

TO: Assembly

FROM: Opportunities Officer

RE: Treatment of Generative artificial Intelligence at Durham University

DATE: 23 November 2023

Assembly Notes:

1. Generative Artificial Intelligence (GAI) is a form of Artificial Intelligence (AI) that generates human-like responses based on a prompt (Note: this policy generally refers to text based GAI)^[1]
2. GAI can assist in the generation and development of ideas, offering substantial support to students in their academic pursuits^[1]
3. Concerns have arisen regarding GAI's use in academic assignments, particularly in regards to plagiarism, authenticity, and the genuine development of knowledge and skills^[2]
4. The lines between legitimate use of GAI and academic dishonesty are becoming blurred, especially when students are unclear on the boundaries between acceptable use of AI tools and fraudulent practices^[2]

Assembly Believes:

1. The ethical usage of GAI can serve as a key learning tool, aiding in the development of ideas and facilitating a deeper, and sometimes faster, comprehension of subject matter
2. There's a fine line between GAI acting as a tool for learning and it undermining the educational process via plagiarism and/or the acquisition of marks disproportionate to the amount of individual effort
3. Establishing clear guidelines on the acceptable use of GAI in academic assignments is imperative to uphold academic integrity and ensure a fair, equitable learning environment
4. The use of GAI should enhance, not replace, individual critical thinking, creativity, and the genuine acquisition of knowledge and skills
5. A single university-wide policy on the use of GAI is not viable because the opportunities and risks of its use vary significantly between departments, faculties, and assessment formats

Assembly Resolves:

1. To encourage the University at a Faculty level to develop and disseminate general guidelines on the use of GAI in academic settings, outlining the highest extent to which these technologies may be used, the penalties for misuse, and how students can properly cite the use of GAI in their work
2. To further encourage the University at a Department level to develop and disseminate clear guidelines on the use of GAI in academic assignments and assessments, outlining the extent to which these technologies may be used, resources on how to ethically use GAI in their subject, and any deviation from the faculty penalty policy
3. To request the Students' Union maintain a webpage regarding the capabilities, limitations, and ethical implications of GAI and hosting up to date links to any and all University policy, guidance, and training that is available
4. To lobby the University not to implement GAI detection tools, if there is potential for the system to unfairly impact and accuse non-native English speakers (or of the language the assessment is in) or those with other disadvantages that may make their work appear to a system as similar to what GAI produces
5. To encourage the University to promote the ethical use of GAI as a supplementary academic tool, fostering a culture of innovation, honesty, and creativity; and, to ensure that students feel they do not have to hide their use of GAI in case of unfair, or harsher marking.
6. To ensure the Academic Affairs Committee monitors, evaluates, and reviews the impact of GAI on the academic environment, proposing amendments to this policy as necessary to adapt to the evolving landscape of AI technologies on a regular basis (at least once per year)
7. To support the University in the development of alternative assessment formats that are less susceptible to being undermined by GAI and more accessible to students experiencing disadvantage with the current assessment format.

[1] Appendix A: AI in Education: Academic Rep Briefing Doc; Durham Students' Union; Olivia Flavell;

[2] <https://dcad.webspace.durham.ac.uk/2023/01/24/ai-the-future-of-assessment-in-higher-education/>
<https://web.archive.org/web/20231103104338/https://dcad.webspace.durham.ac.uk/2023/01/24/ai-the-future-of-assessment-in-higher-education/>

Appendix A:

AI in Education: Academic Rep briefing doc

What is AI?

Artificial Intelligence is the ability of a computer to mirror and perform tasks that are typically associated with humans. Generative AI is likely the form of AI that most are familiar with, this generates human-like responses from a prompt (i.e., produce a CV template for an internship).

Strengths and Limitations

There is much debate on whether AI is a help or a hinderance in HE but it can be a valuable tool if used appropriately, some of the reported strengths are:

- AI can reduce inequalities of access to knowledge
- There are many uses for AI that can encourage creativity
- It can help with getting words down on a blank page/structuring essay

However, AI is not perfect and thus, should not be heavily relied upon when completing assessed work with limitations being:

- They can often provide out of date information about a certain topic that is unreferenced and plagiarised
- There are concerns over copyright and intellectual property both on using copyrighted information, but also if you upload a journal article/information you have paid to access or something that contains sensitive information – this information is then taken into the AI's systems and shared with others
- These tools can also be riddled with bias as they simply reproduce patterns of text taken from the internet
- Hallucinations – Chat GPT in particular can insert sentences that are completely made up

What is DU's stance on AI?

