



AI STUDENT STORIES SUMMARY REPORT

June 2023

METHODOLOGY

An online survey collected 125 student stories of use of artificial intelligence in university exams, assignments, and learning. Participants were compensated for their time with a free ice pop.

FINDINGS

Responses were largely split regarding use of AI in learning and assignments at university, with those claiming not to have used AI giving the reasons that they do not know how to use AI or they do not feel it is helpful for their course. Respondents also stated they do not believe AI tools are reliable or accurate enough for their needs:

"I haven't used it as it is not good for complex tasks."

Some respondents also expressed concern regarding getting caught by their department as a driving factor behind avoidance of AI:

"I would be too anxious about getting caught."

Responses tend to reveal a disparity in AI use between subjects, with those studying STEM based subjects utilizing it more than those studying arts subjects, who express they do not find it to be useful, although there were some exceptions to this. One individual studying History stated they had not used AI as they did not feel it could do as good a job as they could:

"My work tends to be very personal, reflecting my beliefs and morals, and I doubt AI could ever replicate that."

Although there were few responses admitting to explicitly cheating using AI, many respondents stated they knew of people who had cheated. Responses claiming to have used AI in their learning mostly referenced Chat GPT, with Snapchat AI being frequently referenced also. Programs such as OpenAI, Grammarly, Blue Willow and Perplexity were also referred to, but less so.

Respondents who admitted using AI in their university learning largely reported using it as a tool to aid revision, using AI to assist in creating flash cards, practice questions and mnemonics. Responses also expressed that AI is useful in providing summaries of topics and concepts, as well as sourcing additional readings and using it to write notes.

"Others use it to create flash cards."

"I have used Chat GPT to create mnemonics to aid in my learning."

"They use Chat GPT for question creating for exam practice."

Additionally, many students reported using AI to fill deficits in university provisions. Responses expressed how despite being provided with past exam papers, departments do not provide a marks scheme enabling students to check their answers. AI allows them to better understand if their answers are suitable:

"I've only used it a little bit for past paper answers to make sure I've been on the right track as the Uni don't release the marks scheme."

Some students also reported using AI to help them better understand concepts that were either poorly explained by university staff or that they did not fully understand:

"It helps when TA's explanations don't make sense."

Regarding AI use for assignments, respondents reported using AI to help them check and write code, while the main use of AI for assignments was for initial research and to gather ideas ahead of writing:

"I have used AI to help plan essays in the past for revision only. It helps establish ideas."

"I have used it to give me ideas for certain pieces of coursework."

Finally, one student with Dyslexia highlighted how useful AI can be for students with an ILSP, expressing how it helped them improve the spelling and structure of their work, summarise readings and referencing, especially given the frequent strikes and sometimes remote nature of university, which often means they are unable to access the appropriate support. However, due to unclear guidelines and lack of understanding of how helpful AI can be for those with an ILSP, this individual claimed to have stopped using it due to fear of being penalised, despite feeling they are not actually violating plagiarism or assessment rules.

"AI is a game changer for those with learning difficulties who find university hard, especially due to the remoteness of lecturers."

CONSIDERATIONS & IMPLICATIONS

Results from this research indicate that those who are utilizing AI as part of their university education are largely doing so in a way that supplements university provisions rather than in a manner which violates plagiarism guidelines. This brings into question if students should be taught how to effectively use AI to benefit their learning, in the same way they are taught how to effectively use OneSearch and referencing software to maintain high standards of academic practice. Departments should consider instructing students how to use AI effectively to supplement their learning in a way that upholds standards of academic practice and prevents over reliance on AI leading to explicit cheating, especially considering the benefits AI can have for those with ILSPs.

When reviewing these results, it is important to consider that despite being completely anonymous, it is likely that respondents were still reluctant to be completely honest regarding AI use due to fear of consequences. Additionally, there are inconsistencies regarding what constitutes AI. Use of Grammarly or

even spell check can be labelled as AI, although many people do not realise it, potentially impacting responses.

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