



“AI Should Help them Learn, Not Learn for Them”: University Staff Perspectives on the Role of Generative AI in Education

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Abstract

Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) has rapidly emerged as a dramatic disruptor across multiple sectors, significantly impacting higher education and workplace dynamics (Baidoo-anu & Owusu Ansah, 2023). Understanding how students and educators engage with the complexities, challenges, and affordances of GenAI is essential to developing robust institutional educational responses. In 2023, we administered a survey to academic staff at our Australian-based University to explore their perspectives, attitudes and experiences regarding GenAI in learning and teaching. Findings revealed substantial concerns regarding academic integrity, ethical considerations, and the potential erosion of essential academic skills such as critical thinking and creativity. Staff highlighted equity concerns related to student access and proficiency in GenAI tools and digital literacy, with uncertainty about staff responsibilities in training students. Conversely, staff recognised substantial opportunities for using GenAI to enhance teaching practices through streamlined administrative processes, improved curriculum and assessment design, and innovative, student-centred learning activities. Given our findings, there is an urgent need for clear governance frameworks, structured professional training programs, interdisciplinary collaboration, and the active inclusion of student perspectives.

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Practitioner Notes

1. Develop targeted GenAI training that integrates both technical skills and pedagogical strategies
2. Create discipline-specific guidelines to support contextually relevant AI implementation.
3. Establish clear AI assessment policies to maintain academic integrity and transparency.
4. Encourage interdisciplinary collaboration to foster knowledge-sharing and best practices in AI use.
5. Monitor and evaluate the impact of AI tools on teaching, learning, and staff workload to inform ongoing professional development.

Keywords

Artificial intelligence, staff perceptions, higher education, digital literacy

Introduction

Generative AI (GenAI) has rapidly emerged as a major disruptor in the higher education sector, significantly reshaping approaches to teaching, learning, and research (Lee et al., 2024; Nikolic et al., 2024; Pang & Wei, 2025). Australian universities have demonstrated varied responses to GenAI integration, ranging from outright bans (Kutty et al., 2024) to proactive exploration of its pedagogical potential (Nikolic et al., 2024). Central to these discussions are critical concerns regarding academic integrity and plagiarism, specifically how institutions can reliably verify the authenticity of student assessments (Lodge et al., 2023). Hence, assessment practices have become a focal point, prompting universities to reconsider and revise assessment design strategies to effectively evaluate student performance in a GenAI-influenced educational environment (Bearman et al., 2024; Ogunleye et al., 2024; TEQSA, 2024).

Beyond assessment practices and academic integrity, a growing body of literature has explored the broader transformative possibilities and challenges of GenAI, highlighting the need for universities to respond strategically as the technology increasingly influences the future workforce (Liu et al., 2023; Nikolic et al., 2024). Scholarly attitudes toward GenAI have been notably polarised. Advocates highlight the potential of GenAI to revolutionise educational methods, enhancing student engagement and learning outcomes (Lodge et al., 2023). In contrast, critics express considerable caution regarding ethical implications, equity concerns, and risks to core academic competencies (Dwivedi et al., 2023; Lodge et al., 2023). Specific ethical challenges identified include the potential misuse of GenAI by students (Kiryakova & Angelova, 2023), its capacity to reinforce social and gender biases (Khan, 2023) and its role in exacerbating educational inequalities (Bulathwela et al., 2024). Further concerns centre around the accuracy and reliability of GenAI-generated content, often described as AI “hallucinations” (Bin-Nashwan et al., 2023), and detrimental impacts on students' writing skills, originality, and critical thinking (Kiryakova & Angelova, 2023). Conversely, emerging evidence also suggests that strategic use of GenAI can positively support student writing and analytical skills, offering tools for idea generation, immediate feedback, and deeper critical engagement with content (Fiialka et al., 2023; Premkumar et al., 2024).

Academics who have embraced GenAI have welcomed the recent efforts to explore its applications in learning and teaching, highlighting several emerging areas of focus. A primary interest has become empowering learners and educators through the integration of GenAI into teaching practices (Pham et al., 2023) albeit with an eye firmly placed on academic integrity and managing its limitations and risks (Nikolic et al., 2024). Benefits for student learning have largely been identified in terms of personalised learning opportunities (Chan & Lee, 2023), real time targeted recommendations, brainstorming to generate ideas, grammar checking writing support particularly beneficial to international students, and real-time feedback (Sharma & Bozkurt, 2024).

For academic staff, GenAI presents substantial opportunities to streamline resource creation, lesson planning, and administrative tasks, enabling innovative instructional practices that enhance student engagement (Chan & Lee, 2023; Sharples, 2023). The integration of GenAI with collaborative and social learning further extends its educational impact beyond routine functions (Sharples, 2023), emphasising the critical importance of student agency and self-directed learning to fully harness its potential (Lodge et al., 2023). Nevertheless, educators play a crucial role in guiding students toward critically evaluating and effectively leveraging GenAI interactions (Lodge, 2023). However, disparities in educators' preparedness and confidence have emerged, with many

academic staff expressing uncertainty regarding the integration of GenAI into their pedagogical approaches. These uncertainties, compounded by existing workload pressures, the demands of skill acquisition, and a lack of clear institutional guidance, exacerbate stress among academic staff already navigating significant responsibilities (Baig & Yadegaridehkordi, 2025; McGrath et al., 2023).

