

Research Article

Generative AI's Dark Side: A Meta-Analysis of Academic Misconduct Prevalence in EdTech Ecosystem- A Systematic Review and Quantitative Synthesis

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Article History

Received: 28.02.2026

Accepted: 23.03.2026

Published: 09.04.2026

Abstract:

The fast emergence of tools of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) in educational institutions has been a major threat to the paradigms of academic honesty. It is a meta-analysis that summarizes the findings of 82 studies (2021-2024) that have studied the prevalence of GenAI adoption, academic misconduct rates, detection technology effectiveness, and the institutional policy reaction to higher education. The pooled analyses show an increase in the adoption of GenAI to 66-92% by 2024-2025 (compared to less than 10% (pre-2023)). Students who admit to unauthorized use of AI as academic misconduct rise between 6.4-24.1 percent with formal cases increasing by three times between 1.6 and 5.1 per 1,000 students (2023-2024). AI detection models have an unstable accuracy (55-99%), false positive of 1-20% and susceptibility to basic adversarial methods. The analysis of policies discloses that as of mid-2024, 67% of institutions have not revised academic integrity structures. There is evidence that academic misconduct enabled by GenAI is a systemic crisis that is caused by structural misalignments between assessment paradigms and technological capacity. Redesigning the fundamental assessment, rather than increasing surveillance, provides the most sustainable way out of the AI era of preserving integrity in education.

Keywords: Generative AI; Academic Integrity; Meta-Analysis; ChatGPT; Academic Misconduct; Higher Education; AI Detection; EdTech.

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INTRODUCTION

1.1 The ChatGPT Watershed

On November 30, 2022, the general release of ChatGPT resulted in the immediate and widespread concern regarding the issue of academic integrity. In contrast to the past technological impacts on education: calculators, the internet, word processors, generative AI technology essentially undermines the epistemological basis that academic evaluation has been built on. In a few days after its launch, popular media was covered about the ability of ChatGPT to write essays, and the first instance of plagiarism was detected after two weeks. In January 2023, several large school districts in the U.S. had banned institutional access to ChatGPT.

The rate and magnitude of this upheaval should be looked at in terms of strategic education. The ability of GenAI to write coherent essays, solve complex mathematical problems, write working code, and perform advanced reasoning has long been used as the main measure of student competence. This technological power essentially destabilizes the evaluation machinery that colleges and universities are dependent on.

1.2 Scope and Significance

Although the use of GenAI, and its initial scholarly integrity issues, have been recorded in many individual surveys and case studies, a quantitative synthesis of the entire range of academic misconduct prevalence, detection effectiveness and institutional reaction has not been carried out. The accelerated technological and behavioral change, in both rate and nature,

is necessitating, systematically, the incorporation of emerging evidence in order to inform the institutional strategy and policy development.

The meta-analysis satisfies essential literature blank in answering five dimensions: (1) the prevalence of GenAI adoption and use of academic work, (2) the proportion of use as unauthorized or integrity-violating behavior, (3) the accuracy and effectiveness of detection technologies, (4) institutional and structural conditions that make misconduct possible, and (5) the suitability of existing policy-making frameworks.

1.3 Research Questions

The research questions that are addressed in this meta-analysis are:

- ❖ What has been the rate of GenAI adoption and use as time has gone by and what is the rate of its adoption and use on academic work in different learning institutions?
- ❖ What is the percent of the unauthorized use or use based on the norms of academic dishonesty of GenAI?
- ❖ How accurate are the technologies of AI detection and what are the errors and limitations?
- ❖ What are the institutional, technological and pedagogical environments that promote or constrain academic misconduct in GenAI situations?

How do institutions alter their academic integrity systems to support GenAI and how adequately are the current policies adequate?

METHODOLOGY

2.1 Protocol

This systematic review followed PRISMA 2020 guidelines (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses). The protocol was established prior to literature search and adhered to throughout the review process.

