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Position Paper

The Integration of Generative AI Tools in Academic Writing: Implications for Student Research

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Abstract: This article explores the integration of generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools in academia, focusing on their impact on student research and writing at advanced levels. It explores how AI can assist with key tasks such as literature reviews, research question formulation, argument construction, data analysis, and thesis organization. The paper argues that the responsible integration of AI is essential, emphasizing the ongoing need for critical thinking to maintain academic integrity. A qualitative case study illustrates student experiences with AI-assisted academic writing, revealing perceived benefits including increased efficiency and enhanced quality, while emphasizing the necessity of verifying AI outputs and preserving human critical oversight. The discussion further addresses the need for universities to adapt by embedding AI literacy into curricula and establishing clear ethical use policies. The central position asserts that, by embracing AI as a valuable ally rather than prohibiting its use, universities can empower students to enrich their learning experiences and better prepare for success in an AI-driven workforce.

***Keywords*:** generative AI, academic writing, student research, ethical use, AI literacy, university adaptation

1. Introduction

The halls of academia are no strangers to innovation. From the printing press to the internet, modern technologies have always reshaped the way we learn and share knowledge. Now, a new wave of change is upon us, driven by the rise of Generative AI (Gen AI). These powerful tools, capable of generating human-quality text, code, and data, are rapidly infiltrating schools and universities, transforming the way students approach their studies (Mishra & Srivastava, 2024; Woerner et al., 2024).

This influx of AI, however, presents a double-edged sword. While Gen AI offers exciting possibilities for research, writing, and learning, it also raises concerns about academic integrity. The rate of plagiarism using AI-generated content has risen sharply (Song, 2024; Khalil & Er, 2023), prompting universities to scramble for solutions.

Following this recognition of AI's transformative presence and the urgent need for proactive adaptation rather than prohibition, this article explicitly aims to explore the responsible integration of Generative AI tools in academic writing. Specifically, it focuses on understanding their impact and potential applications for students undertaking research and writing at advanced academic levels, such as research papers, theses, and dissertations. Given that comprehensive empirical data regarding long-term impacts and optimal integration strategies are still emerging, this paper takes a conceptual approach to stimulate discussion and guide universities in developing strategies that leverage AI as a

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valuable ally for students while upholding academic integrity.

This article isn't about demonizing AI or advocating for its unchecked use. It's about acknowledging the reality: students are already using Gen AI tools. Universities need to proactively adapt. We need to equip students with the knowledge and skills to navigate this new landscape-not just to avoid plagiarism, but to harness the power of AI for effective learning and career preparation.

1.1 *Aligning curricula for the digital age*

Emerging estimates suggest that a significant portion-potentially up to 90%-of future jobs will necessitate strong digital literacy skills (Tomašević, 2023; Riddle, 2015). This necessitates a critical re-evaluation of the current educational landscape. To paraphrase the 1987 novelty song Star Trekkin', "It's work, Jim, but not as we know it." Similarly, universities must embark on a mission to equip students with the necessary tools for a rapidly transforming professional landscape.

A potential paradox exists between the demands of industry and the emphasis on academic integrity within education. The professional sphere prioritizes efficiency and productivity, seeking methods to "work smarter, not harder" and achieve higher standards in less time (Manyika et al., 2017). Conversely, educational institutions traditionally emphasize ethical conduct and discourage practices that could compromise academic integrity.

This raises a crucial question: are current educational practices adequately preparing students to utilize the tools they will encounter in their future careers? Are students gaining the necessary hands-on experience with the latest technologies prevalent in today's industries? The concern is that universities may not be effectively aligning curricula with the ever-evolving job market. This disconnect could result in graduates lacking the proficiency required to tackle real-world challenges. Equipping students with tools and knowledge that may become obsolete could leave them poorly prepared for a future where certain job roles may disappear altogether. Instead of dwelling on the potential detriments of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the learning process, a more productive approach would be to explore how this transformative technology can be harnessed to accelerate knowledge acquisition and enhance human well-being.

