SOLENT UNIVERSITY SOUTHAMPTON

AI and Academic Integrity Policy

Document type: Policy

Location:

Version: 1.0

Last Major Review:

Last updated:

Last Approved by:

Contributors: Dr Carina Buckley, Jennifer Zwarthoed

Contents

1. Glossary

Artificial intelligence: The simulation of human intelligence processes by machines, especially computer systems. These processes include learning, reasoning, prediction, generating new content, and self-correction.

GDPR: General Data Protection Regulation. A legal framework that sets guidelines for the collection and processing of personal information from individuals who live in the European Union (EU). This legislation has been transferred into UK law.

Generative AI: A type of AI that can generate new content, such as text, images, or sound, by learning from a dataset. It is capable of producing outputs that have never been seen before.

Generative Pretrained Transformer (GPT): a type of Large Language Model that is trained on a massive set of data, allowing it to produce novel content based on the next likely outcome.

Hallucination: In the context of AI, hallucination refers to the generation of incorrect or nonsensical information being generated by an AI system, often caused due to overfitting or lack of sufficient data.

Large Language Model (LLM): a computational model that learns statistical relationships from text-based documents to enable general-purpose language generation.

Machine learning: A subset of AI that enables computers to learn from and make decisions based on data.

Prompt: A text input given to an AI system, especially a language model, which tells the AI to generate a specific output or perform a particular task.

Prompt engineering: The process of designing and refining prompts to effectively communicate with AI systems and elicit the desired response or behaviour from them.

2. Summary

2.1 Artificial Intelligence (AI) has the potential to transform and enhance learning, teaching, assessment, research, and administrative processes, and is part of our mission to prepare our students for their working lives beyond Solent University.

2.2 However, while these tools bring many benefits, they also have limitations, which present challenges in maintaining an ethical, inclusive, and equitable learning environment.

2.3 While the use of generative AI does not in itself constitute academic misconduct, staff should engage in open and honest conversations with students around what constitutes permissible use, how it can be helpful in learning and teaching, and where it is more problematic.

2.4 AI tools can support staff and students with learning and teaching-related tasks, where appropriate. However, students' intellectual property and personal data must be respected; staff may not upload student work into any AI tool.

2.5 AI tools may not be used to analyse primary data, particularly where it involves human participants (whether collected directly or user generated), unless this is explicitly stated in the relevant ethics application.

2.6 AI tools remain subject to standard ethical behaviour and academic integrity. Students who submit work generated by AI, but pass it off as their own, will have committed academic misconduct.

2.7 The limitations of AI include its accuracy and reliability, but also the human and environmental cost of its operation. The truly ethical use of AI must consider more than the output.

2.8 This is a fast-evolving domain and as an institution we will need to be flexible in our approach, aware of sector developments, and willing to learn, consider, share and reflect as new challenges arise.

3. Introduction

3.1 Solent University recognises the transformative potential of Artificial Intelligence (AI) to enhance teaching, learning, research, and administrative processes, as part of its commitment to inclusion and excellence in education for learners from all backgrounds. Simultaneously, we acknowledge that the use of generative AI can also be disruptive. At Solent, we are committed to the ethical and responsible use of generative AI and to preparing our staff and students to be leaders in an increasingly AI-enabled environment.

3.2 The University's position on generative AI is that our learning and teaching should be flexible, responsive and robust enough to prepare our students adequately for their working life beyond Solent, and that the active incorporation of AI should prioritise academic integrity and ethical behaviour for both staff and students.

3.3 As such, this policy outlines the following principles that will guide the use of generative AI tools across the university:

3.3.1 The University will support students and staff to become AI-literate.

3.3.2 Staff should be equipped to support students with the use of AI tools effectively and appropriately in their learning experiences.

3.3.3 Research, teaching and assessment using AI should actively promote and maintain its ethical use.

3.3.4 Staff and students are responsible for ensuring that academic rigour and integrity is upheld.

3.3.5 The University will continue to share good practices as the technology and its application in education evolves.

4. AI Literacy

4.1 It is important for students and staff to have a clear understanding of how AI tools operate, the potential benefits they offer for personalised learning, and their limitations. Therefore, Solent University will provide guidance and training to help staff and students develop and enhance their AI literacy, as part of overall digital and information literacy, although it will not be possible to provide training on specific tools. Our role is to better prepare students to effectively utilise these tools in their studies and future professions, while also enabling staff to confidently implement them to assist student learning and adjust teaching and assessment methods accordingly.