Durham University stated in their Teaching and Learning Handbook that:

"The requirement that submitted work must be a student's own means the inappropriate use of generative AI in the production of assessed work is likely to constitute academic misconduct"

[\(6.2.4.1: Academic Misconduct: Plagiarism\)](#)

However, the University does not plan to use Turnitin's AI detection feature – in line with Cambridge University.

Guidance for students

With the University making their stance on AI clear, the guidance is to avoid using generative AI tools as much as possible when writing formative and summative assessments and particularly during online exams.

With resources such as Chat GPT taking large volumes of unreferenced information from the internet, using it to contribute to or write portions of assessments will likely lead to the document being flagged as plagiarised. If you are unsure whether it is appropriate to use AI for a particular assessment, please get guidance from the module convenor or from your department.

As said above, it's best to avoid generative AI tools when it comes to writing assessed work, especially with Chat GPT as it is not able to produce a nuanced discussion that is expected of students at a university level. However, there are some useful ways that AI technologies can simplify certain processes.

- **Essay plans:** the worst part of starting to write is the blank page, Chat GPT can produce a skeleton structure that you can use to get started.
- **Proof-reading:** Grammarly or Chat GPT can highlight any spelling errors – please do proof-read your own work alongside the help of these tools and use the University guidance -
 - *"Where departmental handbooks advise students that it is acceptable practice to use a commercial proof-reading service, clear guidance should also be provided as to the level of assistance that is acceptable and what level of assistance goes beyond this and amounts to "contract cheating" and hence plagiarism."*

In general, it is good practice to keep record of the following if at any point you are suspected of academic misconduct:

- Keep copies of your drafts along with lecture notes and further reading.
- Prepare yourself to explain your argument and how you came to your conclusions.
- Avoid using Chat GPT or other AI tools to enhance your work – i.e., to improve the language/add sentences or phrases you don't fully understand.

Suspected misconduct

If you suspect that someone is using generative AI to complete their assessments then this can be reported directly to the department or to the module leader.

How is the HE sector responding to AI?

Many university's have developed policies outlining their approach on AI, some are more accepting than others. For example, Nottingham University includes a section on how to reference the use of AI in written assessments; whereas, Oxford and Cambridge issued a university wide ban on any form of AI use during assessments. One reason for the resistance has come from university staff fearing that students will use the software during assessments and pass with minimal effort and not actually understand the content.

There are some positive reactions to the potential of AI becoming more widely used in HE, for example, the Lancaster SU developed a framework to guide the university in its approach to AI, these include:

- Staff understanding how to use AI and teaching students how to use it for both HE and employability purposes
- Guidance for AI should be developed by each department and updated/circulated for each assessment
- Consider developing alternative teaching methods (i.e. verbal assessment)

This also brings into question whether HE pedagogies should be revolutionised to be progressive and able to adapt to many forms of learning, along with updating forms of assessment to reflect this. The work done by the Lancaster SU indicates that students also want universities to adapt to AI supplementing their learning, not just using the software to get a better grade as many believe the standard of work they produce is much higher than that of AI software. There is also a positive response from the Russell Group, with all 24 universities' VC's supporting 5 new principles that support the integration of AI whilst upholding academic integrity.

How can DU do AI better? (Discussion)

- *How do you think DU should approach the use of AI?*
- *Do you think AI is a useful tool for HE?*
- *Is there a centralised approach to take?*

Direction of AI at DU (Discussion)

- What are your personal thoughts on using AI for assessments?
- Should AI be incorporated into assessments?
- Should the University consider teaching students how to use AI?
- Should AI be banned all together?

Useful resources

Blog post by DCAD's Matt Wood accessible here: <https://dcad.webspace.durham.ac.uk/2023/01/24/ai-the-future-of-assessment-in-higher-education/>

Article by UG Academic Officer Will Brown accessible here:

<https://www.palatinete.org.uk/artificial-intelligence-at-university-a-guide-to-using-chatgpt-for-work/>

Article by the Russell Group on principles of AI use in education accessible here: <https://russellgroup.ac.uk/news/new-principles-on-use-of-ai-in-education/>

Journal article by Chan, C. (2023) on a potential policy framework for HE accessible here:

<https://doi.org/10.1186/s41239-023-00408-3>

Article by Elena Rodríguez Falcón on AI prompting a more progressive approach to learning:

<https://wonkhe.com/blogs/ai-should-cause-us-to-adopt-more-progressive-approaches-to-learning/>

Article by Matt Woodrow on students wanting advice on how to use AI in their work: <https://wonkhe.com/blogs/ai-should-cause-us-to-adopt-more-progressive-approaches-to-learning/>