Across Australian universities, concerns have notably increased regarding academic staff skill development, highlighting an urgent need for targeted training, clear governance, and supportive policies to effectively manage the incorporation of GenAI into higher education (Nikolic et al., 2024). Developing comprehensive digital literacy skills among both students and academics is essential for successfully navigating the evolving landscape shaped by GenAI (Baidoo-anu & Owusu Ansah, 2023). To integrate GenAI effectively into educational practices, it is critical to deeply understand its contextual implications, associated challenges, and potential opportunities (Hillier, 2023). While recent studies have begun examining academic staff perspectives on the nexus of GenAI and teaching, learning, research and governance (Dwivedi et al., 2023), further insights into specific institutional contexts and educator experiences remain necessary. Addressing this gap, the present study conducted in Victoria, Australia, examines academic staff perspectives, experiences, attitudes, and challenges regarding GenAI integration. Through combined qualitative and quantitative methodologies, this research provides valuable insights, contributing significantly to the ongoing discourse on the effective implementation of GenAI in higher education.

Method

With approval from the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Ethics ID: HEC23263), an online cross-sectional survey was administered. This study was conducted in accordance with the National Health and Medical Research Council (2023).

Participants

Academic staff from ten schools within the university were recruited for the study. Demographic data were collected, including age, gender, employment type, teaching level, and school affiliation.

Material

An exploratory cross-sectional design was employed, using a digital survey that included a combination of closed and open-ended items. The survey was hosted on Redcap, a secure data collection platform (Harris et al., 2009) and was based on the Generative Artificial Intelligence Survey developed by Kelly et al. (2023). Prior to launch, the instrument was trialled with a small group of colleagues, whose feedback informed minor refinements. These included reorganising content into more digestible sections and enhancing instructional clarity. The final survey contained up to 55 items presented across six sections: Part A Demographic Information, Part B General Digital Literacy and Artificial Intelligence, Section C Training and University Adoption, Section D Prompt Engineering, Section E Assessment Development, and Section F Academic Integrity Ethics and Equity. Items included multiple-choice, Likert-scale, and open-ended formats. Branching logic was used throughout so the number of items displayed varied depending on participant responses. The full survey instrument, including exact question wording, ordering,

response formats, and branching structure, is provided in Appendix A to support transparency and replicability.

Procedure

After obtaining ethical approval, the survey was distributed through various university channels. A link and QR code directing participants to the online survey were shared by Associate Deans of Learning and Teaching to academic staff, via email and Microsoft Teams, and displayed on posters in high-traffic areas, including the library and campus café. Upon accessing the survey, participants were first presented with an electronic participant information statement and asked to provide informed consent. Those who agreed proceeded to the demographics section, while those who declined were directed to the survey exit. Responses, both complete and incomplete, were stored securely using Redcap and later analysed in SPSS version 28 (IBM Corp, 2023). The survey was open from August 2023 to June 2024 and had an estimated completion time of 15 minutes.

Data Analysis

Analysis of closed-ended questions was performed using SPSS version 28 (IBM Corp, 2023) to generate descriptive statistics. Given the descriptive and exploratory nature of the study, and the small sample size with low cell counts across response categories resulting in insufficient statistical power, the dataset was not suitable for robust inferential analyses. Therefore, only descriptive statistics were reported. Open-ended responses were imported into Excel (Microsoft Corp, 2018) where data were systematically sorted, and labels and themes were generated for thematic analysis. Open-ended responses were analysed using an inductive thematic approach, which grounds codes in the data rather than a pre-existing theoretical framework (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Data were analysed by the third author, who systematically reviewed all responses and generated preliminary codes, then combined similar codes into broad themes. Coding consistency was maintained through iterative checking of codes against themes to ensure that each code was well represented by its assigned theme. Saturation was determined when repeated review of the data produced no new codes or concepts, and all key ideas were well represented within the existing thematic framework. To support analytic rigour in line with Braun and Clarke (2022) guidance, the coder engaged in ongoing reflexive practice throughout the analysis, documenting interpretive decisions through analytic notes and periodically discussing developing insights with the research team to ensure coherence and transparency in theme development.

Results

Demographic Information

While 94 responses were initially received, listwise deletions were applied to exclude participants who did not proceed past the demographic items ($n = 18$), resulting in a final sample of 76 academic staff currently employed at our university, with demographic information detailed in Table 1 below.

Table 1*Participant Demographics (n = 76)*

Sample Characteristics	n	%
Gender		
Female	54	71.1
Male	20	26.3
Gender non-conforming	2	2.6
Age		
24-29	8	10.5
30-39	19	25.0
40-49	24	31.6
50-59	23	30.3
60+	2	2.6
Employment Type		
Ongoing	53	69.7
Contract	14	18.4
Casual academic	9	11.8
Teaching Level		
Undergraduate	60	78.9
Postgraduate	14	18.4
Higher Degree by Research	2	2.6
Affiliation		
Humanities and Social Sciences	6	7.9
Business	6	7.9
Law	7	9.2
Rural Health	11	14.5
Allied Health, Human Services and Sport	17	22.4
Agriculture, Biomedicine and Environment	7	9.2
Nursing and Midwifery	8	10.5
Education	2	2.6
Psychology and Public Health	10	13.2
Computing, Engineering and Mathematical Sciences	2	2.6

General digital and AI literacy

Academic staff considered themselves digitally literate, with the majority ($n = 63$, 82.9%) rating themselves as either “moderate” or “high” on general digital literacy, and most ($n = 46$, 60.5%) rating themselves as either somewhat or very confident regarding their skills and understanding of AI technologies. Notably, an equal proportion ($n = 12$, 15.8%) rated themselves as “very high” on digital literacy and “very confident” in their skills and understanding of AI technologies. All had heard about GenAI tools, with the most common response being having heard “a moderate amount” ($n = 43$, 56.6%). Most academics ($n = 64$, 84.2%) considered themselves either “somewhat” or “very” familiar with the applications of GenAI in education or other fields, and most ($n = 51$, 67.2%) were either very or somewhat confident about critically evaluating GenAI outputs or recommendations in the teaching context; roughly a third ($n = 25$, 32.9%) were not very, or not confident at all.