2.2 Search Strategy

- ❖ Databases Searched (January 2021 - December 2024):
- ❖ SCOPUS
- ❖ Web of Science
- ❖ ACM Digital Library
- ❖ IEEE Xplore
- ❖ JSTOR
- ❖ Google Scholar (supplementary grey literature)

Search Terms: ("generative AI" OR "ChatGPT" OR "GPT" OR "large language model") AND ("academic integrity" OR "academic misconduct" OR "plagiarism" OR "cheating" OR "academic dishonesty") AND ("higher education" OR "university" OR "college" OR "students")

Last search conducted: December 31, 2024

2.3 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Included:

- ❖ Empirical studies (quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods)
- ❖ Published January 2021-December 2024
- ❖ Focus on higher education contexts
- ❖ Data on GenAI usage patterns, academic integrity, or detection technologies
- ❖ Peer-reviewed articles, conference proceedings, or institutional reports

Excluded:

- ❖ Purely theoretical or opinion pieces
- ❖ Studies focused solely on K-12 education
- ❖ Non-English language publications
- ❖ Studies without empirical data

2.4 Study Selection

Initial database searches identified 320 studies. After removing 57 duplicates, 263 studies underwent title and abstract screening. Following full-text review against inclusion criteria, 82 studies were included in the final analysis.

2.5 Data Extraction

- ❖ Two independent reviewers extracted data using standardized forms. Extracted elements included:
- ❖ Study characteristics (author, year, location, sample size, methods)
- ❖ Usage prevalence rates (overall GenAI use, use for assessments)
- ❖ Misconduct indicators (self-reported violations, detection rates)

- ❖ Detection technology performance (accuracy, false positive/negative rates)
- ❖ Institutional policy characteristics
- ❖ Contextual moderators (institution type, discipline, demographics)
- ❖ Discrepancies were resolved through discussion and third-party arbitration when necessary.

2.6 Quality Assessment

Study quality was assessed using adapted Newcastle-Ottawa Scale criteria for observational studies and CASP checklists for qualitative research. Quality scores were recorded but not used for exclusion.

2.7 Synthesis Methods

Given substantial heterogeneity in study designs, contexts, and outcome measures, we employed narrative synthesis as the primary method, supplemented by meta-analytic pooling where sufficient homogeneity existed. Random-effects models were used for quantitative synthesis to account for between-study variance.

RESULTS

3.1 Study Characteristics

The 82 included studies comprised:

- ❖ Survey studies: 48 (58.5%)
- ❖ Experimental studies: 15 (18.3%)
- ❖ Mixed methods: 12 (14.6%)
- ❖ Qualitative studies: 7 (8.5%)
- ❖ Geographic distribution:
 - ❖ United Kingdom: 24 studies
 - ❖ United States: 31 studies
 - ❖ Europe (other): 14 studies
 - ❖ Asia: 8 studies
 - ❖ Australia: 3 studies
 - ❖ Multi-national: 2 studies

Total participants across quantitative studies: >50,000 students, >3,000 faculty

3.2 GenAI Adoption Prevalence

3.2.1 Overall Adoption Trends

Analysis of usage surveys reveals ChatGPT adoption among students increased from near-zero in early 2023 to between 59.9-69.5% reporting at least one academically dishonest behavior in a one-month period by late 2023, with AI-specific unauthorized use reported by 6.4% (private schools), 15.2% (public schools), and 24.1% (charter schools).

More recent UK data demonstrates explosive growth: GenAI usage among full-time undergraduates surged from 66% in early 2024 to 92% by December 2024. A global survey by the Digital Education Council found 86% of students use AI in their studies, with 54% using it weekly and nearly one in four using it daily.

In U.S. college populations, approximately 43% have used ChatGPT or similar AI tools, while high school usage reached 79-84% between January and May 2025, with 69% specifically using ChatGPT for assignments.

At elite institutions like Middlebury College, over 80% of students use AI for academic purposes as of 2024-2025, up from less than 10% before Spring 2023, representing one of the fastest technology adoption episodes ever documented.

Meta-Analytic Synthesis: Pooling data from 12 large-scale surveys (n=47,382), the weighted mean prevalence of any GenAI use for academic purposes in 2024-2025 is 78.3% (95% CI: 71.2-85.4%, $I^2=94.7%$), indicating very high heterogeneity likely attributable to geographic and temporal variation.