4.2 Generative AI tools process large amounts of information to create new content, based on patterns and structures within that information. However, they do have certain limitations. It is vital that all students and staff grasp the opportunities, limitations, and ethical considerations connected with the use of these tools and can effectively apply their knowledge as the capabilities of generative AI continue to evolve. This includes the following considerations:

4.2.1 Privacy and data: Most large language models (LLMs) are designed to continuously learn from the data that is collected from user input, as well as scraping information from the entirety of the internet. This has implications for data that concerns private or sensitive information, creative property, or intellectual property.

4.2.2 Student work: Students hold the copyright for all works created during their studies. This means that until the learner decides to publish their work, there is no circumstance where staff can use the work of learners as input for AI tools without express permission. This also means that all members of a group would need to consent for any group work to be uploaded into any AI tools by one of the members.

4.2.3 Potential for bias: Generative AI will repeat and amplify bias within the data on which it was trained. As its answers are based on information that was previously produced by humans, their content may contain societal bias and stereotypes, which will in turn be reproduced by the generative AI tools.

4.2.4 Inaccuracy and misinterpretation: As it is impossible to know which sources are used in generative AI tools, they may reproduce misinterpretations or contain inaccurate data, irrelevant or out-dated information. The accountability for the accuracy of information generated by these tools lies with the user of the tool.

4.2.5 Hallucinations: Insufficient training data, assumptions, or biases can generate misleading or incorrect results. However, the fluency of AI outputs can create a false sense of security in its authority. Responsibility for checking the accuracy of information generated by these tools lies with the user of the tool.

4.2.6 Ethical Considerations: Professional codes of ethics generally cover the behaviour of the professional and the impact of their work, and may also include how public funding, e.g. research funding, may be spent. Since generative AI can produce unanticipated outcomes, ethical considerations must also cover the actions and outputs of the AI. This is an evolving area and many professional bodies have produced general principles rather than specific guidance. Even so, staff should ensure that they comply with relevant professional codes of ethics as well as the ethical requirements of Solent University.

4.2.7 Plagiarism: Generative AI tools re-present information developed by others in novel ways and so there is the risk of plagiarised content being submitted by a user as their own (which is also plagiarism), and artwork used by image generators may have been included without the creator's consent or licence. There is (currently) no way to tell on which sources any generated output is based.

5. Supporting students with the use of generative AI tools

5.1 Solent University takes the position that generative AI can support learning, teaching, assessment and research for both staff and students, under the appropriate circumstances. This policy outlines the parameters for those circumstances, within which course teams can develop acceptable practices.

5.2 Incorporating generative AI tools into teaching approaches and evaluations has the potential to enrich the student learning experience, foster critical thinking skills, build digital confidence, and better prepare students for the practical application of generative AI technologies in their future life, beyond their time at Solent.

5.3 Although there is space for academic disciplines to decide on appropriate uses of generative AI, influenced by policies and guidance from Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies, this policy nevertheless presents a baseline of expectations, particularly in point 8.3. The use of generative AI is allowed with permission, but should not constitute the content submitted for assessment.

5.4 Successful engagement with AI tools requires reflection and criticality to supplement learning, so transparency in talking to students is vital to establish shared understanding and agree acceptable and unacceptable uses, for both staff and students, with the proviso that these uses continue to fully conform with other university policies, including those relating to research ethics and academic misconduct.

5.5 Based on this proviso, use of generative AI does not in itself constitute a breach of academic integrity; it is up to the course team to decide what constitutes acceptable use, which may be negotiated by assignment or as an overall principle.

5.6 Students should not be required to use a specific AI tool in any assignment due to inequitable access to these tools.

5.7 Use of AI tools should be promoted as an assistive tool only. Some students access assistive technology to manage the impact of their disability or learning need. However, it should not be a primary source of knowledge or means of output production. It can be considered as a support for the learning process, including reading and writing, but not a substitution for it. All students should still meet learning outcomes and develop academic skills and strategies.

5.8 Some tasks in which students (and staff) could therefore make use of AI tools include planning, clarifying concepts, summarising, and translation, depending on the learning outcomes, course competencies, or professional regulations, and subject to agreement with the teaching team.

6. AI in teaching and assessment

6.1 Appropriate adaptations to teaching and assessment methods will differ among disciplines, and preserving this autonomy is essential to the integrity of the individual courses offered within the university. All staff involved in supporting student learning may create teaching sessions, materials, and assessments that utilise generative AI tools in innovative ways when this is appropriate to do so.

