

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN ACADEMIC WRITING: OPPORTUNITIES AND TENSIONS FROM A FACULTY VIEWPOINT

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The use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in higher education has accelerated rapidly, transforming how students learn, conduct research, and complete academic tasks. Its application comes with both significant opportunities and challenges. This commentary therefore aims to contribute to a better understanding of the potential benefits of AI on education from the faculty's perspective, as well as the challenges associated with this transformation. A roadmap for the successful implementation of AI in educational settings is suggested.

Tools such as generative AI, intelligent tutoring systems, plagiarism checkers, and data analysis programs offer unprecedented opportunities for personalized learning, efficiency, and access to knowledge. However, the proliferation of AI has also generated significant frustration among professors and educators, who perceive both the promise and perils of these technologies. AI has undeniably enhanced learning experiences for tertiary students. Intelligent tutoring systems adapt to individual learners, providing personalized exercises, immediate feedback, and tailored explanations that strengthen understanding of complex concepts. AI tools facilitate rapid literature reviews, data organization, and preliminary analysis, enabling students to focus on higher-order thinking, problem-solving, and critical reflection. Furthermore, AI can promote inclusivity by supporting students with disabilities through text-to-speech, speech-to-text, and other assistive technologies.

For students, AI provides convenience and efficiency, allowing them to manage academic workload effectively. For instance, generative AI can help draft essays, propose research ideas, or simulate problem-solving scenarios, enhancing creativity and broadening learning perspectives. Despite these benefits, many professors are increasingly frustrated with the misuse and overreliance of AI by students. A prominent concern is academic integrity. Some students use AI-generated content as a shortcut, submitting essays, lab reports, or assignments with minimal personal input. For educators committed to nurturing analytical skills and independent thought, this represents a fundamental challenge: students may complete assignments without engaging critically, undermining the very purpose of higher education.

Another source of frustration is the difficulty of detection. Traditional plagiarism checkers may not reliably identify AI-generated content, leaving professors uncertain about the authenticity of student work. This uncertainty increases the administrative burden, creates tension in student-faculty relationships, and diminishes trust. Additionally, professors observe a growing disparity in AI access and literacy. While some students leverage AI effectively to enhance learning, others, particularly those from under-resourced backgrounds, may struggle to use these tools, inadvertently widening performance gaps. This inequity raises ethical and pedagogical concerns for faculty striving to maintain fair assessment and inclusive learning environments.

From an ethical standpoint, AI use in higher education necessitates careful management. Professors advocate for clear institutional policies, explicit guidelines on acceptable AI use, and mandatory AI literacy training to equip students with skills to leverage technology responsibly. Emphasis must be placed on transparency, critical evaluation of AI outputs, and maintaining personal intellectual effort. Furthermore, educators suggest integrating assessment strategies that prioritize critical thinking, problem-solving, and creativity, which cannot be easily outsourced to AI. By restructuring assignments and exams to emphasize process, reflection, and application, institutions can mitigate the risk of overreliance on AI. Ultimately, the rise of AI presents a double-edged sword in tertiary education. While it offers opportunities for personalized learning, efficiency, and skill enhancement, it also poses significant challenges to academic integrity, skill development, and equity. Professors' frustration stems from witnessing the tension between AI's potential as a transformative educational tool and its misuse as a shortcut that undermines learning.

To navigate this evolving landscape, universities must adopt a balanced approach: embracing AI as an enabler of learning while enforcing ethical use, promoting critical thinking, and fostering digital literacy. Open dialogue between students and educators, institutional support, and innovative pedagogical practices are crucial to ensure that AI enhances—rather than compromises—the mission of higher education.