

AI-DRAFTED STUDY-SKILLS CURRICULUM, US MEDICAL SCHOOL

The channel that got read, and the one that didn't

A US medical school's staff-room experiment with AI-drafted content, translated for any school leader weighing a similar scaled programme.

If your team drafted a multi-week induction or CPD programme with an AI tool and one named reviewer, would anyone actually read it, and would they say it helped?

In one line

A feasibility signal, not evidence of impact: when one US medical school sent 120 new medical learners an eight-week AI-drafted study-skills programme by email, PDF and podcast, two-thirds completed the follow-up survey and those who engaged more also rated it more useful, but engagement and perceived benefit were both self-reported on the same survey, with no comparison group and no measure of any actual change in study habits or grades.



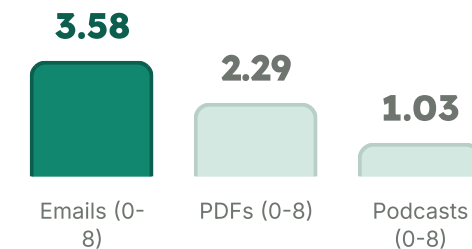
Most read the emails; far fewer read to the end

All 120 incoming learners at the University of Arizona College of Medicine-Tucson were sent an eight-week, AI-drafted 'study strategies' curriculum by weekly email, PDF summary and short podcast, built from peer-reviewed learning-science literature and reviewed by a senior educator before each send. Two-thirds completed an anonymous survey at orientation.

- ✓ **Nearly every new learner was offered the programme** · All 120 incoming learners were sent the curriculum; 78 (65%) completed the anonymous follow-up survey
- ✓ **Email got read; the podcast mostly didn't** · Average learner read 3.58 of 8 emails, reviewed 2.29 of 8 PDFs, but listened to only 1.03 of 8 podcasts
- ✓ **Perceived benefit was real but modest** · Helpfulness rated 2.95 of 5; series 'somewhat' introduced new techniques (2.09 of 3); moderate influence on approach (2.58 of 5) and likelihood of applying strategies (3.10 of 5)
- ✓ **More engagement, more perceived benefit** · Emails read correlated with helpfulness ($r=0.503$), new techniques ($r=0.302$), influence on approach ($r=0.522$) and likelihood of applying ($r=0.612$), all $p<0.01$
- ✓ **No group was left behind or pulled ahead** · Perceived benefit did not differ significantly by first-generation status, prior study-strategy instruction, or path into medical school
- ✓ **Built for about four hours a week** · Drafted with ChatGPT and NotebookLM from peer-reviewed literature, then reviewed and approved by a senior educator before each weekly send

Average engaged with, out of 8 offered

Each format was offered once a week for eight weeks. Bars are drawn to the true 0-8 scale.



Self-reported by the 78 learners who completed the survey; no independent usage data (such as email opens) were available.

There is no baseline or comparison group: this is a one-off, post-programme snapshot, not a before/after test.

What the programme actually asked of one educator

DESIGN CHOICE	WHAT IT SOUNDS LIKE AT SCHOOL (OUR EXAMPLE)	WHY IT'S WORTH NOTING
Lean staff footprint	<i>"One programme lead drafts with an AI tool; one deputy head reviews and signs off before anything goes to staff or families."</i>	The whole eight-week build took about four hours a week: literature review, AI-assisted drafting, quality review and sending. No large team is needed to pilot something similar.
SL GUIDANCE Do it well: keep a single named reviewer accountable for accuracy before every send, whatever the AI drafts.		
Multi-channel, but not equally used	<i>"A short weekly email lands in every inbox; a two-page PDF and a 10-15 minute podcast go further for anyone who wants more."</i>	Learners read the short email nearly three-and-a-half times as often as they played the podcast (3.58 vs 1.03 of 8 offered). If you can only build one channel well, build the email.
SL GUIDANCE Do it well: treat audio and long documents as optional extras, not the default channel, until you know your own audience's habits.		
Not told an AI was involved	<i>"The weekly material arrived as an ordinary school email, with no mention that an AI tool helped draft it."</i>	The study's own authors record that "students were not specifically informed that LLMs were used in the development of the curricular materials", a disclosure choice worth deciding on purpose.
SL GUIDANCE Do it well: decide your own disclosure policy on AI-assisted materials before launch, rather than leaving it unaddressed.		
Measured opinions, not habits	<i>"Everything reported, both how much learners engaged and how useful they found it, came from the same end-of-programme survey."</i>	Because both halves of the story are self-reported by the same person, 'more engagement, more perceived benefit' could mean the materials worked, or simply that more positive people answer everything more positively.
SL GUIDANCE Do it well: track at least one objective usage number (opens, downloads) alongside any satisfaction survey you run.		

The honest fence: where this evidence stops

One institution, no comparison group

A single-group, cross-sectional survey at one US medical school. There is no control group and no baseline measure of study behaviour or attitudes at any point.

Both halves of the story are self-reported

The same survey asked how much learners engaged AND how helpful they found it. This is a classic common-method confound: more positive people may simply answer everything more positively.

No objective usage data at all

"Objective engagement metrics, such as email open rates, PDF downloads, and podcast analytics, were not available." Every engagement number is a self-estimate.

No measured change in behaviour or grades

Nothing about actual study habits, exam results or wellbeing was tracked. 'Perceived impact' is entirely opinion, gathered once, after the programme ended.

The authors call their own analysis exploratory

Many subgroup and correlational tests were run "without formal correction for multiple comparisons", which the authors themselves flag as hypothesis-generating, not confirmatory.

Only the more willing third took part

A 65% response rate to a voluntary, anonymous survey. The authors note that more motivated or more concerned learners may have been likelier to respond, and to respond favourably.

● Early signal

One institution's own account of a curriculum it built and evaluated itself, worth testing further, not proof it changes behaviour. A version run across several schools or institutions, with an objective usage measure and a comparison group, would raise this to Developing.

Worth testing: does channel choice matter more than content?

The notable part of this account isn't that an AI tool can help draft a study-skills curriculum, it's that a lean team could ship one, most incoming learners engaged with at least some of it, and the channel that took the least effort to consume, a short email, was read nearly three-and-a-half times as often as the channel that took the most, a podcast. If a similar programme lives or dies on being read rather than merely written well, it may be worth testing which channel your own audience will actually use before building out every format.

1

Start with the low-effort channel

Given a nearly 3.5-times gap between the most-read format (email) and the least (podcast), pilot a short written weekly note before investing in audio or long documents.

2

Keep one named reviewer in the loop

The whole eight-week build took about four hours a week for one senior educator to draft with AI, review and approve; that's a realistic staffing model for a first pilot of an induction or CPD programme.

3

Track use, not just opinion

Because engagement and perceived usefulness came from the same self-report survey here, add at least one objective number, opens, downloads, or a simple before/after check, if you want to know whether a similar programme actually changes anything.

Early signal, so run it as an experiment: draft one multi-week induction or CPD unit with an AI tool and a single named reviewer, send the core content as a short weekly email, and track actual open or completion rates alongside a simple before/after check, not just an end-of-programme satisfaction survey.

Why not try? Planning a lean, AI-assisted content programme is easier with a framework to build against. Open a free account to plan your next induction or CPD unit at app.structural-learning.com.