



Learning & Teaching Enhancement Programme Case study

As a way of capturing the detail and impact of your Learning & Teaching Enhancement Project, please complete the questions below, which align with the QAA Scotland reporting template. *Please answer all questions in 200 words or fewer.* Case studies may be published on the University's website and elements may be used in reports for QAA Scotland. Project teams may be asked to contribute a Blog or Podcast to help to share project activities and outcomes. Any questions, please contact cad@abdn.ac.uk.

Translation Software in Higher Education

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Context

This section should provide brief details about the context of the project/activity, highlighting any specific challenges and/or strategies it is intended to address.

Text in this section should not exceed **200 words**.

While there is extensive discussion around the appropriate use of Generative AI in Higher Education, there has been less focus on translation software. There is some evidence that students actively use translation software to enhance their English language skills (Zhou et al., 2022), and previous work by the research team involved in this proposal revealed that more than half of international students routinely use translation software for writing assignments as well as translating lectures and academic materials. The purpose of this project was:

- (1) to investigate academic staff's view of the potential benefits of translation software as well as its implications for academic integrity across disciplines,
- (2) to better understand the extent of students' use of translation software, and their understanding of the benefits and disadvantages it might offer, and
- (3) to use the findings to develop guidelines for students on the appropriate use of translation software and recommendations on the factors that HE institutions should consider when developing codes of practice around translation software.

Description of activity

In this section, you should provide brief and descriptive details of the project/activity. Please include information on student engagement in the project here.

Text in this section should not exceed **200 words**.

We appointed a student intern funded by the LTEP grant and were also assisted by a voluntary intern who expressed an interest in the project. The team developed two questionnaires, conducted through the Testable platform – one was designed to understand students' use and understanding of translation software, and the other was to understand staff's perception of translation software. We used a mixed-methods approach, collecting both quantitative and qualitative responses from our participants. We secured internal funding to help recruitment on the student questionnaire. We ran the two questionnaires over the course of May to July and have conducted preliminary analyses of the responses received. Our student interns received training on research ethics, programming in Testable, recruitment of participants, and both quantitative and qualitative analyses.

Evaluation and impact

This section should provide an analysis of evaluation and impact of the project.

To support evaluative activity, institutions are encouraged to use the [resources](#) developed by Professor Stella Jones-Devitt and Dr Liz Austen, particularly the Enhancement Themes Theory of Change model and the Universal Evaluation Framework (UEF).

Text in this section should not exceed **200 words**

We analyse the evaluation and impact of this project following the UEF. The project aims to develop student guidelines on translation software use and recommendations for HE institutions when shaping codes of conduct. The rationale for this evaluation comes from our findings, which show a lack of clarity and consistency across the sector. Students reported benefits such as support for academic writing and increased inclusivity but also highlighted risks including over-reliance on software and financial inequities. Staff raised concerns about reputational risks and potential impact on language skill development. Evaluation is essential to ensure that outputs are not only evidence-based but also relevant to the needs of students, staff and institutions.

The project's impact lies in the positive changes it creates for key stakeholders. For students, the guidelines will provide fairness, clarity, and equity in accessing digital tools. For staff, the recommendations will foster consistent and informed advice. For institutions, evaluation underlines the need to balance academic integrity with inclusivity and reputation management. The evaluation adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining questionnaire data, further data collection, and sector benchmarking. The findings will help us improve guidelines, share best practice, and encourage conversations across the sector about responsible use of translation software.

Lessons learned and next steps

In this section, you should reflect on the key learning points drawn from this activity for the

institution. You might also consider what learning other universities or the tertiary education sector could take from this activity. If there is any planned follow-on activity, please provide brief details here.

Text in this section should not exceed **200 words**

We have found it difficult to recruit participants to the project and so have made the decision to recruit further participants at the beginning of next academic year; one notable lesson learned was that, despite the anonymous nature of the survey, international students were somewhat reluctant to openly discuss their use of translation software.

Our next priority is to develop guidelines for students on appropriate use of translation software. We will pilot this initially in a “Study Skills” course run at our own institution in order to evaluate students’ views of its effectiveness. We will additionally evaluate the effectiveness of the different software options reported in our study for translating specialist academic texts. This will allow us to make recommendations to students and institutions around the most effective software options to use. Finally, we hope to carry out more empirically-based experimental studies studying the effect of translation software on students’ understanding of academic material.

References

Please provide links to any relevant websites or further information about the activity in this section.