

Pre-trained Large Language Models for Question-Answering

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Abstract

- Retrieval-Augmented Generation (RAG) in large language models (LLMs) enables querying external documents for continuous knowledge updates.
- Current RAG methods often face challenges like irrelevant queries, incorrect responses, and content repetition [5].
- This project aims to adapt LLMs using RAG for efficient question-answering by focusing on **Relevacy Prediction, Hierarchical Approach, Hyperparameter Tuning, and Finetuning Embedding Model**.
- The improved workflow **demonstrates significant enhancements** in generating accurate and contextually relevant answers.

Background

- Large Language Models (LLMs)** are powerful tools for various natural language processing tasks, pre-trained on massive datasets to generate human-like responses [3].
- Retrieval-Augmented Generation (RAG)** allows LLMs to access external knowledge and update responses based on new information, as shown in Figure 1.

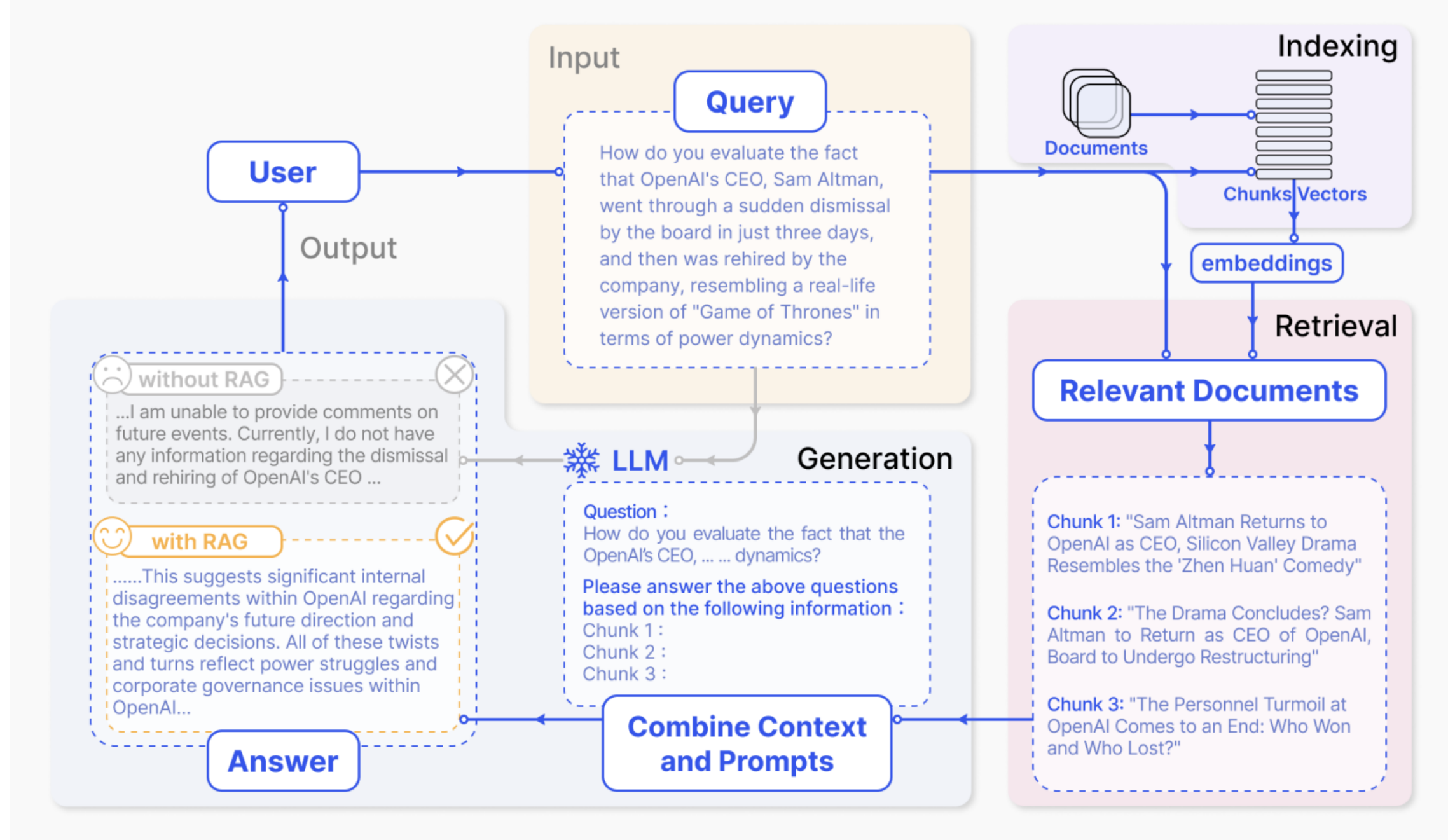


Figure 1. A representative instance of the RAG process applied to question answering [5].

