UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

UPDATE ON THE USE OF GENAI IN EDUCATION

1. PURPOSE OF THE PAPER

This paper provides an update regarding the University's approach to supporting staff and students with the use of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) tools in Education. This paper provides a summary of current and future work in this area.

The University Education Committee is invited to note this GenAI update paper for information.

2. PREVIOUS CONSIDERATION BY /FURTHER APPROVAL REQUIRED

	Board/Committee	Date
Previously considered/approved by	N/A	
Further consideration/ approval required by	N/A	

3. RECOMMENDED ACTION

Members of the UEC are provided with this paper for information only.

4. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

We are continually refining our approach to supporting staff and students with the integration of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) tools in education, reflecting the evolving landscape. Our approach comprises the following four strands:

- Incorporating GenAI tools into applications designed to support learning, teaching, and assessment.
  By integrating these tools into our VLE and associated applications, we aim to enhance the overall educational experience and foster innovation and efficiencies in teaching approaches.
- Supporting staff and students in navigating the integration of GenAI in education.
  This support encompasses training, resources, collaboration, knowledge-sharing, and guidance to facilitate appropriate utilisation of GenAI tools within educational contexts.
- Conducting thorough investigations into the attitudes of both staff and students regarding the integration of GenAI in education.
  This research informs our strategies and ensures alignment with the needs and expectations of all stakeholders.
- Contributing to internal and external AI Groups
  By contributing to internal and external groups we will ensure that we have the appropriate mechanisms in place to lead the universities response to GenAI in education

We propose that over the next academic year we will provide an update to UEC on each of these four strands.

4.1. Incorporation of GenAI tools in applications that support Learning, Teaching & Assessment

Following extensive consultations with staff, the Blackboard Learn AI Design Assistant was implemented on the 21 December 2023, so that staff could explore their potential use from Term 2 onwards. All features were implemented except for the image generation feature. Continuous updates are made to the AI Design Assistant, incorporating it into existing workflows where it can potentially support staff by doing some of the “heavy lifting”, based on the crafting of appropriate prompts by staff. These updates are made available to staff at opportune times, with the exception of image generation features which continue to be remain disabled until it is appropriate for this feature to be reviewed and discussed.

We are committed to evaluating their effectiveness following the conclusion of Term 2 to assess their impact and gather insights for further enhancement.

4.2. Supporting staff and students in navigating the integration of GenAI in Education

The latest update of the guidance for staff and students on the utilisation of GenAI in education was completed in January 2024 ahead of term 2 beginning, with an update provided to the UEC on the 16 of January. These guidelines will undergo a further review and revision process two weeks prior to the commencement of term 3. This periodic review ensures that the guidance remains current, relevant, and aligned with the latest evidence and developments in the field of GenAI in education.

We are working on updating the guidance for staff on the appropriate handling of student data including the onward sharing of students assessments. This guidance will make it very clear that any submission of student work to 3rd party external AI detection tools by staff is in breach of our regulations.

A series of discussions were facilitated by the Library Digital Skills team in November and early December on the topic of “Artificial Intelligence (AI) Conversations at the Library” which were targeted at different stakeholders (PGR students, UG and PGT students, Staff with a research focus and staff with teaching focus).

As part of our ongoing discussion panel series facilitated by CAD, we hosted our first joint discussion panel for research and teaching staff entitled “Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) tools: Impact on Academic's Educational and Research Practice”, aiming to bring together the different aspects of academic staff work.

4.3. Research on the attitudes of staff and students to the integration of GenAI in Education

We continue to seek funding opportunities for carrying out research on the attitudes of staff and students to the integration of GenAI in Education in order to inform policy and practice. To date we have been successful in obtaining funding internally, and from the Advance HE Collaborative Development Fund 2023-24.

Study 1: Exploring Students' Attitudes towards Generative AI and Assessment Practices at University

Funding: Internally funded project

This research initially was designed to inform the ongoing work to enhance provision of support to enhance academic integrity by minimising the engagement of student with contract cheating by exploring the experiences views of university students on the barriers and facilitators to engaging with assignment writing services and their views on what approaches would be most effective in the prevention of engagement with such services. It is now being expanded to include an investigation into the attitudes of students towards generative AI and assessment practices within the university setting.

Progress: ethical approval granted, data collection is complete, transcription and analysis underway.

Study 2: Towards Inclusive Intelligence: A Comprehensive Examination of GenAI Attitudes Among Higher Education Stakeholders

Funding: Advanced HE Collaborative Development Fund 2023-24

This research explores the attitudes and perceptions of diverse higher-education (HE) stakeholders towards the integration of GenAI in academic settings. While the sector has primarily focused on the implications for academic integrity, this study proposes a broader examination of education, including instructional methodologies and delivery approaches. This work is being led by Aberdeen university in collaboration with Edinburgh Napier University, University of Dundee and Heriot-Watt University

Progress: Two student research interns appointed, ethics application submitted

Study 3: GenAI in Tertiary Education

Funding: Carnegie Trust

Progress: Awaiting formal confirmation of funding award, ethics application submitted

4.4. Contributing to Internal and External Groups

Internal Groups: AI@ABZ Working Group

The AI@ABZ Working Group, chaired by Brian Henderson, has been established. The remit of the group is as follows:

- Develop and maintain a comprehensive University AI strategy and related policies that aligns with the University's mission, 2040 strategy and values.
- Establish clear guidelines and policies for AI project initiation, implementation, and monitoring.
- Help inform the requirement for appropriate systems and data structure in support of AI deployment.
- Helps ensure that AI projects are ethically sound, transparent, lawful, secure and accountable.
- Champion the use of AI and foster a culture of collaboration and innovation among stakeholders.
- Within the oversight and agreement of DSC, provides funding for AI related projects and oversees resultant work.

- Provide training and support to academics, professional services staff, and students to enable responsible and meaningful use of AI for research, education and administration.
- Monitor and evaluate AI projects to ensure they meet the University's goals and objectives and meet legal/regulatory requirements.
- Regularly review and update the AI strategy, policy and guidelines to reflect new developments and best practices.
- Monitoring the AI regulatory landscape with respect to impacts on AI and ensuring the working group is kept up to date on developments to inform communications and the work above.

External Groups: Scottish Artificial Intelligence in Tertiary Education Network

The Scottish Artificial Intelligence in Tertiary Education Network (ScAITEN) is a Scotland-wide group for those leading on artificial intelligence in learning and teaching in their institutions. It was established by Heriot-Watt University. The network has representation from all Higher Education (HE) institutions in Scotland and is working to include Colleges. The group serves to co-ordinate and share practices around artificial intelligence (AI)in learning and teaching. It also undertakes collaborative research and events. The network's current objective is to position Scottish Tertiary Education as open, ethical and innovative in the use of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) in learning and teaching.

5. FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information is available from Professor Kirsty Kiezebrink, Dean for Educational Innovation (k.kiezebrink@abdn.ac.uk) and Dr Sara Preston, Senior eLearning Adviser, (s.preston@abdn.ac.uk) Centre for Academic Development.

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Freedom of Information/Confidentiality Status: Open