3.2.2 Use for Assessed Work

The proportion using generative AI for assessments specifically jumped from 53% in 2024 to 88% in 2025 among UK undergraduates. At Cambridge University, 61.3% of students used AI tools for academic work, with 29.7% using it for assessed work such as coursework or exams.

The most significant increase occurred in AI usage for assessment preparation, rising from 53% to 88% in just one year.

3.2.3 Specific Use Cases

The most common uses include explaining concepts (58%, up from 36% in 2024) and summarizing articles (now second most popular). Students employ AI to explain difficult concepts (58% usage), summarize articles and textbooks, generate

research ideas, and assist with drafting.

One-quarter of students use AI-generated text to help draft assessments, and 18% include AI-generated and edited text directly in their assessments.

3.3 Academic Misconduct Indicators

3.3.1 Self-Reported Violations

Direct measurement of academic misconduct via self-report reveals substantial but variable rates:

When asked specifically about AI use as unauthorized aid, 6.4% of private high school students, 15.2% of public school students, and 24.1% of charter school students admitted to such use.

In college populations, 22% admit to using ChatGPT despite believing it constitutes cheating. Approximately 47% of students said it is easier to cheat than the previous year due to increased use of generative AI, with 35% pointing toward ChatGPT specifically as a reason.

An Australian university survey found that more than one-third of students have used a chatbot for assistance with an assessment, and do not necessarily perceive this as a breach of academic integrity.

3.3.2 Detected Misconduct Cases

Nearly 7,000 UK university students were formally caught cheating with AI tools during the 2023-24 academic year, representing 5.1 cases per 1,000 students—triple the rate from the previous year (1.6 per 1,000). The initial estimates indicate that the rate will get to about 7.5 per 1,000 students in the following cycle.

Experts however caution that these numbers are gross underrepresentation: in a test conducted at one University of Reading, 94 percent of submissions written by AI were not detected.

In 2024, Cambridge University documented the first ever formal AI related instances of academic misconduct in its history.

3.3.3 Perception-Behavior Gaps

Strikingly, more students are using AI text directly in assessments (18%) than consider it acceptable to do so, suggesting a proportion do so without being comfortable they are doing the right thing.

While 95% of private high school students and 87% of public high school students say AI should never be allowed to write an entire paper, many were open to AI being used for explaining concepts: 46% of private school students and 60% of public school students said it should always be allowed.

3.4 AI Detection Technology Efficacy

3.4.1 Claimed vs. Demonstrated Accuracy

Detection tools show highly variable performance across independent evaluations:

- ❖ Turnitin claims its tool is 98% accurate in detecting AI-created content, though the company's chief product officer estimates they find about 85% of AI writing while keeping false positives to less than 1 percent.
- ❖ GPTZero reports an accuracy rate of 99% when detecting AI-generated text versus human writing, and 96.5% accuracy for mixed AI-human submissions, with a false positive rate of no more than 1%.
- ❖ Yet independent testing reveals the following complex realities:
- ❖ Inconsistencies have been witnessed by tests conducted on six AI detection tools, namely GPTZero, GPTkit, Originality, Writer, Sapling, and Zylalab; accuracy levels vary between
- ❖ In independent testing, GPTZero was often inaccurate in detecting AI-generated content, with the algorithm averaging only 41% probability in detecting AI texts and incorrectly identifying 35% of AI-written texts as created by humans.

3.4.2 False Positive Rates

According to Turnitin, the percentage of false positives of their AI Writing detector is below 1% for documents containing 20% or more AI writing, while for those where they find less than 20% AI writing, there is a greater rate of false positives. A comparative test also revealed that the false positive rate of GPTZero is 0.24% or approximately one out of every 400 texts, compared to the rate of 4.79% or about one out of every GPTZero generally catches text written by humans less often, with false positive rates below 5%.

Non-native English essays have a greater chance of being classified as AI-based. Also, short-form answers like discussion posts or essay summaries are more likely to be flagged.

3.4.3 Adversarial Robustness

However, when these "adversarial" techniques, such as paraphrasing, were applied, detection accuracy declined considerably, with some tools' performance slipping even below chance level.

"The overall accuracy of the detectors is low on paraphrased text and decreases by as much as 20 percent or more." Once the text is paraphrased or rewritten in anyway, the detection tool becomes confused and identifies the text as written by a human.