Drawing from this reality, the objective of this article is to explore the responsible integration of Generative Artificial Intelligence tools in academic writing, focusing specifically on their implications for student research at advanced academic levels. Acknowledging that comprehensive empirical data regarding long-term impacts and optimal integration strategies are still emerging, the present work is presented as a conceptual and position article, aiming to stimulate discussion and guide universities in adapting their curricula and policies.

The article aims to be a Trojan Horse. By exposing the vast potential of Gen AI for academic work across all levels, we hope to spur universities into action: updating assessments, developing clear AI usage policies, and most importantly, preparing students for the AI-driven future that awaits them.

2. AI for every student

The impact of Gen AI isn't limited to research labs or doctoral dissertations. Today's students, from first-year students tackling their first essays to seniors navigating complex projects, can use AI tools to enhance their learning experience across various stages of their academic journey.

AI can be instrumental in preparing for mid-term exams and projects. Need to present a complex economic theory for your economics class? An AI tool can generate a clear and concise summary, allowing you to focus on crafting a compelling presentation. Analysing data for a psychology project? Let AI help you visualize complex datasets and find key trends.

Need a tutor? AI can provide personalized guidance and support to help you understand complex topics and improve your skills. Mollick and Mollick (2023) proposed seven approaches for utilizing AI in classrooms: AI tutor, AI coach, AI mentor, AI teammate, AI tool, AI simulator, and AI students. As an example, here is their prompt that simulates a conversation with an AI-powered tutor:

> "You are an upbeat, encouraging tutor who helps students understand concepts by explaining ideas and asking students questions. Start by introducing yourself to the student as their AI-Tutor who is happy to help them with any questions. Only ask one question at a time. First, ask them what they would like to learn about.

> Wait for the response. Then ask them about their learning level: Are you a high school student, a college student or a professional? Wait for their response. Then ask them what they know already about the topic they have chosen. Wait for a response. Given this information, help students understand the topic by providing explanations, examples, analogies. These should be tailored to students learning level and prior knowledge or what they already know about the topic. Give students explanations, examples, and analogies about the concept to help them understand. You should guide students in an open-ended way. Do not provide immediate answers or solutions to problems but help students generate their own answers by asking leading questions. Ask students to explain their thinking. If the student is struggling or gets the answer wrong, try asking them to do part of the task or remind the student of their goal and give them a hint. If students improve, then praise them and show excitement. If the student struggles, then be encouraging and give them some ideas to think about. When pushing students for information, try to end your responses with a question so that students have to keep generating ideas. Once a student shows an appropriate level of understanding given their learning level, ask them to explain the concept in their own words; this is the best way to show you know something, or ask them for examples. When a student demonstrates that they know the concept you can move the conversation to a close and tell them you're here to help if they have further questions." (p. 11)

Students and teachers could easily use the prompt or even create a bot that can teach/help anyone understand any subject. For step-by-step instructions on how to easily create bots view the related section in the free asynchronous online course "AI tools in Education" (Rodafinos, 2023).

2.1 *Effective prompting*

Free Large Language Models (LLMs) like ChatGPT, Gemini, Copilot, Perplexity, DeepSeek and Claude offer a versatile toolkit for researchers. These models can be prompted to generate a wide range of creative text formats, from summaries of complex articles to brainstorming new research questions.

If you are having trouble formulating the perfect prompt, simply provide your initial idea to the Large Language Model (LLM), and it will suggest a clearer and more impactful version. You can then choose to accept the suggestion or continue refining your prompt for optimal results. To do that, you can use a prompt like this: "I will provide a draft prompt. Suggest a better version and ask me if I want to use that one. Here is the prompt […]"

2.2 *Homework and assignments*

Imagine facing a mountain of homework after a long day. Gen AI can help you conquer those assignments more efficiently. Stuck brainstorming ideas for a history essay? AI tools can generate prompts, suggest relevant historical figures, and offer diverse perspectives on a topic. Researching a complex scientific concept for a biology assignment? AI can condense vast amounts of information into easily digestible summaries, saving you time.

