

2. Student Essay Submission

Title

Beyond Prohibition: Integrating Generative AI into Higher Education Assessment and Learning

Introduction

The rapid emergence of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) tools, such as ChatGPT and Claude, has fundamentally disrupted the landscape of higher education. While digital tools have long supported academic study, GenAI's ability to synthesise complex information and generate human-like text presents unprecedented challenges to established educational norms.

A key concern among educators is the threat these tools pose to academic integrity, particularly in relation to traditional assessment methods. However, an exclusive focus on these risks overlooks the significant potential of GenAI to enhance personalised learning.

This essay argues that although GenAI undermines the reliability of conventional essay-based assessments, it also offers meaningful benefits for student engagement and skill development. As a result, universities should move beyond outright prohibition and adopt a policy of critical integration by redesigning assessments to coexist with emerging technologies. The discussion will first explore challenges to academic integrity, then examine learning benefits, and finally address the need for assessment reform.

Body Paragraph 1: Challenges to Academic Integrity

The most immediate challenge posed by GenAI is the erosion of academic integrity in traditional written assessments. Coursework that relies heavily on knowledge summarisation or standard essay writing is especially vulnerable to AI-generated plagiarism. Baron (2023) highlights that existing plagiarism detection software increasingly struggles to distinguish between human and AI-produced text, creating a "crisis of trust" in grading systems.

This issue stems from the way GenAI generates original outputs by predicting word sequences rather than copying text verbatim, allowing it to evade similarity-based detection tools (Zhang & Li, 2024). As a result, students can submit high-quality work with limited cognitive engagement, undermining the credibility of academic qualifications.

Although some institutions have implemented strict bans, enforcement is largely ineffective outside controlled examination settings. Consequently, continued reliance on take-home essays as a primary measure of learning is becoming increasingly unsustainable.

Body Paragraph 2: Benefits for Student Learning

Despite integrity concerns, GenAI offers significant opportunities to enhance learning through personalisation and instant feedback. Unlike human tutors, AI tools can provide continuous academic support without time constraints. Chen et al. (2024) demonstrate that when AI is used as a Socratic tutor—prompting learners through guided questioning rather than direct answers—students show improved critical thinking skills, particularly in STEM disciplines.

This indicates that GenAI can effectively scaffold learning by adapting explanations to individual proficiency levels. Additionally, language and formatting support offered by AI allows students, especially second-language writers, to focus on higher-order thinking rather than surface-level accuracy (EduTech Future, 2023).

Therefore, rather than replacing learning, GenAI can function as an assistive tool that broadens access to academic support and enhances learner autonomy.

Body Paragraph 3: The Need for Assessment Reform

Given both the risks and benefits of GenAI, assessment reform represents the most sustainable response. Universities must shift from evaluating what students know to assessing how they apply knowledge in conjunction with technology. A prohibition-focused approach fails to acknowledge that AI literacy is increasingly expected in professional contexts (World Economic Forum, 2024).

Assessment methods should evolve to include oral examinations, reflective portfolios, and tasks that require critical evaluation of AI-generated outputs. The University of Manchester Teaching Framework (2023) emphasises the importance of prioritising learning processes over final products, encouraging students to demonstrate inquiry, verification, and reflection skills.

By embedding AI use within assessment design—such as asking students to critique flawed AI responses—institutions can cultivate critical digital literacy that aligns with contemporary academic and workplace demands.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the integration of GenAI in higher education presents a clear paradox: it threatens the integrity of traditional assessments while simultaneously offering powerful tools for personalised learning. As this essay has demonstrated, banning AI technologies is an impractical and short-sighted response that leaves students unprepared for a technology-driven future.

Instead, universities should adopt a balanced approach that integrates AI literacy into curricula while redesigning assessments to prioritise critical thinking, authenticity, and reflective practice. Ultimately, the rise of GenAI does not mark the decline of higher education but signals an essential evolution towards more resilient and relevant pedagogical models.