Policy on the use of Generative AI in Teaching, Learning and Assessment

Section 1 - Executive Summary

(1) Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) is likely to change the way Australians work, and the University of Newcastle (University) will look to harness its potential in teaching and learning. Recognising the rapidly changing employment environment our students will be entering when they graduate, the education experience offered by the University to students will prioritise activities that develop life-ready graduates who are community-minded, resilient, and ready for work.

(2) The emergence of GenAI, while creating new possibilities for learning and teaching, has increased the academic integrity risks associated with some assessment options.

(3) Appropriate use of GenAI will vary across different disciplines and is likely to change as its use becomes more ubiquitous in society.

Section 2 - Acknowledgements

(4) The content of this document has benefited from input from the following resources:

a. Australian Universities Accord Final Report. February 2024
b. Ai In Education. A Microsoft Special Report. April 2024

Section 3 - Purpose

(5) This Policy provides the principles to support student, course, discipline, Program, School and College decisions on the appropriate application of GenAI.

(6) This policy supports, reinforces, and should be read in conjunction with the following documents:

a. Student Code of Conduct
b. Staff Code of Conduct
c. Academic Integrity and Ethical Academic Conduct Policy
d. Program Design and Management Manual
e. Course Design and Management Manual, Course Assessment and Grading Manual
f. Digital Security Policy
g. Ethical Framework

(7) In the event of any inconsistency between this policy and any higher-level policy document, the higher-level document prevails to the extent of the inconsistency.

Section 4 - Scope

(8) This Policy applies to all students or staff who engage in teaching, learning and assessment activities that may involve GenAI.

Section 5 - Audience

(9) The Policy should be read and understood by all:

a. students at the University in all modes of study, including undergraduate students and postgraduate coursework students; and
b. staff involved in the design and delivery of coursework courses and programs and who support student learning.

Section 6 - Definitions

(10) In the context of this document, the following definitions apply:

a. GenAI: Any tool, system or software that can be used to generate new content in one or more formats (code, text, images, audio, video, etc).
b. GenAI Literacy: The knowledge and skills that enable staff and students to critically understand, use, and evaluate GenAI systems and tools to participate safely and ethically in an increasingly digital world.
c. Programmatic Assessment Security: A defined series of secure assessments, delivered across a program of study, used to assure student attainment of program learning outcomes.
d. Secure Assessment: Supervised assessment that facilitates observable attainment of program/course learning outcomes, verifying that students demonstrated the required knowledge and skills.

Section 7 - Principles

(11) The University recognises that the informed and ethical use and understanding of GenAI is integral to lifelong learning and crucial in developing students abilities to navigate a technologically driven society. Embedding GenAI into teaching and learning activities ensures students are not merely users of the technology but understand its impact, limitations, and ethical considerations.

(12) The University is committed to:

a. ensuring that the utilisation of GenAI contributes to the development of life-ready graduates who are community-minded, resilient, and ready for work;
b. ensuring graduates are trained in the appropriate use of GenAI tools, systems, and software;
c. providing opportunities for staff and students to develop the ability to apply GenAI to real work experiences through the development of resources to support GenAI literacy; and
d. mitigating potential risks to the quality of student educational experiences should technological, financial, or social factors result in inequitable access to GenAI tools, systems, and software.

(13) In relation to teaching and learning, ongoing advancements in access to, sophistication, variety of GenAI, and the associated limitations and ethical matters (some common to other resources and sources of information) should be considered when determining the appropriate use or application of GenAI.

Section 8 - Details

Developing Literacy

(14) The University will:

a. provide student-facing resources to support the development of GenAI Literacy; and
b. provide appropriate professional development opportunities for staff to support the development of GenAI Literacy.

(15) Staff should:

a. be proactive in pursuing opportunities to develop a level of GenAI Literacy, appropriate to the responsibilities of their role; and
b. where required, consider the level of GenAI Literacy that students will require to be an active participant in educational experiences offered by the University; and
c. promote opportunities for students to develop their GenAI Literacy.

(16) Students should be proactive in pursuing opportunities to develop a level of GenAI appropriate to the needs of their courses and programs.

Equitable Access

(17) The University will facilitate access to GenAI in a way that promotes fairness and inclusivity.

(18) Staff should:

a. consider fair and equitable student access in the design and delivery of all learning activities that involve the use of GenAI, taking particular care to avoid the use of subscription or paid services; and
b. provide suitable alternative arrangements should limited access to GenAI disadvantage student(s) in the completion of an assessment that explicitly requires the use of GenAI.

(19) Students should follow the direction of Course Co-ordinators regarding the use of specific GenAI in courses.

Ethical Considerations and Limitations

(20) The range of GenAI platforms and providers means that ethical consideration and limitations are extremely variable. Gen AI outputs may:

a. duplicate and proliferate biases present in the information on which it has been trained;
b. contain inaccurate content and information (commonly referred to as “hallucinations”);
c. lack contextual understanding of the tasks a user is asking it to perform; and
d. contravene accepted norms relating to copyright, ownership, plagiarism and/or attribution.

(21) As part of broader GenAI and information literacy initiatives, the University will provide and promote opportunities for staff and students to gain awareness of ethical considerations and limitations in the use of GenAI in teaching and learning activities.

