QUB Guidance on the use of AI in Assessment – Sept 2024

The goal of this document is to provide guidance on the use of generative AI within assessment.

Appropriately introducing AI

Consistent with the published Russell Group position on AI we are working towards introducing the appropriate use of AI into our teaching and assessment processes. Our goal is to provide equal access for all, enhance the student learning experience, improve critical thinking skills, and prepare our students for real-world AI applications they will use after graduation.

The inclusion of AI tools into teaching and assessment methods will vary by discipline, and protecting this autonomy is essential. Additionally, professional bodies will have an important role in shaping how AI is integrated, particularly in relation to accreditation.

Ensuring academic rigour and integrity

Protecting academic rigour and integrity is essential and our regulations concerning academic offences have been updated to include procedures that cover the suspected inappropriate use of AI within assessment.

As recommended by the QAA, as we transition to new or updated methods of assessment it is important that we are clear in our expectations around the use of AI and help support our students to understand what is expected of them. This can be achieved by providing an open environment where students can freely discuss the use of AI and raise their concerns without fear of consequences.

The challenge of preserving academic integrity is not a new problem and the introduction of generative AIs will not change the fundamental challenges that face educators. To effectively prevent cheating, it is essential to address its root causes. Research shows this can be achieved by promoting a strong culture of academic integrity that emphasises the importance of honesty and integrity. Our ultimate objective is to prepare students for the dynamic and evolving employment contexts of the future.

Use of AI detection tools

Current tools that attempt to detect AI generated text – whether by analysing writing styles, using machine learning classification, or watermarking – cannot definitively identify AI-authored content. Worryingly, these systems often produce an unacceptably high rate of false positives.

In the future, with the integration of AI writing tools into platforms like Microsoft Word and Google Workplace, it is anticipated that much of our writing will include AI-generated elements. This will be similar to how we currently benefit from algorithm-driven spell checkers and grammar tools.

Considering these factors, the use of text-based AI detectors is not recommended.

See QUB guidance on the use of AI detection tools

Sustainability of different types of assessment

In their '*Reconsidering assessment for the ChatGPT era: QAA advice on developing sustainable assessment strategies*', the QAA considers the current and longer term viability of different types of assessment.

The QAA caution against an increased use of traditional handwritten, supervised exams. Concerns include issues of accessibility and the argument that such assessments do not effectively test skills required in modern workplaces. Where timed exams are deemed essential due to subject-specific needs, the QAA recommends they are delivered electronically through a digitally secure platform.

As an alternative to the traditional examination that may be applicable, the QAA recommends the use of observed examinations that are designed to be both authentic and synoptic. Examples include the Observed Structured Clinical Examinations or Observed Structured Practical Examinations. Here, students are monitored while performing discipline-related tasks and then questioned about their grasp of the associated concepts, context, and applications.

When it comes to coursework, the QAA recommends the design of authentic assessments which incorporate the planned and appropriate use of AI tools, potentially alongside an analysis/reflection of the use of AI.

Longer term assessment revision

In the longer term there is likely to be a move in many disciplines towards programme-level or synoptic assessments across modules. This might involve:

- Decreasing the volume of assessments, especially those diminished by the availability of AI tools, and repurposing the freed time for other pedagogical activities.
- Increasing the emphasis on synoptic assessments, requiring students to synthesise knowledge from different parts of the programme. Some of these assessments might permit or integrate the use of AI tools.
- Develop additional authentic assessments, where students use their skills in practical, often workplace-oriented scenarios. Ideally, these assessments would also encompass a synoptic component.
- Increasing the use of formative assessment to provide students with feedback on their learning.

By reducing the volume of assessment, it becomes possible to create space within the curriculum that can then be used to develop additional skills and competencies, including discipline-specific applications of AI.

Practical advice for staff

- Review how generative AI might enhance student learning through the assessment. For example, AI tools could be used to analyse and summarise relevant materials, provide a draft structure or starting point, or otherwise free up time for students to focus on other critical aspects of their learning such as evaluation, synthesis, analysis, critical thinking, or reflection.
  The AI Assessment Self-Help Guide offers a practical and efficient way to assess the potential impact of AI on your assessments.

- Before modifying any assessment, test it with tools like Copilot or ChatGPT to see what kind of answer is produced. Adapt or amend the assessment as necessary.

- Require students to "show their work" by submitting drafts or notes or using digital versioning (documents stored on a student's OneDrive can provide a record of changes made over time). Such material can provide insight into the steps students took to arrive at their final submission.

- Have open and transparent discussions with students regarding the acceptable and unacceptable use of AI in assessments and the value of integrity. This should include explicit instructions on what constitutes appropriate use, such as the production of original work. Students should be required to acknowledge requirements through a declaration of integrity form and be informed that any unacceptable use of AI will be considered academic misconduct.

- Engage students in conversations about the proper use of AI tools. Highlight the need to ensure appropriate data privacy and the importance of understanding the limitations and potential biases in AI tools. Stress the necessity to verify and validate AI-generated results.

- Ensure that student declarations accompanying assessment submissions acknowledge the use of AI tools. For instance, "I certify that this submission is my original work, all sources are accurately cited, and any assistance from AI tools is clearly acknowledged."

Academic offence procedures

The University has in place procedures for investigating allegations of academic offences and imposing penalties where such an offence is found to have been committed

See Procedures for Dealing with Academic Offences

Of relevance is 2.7 "*Contract Cheating: where a student commissions or seeks to commission (either paid or unpaid) another individual or artificial intelligence software tool to complete academic work on their behalf.*"

Under the regulations, specific provision is made for a short viva voce to be undertaken where a student is suspected of contract cheating. Following this, a decision on whether the academic offence has been committed is made.

Academic Affairs can assist and support colleagues in managing cases where students may be in breach of the Procedures for Dealing with Academic Offences, as a result of the use of AI within assessment.