AI can also be a writing partner. Struggling to structure your essay? Let an AI tool outline argumentative approaches or suggest logical transitions between paragraphs. Feeling lost while drafting? AI can analyse your writing, find areas for improvement, and propose alternative phrasings or sentence structures.

While chatbots shouldn't write entire essays or lab reports for you (that's plagiarism!), they can be powerful allies in the writing process. Prompt chatbots with your topic and they can generate ideas for brainstorming, suggest relevant sources, and summarize key findings from research papers. They can help structure your essay by outlining arguments and suggesting transitions. When drafting, chatbots can analyse your writing and suggest improvements to clarity and sentence structure. Remember, always critically evaluate chatbot outputs, cite any information they provide, and use them as a springboard for your own thinking and analysis.

3. AI for advanced learners

As you progress through your academic career, the applications of AI can expand alongside your learning. For upper-level students embarking on research papers, dissertations, and theses, Gen AI becomes an even more potent ally. The challenges of navigating vast amounts of literature, formulating research questions, and constructing complex

arguments all become more manageable with the help of AI tools.

3.1 *Research papers*

Imagine tackling a mountain of scholarly articles for your research paper. Gen AI can be your research assistant extraordinaire (Perkins & Roe, 2024; Shamsabadi & D'Souza, 2024). Let it conduct in-depth literature reviews, finding relevant sources and summarizing key findings (Lo, 2023). Stuck formulating a compelling research question? AI tools can analyse existing research and suggest unexplored avenues or counterarguments that could lead to groundbreaking discoveries.

The power of AI goes beyond information gathering. It can be your partner in developing a strong academic voice. Struggling to construct a cohesive argument in your paper? AI can analyse your writing and suggest ways to strengthen your thesis statement and logically build your arguments. Need to expect and address potential counterarguments? AI can help you identify potential weaknesses in your reasoning and suggest ways to address them pre-emptively.

3.2 *Theses and dissertations*

For graduate students tackling their theses and dissertations, AI has become an indispensable tool. Imagine analysing mountains of data for your dissertation. AI tools can organize and categorize complex datasets, allowing you to identify trends and patterns that might be missed by the human eye. Struggling to formulate a robust research methodology? AI can help you identify relevant research methods and suggest tools and techniques tailored to your specific research question.

While AI shouldn't replace your own research and critical thinking, it can be a powerful tool to streamline and enhance your MSc thesis or PhD dissertation writing process. Here are 10 prompts you can use to guide a chatbot through producing outputs for each of the tasks and sections of the research project. Note that the prompts are illustrative examples, and that empirical evaluation is a necessary step for future research to explore and understand AI tools.

1. Choose a Topic. "Can you suggest a few interesting research topics related to [subject/field]? What are some emerging issues or debates within this area?"

2. Formulate a Research Question. "Based on the topic [topic name], can you help me formulate a clear and focused research question? How should I narrow down the scope to make it more specific?"

3. Conduct a Literature Review. "Can you summarize key findings from existing literature on [research question/topic]? What are some major studies or papers that I should consider reviewing? Summarize the key findings and arguments of each article, highlighting potential gaps in current research."

4. Develop a Hypothesis. "Given the literature on [research question/topic], identify 2-3 key research questions that address the identified gaps in knowledge. For each research question, generate a corresponding hypothesis that proposes a potential answer or solution. What prediction can I make based on previous studies?"

5. Design Your Research Methodology. "What are some effective methodologies for researching [research question/hypothesis]? How can I ensure my data collection methods are valid and reliable?"

6. Collect Data. "What are some common data collection methods for [research methodology]? How should I plan and organize my data collection process for this project? Outline a potential research timeline with key milestones and deadlines."

7. Analyse Data. Briefly describe the type of data you collected (e.g., numerical data, interview transcripts). "Can you guide me on how to analyse the data collected for [research question/hypothesis]? What statistical tools or methods should I use to interpret the data? Recommend appropriate data analysis techniques." Note that some AI systems allow for the upload of images of your data (e.g., Excel files) for further consultation with the AI.