Problem Statement

Commonly Observed Issues When Applying RAG

- Irrelevant Queries:** The retrieval mechanism sometimes fails to filter out irrelevant queries, leading to unnecessary computational effort and reduced efficiency.
- Incorrect Responses:** The system occasionally retrieves incorrect or incomplete chunks of information, resulting in inaccuracies in the generated answers.
- Content Repetition:** The model often repeats information redundantly within the same response, affecting the quality and coherence of the output.

Research Goal

This project aims to identify key factors that impact the performance of the RAG method in the context of the DKU Bulletin. To address those issues, the performance will be assessed on the following evaluation metrics with a 0-to-1 scale:

- Retrieval Performance Metric: **Hit Rate**, which evaluates whether top-k retrieved documents contain relevant content.
- Generation Performance Metrics [2]: Shown in Figure 2, **Faithfulness**, **Context Precision**, **Context Recall**, and **Answer Relevancy** are used to measure the quality of generated answers.

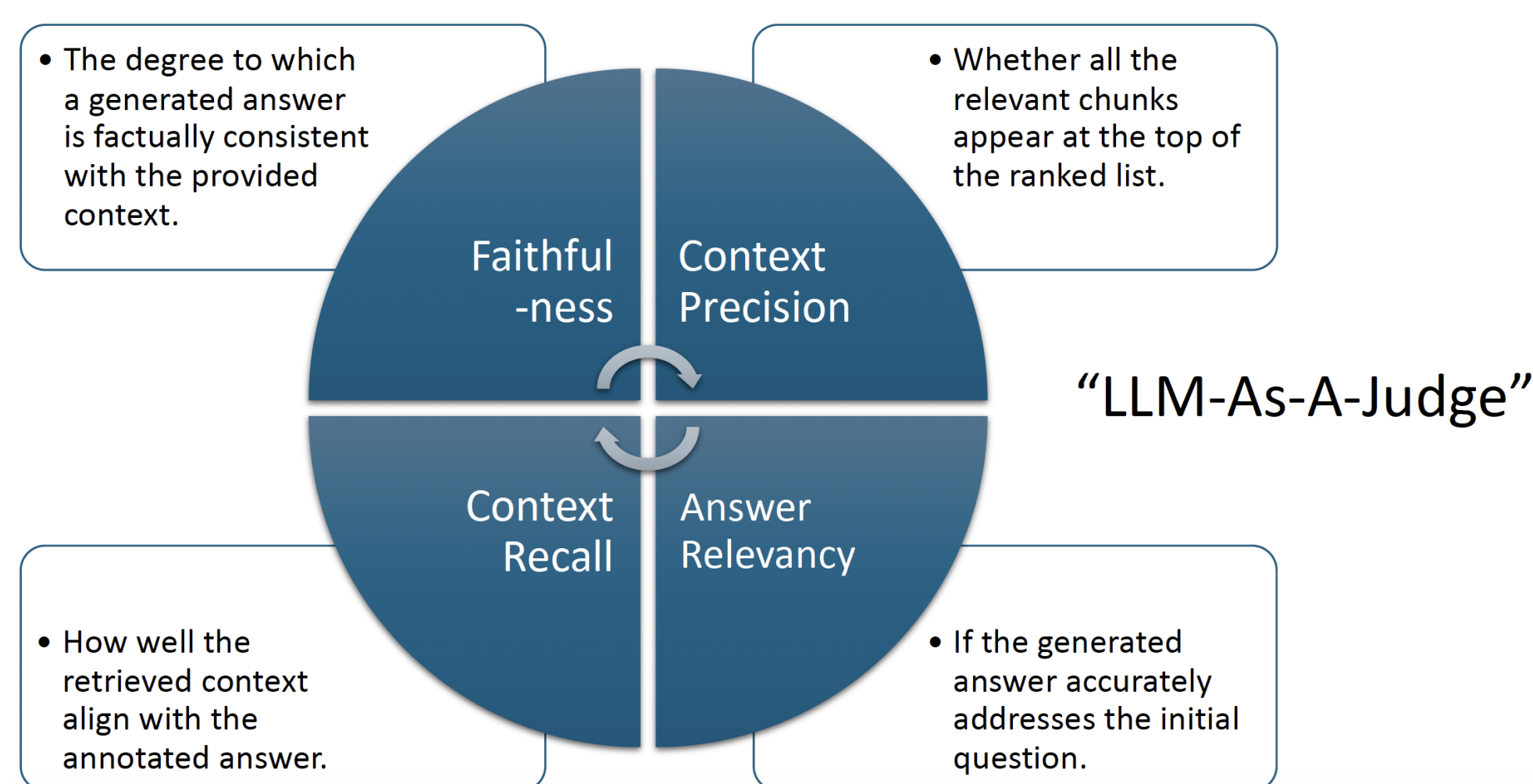


Figure 2. Four evaluation metrics as indicators of generation performance.

Methodology

Overall Mechanism

The overall workflow of the proposed model is depicted in Figure 3.

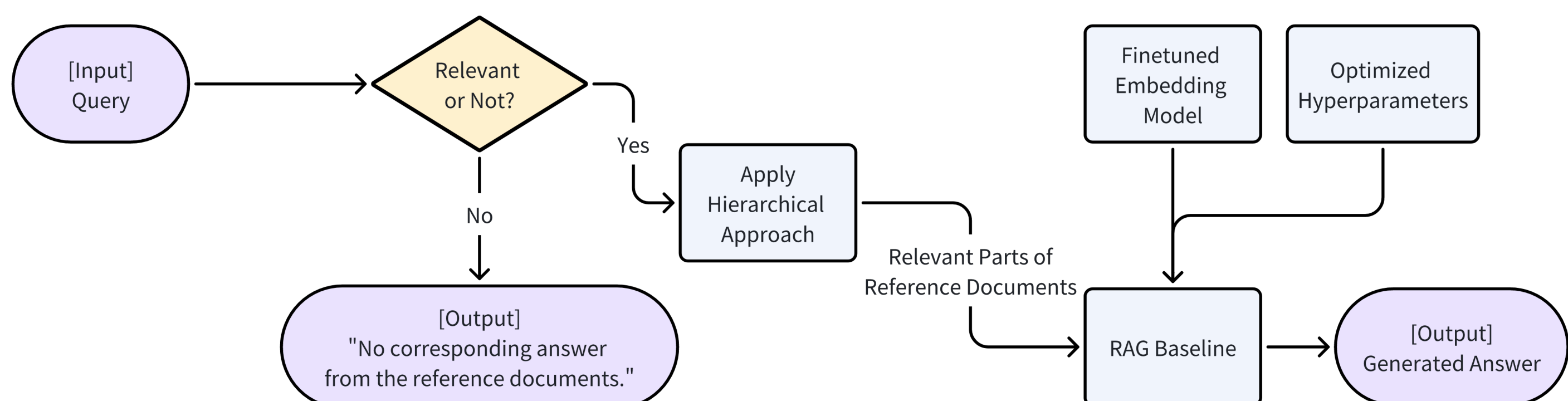


Figure 3. The overall model workflow.

Methodology (continued)

Relevancy Prediction

- Addressed Issues:** Filtering irrelevant queries that reduce efficiency and increase computational costs.
- The cosine similarity between the query and retrieved documents is calculated as a benchmark, with a threshold of 0.6.

Hierarchical Approach

- Addressed Issues:** Efficiently handling large documents and selecting precise content relevant to the query.
- As illustrated in Figure 4, on each level of the hierarchy, we test our query embedding against that level's summary embedding. If relevant, continue down the hierarchy for that specific part of the document.

Hyperparameter Tuning

- Addressed Issues:** Balancing between accurate, non-redundant responses and avoiding information loss.
- Tested 75 sets of different combinations of hyperparameters.
 - Large length limit of generated answers or overlapped chunks led to repetition.
 - Inappropriate size of chunks caused information loss.
- Best hypermeter combination was selected to prevent redundancy while ensuring comprehensive answers.

Finetuning Embedding Model [4]

- Addressed Issues:** Improving the relevance and contextual accuracy of retrieved content.
- Used a manually verified dataset with (*query, context*) pairs to finetune the embedding model, *all-mpnet-base-v2*.