Use of generative AI

Most academics ($n = 47$, 61.8%) had already used GenAI in their work, however only 6.6% ($n = 5$) were currently paying to use GenAI. Analyses were conducted with the subsample of academics who had used GenAI before in any capacity ($n = 47$). Of these, most did not use it frequently or regularly, and most had not integrated it into their teaching practices or curriculum design, with a small minority stating that they had no intention of doing so in the future. However, a substantial proportion ($n = 19$, 40.4%) had integrated GenAI into their teaching practices or curriculum design on an either occasional or regular basis. Most rated their experience using it as positive with only two academics rating their experience as either negative or very negative. When asked which AI tools they had used before, the most common by far was the free version of ChatGPT (used by most of the sample).

Academics were asked about the perceived benefits and uses of GenAI in their teaching work. The main perceived benefit of GenAI use was enhanced productivity and efficiency, with substantial proportions of academics stating that they believed it could also lead to improved understanding or insights into the content, improved creativity or innovation, or expanded possibilities for exploration or experimentation. Academics also stated that GenAI would be useful for brainstorming/background information and summarising content, with the least popular perceived use being referencing. See Table 2 below for more information.

Table 2

Perceived Benefits and Uses of GenAI

Survey Item	n	%
Main benefits of using GenAI		
Enhanced productivity and efficiency	45	58.2
Improved understanding/insights in subject matter	29	38.2
Improved creativity and innovation	18	23.7
Expanded possibilities for exploration/experimentation	25	32.9
Other	21	27.6
Areas GenAI most helpful for		
Brainstorming and background information	38	50.0
Summary of content	34	44.7
Creative writing/storytelling	14	18.4
Data analysis/visualisation	12	15.8
Analysis of content	10	13.2
Referencing	4	5.3
Other	31	40.8

Note. Academics were able to check multiple responses for each question.

In qualitative comments academics commonly reported that GenAI was perceived as an aid in curriculum design, such as lesson planning or assessment design. Some academics had used it to aid in summarising or explaining concepts, whilst others gave other examples of using it as a teaching tool (e.g., generating examples or case studies to work through). Other uses included assisting students with self-assessment or critical reflection on their own work, prompting

discussion or reflection adopting Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles, administrative tasks and creating graphics. One academic remarked “the technology should be used to enable and support the best parts of what we do, while reducing the costs and eliminating the worst parts of what we do” while another saw it as “another resource in our education toolbox.” In four cases, applications of GenAI had been coupled with critical evaluation designed to encourage an understanding of the limitations of GenAI (e.g., having AI generate a report that students are then asked to critique).

Training and university adoption

Although most academics expressed a desire to receive training to enhance their AI-related understanding and skills, more than three-quarters of the sample stated that adequate resources were not provided to develop their own AI literacy. Most supported the incorporation of AI literacy into the curriculum, and most agreed that the University should embrace the integration of GenAI to enhance student employability and foster innovation, in line with our institutional values and strategic plan ($n = 50, 65.7\%$). However, only one participant rated our university as above average in this regard compared to other universities, with the sample broadly agreeing that it was either on par, below average or lagging behind. See Table 3 for more information.

Table 3

Attitudes Toward GenAI Skills and Training (N = 76)

Survey Item	n	%
Provided with sufficient training?		
Yes, regularly	2	2.6
Yes, occasionally	26	34.2
No, but I would like to receive training	41	53.9
No, and I do not require any training	7	9.2
Important to incorporate GenAI literacy into curriculum?		
Yes, it is crucial	53	69.7
No, digital literacy should be the responsibility of specialised programs or departments	6	7.9
Unsure/Undecided	17	22.4
Adequate support and resources provided to staff?		
Yes	7	9.2
No	59	77.6
Unsure/Undecided	10	13.2
Should embrace the integration of GenAI to enhance student employability and foster innovation		
Yes, I strongly agree	22	28.9
Yes, I agree	28	36.8
Neutral	18	23.7
No, I disagree	3	3.9
No, I strongly disagree	5	6.6
Utilisation of AI compared to other universities		
Leading the way	0	0
Above average	1	1.3
On par with others	48	63.2
Below average	21	27.6
Lagging behind	6	7.9

Most agreed that students should possess a range of GenAI-related skills upon graduation, with the vast majority agreeing that students should be able to understand the ethical implications and considerations of AI technology and critically evaluate AI-generated content. Most academics agreed that university staff should play a role in improving student digital literacy in relation to GenAI, with the majority agreeing that academic staff should incorporate GenAI and related concepts into existing subjects and courses and provide resources and guidance for student self-learning. Close to half of the sample ($n = 35, 46.1\%$) believed that academic staff should play a role in educating students about prompt engineering; a smaller number were undecided or neutral ($n = 30, 39.5\%$) and 14.5% ($n = 11$) stated that students should learn effective prompt use on their own. See Table 4 for more information.

Table 4

Attitudes Regarding the Impacts and Implications of GenAI

Survey Item	n	%
GenAI skills students should possess upon graduation		
Understanding ethical implications and considerations	69	90.8
Ability to critically evaluate AI-generated content	68	89.5
Knowledge of AI algorithms and their potential biases	52	68.4
Proficiency with GenAI for creative or analytical purposes	47	61.8
Other	8	10.5
Role university staff should play in improving student GenAI literacy		
Incorporate GenAI and related concepts into existing subjects and courses	47	61.8
Provide resources and guidance for self-learning	44	57.9
Offer GenAI-specific courses or modules	36	47.4
Actively provide student training and workshops	30	39.5
Play a supportive role by offering access or subscriptions	28	36.8
Other	5	6.6

Note. Academics were able to check multiple responses for each question.

