



From Classroom Design to Newsroom Practice: Designing GenAI Assessment Intervention

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Abstract

Generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) presents journalism educators with a paradox. It promises efficiencies and new creative possibilities for students, yet threatens academic integrity, authorship, and the core values of the profession. This paper presents a practice-based curriculum intervention based on an ethical framework that embeds GenAI into undergraduate journalism assessment. The framework integrates Colin Beard's Experiential Learning Design with Bloom's revised taxonomy to scaffold students' movement from human-only reporting tasks to AI-integrated work and critical reflection. Qualitative data from a second-year journalism unit at an Australian global campus in Sarawak, Malaysia, reveal that students already use GenAI strategically but hold deep concerns about accuracy, originality and disclosure. These findings inform the design of authentic, scaffolded activities that aim to convert students' intuitive concerns into explicit competencies in ethical decision-making, prompt engineering and verification. The paper contributes a model that links Australian and institutional quality expectations to the realities of GenAI in journalism education in Malaysia campus.

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Practitioner Notes

1. The authors welcome feedback and discussion from practitioners as the second phase of this project continues and more empirical data is captured.
2. Practitioners working in cultural contexts other than Western or South East Asian journalism courses may wish to adapt the Ethical Framework based on local norms or ethical guidelines for journalists.
3. The framework proposed in this paper is intended for undergraduate journalism programs, but it may be relevant in other settings; for instance, post-graduate, or adjacent media and communications programs.
4. ChatGPT is mentioned in this paper, but other generative large-language models may be more appropriate for the framework in other contexts.
5. Ethics, in the context of this paper, is treated as a value and not merely as a procedural matter for compliance.

Keywords

Artificial intelligence, curriculum design, ethics, intervention, journalism

Introduction

Generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) has rapidly transformed the terrain of higher education (HE) assessment. Since the release of large language models such as ChatGPT-3.5 in late 2022, students have gained easy access to tools that can draft, paraphrase, visualise and structure content in ways that would once have been regarded as evidence of learning. While the integration of AI tools into higher education can enhance personalised learning, foster collaboration and scaffold students' learning needs (Cai et al., 2025; Crompton & Burke, 2023; Ngu et al., 2025), it has also created new forms of anxiety, academic misconduct and skill atrophy (Chan & Hu, 2023; Gerlich, 2025; Sardi et al., 2025). Furthermore, the widespread adoption of GenAI in HE has put academic integrity and honesty in assessment production into question (Rahman & Watanobe, 2023).

These tensions are especially acute in disciplines such as journalism where authenticity, originality and public trust are foundational to professional identity (Kasneji et al., 2023; Ward, 2018). Journalism educators thus face a double challenge: to protect academic integrity while preparing students for a profession already adopting automation. This paper responds to these challenges by proposing an curriculum intervention based on an ethical framework that embeds GenAI into a core undergraduate journalism unit taught at Australian global campus in Sarawak, Malaysia, and the development of a related assessment intervention. Calls for a formal inclusion of AI ethics in HE curricula are timely (Borenstein & Howard, 2021), but the pace of adoption of GenAI in news practice may outstrip the lead-time for new curriculum development (Kofinas et al., 2025), so it is appropriate for journalism educators to consider integration in existing curricula. This paper presents the ethical framework, a detailed outline of the assessment intervention, and the nuanced interplay among value, competencies and students' learning process. The central research question is:

Research Question: How does GenAI assessment intervention be deployed to enhance students' self-reported understanding of, and engagement with, ethical processes for integrating GenAI in their journalism tasks?

This question entails clarifying the role of assessment intervention using AI tools in journalism learning activities. In this project, the researchers identified the above research problem and designed an intervention based on Beard's (2022) experiential learning model that emphasizes immersive, authentic experience which situates students in realistic journalistic contexts where they will engage with AI tools and apply ethical principles in their news writing assignment. This pilot project aims to contribute to pedagogical aspects of *how* students learn than what they learn while engaging with AI tools. Future directions of this project will include cross-cohort comparative analysis of evaluations, and refinement of the intervention's design in accordance with the findings of this analysis. Accordingly, this paper reports on the process and rationale for the intervention itself, and themes emerging from evaluations with students.

