



Teesside University Excellence Case Studies

2024/2025

Creative and ethical use of AI to develop graduate competencies in the Education discipline

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“AI has the potential to significantly catalyse student learning, if used effectively”

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Background:

This case study is based on a level 5 module studied by learners on BA (Hons) Children and Early Childhood and BA (Hons) Education Studies courses. In response to the rapid growth of the use of AI within all phases of education, the course teams decided to proactively plan for the ethical use of AI within our teaching practice. To read about other uses of AI on the above courses, see [Jones \(2024\)](#) and [Russell \(2024\)](#).

In this module, learners work in groups to create a learning space or educational setting (e.g. Primary School) to develop and demonstrate graduate competencies in their discipline. The project requires learners to create supporting documents, such as safeguarding policies, risk assessments and job descriptions for their setting. As part of the module, learners also had to gain a digital certification. The lecturers were new to the module and this was the second iteration of it.

In this module, we aimed for students to:

- Use AI fluently and ethically to support the creation of industry-standard documents.
- Analyse the benefits and challenges of using AI to create bespoke documents for specific, defined contexts.

The above intended outcomes link to the Digitally Empowered, Future Ready and Student Success areas of the TU Academic Enhancement Framework.

Approach:

Student use of AI in this module was intended to give learners opportunities to build on their previous exposure to AI in other modules by encouraging them to use AI in creative ways to complete tasks and solve problems that they would be likely to face in practice. As such, the module did not include a significant amount of explicit teaching about the technicalities of using AI. Instead, it focused on analysing the ethics and effectiveness of AI through a process of using and reflecting on the output of AI tools.

The educational potential benefits of AI and its potential ethical challenges is subject of much current research see [Creely and Blannin, 2025](#). To support appropriate use of AI, the course team provided clear, consistent guidance about the use of AI in the context of this module. First, we decided that learners could use AI to help them to generate ideas when completing tasks such as action planning or writing policies. Secondly, we decided that AI could be used to refine ideas. For example, learners could ask AI to make suggestions about how to enhance their CV or to improve answers that they planned to give in mock interviews. Finally, we decided

“As a course team, we proactively plan for the ethical use of AI to enhance learning and teaching”

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“The use of AI to complete lower-order tasks frees time for more valuable learning and teaching activities”

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that learners had to reflect on each use of AI to assess its impact. To support critical reflection, we created a series of questions to analyse the learner’s use of AI, the impact on their learning, and the impact quality of their work.

Two significant challenges were;

- 1) achieving learners’ ethical use of AI, and
- 2) addressing student concerns over the use of AI and potential academic misconduct.

We aimed to support ethical use of AI by providing clear, consistent guidance around the use of AI in written resources and in taught sessions. In addition to this approach, we sought to address additional student concerns through the use of a discussion board, where learners could ask specific questions about their use of AI (among other topics), and by responding to learners’ more sensitive queries on a one-to-one basis.

Outcomes:

Based on discussions with learners and the observation of learner engagement with AI in class and in their online portfolios, students appear to have developed an appropriate understanding of how they can use AI ethically to create good quality texts. In classroom discussions, learners have also demonstrated good critical analysis of the benefits and challenges of using AI.

The use of AI to support idea generation and the refining of ideas has significantly reduced student workload on a complex module. It has allowed students to quickly create model texts that they could analyse and adapt to meet their needs. Students could also ask AI to provide links to authentic examples, thereby reducing time spent searching. Learners found this process much more efficient. This reduced searching time has given learners more time to analyse and adapt texts.

Overall, the experience has been a positive one for staff and, potentially, transformational for some students who see AI as a tool for reducing workload, and supporting idea development and refinement. Similarly, staff see the potential of AI as a tool to support learners to complete lower-order tasks more efficiently, which frees time for more valuable learning and teaching activities.

The teaching team will continue to proactively encourage the responsible use of AI in ways that mirror the practice environments that our learners aspire to enter. Working with students, we will continue to develop our approach to maximise learners’ ability to use AI ethically and fluently to enhance their learning. I would encourage staff to engage in honest conversations with their students about the ethical use of AI in practice and the university. Conversations with colleagues and students will also help us, staff, to develop our understanding and practice.

“Using AI ... has significantly reduced student workload on a complex module.

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