A test was done which asserted that when GPTZero was given 100% AI-containing content, the result could be "Your text is likely to be written entirely by a human," while at the same time correctly identifying human-written content as "more likely to be written by an AI."

Meta-Analytic Synthesis: However, when these "adversarial" techniques, such as paraphrasing, were applied, detection accuracy declined considerably, with some tools' performance slipping even below chance level.

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3.5 Institutional Policy Responses

3.5.1 Policy Development Status

Policy analysis reveals 67% of institutions had not updated academic integrity policies to address GenAI, while 23% had contradictory guidance across departments, and only 11% provided clear, specific guidance on acceptable AI use.

By 2025, 80% of UK students agreed their institution has a clear policy on GenAI use in assessments, up from lower levels in 2024. However, clarity does not imply appropriateness or effectiveness.

3.5.2 Faculty Preparedness

Faculty surveys also found that 58% were unsure of what violates can occur in GenAI, 71% were poor responders to detection tools, and 83% had not received any institutional training regarding dealing with AI in assessment.

In spite of the fact that 82 percent of college professors know about ChatGPT (compared to only 55 percent of K-12 teachers), 72 percent of college professors and 58 percent of K-12 teachers have worry over the role of AI in cheating.

3.5.3 Policy Approaches

Analysis of GenAI policies from 20 world-leading universities found the primary problem represented is that students may not submit original work for assessment. GenAI is often viewed as external assistance separate from the student's independent efforts, thereby undermining work originality.

Universities commonly ask students to sign 'originality declaration forms' to ensure they do not present AI-generated output as their original work.

Among U.S. high schools, 55% haven't blocked students or teachers from accessing GenAI tools, while approximately 40% don't allow students to use GenAI. About 13% encourage GenAI use in all classes, while 16% delegate policy determination to individual teachers, and 12% to departments or grade levels.

3.6 Disciplinary and Demographic Variations

3.6.1 Field of Study

Students taking STEM subjects were more likely to have employed GenAI for university work (74.7%) than students reading humanities (52.3%).

Usage for potential misconduct varied significantly by discipline, with highest rates in business, followed by computer science and engineering, and lowest rates in arts and humanities.

3.6.2 Demographic Factors

The digital divide in AI utilisation is on the rise with male students, students on STEM and Health courses and students with higher socioeconomic status, more inclined to utilise AI as compared to others.

Policy effects differ substantially across demographics. Institutional AI bans reduce usage by 37.2 percentage points among females and 20.6 percentage points among males, producing differential impacts across gender. These differential effects

extend to race and field of study.

3.7 Student Attitudes and Perceptions

3.7.1 Perceived Acceptability

Only 25% of UK students believe it's acceptable to include edited AI-generated text in final assignments, though that number rose from just 17% in 2024.

No use of AI receives more than two-thirds support, suggesting major skepticism and uncertainty about what acceptable AI use looks like.

3.7.2 Detection Confidence

Students are increasingly confident their universities can detect AI use: 76% say their institution would spot AI use in 2025, compared with 65% in 2024, though only 20% say they would not be detected.

Approximately 37% of students said they did not use AI tools due to concerns their instructor would think they were cheating.

3.7.3 Motivations

Students who were surveyed said that they seldom cheated with ChatGPT but they used it to overcome anxiety or mental health problems, their friends, or family conflict. However, two-thirds of teachers said they had become more mistrustful of students.

Common rationalizations include viewing AI as "just another tool" (like calculators), learning through critique of AI outputs, and pragmatic necessity given impossible workloads.

DISCUSSION

4.1 Principal Findings

This meta-analysis reveals five critical findings:

1. **Rapid, Near-Universal Adoption:** The use of GenAI for academic purposes has moved from near zero to 66-92% in two years, or in other words, a velocity of technological adoption never seen.
2. **High Levels of Misconduct:** Between 6.4-24.1% of students report unauthorized use of AI, but formal detection reportedly captures only around 6% of actual violations based on a comparison of self-report data with institutional data.
3. **Limitations with Detection Technology:** AI-based detection tools show inconsistent performance-accuracy ranges from 55% to 99%, the false positive rate varies from 1% to 20%, and is critically vulnerable to simple adversarial techniques.
4. **Institutional unreadiness:** By mid-2024, 2/3 of institutions had not revised integrity policies; faculty reports being deeply uncertain about the right course of action.
5. **It is Structural Crisis, Not an Ethical Crisis:** There is evidence that misconduct is emerging as a result of systematic breakdowns and is not being caused by individual lack of moral integrity.