This study proposes the use of GenAI assessment intervention to enhance journalism students' engagement and understanding of ethics. The intervention developed for this project is based on a framework that researchers of this study designed for embedding GenAI into a journalism assessment. It also attends to ethical issues that arise through implementing GenAI instruction into journalism curricula, and an assessment item that responds to the principles outlined in the proposed framework. The intervention and assessment learning activities address the research

question by enabling researchers to gather empirical evidence with which to measure students' self-reported engagement with, and understanding of GenAI ethics, and their self-reported experience in adopting AI tools in the context of journalism.

Studies on the ethical and pedagogical implications of integrating GenAI into educational assessments are underexplored. Therefore, in this paper, the researchers examine how GenAI is interpreted into educational practice with a particular focus on the journalism program at an Australian global campus in Sarawak, Malaysia. The paper addresses a gap in students' engagement with GenAI, widely use but superficial, and contributes pedagogical approach for teaching students how to use AI tools ethically while polishing their industry-relevant skills. It suggests an alternative approach to integrating GenAI in education by creating purpose-built ethical framework for GenAI use in journalism assessment. This actionable approach promotes knowledge acquisition, address concerns about AI use and academic integrity and requires effective guidance from the lecturer (Crawford et al., 2023; Geerling et al., 2023). The researchers also argue that GenAI should be used and understood within the contexts of its use (Bearman & Ajjawi, 2023) and through the assessment intervention, students make meanings about their interactions with AI technology.

Literature

This paper proposes a practise-based teaching approach that integrates a purpose-built framework directly into experiential learning activities. The following review session highlights some key issues identified by scholars and educators that help us frame our discussion.

Experiential Learning Approaches

In the context of developing curriculum, scholars often leverage experience and reflection for meaningful learning. Experiential learning theory posits that students construct knowledge through active engagement with learning activities, supported by cycles of reflection and application, which enhances their motivation to learn and deepens their understanding (Kolb & Kolb, 2017; Bradberry & De Maio, 2019). This learning process is continuous, iterative and situated in specific social and disciplinary contexts that shape how knowledge is interpreted and applied (Salinas-Navarro et al., 2024). Students learn through intellectual activities that inform their actions while ongoing feedback help them to refine their knowledge and skills in context. By extending beyond cognition, Beard (2022) emphasises the intentional design of learning environment by focussing on how educators design meaningful engaging experiences that integrate reflection, action, and context. This is more aligned to the ethical framework that this paper proposes which focuses more on pedagogical implementation and embedding student engagement and real-world complexity in the context of journalism into learning tasks.

However, there are criticisms that Kolb's experiential learning lacks learning cycle clarity, learners may not be willing to go through all learning stages and unequal relations towards learning (Vince, 2022) and insufficient attention to social, historical and cultural differences (Bergsteiner et al., 2010). On the other hand, Beard's emphasis on affective, sensory, and environmental dimensions is less measurable and dependent on practitioner's interpretation. Despite all these claims, literature has acknowledged the benefits of experiential learning for developing generic learning outcomes within specific discipline context in higher education (Duchatelet et al., 2023).

Likewise, practice-based approaches emphasise experiential learning, where students engage directly with authentic tasks that mirror professional contexts (Gulikers et al., 2004). By integrating practice-based pedagogy, ethical safeguards, student insights, and ongoing evaluation, this study proposes an intervention that contributes to the development of trustworthy, context-sensitive approaches to GenAI in journalism assessment design. Such curriculum redesign not only addresses immediate pedagogical needs but also anticipates the evolving demands of future newsrooms where GenAI will increasingly shape reporting practices.

GenAI in Journalism and News Practice

The automation of journalistic tasks is no longer speculative. Internationally, newsrooms have adopted Gen-AI for numerous applications. The Associated Press boasts that it is at the forefront of artificial intelligence, using it for tasks like automated video shotlisting and automated writing (The Associated Press, n.d.), *Cosmopolitan* magazine used Gen-AI to create the cover of its June 2022 issue (Liu, 2022), and *Le Monde* automated tens of thousands of articles on the French election (Beckett, 2019). Scholars have described these trends as both an extension of data journalism and a new wave of “networked” or “algorithmic” journalism (Heinrich, 2011). While automation may free journalists for higher-value work such as investigative reporting, it also raises ethical issues about algorithmic transparency, audience understanding of computational processes, bias, and the blurring of authorship (Beckett, 2019).

