

Inclusion must not remain a strategic priority merely for fee-paying students (or customers in today's increasingly commercialised institutions) whilst paying lip service to the needs of neurodiverse academics (by 'fobbing' them off, as one respondent put it, with Occupational Health referrals or avoiding implementing what can be perceived as costly or time-consuming 'reasonable adjustments'). We must start and facilitate the work of providing equity of support and opportunity for all.

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AI detectors in universities: Time to turn them off and embrace AI for enhanced learning

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The global debate around the use of artificial intelligence (AI) detection software in universities is intensifying (Bowen and Watson, 2024), prompting many institutions to re-evaluate their stance on these tools (Ghaffary, 2023). Though this article may be difficult reading for academic staff who unquestioningly accept AI detection tools (Roe *et al.*, 2024), it recommends that universities worldwide discontinue their use. The reasons are compelling: inaccuracies and biases inherent in these tools, ethical concerns, and the necessity to embrace a more integrated and constructive approach to AI in education. By turning off AI detection software, universities can cultivate more equitable, transparent, and future-ready educational environments that truly enhance learning while maintaining academic integrity.

Inaccuracy and high false-positive rates

Turnitin, used by 98% of universities in the UK (Maples, 2023), initially claimed a 1% false-positive rate for its AI detection tool but revised this to 4% later in 2023 (Chechitelli, 2023). Even a 1% error rate is significant; in

large universities, this could mean hundreds of students being wrongly accused of academic dishonesty. This statistic translates into potentially devastating consequences for students who may face unjust academic penalties, loss of scholarships, or tarnished reputations. As highlighted by Gegg-Harrison and Quarterman (2024), the potential for false accusations can severely undermine trust in the academic system and create unnecessary stress for students.

Moreover, the methodology behind AI detection software is often opaque. The algorithms used by these tools are proprietary, and their inner workings are not disclosed to the public or even to the institutions that use them (Akram, 2023). This lack of transparency further undermines trust in their accuracy and fairness. In a system where academic integrity is paramount, the tools used to uphold this integrity must themselves be beyond reproach.

Widespread rejection by institutions

Numerous prestigious institutions, including Vanderbilt (Coley, 2023), Michigan State, the University of Texas at Austin

(Ghaffary, 2023), University of Limerick (2024) in Ireland, and several UK universities, such as Cambridge (Financial Times, 2023), Durham University (Burrin, 2023), University of Dundee (2023), and Oxford Brookes University (2024), have already turned off or opted out of AI detection software. This widespread rejection is not just a critique of the technology's accuracy but its implications for 'loss of student trust, confidence and motivation, bad publicity, and potential legal sanctions' (University of Pittsburgh, 2024).

Transparency is a cornerstone of ethical practice in education. Students and educators have the right to know how their work is being evaluated and to understand the criteria used to make judgments about academic integrity. Without this transparency, the use of AI detection tools can undermine trust and create an adversarial relationship between students and faculty (Han *et al.*, 2022).

Universities who have opted out or disabled AI detection are leading the way in exploring alternative methods of assessment that emphasise learning and development over punitive measures. This trend towards more holistic educational practices is a positive step that others should consider following.

Bias against non-native English speakers

Research by Liang *et al.* (2023) shows that some AI detection tools are biased against non-native English writers. These tools often misclassify non-native writing as AI-generated, penalising students unfairly based on their linguistic background. Many international students use tools like Grammarly or similar to refine their spelling or grammar, which can be flagged by the AI detector (Gillham, 2024). This bias not only affects student outcomes but also raises ethical concerns about equity and inclusivity in higher education.

The implications of this bias are far-reaching. Non-native English speakers already face significant challenges in navigating an educational system that operates in a second language (Shi *et al.*, 2017). Penalising them for using tools to aid their writing exacerbates these challenges and could contribute to non-native English speakers feeling that they are being discriminated against. It is essential for educational institutions to create an inclusive environment where all students have equal opportunities to succeed.

The futility of the detection arms race

The rapid development of tools designed to bypass AI detectors, such as those advertised to students on TikTok, indicates that the arms race between detection software and evasion techniques is unwinnable (Wood, 2023). Students are increasingly able to mask their use of AI, using tools such as StealthWriter (2024) or Althor (2024), rendering detection efforts ineffective and fostering a culture of distrust and constant surveillance.

This cat-and-mouse game between AI detectors and evasion techniques diverts valuable resources and attention away from more meaningful educational pursuits. Instead of investing in ever-more sophisticated detection tools, universities should focus on teaching students how to use AI responsibly and ethically (Chauncey and McKenna, 2023).

This approach not only prepares students for the realities of the modern workplace but also fosters a more collaborative and innovative learning environment.

AI in the workplace vs. academia

AI tools are becoming ubiquitous in the workplace, now integrated into everyday products like Google Drive and Microsoft Office (Bowen and Watson, 2024; Microsoft and LinkedIn, 2024). Banning or penalising their use in an academic setting creates a disconnect between educational practices and real-world applications. Embracing AI in education can better prepare students to be effective users of these tools in professional environments, where they are becoming standard.

In the professional world, AI tools are used to enhance productivity, creativity, and decision-making (Pescuma, 2023). Teaching students to use these tools effectively can provide them with a significant advantage in their future careers. Rather than viewing AI as a threat to academic integrity, educators should see it as an opportunity to innovate and improve teaching and learning practices.