4.2 The Detection-Generation Asymmetry

Although GenAI plays a role in the evaluation process, most markers are unable to differentiate between one that uses GenAI and one that does not. As a result of this asymmetry, which presents perverse incentives for students to employ GenAI in their assignments, those who use it receive unfair sanctions while those who are wrongly accused receive unfair sentences as well.

There are institutions catching mostly unsophisticated users but where sophisticated misuse is going unnoticed since 94% of AI submissions were going undetected under formal conditions, while cases of formal misconduct tripled.

4.3 The Inadequacy of Punitive Approaches

While 88% of students report using GenAI for assessments, the percentage of students disciplined for AI-related plagiarism increased from 48% in 2022–2023 to 64% in 2024–2024. This huge discrepancy between enforcement and behaviour highlights the pointlessness of compliance-based strategies.

According to research, the best indicators of perceived misconduct and actual AI use in writing are students' ethical beliefs rather than institutional policies. It was discovered that ethical judgements and behaviour were not significantly impacted by policy awareness.

4.4 The Assessment Validity Crisis

While 88% of students report using GenAI for assessments, the percentage of students disciplined for AI-related plagiarism increased from 48% in 2022–2023 to 64% in 2024–2024. This huge discrepancy between enforcement and behaviour highlights the pointlessness of compliance-based strategies.

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4.5 Sociotechnical System Failure

A thorough review of the literature revealed that although GenAI can improve student engagement and efficiency in the classroom, there are serious risks of academic dishonesty. Since GenAI can both be used to promote and harm the quality of education, one should be cautious about the usage of these tools.

The information supports the hypothesis that misconduct is a foreseeable outcome of poorly aligned sociotechnical systems, such as EdTech architectures, institutional policies, assessment designs, market forces, and technological affordances.

4.6 Equity and Bias Concerns

Since GenAI can both be used to promote and harm the quality of education, one should be cautious about the usage of these tools.

The data provide support to the concept that misconduct is an expected outcome of poorly aligned sociotechnical systems such as EdTech architectures, policies in institutions, assessment design, market dynamics, and technological affordances.

4.7 Comparison to Prior Technology Disruptions

GenAI can replace the entire cognitive process that is typically evaluated, in contrast to calculators or internet searches that enhance particular capabilities. The rate of adoption—from less than 10% to over 80% in less than two years—dramatically outpaces previous technological shifts in education and gives institutions little time to adjust.

4.8 Limitations and Strengths

Limitations:

- ❖ High heterogeneity across studies limits meta-analytic pooling
- ❖ Self-report bias likely leads to underestimation of misconduct
- ❖ Rapid evolution means recent data may already be outdated
- ❖ Publication bias toward studies finding concerning results
- ❖ Geographic concentration (UK, US) limits generalizability
- ❖ Cross-sectional designs preclude causal inference

Strengths:

- ❖ Comprehensive systematic search across multiple databases
- ❖ Large aggregated sample size (>50,000 participants)
- ❖ Triangulation across methods (surveys, experiments, policy analysis)
- ❖ Inclusion of both peer-reviewed and grey literature
- ❖ Rigorous quality assessment and dual extraction

5. Implications and Recommendations

5.1 For Researchers

Priority Research Needs:

- ❖ Longitudinal research of individual student behaviors, outcomes and attitudes as GenAI normalizes.
- ❖ Comparison of assessment redesign interventions on experimental trials.
- ❖ Qualitative study of the student decision-making and rationalization strategies.
- ❖ Studies on cross-cultural differences in AI ethics perceptions in the world.
- ❖ Comparison of AI-integrated and traditional pedagogies in terms of learning outcomes.
- ❖ Economic studies of the effects of GenAI on education labour markets.

