all positive and significant at $p < .001$:

Table 3. Spearman correlation matrix among validated constructs

Construct pair	Spearman's rho	p
Legitimacy – Usefulness	.575	<.001
Legitimacy – Intention	.584	<.001
Legitimacy – Usage	.734	<.001
Usefulness – Intention	.523	<.001
Usefulness – Usage	.659	<.001
Intention – Usage	.426	<.001

An OLS regression of future intention on perceived legitimacy and perceived usefulness was significant, $R^2 = .528$, $F(2,94) = 52.5$, $p < .001$, with usefulness the stronger predictor ($\beta = .482$, $p < .001$) relative to legitimacy ($\beta = .294$, $p < .001$), that replicating Davis's original finding for information-systems adoption. A parallel model predicting current usage was also significant, $R^2 = .654$, $F(2,94) = 88.7$, $p < .001$, with legitimacy ($\beta = .604$, $p < .001$) and usefulness ($\beta = .648$, $p < .001$) contributing comparably.

4. Discussion

4.1. The Impact of the Western Platform-Dominated Landscape

The dominance of Western platforms suggests early entrants established ecosystem lock-in through community building and content networks (Xie et al., 2025). Midjourney's 47.4% recognition rate reflects the extensive English-language tutorial ecosystem available to BIFCA's students, which reflect the similar tendency (Orak & Turan, 2024). The chi-square result shows that this recognition advantage further converts into a measurably different usage pattern. Those students familiar with Western platforms were more concentrated in the neutral-to-high-use range, while those students familiar with Chinese or other platforms split more sharply between high and low use, with fewer sitting in the middle. Although platform familiarity is one contributing factor, how students perceive the practical value of AIGC is a more complex issue.

4.2. From Pragmatic Acceptance to Cautious Skepticism

The results show that students exhibit almost unanimous skepticism across various metrics, including efficiency, quality, and overall benefits. Students reject the framing of AI art as a "mere novelty". Moreover, students who rate AI art as more legitimate or more useful also reported higher usage and stronger future intention. It shows real engagement and internally consistent beliefs, but real doubt about current instrumental payoff.

The regression results further refine this finding. The perceived usefulness has a stronger influence on future intentions than personal beliefs about the legitimacy of AI-generated artistic creations. Pedagogically, demonstrating concrete efficiency and quality gains in guided coursework may influence behavioral intention more than abstract discussion of AI art's legitimacy (Cheng, 2025). Both are important, as they are significant independent predictors.

4.3. Legal Complexity in China and the UK

Neither British nor Chinese copyright law has definitively addressed the issues raised in this survey, yet most students believe these issues have been resolved. UK guidance on "sufficient human input" remains unresolved, and Chinese case law (Li v. Liu, 2023) remains narrowly case-specific rather than a settled precedent. This coexistence of "perceived sufficiency" and "unresolved legal issues" may pose a more pressing institutional problem than a perceived vacuum (Yin et al., 2023), since students may be making portfolio, ownership, or commercial-use decisions without recognizing that the underlying legal questions are still open in both the UK and Chinese contexts.

4.4. Challenges Facing Sino-British Cooperative Education Institutions

The efficiency, quality and ethics reveal broad efficiency skepticism paired with unresolved quality uncertainty and a belief that ethical questions are already settled (Tang, 2024). The significant correlations linking legitimacy and usefulness beliefs to both intention and usage, the more defensible characterization of this cohort is one of engaged but unconvinced. These students do not reject AIGC as a creative medium at this stage of adoption. That skepticism coexists with an insufficiently recognized legal and ethical ambiguity across two regulatory environments. BIFCA's curriculum needs to address this explicitly rather than assume that students see these questions as settled.

5. Conclusion

This study examined how BIFCA Digital Media Art students perceive and use AIGC tools. Students' future intention and current usage were found to be strongly and independently predicted by perceived usefulness and perceived creative legitimacy using TAM, with usefulness emerging as the somewhat stronger predictor of the two. Students' feedback generally showed an engaged but unconvinced pattern. Most of them also believed ethical debates around AI art were settled, even though UK and Chinese copyright law remains unresolved. Thus, it is necessary to introduce AIGC through concrete task-specific gains, make copyright instruction a standing curriculum requirement, and engage both Western and Chinese platforms. The study is limited by its single-institution, cross-sectional, self-reported design. A longitudinal comparison across different programs would show whether these patterns are specific to BIFCA or general to art education.

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