Scottish University Sector statement on the use of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI)

Preamble

This *Scottish University Sector statement of principles on the use of GenAI* is adapted from the *ScAITEN statement of principles on use of GenAI in learning, teaching and assessment*, under the terms of the Creative Commons licence of the ScAITEN statement.

While the impact of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) on education transcends borders and national contexts, the Scottish tertiary education sector is uniquely positioned to act collaboratively and with agility on establishing and implementing principles which align with long-standing values of education for all, the shared common good and social justice.

Taking an enhancement-led approach to exploring the implications of GenAI on the sector will enable us to address the potential impact, from start to finish, and our responsibilities to wider society.

We, the supporting institutions, organisations and individuals who work and study in the Scottish higher education sector, recognising the opportunities and challenges that developments in GenAI present, agree that our position in relation to the use of generative AI will be guided by the following principles.

- Human-centred
- Agency
- Trust
- Ethical
- Equitable
- Environmentally responsible
- Collaboration
- Openness
- Transparency
- Safety



Furthermore, we invite individuals and organisations, such as student representative bodies, funding councils, agencies, GenAI developers and companies, and governments, within and outwith Scotland, to collaborate with us in exploring the role of GenAI in tertiary education, as well as to endorse these principles.

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Principles

Human-centred

We value the individual and collective humanity of those who use, develop, train and are impacted by GenAI.

- We will ensure that our actions and decisions are evidence-based, and informed by compassion, equity, ethical and environmental responsibilities, and a commitment to the common good.
- We acknowledge that GenAI can provide efficiencies in work and study. Where appropriate we will support staff and students to utilise these to achieve fulfilment in their work and studies.
- We will introduce any changes at a scale and pace which limits negative impacts on wellbeing, supports long-term planning, and positive outcomes.

Agency

We believe that individuals should be empowered to make informed decisions through discussions about GenAI.

- We advocate that everyone who works and studies in the Scottish tertiary education sector develops their understanding of GenAI, and critical and practical AI literacies as it relates to their context.
- We emphasise the importance of engaging with GenAI critically, approaching it with curiosity.
- We encourage everyone to make informed decisions about whether or not to use GenAI, when it may be appropriate to do so, and to continue to reflect on these decisions and the impact of them.

Trust

We recognise the importance of trust between peers, colleagues, students and staff, and within and between institutions.

- We commit to founding our actions relating to generative AI in this shared trust.
- We encourage authentic practice and the importance of acknowledging generative AI outputs and modifications.

Ethical

We acknowledge the ethical complexity of GenAI and commit to using GenAI with integrity, and for the public good in keeping with the shared values of the Scottish tertiary education sector.

- We will educate and seek to address any ethical issues created by the training and development of GenAI, particularly in terms of equity, copyright, intellectual property,

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privacy and data protection/governance; and will advocate for ethical future developments.
- We will support all staff and students to understand the specific issues which GenAI creates in relation to research integrity and ethics e.g. in relation to reproducibility, peer review and authorship.
- We will ensure that any engagement with or use of GenAI complies with our legal responsibilities.

Equitable

We recognise that we operate in a globally connected world with a diverse population.

- We will make sure that any decision about development or use of GenAI appropriately identifies any potential impact on equity and will act to address this.
- We will seek to provide equity of opportunity, access, use and impact of GenAI.
- We acknowledge the inherent issues with bias and inappropriate materials from some models of GenAI, and the harms caused by these, and will seek to challenge and safeguard against the harms or potential misuse as appropriate.

Environmentally responsible

We acknowledge that the development of GenAI has emerged in a time of climate crisis and that all technologies, including GenAI, have an environmental impact.

- We will educate ourselves and others about the evolving environmental impact of the development and use of GenAI.
- We will make decisions informed by our environmental responsibilities, the importance of sustainable development and taking account of the most effective and efficient practices.

Collaboration

We value learning with and from each other, and how this can enhance and support our individual and collective development.

- As institutions, we commit to working together on GenAI (where relevant) and sharing our practices.
- We commit to working with students as partners in exploring the role and impact of GenAI in education and research.
- As a sector we will work together to lobby technology suppliers to provide AI products which are ethical, equitable and environmentally responsible.

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Openness

We maintain that open communication, sharing of knowledge, research, practices and educational resources benefits education and society.

- We will uphold the values of open practices in any development and use of GenAI.
- Where appropriate, we will share our knowledge and publications openly across the tertiary education sector and wider society.
- We will use our research and innovative practices in GenAI to lead academic, educational and policy debates on GenAI to positively influence its use in society.

Transparency

We understand that we have a duty to act visibly, predictably and understandably to promote participation and accountability in relation to GenAI.

- We commit to transparent institutional and personal decision-making.
- We will seek transparency from developers, platforms and companies in our selection and procurement of GenAI.
- We will be transparent in whether and how GenAI may be used in by students and staff.

Safety

We will seek to safeguard students and staff from harm from GenAI.

- We will ensure that staff and students are aware of the potential harmful GenAI outputs, such as disinformation, exposure to inappropriate material, and how to mitigate these.
- We will use our risk management frameworks to acknowledge and address risk / benefit trade-offs when creating, using or investing in GenAI.
- We will educate all staff and students on how to identify and escalate any issues or risks relating to GenAI e.g. data protection breach, harm caused by bias, safeguarding risks.

Review

Recognising the rapidly developing nature of GenAI, we will review our understanding, policies and practices regularly in light of emerging evidence, societal impact, and technological change.

References

These principles build on the *ScAITEN statement of principles on use of GenAI in learning, teaching and assessment*, the Russell Group Principles on the use of Generative AI tools in education, the Scottish Open Education Declaration and align with the Sustainable Development Goals and the ALT Framework for Ethical Learning Technology.

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