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Title of paper: Next Steps for AI in Education

Main purpose of the paper: For information / For discussion

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Purpose of the paper

To consider the risk to academic standards, and controls required, in relation to inappropriate use of AI in assessments.

Relation to strategy and values

Education Strategy

Recommendations:

For discussion.

Consultation to date (including any previous committee consideration and its outcome):

University Education Committee

Next steps for AI in Education

Background

1. We have come a long way since introducing our guiding principles for generative AI in education back in March 2023. Although there is of course more to do, we have made significant progress in relation to principle 1 (students and colleagues will be supported in developing their AI literacy, enabling them to critically, effectively, responsibly, and ethically communicate with and use AI tools). There is a wealth of information and guidance about AI and how to use it responsibly within the education for both colleagues and our students. This includes guidance on acceptable and unacceptable use of AI in assessment and the development of a tool that encourages colleagues to consider AI vulnerability when designing assessment strategies.
2. As awareness and confidence in the capabilities of AI tools has grown there is a need to define our position as to where and how use of such tools may be acceptable. It is important that we encourage innovation and adoption of AI in a responsible and safe way and provide clear boundaries within which such use is deemed institutionally accepted, or not.
3. The capabilities of generative AI have progressed at a significant pace and pose significant risk to the integrity and standards of our assessments and the credibility of the awards we bestow. It is essential that UEC be able to effectively monitor this risk and implement appropriate controls as mitigation.
4. This paper therefore has two parts each of which requiring discussion and direction from UEC.

Part 1: Academic integrity and standards

5. Generative AI poses a significant risk to our ability to assure academic integrity, standards and fairness of assessment outcomes. The majority of learners value and respect the need for academic integrity, but the proliferation, accessibility, and capabilities of generative AI tools makes it easier to intentionally, or unintentionally, use AI in assessments in ways that we may consider unacceptable. There is no reliable way to identify where AI has been used inappropriately in the assessment process thus compromising the ability to initiate academic misconduct processes.
6. Fairness of assessment outcomes is critical in maintaining trust among our student community, as well as the value of their award. It is our responsibility to adopt assessment strategies that minimise the proliferation in the temptation to utilise AI inappropriate ways. We should also be cognisant that there is inequity of access to AI tools with more capable and effective tools available behind paywalls.
7. Principle 2 (teaching, assessment, and student experience strategies will be adapted to incorporate ethical use of AI tools) and principle 3 (academic integrity and rigour in assessment will be upheld) set our expectations. To support colleagues in evaluating risk and adapting practice we produced PASS AI, guidance highlighting the case for change in assessment practices and the relative vulnerability of different assessment methodologies. PASS AI was issued as guidance to support the MoFS 2025-26 approval process. It is unclear what impact this had, in particular in areas that may be most vulnerable to AI. The AI vulnerability of assessment strategies will vary across the institution, and we should not consider when and where it is appropriate to move from a position of offering guidance to requiring/mandating a change in practice.

Our risk

8. There is a risk to the value of degree awards should it be possible for AI to be used to pass such degrees. The potential reputational damage of awarding a degree completed successfully with AI generated or answered assessment cannot be underestimated. The is also a significant risk to our conditions of registration, particularly B4 (which requires us to ensure students are assessed effectively and that each assessment it valid, reliable and that our awards are credible) and B5 (which requires us to ensure that any award we grant reflects the knowledge and skills of the student against sector-recognised standards).

9. Our risk register includes the following in relation to the potential impact of not being able to ensure academic standards:

    - Risk register item 5: *"Assessment approaches are not effective to ensure academic standards (inc. in response to the use of AI)"*
    - Controls *"Academic regulations and assessment policy; local control mechanisms (Board of examiners) and TPSC monitoring of outputs (AMR, EE Reports); annual monitoring of degree outcomes, academic appeals and academic misconduct by UEC; AI specific resources and guidance for staff and student"*
    - We believe our controls are *partially* effective and this is a risk that we need to *treat*.

10. Minutes from the most recent meeting of TPSC (29th May 2025), one of our risk controls, highlight increasing concern arising from AMR and EE reports. At present, it is challenging to identify programmes that may be most vulnerable, i.e. those wholly or mostly reliant on take home written assessments, to support them in adapting their assessment practices.

UEC to consideration

11. UEC has devolved responsibility from Senate to manage the quality and standards of our educational offer. Though our renewed education strategy we have the opportunity to consider assessment strategies and how we maintain academic integrity and standards in an AI-enabled world. Education for Life 2030+ therefore provides the mechanism to drive change. There is however a degree of urgency to change practice in a more-timely way than possible through the implementation plan for Education for Life 2030+ given it is a risk we are facing now.

12. To enable us to monitor our risk and act effectively in a timely way, we need to consider the following:

    - How do we identify potential at risk programmes and facilitate change to vulnerable assessment practices where necessary?
    - What data do we need to identify and act upon potential risk to the standards and integrity of our assessment processes?
    - Should implementation of the assessment element of our education strategy be accelerated to mitigate risk?
    - How should we respond if and when there is an acute need, e.g. an AI related academic integrity scandal before or during the 2025-26 academic year?

Part 2: Refining guidance and permission to innovate

13. Principle 4 (a culture of innovation, collaboration, and sharing of best practice in the application of AI tools will be fostered) sets out our ambition to adapt AI tools where the benefit education and the student experience. However, as awareness of AI and its capabilities grow there it perhaps a need to provide more guidance and direction as to where and how the use of AI tools may be acceptable, or not.

14. It is important that we facilitate a culture of collaboration and innovation. To do this we need to be clear about where colleagues can freely experiment and implement and where there may be any boundaries where implementation of AI-enabled tools may require additional scrutiny. This will not only guide colleagues who strive to improve educational experiences and processes, but will also provide a clear steer for groups such as DiscoverAI to explore areas where AI adoption may be more acceptable. It is perhaps worth reflecting on the guidance provided by the Department of Education for Schools and how AI can be used to assist marking and write letters to parent.

15. It is proposed that we undertake a series of listening exercised across the institution, not just in education, to understand who and where colleagues may want to explore use of AI and the guidance they would find helpful in doing so. UEC has a role to play in considering the potential of AI to enhance education and the educational experience, as well as where we may want to think more carefully before deploying AI tools.

UEC consideration

16. In anticipation of institution-wide consideration of how we provide the authority and confidence for colleagues to explore how best to implement AI within agreed boundaries, it is worth UEC considering where adoption of AI in education acceptable or not. Are we comfortable with AI being involved in the following, and if so to what extent:

    - Marking and feedback of assessed work
    - AI assistant supporting learning and teaching
    - AI assistant for student support, including wellbeing
    - Generation of teaching content and/or planning of teaching activities
    - Communication with learners
    - AI in learner analytics, including predictive analytics
    - Any other areas in the education space we should consider and include in any guidance?

Actions requested

17. UEC to determine measures of risk and potential actions required to mitigate against the threat of AI to academic integrity and standards
18. UEC to determine any limitations in how AI is deployed so we can clearly guide and give colleagues permission to innovate within any

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