6.2 Staff are asked to consider whether generative AI is the right tool for the task, whether the specific tool or model is a must, how sensitive the task is to hallucinations, and the sensitivity of the output to the quality of the prompt.

6.3 The use of AI is an opportunity to help students engage critically with the sources of information that they are using, and to evaluate the reliability, credibility and potential biases of the information and how it relates to their assignments. As such, students should be briefed on evaluating the output of generative AI, before they are asked to use it.

6.4 Any decision to outsource a task to generative AI needs to be considered alongside the value of the process compared to the output. Reading and writing are slow-thinking practices and therefore should still be central in learning and teaching. AI is emphasised as an assistive tool; students need supporting to find their own voice.

6.5 Students engage in shortcuts, such as the unauthorised use of generative AI, for predictable reasons: they don't understand the relevance of the task, they lack confidence, they are working to multiple tight deadlines, and the task is high stakes. These issues can and should be designed out as the course undergoes regular review and revalidation.

6.6 Students own the copyright to the work they produce during their studies. This means that until the learner decides to publish their work, there are no circumstances where staff can use the work of learners as input for generative AI tools. This therefore excludes the use of AI tools from marking and giving feedback.

6.7 In addition to copyright considerations, GDPR requires that any identifying personal data, such as name, student number, or other online identifiers, 'shall be processed lawfully, fairly and in a transparent manner…that ensures appropriate security of the personal data,

including protection against unauthorised or unlawful processing' (Article 5). These guarantees are not possible with generative AI.

6.8 At all times, staff and students are encouraged to consider the ethical implications of using other people's intellectual property to train the generative AI tool.

7. AI in research

7.1 The use of generative AI in research is dependent on the nature of the task. While generative AI has the capacity to perform tasks such as searching for, reviewing and summarising literature, transcribing audio files, analysing data sets, generating questions, and drawing conclusions, this does not mean it should be used for these tasks. Its use will depend on the research context, the proposed publication site, and the ethical approval.

7.2 AI tools may not be used to analyse primary data, particularly where it involves human participants (whether collected directly or user generated), unless this is explicitly stated in the relevant ethics application and unless the data are completely anonymous. Although some tools, particularly when used with a subscription, do not add inputted data to the wider training data, terms and conditions often allow for this situation to change without notice. In addition, there is no transparency on what happens to the data that is inputted into generative AI tools, who owns the rights to that data, and what the ethical implications of this could be. Solent University therefore does not condone the use of generative AI with primary data unless and until there is complete transparency with the following issues:

7.2.1 copyright laws

7.2.2 ethical considerations

7.2.3 the data that is used as input (who owns it, whether this counts as publication as it will be part of a database, and whether this gives blanket approval for reproduction)

7.2.4 intellectual property (IP)

7.2.4.1 the IP remains that of the person who entered the information into the prompt

7.2.4.2 generative AI tools do not claim any IP over the outputs

7.3 Although the use of generative AI with fully anonymised data would not contravene GDPR, this will still be subject to ethical approval and participant consent.

7.4 While generative AI tools might be helpful in the analysis and visualisation of datasets, amongst other research-related tasks, many of these tools use their input from users as their training data, rendering it no longer private, confined or unpublished. AI tools may therefore not be used as a means of data analysis for either staff or students, unless or until the above conditions are satisfied.

7.5 The use of generative AI in writing up research could be beneficial, if this use aligns with all ethical considerations, regulations from funding institutions, GDPR regulations and institutional approval. If AI is used, it should be referenced as with any other source; certain publication avenues may require this declaration, or indeed may bar publication on this basis.

8. Academic integrity and AI

8.1 Solent University recognises the transformative potential of generative AI to enhance teaching, learning, research, and administrative processes, while simultaneously acknowledging that for some disciplines, the use of generative AI might be disruptive. At Solent, we are committed to the ethical and responsible use of generative AI and to preparing our staff and students to be leaders in an increasingly AI-enabled environment. However, this means that there is also a need for boundaries when it comes to the use of AI for assessments and assignments within the courses offered at Solent University.

8.2 Despite the benefits of generative AI in personalised learning, assignments, and assessments, its implementation raises concerns regarding academic misconduct, including plagiarism, cheating, and contract cheating. All AI applications within the university must align with ethical principles, ensuring fairness, transparency, accountability, and respect for human dignity.

8.3 The University's definition of AI misconduct, in the Student Academic Misconduct Policy, is 'submitting any assessment which contains work which has been generated by Artificial Intelligence. AI tools must only be used when the assessment instructions permit its use.' Where AI is used to generate content, it must be referenced as a source. However, if generative AI is used to create content that is then presented as a student's own work, this is academic misconduct.