The integration of GenAI in journalism studies has been widely explored in Western contexts (Beckett, 2019; T. Thomson et al., 2024; T. J. Thomson et al., 2022; Weller, 2023). For example, in Spain, AI has been used to train journalism students competencies such as data collection and processing, automated content creation and verification (Gómez-Diago, 2022). Such development highlights the growing integration of AI in journalism education in these contexts. However, GenAI integration into Malaysian journalism education and the news industry remains limited. Journalism programs in the region still pursue a distinct focus on conventional journalistic skills and knowledge (Aksar et al., 2025; Wilson & Sedhom, 2025). Although some media outlets, such as Malaysiakini and The Star, have attempted to integrate data-driven reporting, others still struggle with adopting computational tools and open-data practices (Wu, 2024). This gap in praxis and education in Malaysia has raised concerns, as educators seek to find opportunities to develop students’ AI skills but without a clear understanding of the requirements of future newsrooms in the region.

Generally, the main factors that hinder the growth of data journalism education in Malaysia are institutional, such as a lack of technical training for educators and budget allocation for the journalism programs in Malaysia. Aksar et al. (2025) suggest that journalism curricula should be updated to align with industry trends by integrating coding and data visualisation skills and encouraging interactive learning so that students are equipped with relevant skills and are equipped for global opportunities.

GenAI in Higher Education Assessment

The November 2022 release of free GenAI large language models (LLMs) like Chat-GPT 3.5 set in motion a domino effect of disruptions in journalism education. From January 2023, GPT 3.5 performed at least as well as a competent student in some common assessment tasks, such as writing original news articles from a set of facts, and producing essays about the commonly taught

ethical and legal frameworks that guide student journalists (Pavlik, 2023, Weller, 2023). When LLM-based chatbots can improve knowledge transfer, support evaluation and break the illusion of explanatory depth—the tendency for individuals to overestimate their own understanding (Mollick & Mollick, 2022)—these benefits are neither automatic nor pedagogically neutral. Rather, they depend on good teaching and guidance (Crawford et al., 2024; Escotet, 2023). Consequently, redesigned assessments and tailored learning and teaching are necessary to ensure GenAI integration fosters deeper learning and critical engagement (McDonald et al, 2025).

In HE more broadly, assessment has been a primary site of GenAI disruption (Cotton et al., 2024; Kofinas et al., 2025; Sardi et al., 2025). Authentic, experiential assessment has long been advocated to preserve academic integrity and promote genuine employability (Ellis et al., 2019; Mueller, 2005; Sotiriadou et al., 2019). Yet the rise of LLMs challenges traditional markers of originality, creativity and knowledge synthesis. Detection tools remain unreliable and risk false positives even in authentic tasks (Kofinas et al., 2025), and an over-reliance on punitive approaches, in our view, is not conducive to learning, or reflective of real-world adoption of GenAI technologies.

Conceptual Foundations and Research Gaps

Perkins et al's Artificial Intelligence Assessment Scale (2024) has been adopted by the university's AI policymakers, and it is included in educational materials for unit convenors aiming to establish clear conditions under which students may, or may not use GenAI in their work (Weller, 2023). The scale sets out five levels of GenAI use, spanning from level one, 'No AI' – a task completed without using GenAI at all, to level five, 'Full AI' – a task completed with complete freedom to use GenAI and no requirements to cite or otherwise distinguish between the student's own work, and that of the GenAI tool or tools they employ (Perkins et al., 2024).

In this model, level four, 'AI Task Completion, Human Evaluation,' is the closest level to the GenAI-integrated approach adopted in this research paper. In this level of assessment, Perkins et al suggest that students will use GenAI to complete specific tasks within their assessment activities, and clearly indicate which content has been created using GenAI. This level encourages a deeper understanding of the capabilities and limitations of GenAI tools. It also aligns with the emerging arguments that journalistic content need not to be inherently human but can instead be produced through the integration of GenAI and students' own knowledge through collaborative human–AI interaction (Dollinger & Nieminen, 2026).