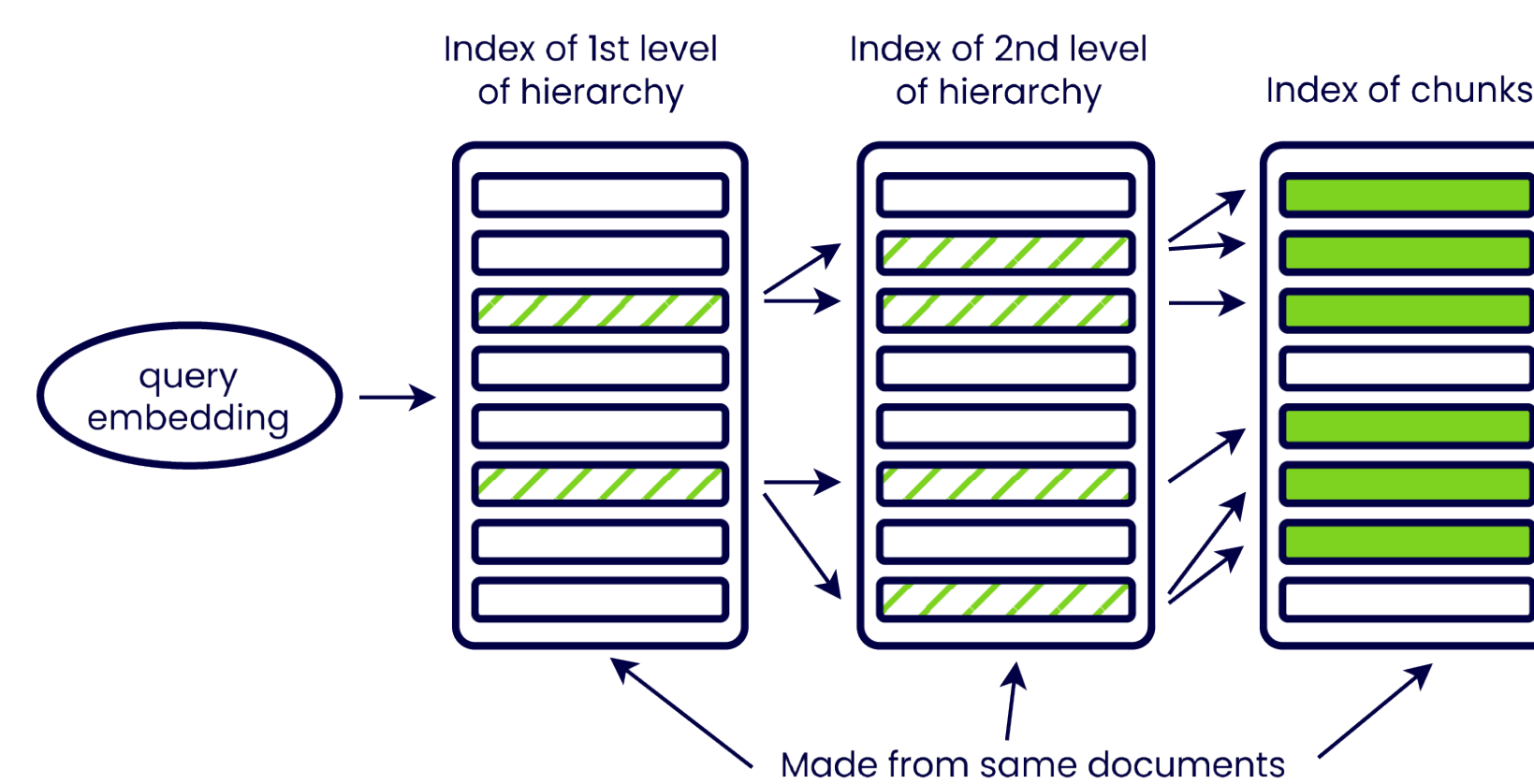


Figure 4. Hierarchical index retrieval overview [1].

Experimental Results

- Experiments were implemented in Langchain, with *all-mpnet-base-v2* as the embedding model and *Llama3-8B* for text generation.
- Figure 5 reveals the performance with the embedding model *all-mpnet-base-v2*, before and after fine-tuning.
 - Improvements were noted in most performance metrics, though with a slight decrease in Answer Relevancy.