Supports and resources

When asked what specific areas or topics regarding GenAI they were most interested in exploring through training or resources, almost all survey academics ($n = 72$) left responses to this open-ended question. A quick thematic content analysis showed that a substantial number of academics were unsure or didn't have enough information to know what they needed whilst some were not interested in receiving more training or resources on GenAI from the university. The most common topic that staff expressed interest in exploring more about was assessment, including how to incorporate GenAI into assessment design, how to mitigate against cheating using GenAI or how to use it in marking or feedback. Another topic of interest was ethics, including the ethicality of GenAI in general, the legality of its use, clarity regarding what is permitted for both students and staff, and how to use it ethically as an academic. Other academics wanted to know more about how GenAI models work, how to use them (e.g., prompt engineering), their strengths and limitations, and what possibilities they afford. How to integrate GenAI into their subjects as a teaching tool, was also requested whilst some wished to explore more about how to detect student plagiarism or cheating.

When asked whether there are resources or support systems, they felt would be helpful in effectively integrating GenAI into their work or teaching, almost all survey academics ($n = 73$) left responses to this open-ended question. The most common responses in this subsample ($n = 40$, 54.8%) related to information, training, real-world examples or hands-on practice regarding how to use GenAI in teaching and learning. Some of these academics specified that they desired more clarity regarding what is acceptable legally or ethically, or what the university's stance is regarding the extent of permitted student AI usage. As well as training and practice, academics desired more structural support, such as new GenAI-based software for things like administration, analytics and assessments, resources and support from peers such as in a community of practice, professional or technology support staff to assist with GenAI issues, or a tool which accurately identifies GenAI plagiarism. Practical considerations such as time and cost were also mentioned; some reported that they did not have the time nor workload capacity to engage in training or implement changes, whilst some stated that the university should subsidise the cost of GenAI for students and/or academic staff. However, interestingly some other academics stated that they did not need resources or supports from the university in this area or were unsure about what resources or supports they might find useful.

Concerns and barriers

An open-ended question asked academics to specify any concerns or challenges they associated with the use of GenAI in the university setting. Almost all surveyed academics ($n = 70$) responded. Thematic content analysis identified four key themes arising from 55 academics.

Theme 1: Academic integrity

By far the most common issue was academic integrity, specifically regarding the use of GenAI by students to plagiarise or cheat on assessments. These responses tended to be brief, e.g., "Academic Integrity" and "Cheating". Most referenced concerns over students' ability to "use AI to complete work and passing it as their own". Two academics viewed the attempt of staying on top of this as futile due to the speed of technological development "students will inevitably know and use any new tech faster than teachers & universities can keep up". Two reported that assessments needed to be changed to respond to the challenges posed by GenAI; one mentioned online quizzes as being particularly vulnerable, and another stated that all "exams should be on-campus invigilated".

Theme 2: Impediment to learning

Approximately one-third of the sample reported that GenAI posed a threat to high-quality teaching and learning. The most frequently identified subtheme, skills deficiency, reflected concerns that students would use GenAI as a "shortcut" when completing assessments "without actually learning or satisfying the intended learning outcomes (ILOs). Academics were concerned that this would lead to students not obtaining critical professional skills of writing, referencing, conducting literature searches, creative thinking or critical analysis "students are not doing the necessary cognitive work and thus not developing vital skills".

Another subtheme, inaccuracy and bias, concerned the problem of factual errors or hallucinations. Academics acknowledged that GenAI is "not factually accurate" and "often biased" in a way that "students may not have the expertise to detect." A related subtheme, poor AI literacy, reflected

concerns that students lacked the proficiency to recognise GenAI's limitations, which could result in unintentional misuse and overreliance on its output. As one academic noted, "students are now using ChatGPT to find answers not realising it's just guessing the next word." These responses reflected an overarching concern that GenAI is too easily used uncritically as a substitute for learning rather than a tool to support it. A key challenge, as one academic observed, is "getting students to use AI to help them learn, not to learn for them." Two academics also warned that this shift could damage the university's reputation, ultimately leading to the "value of a degree being diminished."

Theme 3: Labour implications

Some academics perceived GenAI negatively in relation to their work. Five academics indicated that GenAI had increased their workload. For example, one person commented, "Assessing AI-generated essays has significantly increased the amount of time I need for marking." Another pointed to the inadequate integration of GenAI within the university's Learning Management System as a missed opportunity to reduce administrative tasks. Others highlighted deteriorating working conditions, with one noting that error-checking AI-generated content had "created negative job dissatisfaction," and another suggesting that academic staff roles were becoming "reduced to supervisors with less creative input." A few academics also raised concerns about the university adopting AI to perform tasks that should be completed by humans. As one stated, "they will be used to replace functions that can only and must be done by people, such as marking and feedback and student services."

Theme 4: Ethics

Some academics raised ethical concerns about GenAI that extended beyond issues of academic integrity. One participant simply stated, "they are not ethical." Concerns included the use of training data without consent, including questions of copyright and legality, the use of student work to train GenAI, the need to disclose AI use in developing teaching materials, and the sharing of exam questions with AI.

Barriers to integrating digital literacy skills

An additional open-ended question invited staff to describe any challenges or barriers they had already encountered when integrating digital literacy skills or teaching about GenAI in their courses. Most academics ($n = 67$) provided comments. The most frequently reported theme was a lack of personal knowledge on the topic, with participants stating, "we don't have the time or expertise to do this" and "I don't have proficiency at all, my students know more than I do." Some academics also pointed to a lack of institutional guidance, referring to a "lack of clear vision at Uni level" and "lack of guidelines." Others expressed ethical concerns, with several noting uncertainty about how to teach GenAI without inadvertently encouraging misuse. Time constraints were also prominent, with academics reporting insufficient capacity to address GenAI-related issues or engage in relevant training. As one participant noted, "I have not had time to learn myself let alone how to integrate into course." Some academics felt restricted by current tools, citing either outdated or inadequate assessment rubrics or limitations of the technology itself. A few academics believed that teaching GenAI was outside the scope of their role or irrelevant to their discipline. Others described reluctance or negative attitudes among colleagues, with one noting, "Some staff

are very anti-AI.” Finally, several academics noted that the rapid pace of technological change made it difficult to keep course content current, commenting that “content will be outdated by the time we teach it.”