Despite growing literature on GenAI in journalism and on AI-aware assessment, there is little research on how to integrate GenAI ethically into Australian journalism curricula and implement it in Malaysia context. Instructors grapple with three interrelated problems: first, obstacles to inclusion of GenAI despite evidence of potential benefits; second, increasing difficulty in detecting unethical use of GenAI in writing assessments; and third, the imperative to equip graduates with GenAI literacy as a workplace skill (Beckett, 2019; Wenger et al., 2025).

Through this project, the researchers tested undergraduate journalism assessments against ChatGPT and other GenAI language models and began to develop a guiding framework for new assessment design that aimed to provide students with a meaningful learning experience, even in the face of the ever-expanding pseudo journalistic capabilities of GenAI (Weller, 2023). The researchers sought to establish a new style of assessment that recognises demonstrable knowledge attainment and skill development, and that does not reward submissions created by

GenAI that provide a convincing facsimile of such attainment. To fill up the gap, a curriculum intervention based on ethical framework will be developed to embed GenAI use within a values–processes–competencies model grounded in experiential learning.

Method

This study adopts a design-based approach to develop a practise-based assessment intervention. It draws on Colin Beard's experiential learning design (2022) to scaffold students' movement from human-only reporting to AI-integrated reflection, while using Benjamin Bloom's revised taxonomy (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001) as an anchor for articulating the cognitive challenge of each stage. The development of intervention is further informed by undergraduate students' opinions and responses to their learning needs and preferences within the journalism discipline.

Participants and Context

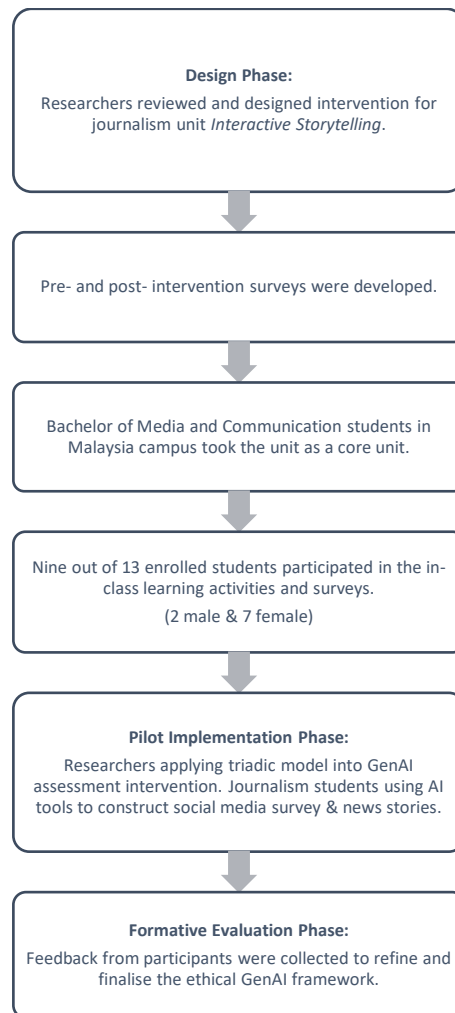
The intervention was implemented in a second-year core unit, *Interactive Storytelling*, within the Bachelor of Media and Communication (BMC). The unit trains students in digital storytelling techniques for journalistic outputs sourced from social media research and destined for social media publication. The pilot project illustrated in Figure 1 was carried out for one academic semester (approximately three months). It helps the researchers to refine the proposed curriculum design and intervention before full implementation across other Australian global campuses by using the same instrument and analysis methods.

A total of nine out of 13 journalism students participated in the study. The purposive sampling frame was constrained by the reduced intake, as many students, predominantly Sarawakians, opted for Business and STEM-related courses offered by the university under the Sarawak Free Tertiary Education scheme. Participants were selected based on two criteria: they were, i) enrolled in *Interactive Storytelling* at the Australian global campus in Sarawak, Malaysia on full-time basis, and ii) actively participating in GenAI-related tutorial activities in the classroom. The sample size of this pilot study was modest but participants with various demographic characteristics such as age, gender and ethnicity helped to enhance representativeness and capture potential variations in students' GenAI learning experiences (Issabek et al., 2025).