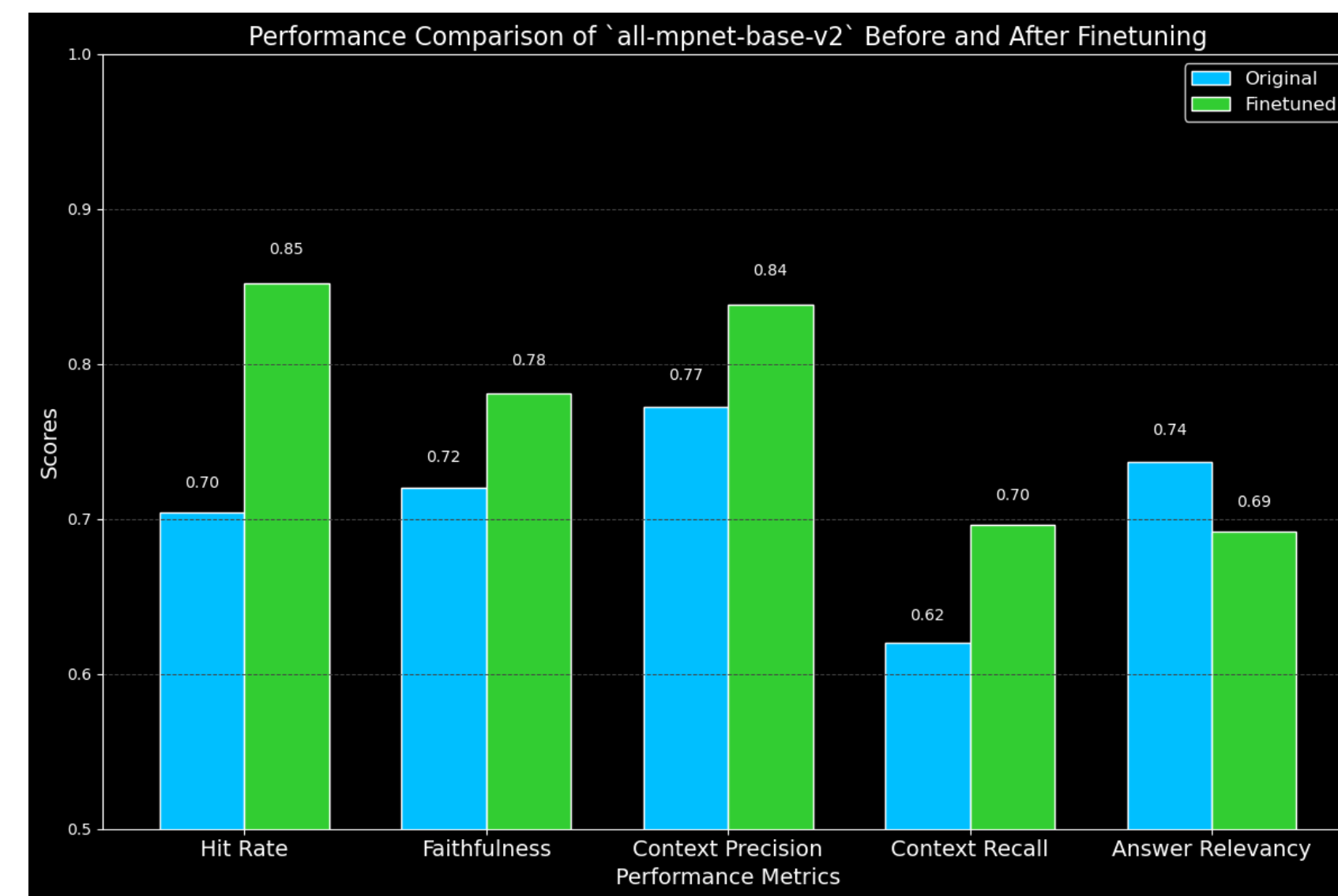


Figure 5. Performance with(out) finetuning.

Conclusion & Future Work

- Enhanced LLM-based question-answering using RAG, relevancy checks, a hierarchical approach, and fine-tuning.
- Workflow of Proposed RAG Framework:
 - Assess query relevance to reference document.
 - Apply a hierarchical approach to select the most pertinent section.
 - Use the selected section with a finetuned RAG model for answer generation.
- Improved focus on relevant contexts, with minor issues in answer relevance.
- Future work can use a more advanced RAG framework and explore more comprehensive methods for optimizing content selection, to make the model more adaptive and context-aware.

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- Runchu Wu** contributed to the optimization of hyperparameter configurations.
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