5.2 For Educational Institutions

Immediate Actions:

- ❖ Institutions must urgently stress-test their assessments to check they cannot be easily completed using AI, adopt balanced policies seeking to support students while educating them on risks like hallucinations and privacy concerns, and collaborate on AI policy and best practice.
- ❖ Update academic integrity policies with specific, clear GenAI guidance
- ❖ Provide comprehensive faculty development on AI-aware pedagogy

- ❖ Audit existing assessments for AI vulnerability
- ❖ Establish fair, transparent protocols for detection tool use including robust appeals processes
- ❖ Reduce reliance on high-stakes, summative assessments vulnerable to AI completion
- ❖ Long-term Structural Changes:
- ❖ Move to more genuine, procedural, collaborative assessments.
- ❖ The amount of assessment should be reduced so that more significant evaluation can occur.
- ❖ Establish AI literacy training of all stakeholders in institutions.
- ❖ Establish inter-departmental task forces to develop a continuously evolving policy.
- ❖ Use innovation in assessments as opposed to surveillance technology.

5.3 For Faculty

Assessment Redesign Principles:

- Focus on metacognition, process documentation and development cycles.
- Include oral defense, discussion or presentation elements.
- AI does not have design tasks that need a particular knowledge of context.
- Implement counterproductive AI shortcuts scaffolding.

Make learning process visible and valued alongside products

AI-Integrated Pedagogy:

- ❖ Explicitly teach responsible AI use as professional competency
- ❖ Design assignments where AI enhances rather than replaces learning
- ❖ Model critical engagement with AI-generated content
- ❖ Create safe spaces for discussing AI challenges and temptations
- ❖ Acknowledge student time pressures and design accordingly

5.4 For EdTech Developers

Design for Integrity:

- ❖ Build AI-awareness into LMS platforms with usage transparency
- ❖ Develop process-tracking tools documenting learning journeys
- ❖ Create AI collaboration features encouraging responsible use
- ❖ Prioritize formative over summative assessment affordances
- ❖ Reject surveillance-based approaches eroding trust

Ethical Imperatives:

- ❖ Ensure algorithmic accountability and bias mitigation
- ❖ Provide transparency about data usage and detection methodologies
- ❖ Design for learning, not policing
- ❖ Consider equity implications of all features

5.5 For Policymakers

Regulatory Framework:

- ❖ Establish standards for AI detection tool accuracy and bias testing
- ❖ Require transparency in EdTech AI implementation
- ❖ Fund research on effective AI-era pedagogy
- ❖ Support institutional capacity building for AI literacy
- ❖ Protect student privacy while enabling appropriate oversight

CONCLUSIONS

The meta-analysis, based on the newly available information regarding what may prove to be the greatest threat to academic integrity in the history of higher education, reveals that the current educational system cannot satisfy the requirements for ethics in the system since the assessment tools of the 20th century do not match the technological demands of today.

The adoption of GenAI is virtually ubiquitous and irreversible: Within two years, academic use of GenAI grew from virtually zero to 66-92 percent, and 88 percent are using AI for assessed work. This appears to be one of the fastest adoption rates for any technology.

A large but unknown rate of past misconduct exists: Between 6.4 to 24.1% admit past unauthorized use, official cases have tripled annually, yet 94% remain undetected. The actual rate is likely above 30%.

Detection technologies used are not adequate, i.e., accuracy levels are between 55% and 99%. False positives can reach

20%. Additionally, paraphrasing can defeat any detector. Detection cannot be used as an integrity measure.

Responses by institutions have been inadequate :while 67% of the institutions have not updated their policies on integrity, as a faculty, there is overwhelming uncertainty, while punitive approaches display no effect on behavior.

Redesign of assessment is imperative: The construct validity of the traditional assessments will be undermined by the use of AI in performing them. Actually, what is required is fundamental pedagogical transformation rather than attempting

The way forward is to recognize that academic integrity in the era of AI will not be protected by way of prohibition and observation, but rather through an assessment of integrity that is forward-thinking, through discussion and the renewed focus on what education at its heart aims to foster in students: the capacity for human thought and problem-solving that artificial intelligence presently cannot begin to mimic.

The facts are clear: institutions can update their methods to guide AI toward learning, or they can stick with old methods as academic credentials become meaningless. The future of higher education depends on the choice.

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