(22) Staff should:

a. be aware of possible limitations of GenAI being used in teaching and learning; and

b. review and adhere to all terms and conditions, and all relevant University policies and procedures related to the use of GenAI.

(23) Students should:

a. be aware of possible limitations of GenAI being used in teaching and learning; and
b. review and adhere to all terms and conditions, and all relevant University policies and procedures related to the use of GenAI.

Teaching and Learning

(24) All staff who support student learning should be empowered to design teaching sessions, materials and assessments that incorporate the creative use of GenAI tools where appropriate.

(25) The University will:

a. foster a culture of innovation by encouraging experimentation with new GenAI technologies in teaching methodologies; and
b. implement monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess the effectiveness of GenAI integration in educational practices.

(26) Staff should:

a. endeavour to collaborate with industry experts to stay abreast of emerging trends and best practices in the field of GenAI for educational purposes in their respective discipline;
b. regularly evaluate the impact of GenAI on student engagement and learning outcomes to enhance teaching approaches; and
c. encourage and engage in interdisciplinary collaboration among colleagues to explore novel applications of GenAI across various academic disciplines.

(27) Students should:

a. actively participate in available training to develop their proficiency in using GenAI tools for academic purposes;
b. seek opportunities to apply GenAI tools creatively and ethically to enhance their learning experiences and academic achievements, within the specific context and requirements of their courses and program; and
c. provide feedback on the usability and effectiveness of GenAI tools in educational settings to contribute to ongoing improvements in teaching practices.

Assessment and Academic Integrity

(28) Forming trustworthy judgements about student learning in a time of GenAI requires multiple, inclusive, and contextualised approaches to assessment.

(29) Assessment should emphasise security at meaningful points across a program.

(30) The use of GenAI in assessment will be informed by the Principles of Conduct section outlined in the Staff Code of Conduct and Student Code of Conduct.

(31) The use of GenAI does not automatically constitute academic misconduct. However, it may constitute academic misconduct where the use of GenAI has been explicitly prohibited by lecturers and/or Course Co-ordinators.

(32) The University will:

a. maintain an open dialogue with staff and students regarding the acceptable use of GenAI in assessment;
b. encourage discipline specific approaches to addressing the risks to academic integrity posed by GenAI; and
c. support staff to enact necessary assessment changes resulting from the increasing access to, and sophistication of, GenAI.

(33) Staff should:

a. critically evaluate the suitability of current assessment practices and engage in assessment reform and revision as required;
b. clearly communicate with students regarding expectations for the use of GenAI in specific courses and assessments;
c. work towards ensuring that programmatic assessment security is sufficient to assure student attainment of program learning outcomes; and
d. consider, where appropriate, how GenAI may be used in assessment to support assurance of students' attainment of course and program learning outcomes.

(34) Students should:

a. follow directions from teaching staff regarding the use of GenAI in assessments; and
b. appropriately disclose and reference use of GenAI in assessments.

Use of GenAI in Marking

(35) GenAI should not be used to mark student work unless the output is reviewed and approved by the course marker/coordinator before the output is shared with the student.

(36) Any use of generative AI in marking processes must be clearly communicated to students, with students given the opportunity to opt out of the use of GenAI in marking their work.

(37) Staff should:

a. communicate any use of GenAI in marking processes prior to the assessment submission deadline.
b. review and approve the output of any GenAI used in marking processes, prior to provision of the mark to students;
c. communicate the option for students to opt out of the use of any use of GenAI in marking their submission;
d. refrain from using GenAI in marking any work where the student has opted out.

(38) Students should:

a. follow directions from the Course Co-ordinator, including the process for opting out.

Status and Details

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Responsible Executive	Belinda Yourn Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic & Global)
Enquiries Contact	Office of the Pro Vice-Chancellor Education Innovation

Glossary Terms and Definitions

"Graduate" - (Noun) Has the same meaning as in section 3(2) of the University of Newcastle Act 1989.

"University" - The University of Newcastle, a body corporate established under sections 4 and 5 of the University of Newcastle Act 1989.

"Risk" - Effect of uncertainty on objectives. Note: An effect is a deviation from the expected, whether it is positive and/or negative.

"Academic misconduct" - Means conduct by a student that is defined as academic misconduct in the Student Conduct Rule.

"Course" - When referring to a course offered by the University, a course is a set of learning activities or learning opportunities with defined, assessed and recorded learning outcomes. A course will be identified by an alphanumeric course code and course title. Course types include core courses, compulsory courses, directed courses, capstone courses and electives. For all other uses of this term, the generic definition applies.

"Student" - A person formally enrolled in a course or active in a program offered by the University or affiliated entity.

"Learning outcome" - In accordance with the AQF definitions, the expression of a set of knowledge, skills and the application of the knowledge and skills a person has acquired and is able to demonstrate as a result of learning.

"Postgraduate" - Any qualification being at the level of Graduate Certificate or above.

"Program" - When referring to learning, a program is a sequence of approved learning, usually leading to an Award. For all other uses of this term, the generic definition applies.

"School" - An organisational unit forming part of a College or Division, responsible for offering a particular course.

"Staff" - Means a person who was at the relevant time employed by the University and includes professional and academic staff of the University, by contract or ongoing, as well as conjoint staff but does not include visitors to the University.

"Undergraduate" - Refers to any qualification up to and including the level of a Bachelor Honours degree.

"College" - An organisational unit established within the University by the Council.

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