Negative impact on the student experience

Students do not like AI detectors, and there are petitions at University of Bedfordshire (2023) and Lancaster University (2023) in the UK for their deactivation. The student co-authors of this article mirror this sentiment. They say:

'As undergraduates who have just completed our second year, we believe that responsible and ethical use of AI should not be penalised. AI enhances our learning, creativity, and productivity, preparing us for future careers where the ability to effectively use these technologies will be essential. AI detectors, however, create unnecessary stress and worry for us. Even using AI tools for structuring our work or fine-tuning spelling or grammar is often a source of anxiety about accusations of cheating, particularly closer to assessment due dates. It seems unfair that only staff can see the AI detector score, while plagiarism scores can be easily checked by us, and issues rectified prior to submission. Why can we not see the AI similarity score and flagged text to modify our work and address issues before it is uploaded? Instead of relying on questionable AI detectors, universities should encourage innovative approaches to assessment writing and the ethical use of technology.'

The negative impact of AI detection tools on the student experience is profound. These tools can create a climate of suspicion and anxiety, where students feel they are constantly under surveillance (Han *et al.*, 2022). This environment is not conducive to learning and can significantly detract from their overall educational experience.

Embracing AI for learning

The way forward is not to fight against the tide of AI but to embrace it in a manner that enhances learning. Recent studies by Ardito (2023) and Kramm and McKenna (2023) both argue against the use of AI detection tools in higher education, citing a misalignment with the educational landscape and a neglect

of transformative learning.

Students should be encouraged to personalise and augment AI output to meet module learning objectives and demonstrate their understanding of module materials and engagement with literature, without the necessity of writing lengthy assignments. This approach can foster critical thinking, creativity, and practical skills that are more aligned with real-world applications.

Rather than focusing on detecting AI usage, educators should encourage students to use AI as a tool to enhance their critical thinking and creativity. For instance, students could use AI to generate initial drafts or outlines of their work, which they can then refine and expand upon, adding direct quotations or comparing and contrasting literature, things that AI cannot do. This process helps students develop their analytical and editing skills, as they learn to critically evaluate and improve AI-generated content.

Preparing for the future workforce

As AI becomes increasingly integrated into the workplace, it is essential for students to develop proficiency in using these tools. By incorporating AI into the curriculum, educators can help students gain the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in a technology-driven job market (Abdelwahab *et al.*, 2023). This preparation is not only beneficial for individual students but also for society as a whole, as it ensures a workforce that is capable of harnessing the potential of AI and using it responsibly.

Ethical use of AI

Educators have a critical role to play in teaching students about the ethical use of AI. This includes understanding the limitations and biases of AI tools (Ray, 2023). By fostering an ethical mindset, educators can help students navigate the complexities of AI and academic integrity, ensuring that its use aligns with institutional and broader societal values and goals.

Moving forward: Practical steps for implementation

To transition away from AI detection tools and towards a more constructive use of AI in education, universities can take the following practical steps.

Developing AI literacy programs

Universities should offer courses and workshops that teach students and faculty about AI, its capabilities, and its limitations (Roe *et al.*, 2024). These programs can cover topics such as how AI works and prompt engineering, its applications in different fields, and best practices for using AI ethically and effectively.

Integrating AI into the curriculum

AI should be integrated into the curriculum across disciplines. This can include incorporating AI tools into assignments and projects, as well as teaching students how to use AI effectively to conduct research, analyse data, and create content. By including AI as a part of the learning process, universities can help students become more comfortable and proficient with

these technologies (Chan and Hu, 2023).

Fostering a culture of innovation

Universities should encourage a culture of innovation where students and faculty are empowered to experiment with this technology and how it could be used to enhance learning. Many university staff are resisting AI, forcing students to conceal their use of it and impeding them from becoming more experienced and sophisticated users of it. To address this, universities could create innovation labs, offer grants for AI-related projects, and host events that showcase innovative uses of AI in education and the workforce.

Promoting collaboration and peer learning

Collaboration and peer learning can be powerful tools for enhancing AI literacy and proficiency. Universities can create opportunities for students across disciplines to work together on AI-related projects, share their experiences, and learn from each other. This collaborative approach can help build a community of learners who are skilled in using AI and committed to its ethical use.

Conclusion

The significant drawbacks, inaccuracies, biases, ethical concerns, and the disconnect with professional practices necessitate that universities turn off their AI detectors. This move does not abandon academic integrity but shifts towards more reliable and ethical assessment methods that genuinely evaluate students' understanding and capabilities.

AI detection tools often fail to account for the nuanced ways students use AI, leading to potential biases and unfair penalisation of non-native English speakers. The lack of transparency in these tools further complicates their ethical use, undermining trust in the academic system.

Instead of relying on flawed AI detectors, universities should integrate AI into the educational process. Continuous feedback mechanisms can help students understand their strengths and areas for improvement, while AI-driven tools can enhance research and writing skills. Establishing clear guidelines for ethical AI use and fostering a culture of responsible AI integration will better prepare students for the modern workplace.

Turning off AI detectors allows universities to create a more inclusive, innovative, and future-ready educational environment. This approach aligns educational practices with real-world applications, ensuring that students are equipped with the skills and knowledge needed to thrive in a technology-driven world. It is time to embrace AI's potential and enhance education by focusing on supportive, ethical, and forward-thinking teaching and assessment methods.

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