Assessment development

When asked about the use of GenAI in assessment design, most academic staff were entirely or mostly supportive. However, there was widespread disagreement with the notion that assessments created using AI tools are inherently more objective or unbiased. There was strong consensus on the importance of clearly communicating to students how GenAI is used in assessment development, and on the need for academic staff to receive training in effectively using these tools. The most frequently noted concern was the potential reduction in human interaction and personalised feedback. Nonetheless, a substantial proportion of respondents (n = 34, 44.7%) identified potential benefits, including enhanced objectivity, greater fairness, and the possibility of more personalised and adaptive assessments. See Table 5 for further details.

Table 5

Attitudes Regarding GenAI in Assessment Creation (n = 76)

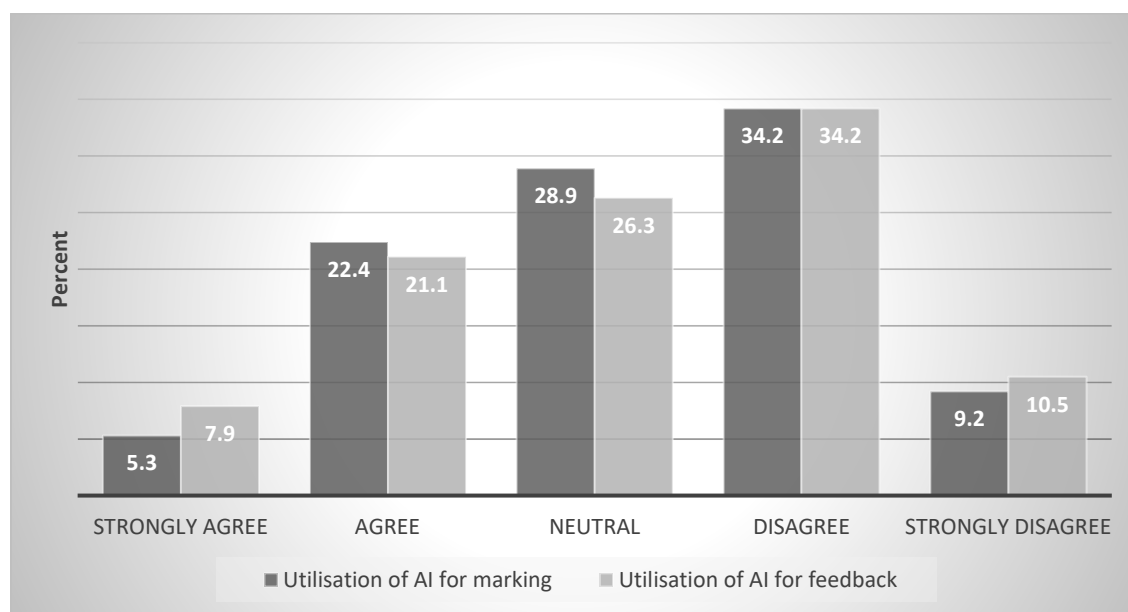
Survey Item	n	%
Feeling towards using AI tools to create assessments		
Would be supportive and see it as a positive advancement	22	28.9
Open to the idea but have some concerns/reservations	29	38.2
Indifferent, as long as assessments are fair and relevant	10	13.2
Would be sceptical, prefer assessments created solely by human instructors	12	15.8
Other	3	3.9
Belief that assessments created using AI tools are more objective and unbiased		
Yes	2	2.6
No	55	72.4
Unsure/undecided	19	25.0
Importance of transparency regarding the use of AI tools in assessment creation		
Very important	51	67.1
Somewhat important	13	17.1
Not very important	10	13.2
Not important at all	2	2.6
Should academic staff receive training on how to effectively use AI tools for assessment creation?		
Yes, it is important	59	77.6
No, AI tools should not be used for assessment creation	8	10.5
Unsure/undecided	9	11.8
How do you think the use of AI tools in assessment creation can impact the educational experience for students?		
Can enhance objectivity and fairness in assessments	9	11.8
May lead to more personalised and adaptive assessments	25	32.9
Could decrease the human interaction and feedback aspect	28	36.8
Other	14	18.4

Regarding the impact of AI tools on the educational experience of students, qualitative comments included that it would improve the clarity, quality or accuracy of assessments, whereas another

highlighted the risk of bias and inaccuracy in GenAI output. One academic saw it “a starting point” for those who are time poor and another commented “current assessment is designed in a way that does not eliminate use of AI, so a person can use AI and get a better mark than a student who doesn't know how to use AI.” When asked for their opinions regarding the utilisation of AI tools by academic staff for marking and assessments, responses were more negative than positive. As shown in *Figure 1*, the largest proportion of participants selected “Disagree” for both marking and feedback, indicating low support for the use of GenAI in these assessment processes.

Figure 1

Staff Agreement with Utilisation of AI tools for Marking and Feedback



Note. Bars represent the percentage of respondents selecting each agreement level. Disagreement was the most common response for both marking and feedback.

A total of 29 academics provided additional comments or concerns about the use of AI tools for delivering feedback in assessment. Positive responses ($n = 9$, 31%) highlighted the potential of GenAI to enhance efficiency and free up time for other tasks “AI could help us to succinctly provide valuable feedback in a more efficient manner”. Others pointed to its perceived objectivity and fairness, with one participant stating that “it's very objective and ensure[s] the marking and feedback is against the rubric and not the bias of the marker.”

