Navigating the Generative AI Response: Reflections from Four Universities

Alex Steel
UNSW

Ruth Greenaway
Southern Cross University

Jo-Anne Ferreira
University of Southern Queensland

How have universities responded to the impacts of Generative AI on the education sector? This panel session aims to provide an informative reflection of how four universities have navigated the generative AI response through innovation, ethics and regulation. By sharing their unique perspectives and strategies they will discuss and debate the importance of a multi-faceted approach to GenAI in higher education. The session will conclude with audience engagement through a Q&A on best practices, potential synergies, and future directions for integrating generative AI responsibly and effectively within academic contexts.

Keywords: Gen AI, assessment reform, TESQSA RFI

Governments, organisations, and employers both internationally and nationally have been grappling with GenAI's potential for innovation and disruption. In Australia and worldwide, the education sector has recognised the risk GenAI poses to the integrity of assessments and the conduct of education and research activities (AAIN, 2023; UNESCO, 2023). Governments and regulators have swiftly acted, designing and implementing principles-based frameworks to address these risks and engage ethically and transparently with GenAI's potential to support innovation and transform work (ARC, 2023; European Union, 2024).

Since ChatGPT's debut in 2022 as the first of many public and freely available GenAI services, a broad range of stakeholders—including governments, employers, businesses, research bodies, scientists, IT and data experts, and the education sector—have been engaged in thoughtful discussions about the impacts of these tools and services (Bearman et. al, 2023; Lodge et. al, 2023; UNSW Higher Education summit, 2024). While the potential for innovation with GenAI is widely acknowledged, its disruptive potential is equally recognised. Disruption is already evident in education and research, where the capabilities of GenAI services are undermining confidence in the skills and knowledge of graduates and the integrity of research outputs (Knight et al., 2023).

Australia's Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA, 2023) has engaged the higher education sector on the impact of GenAI, leading to the publication of "Assessment Reform for the Age of Artificial Intelligence." This document outlines two Guiding Principles: equipping students to participate ethically in an AI-driven society and using diverse, inclusive assessment approaches to form trustworthy judgments about student learning. The five propositions emphasise appropriate AI engagement, systemic program assessment, focus on the learning process, collaboration opportunities with AI, and secure assessment points to inform progression decisions. TEQSA required higher education providers to develop and implement institutional strategies addressing GenAI's impact on award integrity, with action plans submitted on 1 July 2024. TEQSA's key questions for institutions include assessing current methods' effectiveness, ensuring appropriate learning outcomes, maintaining stakeholder confidence in graduates' capabilities, equipping staff to adapt teaching practices, and engaging governing bodies. Institutions were expected to plan responses for the immediate, medium, and long term.

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This panel session aims to provide an informative reflection of how four universities have navigated the generative AI response through innovation, ethics and regulation over the past six months. Universities should take a coordinated approach to leverage the opportunities offered by GenAI and to address the new challenges that it brings. By sharing their unique perspectives and strategies they will discuss and debate the importance of a multi-faceted approach to GenAI in higher education. Perspectives across the four universities include moving a large university to change embedded assessment practices, strategies to support block model teaching with short time frames and those aligned to the HESF, through to leading an adoption strategy at a smaller university that considers learning validation conversations to enhance academic integrity. The session will conclude with audience engagement through Q&A on best practices, potential synergies, and future directions for integrating generative AI responsibly and effectively within academic contexts.

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