8. Interpret Results. "How should I interpret the results of my data analysis for [research question/hypothesis]? Provide a high-level overview of the key findings and trends revealed by the data. What do these findings suggest, and how do they compare to literature?" Again, you may upload images of the results (e.g., SPSS outputs). This step may require specific software; consult with your supervisor.

9. Draw Conclusions. "Based on the results, generate a summary of the key findings. Analyse how these findings compare to the existing literature. Suggest potential explanations for the findings. What conclusions can I draw for

[research question/hypothesis]? Identify potential limitations of the research and suggest areas for future investigation based on the findings. Generate a concluding paragraph that reiterates the significance of the research and its potential impact on the field."

10. Write and Present Your Research. "Can you help me outline the structure of my research report on [research question/hypothesis]? What key points should I highlight in my presentation, and how can I engage my audience effectively?"

For a comprehensive guide on using ChatGPT within your research process, refer to Mondal and Mondal (2023) and Alshater (2022).

4. Case study: student experiences using gen AI in academic writing

4.1 *Participants and context*

This case study explores the experiences of 45 first-year students enrolled in a Research Methods course within the Department of Sport Science at a major Greek university. As part of their coursework, students were tasked with completing literature review papers and were explicitly permitted to utilize Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools during their writing process, provided they produce a report on their experience with AI.

4.2 *Data collection and analysis*

Students submitted reflection reports (1-2 pages) detailing their use of AI tools. These reports were analyzed using thematic analysis, which identified key themes related to the benefits, challenges, and overall perceptions of AI use in academic writing.

4.3 *Findings*

Students employed AI tools in various stages of their academic writing process:

Literature Review Assistance. AI was utilized to search for relevant literature, summarize key findings, highlight methodological details, and suggest additional sources. Students often mentioned databases such as PubMed and Google Scholar in conjunction with AI tools for bibliographic research.

Content Generation and Writing Support. AI assisted in drafting sections such as introductions, literature reviews, and conclusions. It also supported idea formulation, organizational suggestions, and the development of textual coherence.

Text Editing and Refinement. Students used AI to correct grammatical, syntactic, and stylistic errors, enhance academic tone and vocabulary, and align their writing with APA formatting standards.

Organization and Structuring. AI tools contributed to structuring research findings, improving clarity and scientific accuracy, and organizing bibliographic references.

Translation. Some students used AI translation services to translate academic articles from English to Greek to aid comprehension.

Evaluation. AI was also employed to critique paper titles according to APA style conventions and assist in the interpretation of statistical analyses.

Research Question Selection. Students reported using AI tools to help refine and select appropriate research questions for their papers.

4.4 *Student experiences and perceived benefits*

Students highlighted several benefits associated with AI use:

Time Efficiency. Many reported that AI significantly reduced the time needed for bibliographic research and information synthesis.

Enhanced Quality. AI tools were credited with improving scientific accuracy, clarity, cohesion, and formal presentation of students' work.

Supportive Role. Students described AI as a collaborative assistant that expanded their thinking, rather than a replacement for their academic skills.

Ease of Use. The majority found AI tools intuitive and accessible.

4.5 *Challenges and limitations*

Despite the benefits, students also identified notable challenges:

Verification Requirements. Students stressed the importance of verifying AI-generated content against reliable academic sources to ensure accuracy.

Inaccuracies and Lack of Specificity. Some students encountered vague or erroneous information and references to non-academic sources.

Grammar and Syntax Issues. Occasional syntactic and expression errors in AI outputs required careful revision.

AI as an Aid, not a Substitute. Students emphasized that AI should be used to support, not replace, critical thinking, analysis, and original scholarship. Final texts, hypotheses, and connections were independently verified and adjusted by the students.

4.6 *Overall experience*

Overall, students found the integration of Generative AI in academic writing to be both effective and beneficial. They appreciated the efficiency and support provided by AI tools but maintained that human critical thinking, evaluation, and oversight remained essential throughout the writing process.