Concerns about the use of AI tools for feedback ($n = 26$) were grouped into five main themes: inherent limitations, education quality, teacher–student relationship, labour implications, and bias. The most frequently raised issue related to the limitations of the technology itself. Many participants noted that GenAI lacks the capacity to assess sophistication, innovation, or nuance in student work. One participant commented, “I don't think that AI is capable of recognising innovation.” Others described GenAI-generated feedback as too generic, imprecise, or “too

impersonal.” Another remarked that GenAI is “too polite to give harsh feedback that may be necessary.” Concerns about educational quality were also prominent. Several participants warned that outsourcing marking or feedback to GenAI could diminish the student experience, particularly by reducing opportunities for dialogic, authentic, or meaningful feedback. Some questioned whether tertiary education risked becoming a cycle of “AI writing and then marking its own essays,” resulting in minimal learning or skill development.

The importance of marking and feedback as part of the teacher–student relationship was also emphasised, with some highlighting its role in getting to know students and providing a vital human element. A few respondents raised concerns about the labour implications of implementing GenAI, including fears that “if the technology is implemented, the cost savings will be absorbed by the institution, rather than spread to the workers.” Two academics mentioned the risk of bias, including the potential for AI detectors to unfairly flag the work of neurodiverse students or non-native English speakers.

Academic integrity, ethics and equity

Academic staff expressed mixed or neutral levels of confidence in using GenAI while maintaining academic integrity. Many reported that the university had either not provided policies or guidelines on the ethical use of GenAI for learning and assessment, or that existing resources were unclear. One academic observed, “there’s so much information out there, and it is evolving so rapidly, that it is impossible to keep up. Lack of school/uni policy makes things difficult to incorporate. Lack of clear vision at Uni level is a problem. No support staff present to help. We are a long way behind the curve here.” The overwhelming majority indicated that they would benefit from additional training on this issue. See Table 6 below for further details.

Table 6

Attitudes Regarding Using GenAI with Respect to Academic Integrity (n = 76)

Survey Item	n	%
Confidence in use of GenAI while maintaining academic integrity		
Very confident	8	10.5
Slightly confident	11	14.5
Mixed feelings/neutral	31	40.8
Not very confident	10	13.2
Not at all confident	9	11.8
Unable to judge	7	9.2
Provided with clear policies or guidelines from the uni regarding ethical use of GenAI for learning and assessments?		
Yes, comprehensive guidelines are provided	9	11.8
Yes, but the guidelines are unclear or insufficient	23	30.3
No, there are no specific guidelines provided	33	43.4
N/A, haven't used GenAI for learning or assessments	11	14.5
Would benefit from additional training or resources regarding ethical use of GenAI for learning and assessments?		
Yes, I would find it beneficial	61	80.3
No, I feel adequately informed	7	9.2
Unsure/Undecided	8	10.5

Future considerations

In reflecting on where the AI revolution might lead tertiary education, most academics anticipated ethical challenges, greater efficiency, or a transformation of teaching and learning practices. See Table 7 below for further detail.

Table 7

Attitudes Regarding the Future Impact of GenAI (n = 76)

Survey Item	n	%
Future impacts of GenAI on tertiary education		
Ethical considerations and challenges in AI-driven education	56	73.7
Increased efficiency in administrative tasks and processes	47	61.8
Transformation of teaching methodologies and learning experiences	40	52.6
Enhanced personalisation and adaptive learning systems	26	34.2
New opportunities for interdisciplinary research and collaborations	18	23.7
Other	10	13.2

Note. Academics were able to check multiple responses for each question.

Qualitative comments reflected a range of concerns about the future impact of GenAI in higher education. Some participants believed it would diminish the quality of research, teaching, and graduate outcomes, while others expressed concern about a potential rise in academic misconduct. Several respondents anticipated job losses or increased underpayment of staff. In contrast, some viewed GenAI as a supportive tool for students with English as an additional language, whereas others predicted that it could exacerbate existing inequities for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. While views varied on the broader implications of GenAI for higher education, many academics also reflected on the evolving role of educators in an AI-enabled landscape.

“A tool, not a solution” – The role of educators in an AI-enabled landscape

An open-ended question invited academics to describe how they envisioned the role of human educators in the context of increasing AI integration, and how best to foster effective collaboration between AI technologies and human expertise. Almost all academics ($n = 67$) provided a response. Many expressed uncertainty, stating that they did not feel sufficiently experienced with GenAI to offer a clear view. Among those who did elaborate, there was broad agreement that GenAI should be viewed as a tool to support, rather than replace, human educators. Several participants suggested that its role lies in managing routine or administrative tasks, enabling educators to focus on higher-order teaching and student engagement. As one academic put it, GenAI could help by “reducing the amount of 'shovel' work that needs to be done.”

Regarding the role of educators, academics emphasised the importance of preserving the human element in teaching. They pointed to aspects of education that should not be replaced by AI, such as teacher–student interaction, disciplinary expertise, oversight of AI-generated content, curriculum development, real-world application of concepts, and guiding students in the critical use of GenAI. One participant captured this view: “To always remember that human connection is essential to student learning, student belonging and student engagement on campus. AI cannot take the place of the relationships we build with our students, and I would hate to see those

relationships lost.” Many agreed that GenAI should be used to support rather than replace educators. As one described, “GenAI is a tool, not a solution,” and another elaborated, “The technology should be used to enable and support the best parts of what we do, while reducing the costs and eliminating the worst parts of what we do.”

