

A few thoughts on *student use of AI*

A few points about student use of AI, from the experience of a researcher and educator.

- 01 You can't tell from an artefact what a student has thought in the process of making that artefact. This is the main challenge of product-based assessment.
- 02 Sometimes, students write a text without AI and then use AI to format it and refine the language.
- 03 A student can use AI to make something and still think. The thinking changes, depending on how they use AI.
- 04 There are infinite possible uses of AI in making something, and also infinite possible ways of thinking while using AI in making something.
- 05 A single use of AI does not necessarily contaminate a whole assignment.
- 06 Using AI on a single assignment does not necessarily contaminate a whole degree.
- 07 Experimentation is part of learning.
- 08 If a student is really good at using AI, they may or may not be good at using AI to learn.
- 09 If a student is really good at using AI to learn, then using AI is probably not harming their learning in an overall sense (and may be helping)
– although that depends on a lot of factors like time pressure, competing demands, personal situation, the perceived relevance of the work, and extrinsic motivations to complete the work superficially or thoroughly.
- 10 The only way to know what your students are thinking, whether they are doing their work properly, and to help them do it properly, is to spend time with them. It is too late to do this during an end-of-semester oral exam.
- 11 Students usually care about their learning.
- 12 A key purpose of higher education – and all education – is to learn how to learn, and learning with technologies, including AI, is part of this.
- 13 The AI-related beliefs and practices of students are as diverse as those of staff.
- 14 AI in education is an even bigger, and more emotional and personal, challenge for students than it is for educators.
- 15 Students need educators who understand all of this and will help them navigate it.
- 16 Every time we talk about students as if they are all cheating or avoiding learning, we cause harm to students.
This is not to dismiss the challenge in front of us, but to call for a more sophisticated conceptualisation of it.
- 17 Competing demands, the competitive nature of higher education and employment, and the erosion of trust between students and institutions are much bigger threats to friction and effortful learning than the availability of AI.

The next time someone talks about students and cognitive offloading as if it is a simple idea, please remind them of these points.