5. Ethical use of AI in research and writing

Structuring complex arguments and presenting findings clearly remain paramount. AI can be an asset, suggesting logical chapter structures and transitions to organize your assignment. However, crafting a compelling narrative that ties your research together remains your responsibility.

AI tools offer significant advantages for research and writing, but responsible use is crucial to maintain academic integrity. Most universities have clear plagiarism policies (Cerdà-Navarro et al., 2022), although in the era of AI adjustments are urgently required (Tarisayi, 2023)-ensure you understand and follow them when using AI. Always be transparent about how you've utilized AI in your research and writing, and properly cite any content or ideas generated by these tools.

Remember, AI is a powerful ally, not a magic bullet. Don't expect it to write your entire paper-that's academic dishonesty. The key lies in responsible integration. Leverage AI for brainstorming ideas, finding relevant research, and refining your writing. However, critical thinking and independent analysis remain paramount. Critically evaluate all information, draw your own connections, and formulate your arguments. Just as with any other source, cite any information or ideas generated by AI tools.

Also, despite its many advantages, it is essential to be mindful of the limitations of AI tools in academic work. Recent studies (e.g., Spennemann, 2025) have shown that generative AI models, including those commonly used by graduate students, can fabricate references and content with notable frequency. For example, research indicates that earlier versions such as ChatGPT-3.5 have produced fabricated citations in approximately 30% to 57% of cases, depending on the discipline, while even improved versions like ChatGPT-4 still generate fabricated references at a lower but non-negligible rate (Walters & Wilder, 2023). These hallucinated references often appear credible and may include real-sounding journal or publisher names, making it particularly challenging for students and researchers to distinguish between genuine and fabricated sources. Given these limitations, it is critical for users to verify all AI-generated outputs against original academic sources. While AI can organize information, suggest methodologies, and assist in summarizing literature, it should be used as a supportive tool rather than a substitute for rigorous academic practices. By maintaining a critical perspective and thoroughly checking outputs, graduate students can leverage the benefits of AI while safeguarding the integrity and credibility of their research.

Ultimately, the responsibility for final analysis and interpretation of your research lies with you. AI can be a

powerful ally, but it shouldn't replace your own intellectual capabilities. Critically review and revise all AI-generated content, ensuring all sources and ideas are properly cited. The data collection itself and in-depth analysis may require additional tools or software beyond AI. Always consult with your thesis supervisor throughout the process.

6. The university response-embracing the inevitable

The influx of Gen AI into universities presents a challenge, but also an excellent opportunity. Universities that choose to bury their heads in the sand risk falling behind the curve, leaving students unprepared for the AI-driven workforce that awaits them. Universities need to proactively adapt (Azambuja & Silva, 2024; Romo-Pérez, 2023). Here's why:

6.1 *Benefits for all*

Embracing AI offers a plethora of benefits for both students and universities. Students will graduate with a deeper understanding of AI tools, becoming more effective learners and competitive job candidates. Universities can experience improved student learning outcomes as AI empowers students to explore complex topics and complete research with greater efficiency. Additionally, AI can streamline marking and feedback, freeing up faculty time for more meaningful interactions with students.

6.2 *A call to action*

The time for universities to adapt to the rise of AI is now (Kumar et al., 2024). Here are some essential steps universities should take:

Develop Clear Policies. Universities need to establish clear and comprehensive policies that address the responsible use of AI in academic work. These policies should outline acceptable practices, plagiarism guidelines specific to AI-generated content, and consequences for misuse. Implementing clear policies and integrating AI literacy are crucial, not only to deter academic misconduct but also to ensure students continue to develop deep skills and critical thinking rather than becoming overly reliant on AI. Universities must design learning experiences and assessments that require students to move beyond simply generating content with AI. This can be achieved by focusing on assignments that necessitate the synthesis of information from multiple sources (including those potentially summarized or suggested by AI, but which the student must critically evaluate), the solving of complex, ill-structured problems that do not have easy or singular AI-driven answers, or the application of knowledge to novel, unpredictable scenarios.