Although demographic diversity is essential for understanding differential perceptions and adoption of GenAI in higher education (Selwyn, 2023; Ngu et al., 2025), this study opt for ethical commitments to anonymity and privacy (Markham & Buchanan, 2012). This methodological stance is to safeguard participants from potential disciplinary consequences associated with GenAI use and prevent potential risks (Lund et al., 2025). Although the participants may come from different backgrounds and have varying academic experiences, this method does not imply equivalence. Instead, it aims to identify patterns and contrast in GenAI and human journalist experience, as well as students' ethical motivations in using GenAI in their studies and assignments.

Figure 1

Project Flow Diagram in Malaysia Campus



Besides participants, the researchers' positionality as journalism educators from Australia and Malaysia campuses have shaped the design and interpretation of this study. Researchers' identities, their professional roles and ethical commitment influence the research process (Darwin H., 2020). In this study, researchers' academic roles as unit convenor and educator who prioritise academic integrity and student welfare reflect their broader commitment to students' digital and AI literacy, which is consistent with the ethical guidelines for research in higher education. This positionality was further operationalised through conducting the survey by anonymising responses and emphasising voluntary participation.

Instruments and Data Collection

At the pilot stage, researchers designed the study and survey questions based on a review of a journalism unit and curriculum materials offered at Malaysia campus. Common themes such as students' ethical perceptions of GenAI, its integration into journalism assessments, and its influence on news writing practices were included. These themes were refined during an internal

review by researchers from both Australia and Malaysia campuses, ensuring a proper alignment with the Unit Learning Outcomes (ULO) and institutional priorities. A draft questionnaire was then reviewed by an academic peer and a member of the ethics committee, providing expert validation and enhancing credibility. Ethics clearance and approval for the study was obtained from the university's Research Ethics Office (REF: 20258933-22298) before the project commenced.

After ethics approval, the survey was distributed to the students from Malaysia campus via an arms-length approach. The instrument comprised multiple-choice and short reflective questions, designed using Qualtrics software. The survey was intentionally brief, approximately 10 minutes, to encourage participation during tutorials. Researchers emphasised in class that the survey was voluntary, anonymous and would not affect academic grades. This process was consistent with ethical standards of informed consent (Israel & Hay, 2006).

Researchers' ethical commitments shape their methodological choices. The researchers of this study adapted Lincoln and Guba's (1985) framework of trustworthiness, comprising criteria such as credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. This framework is widely applied in qualitative educational research to ensure rigor and reliability (Shenton, 2004). They use peer review of survey instruments and triangulation across two campuses to ensure credibility and transferability of Australian curriculum to Malaysia campus was addressed by providing detailed contextual descriptions of the journalism unit and institutional settings. In addition, they systematically document the research steps and data collection stages and keep an audit trail of the coding and thematic analysis to validate the research confirmability.

Researchers collected data before and after the journalism assessment deadlines in Malaysia campus. During tutorial classes, students undertook learning activities exploring the affordances of GenAI and the importance of ethics and integrity in journalism. Between the pre- and post-surveys, students engaged in two assessment tasks and four classroom activities (detailed in Table 2). This process provided an experiential grounding for survey responses. The activity was mapped to the principle of constructive alignment (Biggs, 1996), linking practice-based learning with the intended outcomes when students reflect their academic use of GenAI. Survey responses were coded thematically using *in vivo* coding (Saldana, 2016), with consistency across two rounds of surveys.

Results

Design Phase: Developing Ethical Framework for Journalism Intervention

In response to the research question, this study addresses a gap in existing frameworks for GenAI in journalism curricula and proposes a new design that is grounded in three interrelated guiding concepts: values, processes and competencies. The design explores two themes: academic integrity and news automation. Each theme offers a new perspective for moving beyond traditional assessment toward more industry-ready practices that value ethical learning and assessment.

The proposed triadic structure aligns closely with established quality and regulatory expectations in Australian higher education. At a national level, the *Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards)* administered by TEQSA requires providers to clearly specify, teach, practice, and assess learning outcomes in ways that are valid, transparent, and aligned with regulatory expectations (Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency, 2017). The mandate embeds not only the competencies students are expected to develop, but also the processes by

which learning and assessment occur, and the institutional values—such as fairness, integrity, accountability—that underpin quality assurance.