Some academics challenged the assumption that the widespread integration of GenAI in higher education would yield positive outcomes. Some made the general comment that it was either too difficult or not possible to use GenAI effectively “We can’t at the moment. AI can still be tricked”. Some emphasised that, even if there are theoretical benefits, the for-profit model of university management would mean that outcomes for staff would be negative (e.g., reduced pay, replacement by AI, reduction of teaching quality in favour of low-quality cost-saving measures). A few rejected the phrase ‘*collaboration with AI*’, referring to it as a tool (similar to a calculator or car), not a collaborator. Others worried that students would prefer the simplistic answers provided by GenAI “Why come to class if AI can provide a quick answer?”, others noted “[it is already] hard enough get students to think and read critically” and that GenAI would compound this issue”. A further few academics indicated their strong intention to resist the encroachment of GenAI into the teaching field “We need to be loudly speaking to the manifold problems with it and aggressively pushing back”.

Many academics stated that they wished to see more transparency, guidelines, training or regulations regarding how to use GenAI (including ethical use). Some believed that the role of educators would not change, with one specifying that their discipline involves complex tasks which AI is unable to replace.

Equity in access to GenAI technologies

When asked what measures should be implemented to ensure equitable access to AI-driven educational resources and opportunities for all students, irrespective of background or technological proficiency, almost all academic respondents ($n = 66$) provided feedback. The two most frequently suggested measures included offering free and open access to GenAI tools for all students and staff and establishing comprehensive training and support services in GenAI.

In contrast, some academics expressed scepticism regarding the premise of equitable GenAI access, questioning the essential value of such technologies altogether, with one participant stating, “I disagree with the premise that these technologies should be used at all.” A few participants noted that GenAI tools are already freely accessible and likely to remain so, implying no further measures were necessary. Another participant highlighted existing disparities, commenting, “I don’t [think] students even have equal opportunity currently, so the addition of more technology is unlikely to help the situation.” Additionally, a notable number of participants felt insufficiently informed to respond confidently, indicating a significant gap in staff awareness and preparedness regarding GenAI.

“We need to keep the human in mind” – managing ethical concerns

On the question of balancing ethical considerations and responsible use of AI technologies in education, most academics responded ($n = 67$), with many citing limited knowledge or experience. The overarching theme ($n = 31, 46.3\%$) was the importance of being well-informed, emphasising “creating awareness about AI’s potential biases” and “educating staff and students alike.”

Academics recommended more training, open debate, clear institutional guidelines, transparency in GenAI usage, and teaching students the value of deep learning rather than simply “getting a degree.”

Academic staff further requested practical support, including better plagiarism detection software, invigilation for online tests, and dedicated GenAI support staff. Another common theme stressed retaining the human element, ensuring human oversight, avoiding AI over-reliance, valuing human-generated content, and prioritising “people over profits.” Many advocated for curriculum redesign, emphasising the need for students to genuinely engage with their learning “without taking shortcuts.” Caution against sensationalist claims about GenAI was expressed by some academics, with one noting, “AI is not a cure-all. There are lots of issues that could be made a lot worse with AI,” while others questioned whether ethical use of GenAI in higher education is truly feasible. These views reflect the reality of working in an AI landscape where assessment validity and integrity is increasingly challenged. As the realities of the huge disruption that AI has created including the realignment of all of our pedagogical practices, it is not surprising that these conflicting perspectives have emerged.

Discussion

This study aimed to explore academic staff perspectives, experiences, attitudes, opportunities and challenges associated with integrating GenAI into teaching and learning within higher education contexts. Our findings reveal both critical concerns and promising opportunities, aligning with and extending existing literature.

Academic integrity and evaluative judgement

Academic staff reported both excitement and trepidation regarding the use of GenAI in their teaching practice, balancing a tightrope of possibilities whilst mitigating its risks. Academic integrity emerged as a central concern, particularly the potential for students to misuse GenAI to produce inauthentic work or circumvent learning processes, a concern also noted by Jin et al. (2023). Participants emphasised the need to reconsider assessment design to prioritise higher-order thinking, aligning with Bearman et al. (2024) who advocate for developing students’ evaluative judgement to critically assess the quality and credibility of AI-generated content. This emphasis on evaluative judgement was closely tied to concerns about skill erosion, with participants stressing the importance of preparing students to critically assess GenAI outputs, identify biases, and detect inaccuracies, consistent with the issues raised by Kiryakova and Angelova (2023). Ethical considerations related to data use, copyright, and transparency were also highlighted, reinforcing calls for comprehensive guidelines and governance frameworks to address these concerns.

Assessment design and feedback

The implications of GenAI integration extended to assessment design, with participants expressing concern about the limitations of AI in delivering nuanced, personalised feedback that is integral to student learning. Despite the potential for AI to streamline feedback processes (Mizumoto & Eguchi, 2023) the prevailing view among academics was that human feedback remained essential to fostering deeper student learning and engagement. Participants emphasised that maintaining human oversight in feedback remained essential to preserving the integrity of assessment practices, reinforcing findings by Kiryakova and Angelova (2023). This

perspective contrasted with Chan and Lee (2023), who found that students reported confidence in using AI feedback to refine their work, while Celik et al. (2022) noted the efficacy of AI-driven virtual tutors in providing immediate support and identifying learning gaps. While some academics acknowledged the potential for personalised and adaptive assessments facilitated by AI to support student learning, transparency around AI-generated feedback was deemed necessary. Our student survey (Šarkić et al., under review) further reinforced this, indicating that while students expected transparency regarding AI use in assessments, such transparency was not always evident in practice.

Professional development and institutional support

Concerns about the adequacy of professional development for academic staff were pervasive. While most academics agreed that students should develop proficiency in AI tools, many expressed uncertainty about their capacity to provide effective training, a concern particularly evident in relation to teaching AI prompting skills. Despite the perceived importance of GenAI literacy, less than half of the participants felt confident in their ability to instruct students in this area, indicating a significant skills gap. Further, and consistent with Bearman et al. (2024) academics reported that monitoring GenAI misuse and redesigning assessments to mitigate risks not only increased their workload but was further compounded by their own limited proficiency with GenAI. This dual challenge of addressing potential academic misconduct while simultaneously developing their own digital skills highlighted the need for targeted institutional support and comprehensive training (van Wyk et al., 2023).