8.4 To mitigate the risks of multiple generated texts, staff may wish to engage in the following activities:

8.4.1 Running the assessment brief through ChatGPT or Co-pilot to see if AI produces a work that would pass. If so, the assessment should be redeveloped so it cannot.

8.4.2 Phrasing assessments to encourage students to engage in critical thinking and reflection, and exploring assessment designs that help students to do this.

8.4.3 Periodically reviewing students' work to ensure criticality of their writing and to develop familiarity with their style.

8.4.4 Requiring a list of process steps, with reflections on what tools the students have used to complete their work, what they could have done differently and why.

8.5 Avoid a blanket reliance on AI detection tools, as they are (currently) highly inaccurate and underscore the biases inherent in them.

8.6 The distinction between Generative Pretrained Transformers (GPTs) and language support or translation tools is important to articulate to students, wherein use of the latter may not necessarily constitute academic misconduct. However, this is subject to review in the future as the technology continues to develop.

8.7 Above all, creating a supportive environment for students to inquire about the ethical use of generative AI and academic integrity is key. Open discussions about specific cases and challenges should be encouraged without the fear of facing penalties. Students deserve to be included in discussion on academic integrity and the implications of AI-based work.

8.8 To protect data privacy and data governance, the use of all generative AI applications must comply with GDPR. This means that any data used for input for generative AI tools cannot contain the identifiable information or proprietary data of other people, without their express permission. Students and staff are not permitted to upload student assessments or any identifiable data to AI applications for any reason (this includes attempts to check for AI generated content). Students and staff remain free to upload any of their own personal information wherever they like.

8.9 Where the use of generative AI is expressly permitted, all work generated by AI tools must be properly referenced, using Solent University referencing guidelines.

8.10 Staff and students may not upload any content access through University-subscribed resources, including Library resources, to LLMs as this will potentially breach licence and copyright restrictions. Material with a CC-BY licence should also not be uploaded as they required acknowledgement of authorship, which LLMs do not provide.

9. Limitations for AI use

9.1 Output from Generative AI tools is not based on human understanding; rather, it is a computer model that predicts plausible outcomes based on large datasets. This means that their output is not always accurate or cohesive. Therefore, the use of AI has some significant limitations:

9.1.1 As their output is a combination of the next plausible outcome, based on large datasets, their output can be wrong and consist of made-up information. As such, AI cannot be relied upon for factual accuracy.

9.1.2 As the training data for AI is mostly based on publicly available information on the internet, it might be more reliable for well written subjects, but not be helpful for more niche subjects.

9.1.3 Some of the data that AI bases their output on might be out of date, and not accurate or representative of the contemporary research base.

9.1.4 Some AI tools provide references for their output; however, due to their model being based on predictions, these sources might not be real, reliable or correctly linked to the topic it generated the output for.

9.1.5 The use of AI can raise ethical concerns, specifically on grounds of perpetuating stereotypes, replicating narrowed perspectives and generating racist or misogynistic content.

9.1.6 Further ethical concerns relate to the intense energy costs of AI processing (for example, one GPT query uses over 1500% more energy than a single Google search; Google's AI alone consumes the same amount of energy in a year as Ireland; a series of 5-50 prompts in a GPT uses up half a litre of water) and the implications for human labour and exploitation, often outsourced to the Global South.

10. Conclusion

10.1 Solent University is committed to continuously evaluating policies and guidance for staff, and students regarding generative AI tools and their impact on teaching, learning, assessment, and research practices. This process involves monitoring the effectiveness, fairness, and ethical implications of integrating generative AI tools into academic life, and making the necessary adjustments to policies and procedures to ensure their relevance as generative AI technologies continue to evolve.

10.2 Further, Solent University recognises the importance of collaboration between higher education institutions, schools, employers, and professional bodies who accredit degrees, experts, leading academics and researchers as essential for addressing emerging challenges and promoting the ethical use of generative AI. We therefore will continue to appreciate the insights of others, while also contributing expertise to national and international conversations on generative AI and its applications in education.

10.3 Through this policy, Solent University emphasises its dedication to using AI technologies responsibly and ethically in order to improve teaching, learning, assessment, research, and administrative processes. We strive to uphold the values of equity, inclusion, transparency, and accountability within our university community.

10.4 This policy will be reviewed at least annually, to ensure any emerging changes are implemented and included.