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.

Developing resources and tools to support students' use of AI technologies in their career learning and development

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Context

With fast evolving and increasingly available AI technologies, the complexity of the tools available to careers professionals, and directly to students and graduates is growing exponentially. The ever increasing range of influences and complexity inevitably leads to conflicting information and advice. Developing services and resources which help students recognise and make sense of this complexity of information and influences is becoming ever more important.

This project explores students' use of AI in relation to their career learning and development, building understanding of the benefits and challenges students face in its use and exploring how it impacts on their career readiness and confidence. The impact of AI in a recruitment and selection context is also explored from the employer perspective. Findings are summarised in a report and will be used to inform the development of a suite of tools and resources to support students and graduates to develop the skills and insights needed to be able to benefit from and avoid the pitfalls of using AI in their career development and learning.

Description of activity

A project team was formed comprising Careers and Employability Service staff, the Dean for Employability, and two part-time student interns, with representation from both the Aberdeen and Qatar campuses.

In March–April 2025, an online student survey (92 respondents) explored how students (in Aberdeen and Qatar) are using AI in their career development. A parallel employer survey (19 respondents) gathered insights into how AI is influencing recruitment and selection, focusing on contacts in key University of Aberdeen campus locations in Aberdeen and Qatar.

Findings covered student attitudes toward AI, its use in career contexts, and its perceived impact on career readiness. Employer perspectives on AI in recruitment were also analysed. Data was processed using NVivo and Excel.

A full report, including findings and recommendations, will be completed by September 2025. These recommendations will guide the creation of a student-focused resource set, helping students harness the benefits of AI while avoiding potential pitfalls.

An online guide to using AI tools in careers and a short self-study mini course were the most popular formats for students and strong preference was for resources to be housed on official university platforms.

The final outputs will be launched in November 2025.

Evaluation and impact

Student and employer surveys added insight into how each group view and use AI in a careers context, particularly in relation to recruitment and selection.

Our findings show some alignment with previous research on AI use in application and selection, but differ in relation to use in a wider career development context. Only 23% of our survey respondents reported they currently use AI in a careers context, compared to 75.3% in Mirza's (2023) study.

Research outputs, such as development of new guidance, will address concerns raised by some student respondents, reflecting on their experience using a bespoke AI careers tool. Findings will also inform decision making about appropriate AI careers tools and associated guidance to be provided for students in the future.

The resources to be developed as a result of this research project will be guided by the range of research findings. An evaluation approach for the resources to be developed will be built in from the outset. Mechanisms such as learning gain measures on interactive mini courses, and feedback surveys will be built in, in addition to a plan to review student engagement levels across the resources to inform further development.

Lessons learned and next steps

Initial survey findings from students and employers highlight a clear need for guidance on using AI effectively in career-related activities**.** Employers report a rise in applications but a drop in quality, often due to poor AI use—such as submitting AI-generated applications

lacking personal voice. This trend is negatively impacting students' success in selection processes.

The research supports the development of accessible, trustworthy resources to help students navigate AI use in applications, ideally hosted on University platforms to stand out in an information-heavy landscape.

Next steps include publishing a full report with findings and recommendations, followed by a second-phase project to create tailored student facing advice and guidance materials informed by the research.

The project also demonstrated the value of involving student interns. Their contributions - especially in crafting engaging content and boosting survey responses - were vital. Including interns from both Aberdeen and Qatar campuses enriched the project with diverse perspectives and helped achieve balanced participation across locations.

References

References used to inform the research design:

Cardiff University Using AI in your career development - Student Futures+ - Cardiff University [accessed 14/10/2024]

Law, B. (2010) Building on what we know, career learning on the net, colonise or inhabit? www.hihohiho.com/newthinking/crlrninternet.pdf [accessed 14/10/2024]

Marris, L (2023) Less than 10% of students won't use ChatGPT when applying for jobs | ISE [accessed 14/10/2024]

Mirza, D. (2023) The case for generative AI, Upskilling and Policy in HE Phoenix Issue 169 November 2023 [accessed 14/10/2024]