Additionally, given the University's socioeconomically diverse student cohort, ensuring equitable access to GenAI resources and structured student training was regarded as essential to prevent widening educational disparities. Some academics further noted that the relevance and impact of GenAI varied across disciplines, with those in health professions emphasising the risks associated with AI errors in contexts where human relations are critical, and mistakes are potentially disastrous. This variability stresses the need for targeted, discipline-specific training programs that not only address foundational AI skills but also consider contextual differences in application.

Governance and strategic frameworks

The need for stronger governance frameworks emerged as a key concern among academics in this study. Academics emphasised the urgency of implementing clear guidelines, comprehensive training programs, and ongoing support to navigate the ethical, legal, and pedagogical implications of GenAI. While discussions primarily centred on staff preparedness, the role of students as partners in shaping GenAI policies and practices was notably absent from staff perspectives. This omission is significant, particularly given that other Australian studies have highlighted the importance of student involvement in university-wide discussions on AI integration (Lee et al., 2024). Incorporating student voices into policy development not only aligns with institutional claims of being student-centred but also ensures that protocols, processes, and systems reflect the lived experiences of those directly impacted (Kelly et al., 2023; Matthews & Dollinger, 2023). Through incorporating student perspectives as partners in the process we can gain a critical understanding of how students wish to use AI, their fears and expectations of AI use in their learning and how to navigate this complex road together. Partnership and co-design approaches can also help bridge the knowledge gap between staff and students by creating

shared understandings of GenAI, while supporting more equitable practices that take account of diverse student needs and experiences. This aligns with broader calls in the literature for coordinated strategies to foster inclusive AI governance frameworks that incorporate both academic and student needs (Hillier, 2023; Nikolic et al., 2024).

Recommendations

To effectively navigate the integration of GenAI into higher education, a comprehensive institutional strategy is essential. This strategy should include the development of clear guidelines, targeted training, and structured support for both staff and students (Fawns, 2022; Kutty et al., 2024; Sharples, 2023; Siemens, 2005). Within this context, a broader pedagogical discussion around GenAI use in learning and teaching is necessary, extending beyond resource provision and assessment design. A rethink of pedagogy that addresses the dynamic changes in educational practice is required. Importantly, these theoretical perspectives help illuminate the staff concerns identified in the findings, particularly those relating to integrity, workload pressures, uncertainty about appropriate use, and shifting expectations of academic labour. When viewed through a broader post digital and sociotechnical lens, these concerns become more intelligible, especially the tensions evident in staff reflections about assessment stability, confidence in working with GenAI, and the need for clearer pedagogical direction. This framing directly informs the strategies proposed below.

For example, drawing on entangled pedagogy (Fawns, 2022; Siemens, 2005) we might consider how a new cooperative social digital learning model (Sharples, 2023) could shape our practice. This model could incorporate elements of self-regulated digital learning (Jin et al., 2023), co-regulated learning (Lodge et al., 2023) and explore the broader conversations of educational pedagogy and digital collaboration (Sharples, 2023). We should recognise AI in assessment as an ever-developing condition to be navigated (Corbin et al, 2025) whilst firmly prioritising accessibility and inclusion (Kelly et al., 2023). Building on this educational approach, an institutional GenAI educational framework (Hillier, 2023) would be beneficial including a whole institution program level review of our assessment practices (TEQSA, 2024). This would include a rethink of our curriculum approach to incorporate programmatic approaches (Bartman & Quinlan, 2024), evaluative assessment design (Bearman et al., 2024) and visible learning integration (Bearman et al., 2024) ensuring our learning and teaching strategies incorporate GenAI literacy and student social collaboration at its core. Practical strategies for staff in mitigating AI risk through visible assessment design and an AI integrated approach to assessment regimes would support academics currently navigating this challenging landscape. We need to be mindful of the complex interplay between efficiency and quality, enthusiasm and risk. Whilst universities face huge tensions in transforming educational practice given this complexity, we need to acknowledge the 'wicked problem' of AI which we must all navigate rather than solve (Corbin et al., 2025).

Limitations and future research

The findings of this study should be considered within the context of its limitations. First, the survey-based design inherently limits the depth of insights achievable, as responses are confined to predefined questions, potentially restricting academics' abilities to fully articulate their perspectives and experiences. Second, the study employed a voluntary response approach within a single institution, and participation was likely influenced by self-selection bias, since staff with

greater interest in GenAI may have been more motivated to respond. As a result, the sample is not representative of the broader academic workforce either within the institution or across the sector. Third, the sample size of 76 academics is modest, which affects external validity and limits generalisability to other institutional contexts. However, the sample is adequate for an exploratory descriptive study that aimed to capture a snapshot of staff experiences rather than to produce representative or generalisable estimates. Although participants were drawn from multiple disciplines and academic levels, the respondents do not proportionally reflect the broader staff profile of the institution, and therefore the sample should be interpreted as illustrative rather than representative. Finally, given the rapid evolution of AI technologies and policies since the data were collected in 2023, some findings may no longer fully reflect current sector-wide practices. However, the findings remain meaningful, as they highlight persistent gaps in training, resources, and institutional frameworks that continue to impact academic staff navigating GenAI integration.

Conclusion

While confusion is understandable given the rapid evolution of GenAI, there is an urgent need for clear institutional strategies, practical guidelines for both academic staff and students, and a comprehensive educational framework and management plan to ensure ethical, legal, and creative engagement with GenAI. Most importantly, fostering robust, transparent dialogue among students, educators, and university leadership will be critical to collectively addressing challenges, embracing opportunities, and developing innovative pedagogical practices suitable for an AI-driven educational environment.

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