At the institutional level, Swinburne University’s *Educational Quality Excellence Framework* likewise foregrounds “student-focused quality principles and processes” that enable students to achieve their learning potential and career aspirations; use collaboration in curriculum, pedagogy, and support; and align graduate attributes combining knowledge, skills, and behaviours (Swinburne University of Technology, 2014). This framework explicitly ties institutional values—such as integrity, accountability, fairness, respect—with the design and delivery of learning and assessment processes, and the attainment of graduate competencies via its graduate attributes. By situating the ethical use of generative AI within this three-part structure of values, processes, and competencies, the proposed framework positions students’ decision-making about AI not merely as a discrete technical skill but as part of a broader culture of academic quality and integrity already embedded in the higher education system. This alignment lends legitimacy and defensibility to the framework, connecting it to both national standards and institutional practice.

The triadic framework illustrated Table 1 is designed with a range of journalistic tasks in mind, which might include newsgathering, research and journalistic reporting in a range of different modalities and media outputs, and across a range of platforms. In this sense, the framework is intended to be ‘task agnostic’ – that is, applicable in journalistic units that focus on text, audio, photographic or video journalism, in a range of cultural and environmental settings, and under a range of social and political situations.

Table 1

The Triadic Values-Processes-Competencies Model of the Framework

Values	Processes	Competencies
Ethical and journalistic values, which are taught at a conceptual level before the GenAI integrated assessment task is undertaken.	Structured steps, practices and activities undertaken to enact the values taught, in order to develop competencies in GenAI and journalism.	The specific skills and behaviours that students can demonstrate as a result of engaging with this framework.

In addition, the proposed framework adopted Colin Beard’s experiential learning design (Beard, 2022) to sequence activities through concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation and active experimentation. Authentic, scaffolded tasks allow students to enact and reflect upon the values before integrating GenAI into their work. Beard’s design provides the scaffolding and richness of experience that moves students through Bloom’s cognitive levels. While the researchers adopt Bloom’s revised taxonomy (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001) to articulate the intended cognitive challenge of each activity, each level is treated as “anchors” rather than a strict ladder. This allows overlap and acknowledges emotive, sensory and embodied learning modes—especially during early experiential exposure—that may not map neatly onto a single Bloom category.

Pilot Implementation Phase: Integrating Triadic Values-Processes-Competencies Model into GenAI Assessment Intervention

The GenAI intervention designed for this project is practise-based – designed with context, meaning-making and assessment equal to the learning in journalism discipline. Drawing from journalistic codes of practice (Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance, n.d.; *National Union of Journalists (NUJ)*, 2011; *SPJ Code of Ethics - Society of Professional Journalists*, 2014), the framework foregrounds four values: First, *Disclosure* emphasises transparent communication regarding authorship; Second, *Independence* keeps a critical distance from any influences that might undermine the accuracy and fairness of reporting; Third, *Accuracy* refers to the commitment to verification made in journalism; Fourth, *Integrity* preserves audience’s confidence and trust in journalistic practice.

The framework applies these values through a flipped, scaffolded structure to an intervention that is designed for journalism tutorials. During the intervention, journalism students have to produce a feature story by themselves. This human-only task was conducted in tutorial class where students read and compared emerging research on GenAI in higher education, followed by a discussion that require them to review GenAI-generated work presented as human-authored by using inductive reasoning to identify ethical tensions. After the completion of the first task in class, students were required to revise their story by using GenAI tools. They compared their own and AI-assisted work by reflecting on issues such as journalistic responsibility, accuracy, authorship, originality and audience understanding.

Later on, students worked on their actual news assessment in class and their performance was monitored by the lecturer. Observation showed students initially possess low competency in human-only newsgathering as they were clueless on how to research on news and synthesise the journalistic information from the survey that they posted on social media. Majority started with searching for relevant news articles online and imitating the news writing. They were surprised when the lecturer told them that they are allowed to use AI tools for their news stories in Task 2. Some hesitated to start due to ethical concerns as GenAI has always been prohibited by the university for academic assignments while others lacked relevant digital skill in developing prompts. When the students were informed that they are allowed to use GenAI for research as this was part of the assessment requirement and no penalty would be imposed, they finally overcome their scepticism and actively engage with AI tools.