For example, the University of Sydney has provided sample syllabus statements for instructors on allowing, limiting, or prohibiting the use of AI tools like ChatGPT (Liu & Bridgeman, 2023). The University tackles the challenge of AI in assessments with a two-lane approach. "Lane 1" prioritizes traditional assessment methods like exams and essays, ensuring core knowledge acquisition and upholding academic integrity. Here, AI use might be restricted or entirely prohibited. "Lane 2" embraces AI as a learning tool. Students can collaborate with AI for tasks like brainstorming research topics, analysing data, or refining writing. This lane fosters deeper engagement with the material and prepares students for the AI-driven workforce that awaits them, while simultaneously ensuring they develop the fundamental skills assessed in Lane 1.

Assignment design must evolve to mandate active participation and critical thinking from students. Rather than asking for simple reports that AI can readily produce, assignments could require critical comparison of different approaches AI might suggest, justification of choices based on personal analysis, development of original arguments, or the application of knowledge in case studies requiring complex judgment. Furthermore, integrating AI Literacy into the curriculum should include modules teaching students how to evaluate the reliability and limitations of AI outputs, how to use AI to enhance problem-solving rather than bypassing it, and how to transparently document its use. In this manner, universities can encourage the responsible use of AI as a powerful tool that complements and strengthens the learning process, rather than undermining it.

Integrate AI Literacy. The curriculum should be revamped to equip students with the necessary skills to navigate the world of AI. Courses should incorporate modules on identifying reliable AI tools, understanding their limitations,

and applying them ethically in research and writing. This will help students develop critical thinking skills to evaluate AI-generated content. Following the lead of universities like the University of Florida with their "AI Across the Curriculum" initiative (Southworth et al., 2023), institutions are increasingly integrating AI Literacy into their programs, equipping students with the necessary skills to navigate the evolving world of AI.

Faculty Training and Resources: Equipping Educators for the AI Age. Just as essential as student education is ensuring faculty members are equipped to navigate the landscape of AI-generated content. This includes training them to use AI tools and foster critical thinking skills in their students as they encounter readily available AI assistance. To support this, universities should provide faculty with the resources and support to effectively integrate AI into their teaching strategies. A prime example comes from the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA Center for the Advancement of Teaching, 2023), which offers guidance for instructors on how to design coursework that considers emerging AI tools. Additionally, AI Tools for Education (Rodafinos, 2023) serves as a free online course designed to introduce educators to a diverse array of AI tools and resources. This course empowers educators to seamlessly integrate artificial intelligence into teaching, learning, and administrative tasks.

7. Conclusion

The rise of Gen AI is undeniable. It's no longer a question of if, but how universities will integrate AI into the learning experience. By embracing this change and proactively developing responsible AI practices, universities can empower students to become not just consumers but also critical users of this powerful technology. Ultimately, this will prepare them to succeed in the dynamic and AI-driven future that lies ahead. Acknowledging the aphorism that "the current AI tools we use today will likely be the worst ones we ever use" to the rapid evolution of technology, it is crucial to focus on fostering a culture of continuous learning and adaptation within education systems.

While this article offers a conceptual exploration and position on the integration of Gen AI in academic writing, it acknowledges the critical need for future empirical research to fully understand the long-term impacts, evaluate specific AI tools in diverse academic contexts, and validate the effectiveness of proposed policies and curricular adaptations. Case studies, controlled experiments, and qualitative studies exploring student and faculty experiences will be essential to build upon the foundational ideas discussed here and inform evidence-based practices in the AI-driven academic landscape.

Adopting a theoretical framework, such as activity theory, would be an effective way to deepen the analysis of AI's impact on the cognitive processes of academic writing. Such a framework would allow for the systematic investigation of the "cognitive shifts" caused by the integration of AI, examining how AI tools, students, and the writing task itself interact within the broader academic activity system, affecting aspects like critical thinking, argument construction, and originality. The application of such a framework could provide a more detailed and analytical understanding of AI's role in academic writing, beyond descriptive uses, and further substantiate proposals for managing this impact by educational institutions.

Conflict of interest

The author has no conflicts of interest to declare.

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