Table 2 in the next page summarises how the framework integrates Beard’s experiential Learning (2022) with Anderson and Krathwohl’s revised Bloom’s taxonomy (2001). The researchers integrate this framework into the proposed GenAI assessment intervention to give students a concrete experience, structured reflection and conceptualisation around key journalistic values, while moving them through progressively higher cognitive levels. Bloom’s levels are used here as ‘anchors’ to indicate the intended cognitive challenge of each activity rather than as a rigid hierarchy, allowing overlap and acknowledging the emotive, sensory and embodied dimensions of experiential learning that may not fit neatly into one Bloom category.

Table 2*An Ethical Framework for Embedding GenAI in Journalism Assessment*

Processes	Values Addressed	Competencies	Bloom's Level
<i>Authentic assessment task (Part 1):</i> Students produce a feature story without GenAI, submitting a human-polished draft.	Disclosure, Independence, Accuracy, Integrity	Human-only newsgathering, research and synthesis of journalistic information in the development of stories.	Create (generate original work; synthesise information)
<i>Classroom activity 2A:</i> Readings & discussions contrasting emerging research on student GenAI use with media narratives.	Accuracy, Integrity	Critical decision-making in the application or non-use of GenAI tools, to preserve the integrity of journalistic practice through ethical use of the technology.	Analyse / Evaluate (compare, contrast, judge, decide)
<i>Classroom activity 2B:</i> Discussions challenging students to present positions on authorship.	Disclosure, Independence, Integrity	Ability to articulate a nuanced argument in support of the judicious use of GenAI in the student's own work, with reference to the values of the framework.	Evaluate (defend positions; justify criteria)
<i>Classroom activity 2C:</i> Discussions on diversity, equity & inclusiveness of GenAI image generators and effects on audience comprehension.	Independence	Critical awareness of inclusivity and audience impacts; applies non-use or responsible use principles when selecting images or sources.	Analyse / Evaluate (identify bias; consider implications)
<i>Classroom activity 2D:</i> Review GenAI generated work presented as human-authored; use inductive reasoning to consider ethical tensions.	Disclosure, Accuracy	Applies ethical reasoning to new scenarios.	Analyse / Evaluate (detect patterns; draw inferences; judge)
<i>GenAI-integrated task (Part 2):</i> Students re-submit their story using GenAI and submit a short reflection.	All four values	GenAI prompt engineering, including the design, testing and refinement of prompts to elicit accurate, ethical and contextually appropriate outputs for journalistic purposes.	Evaluate / Create (produce revised work; appraise differences; refine prompts)

Formative Evaluation Phase: Students' Perceptions and Self-Reported Learning

The research findings suggest that the inclusion of a purpose-built ethical framework for GenAI use in journalism assessment provide authentic context for students to experiment with AI tools. The framework enhances participants' engagement with, and understanding of AI ethics and industry-relevant GenAI skills. They described AI as “best support system”, “reflect better”, “useful for ideas and structure” and “better accuracy” as they position themselves as active participants when experimenting GenAI in the journalism assessment process.

The integration of the framework in the unit *Interactive Storytelling*, with its four adjacent classroom activities, positively bolstered the unit's teaching and learning in the area of GenAI, specifically the ethics of GenAI practices in journalistic activities. All survey participants ($n=9$) agreed that AI tools were useful in completing their journalism assessment. Their personal reflections further show that their understanding of, and engagement with, GenAI journalism tools was enhanced by the intervention.

When reviewing the quality of the final assessment item – the AI-edited version of the story – participants reported nuanced and mixed opinions of the changes that GenAI made to their work. In three out of nine cases (33%), GenAI was seen to improve concision. Two participants reported that, when comparing the GenAI version with non-GenAI version, they improved their own proofreading capabilities through exposure to the rewriting process with an AI editor, even though the GenAI version sounded less original.

Majority of the participants reported strong confidence with GenAI, with eight out of nine (89%), stating that they were confident in making ethical decisions. However, questions in the survey that dealt with authorship and ethics revealed that participants' understanding of these issues may be superficial. For example, while all participants agreed that GenAI editing could help their writing, most disagreed that GenAI tools have biases that might undermine the accuracy of news due to the underlying assumption that technology is unlikely to be biased. Based on participants' self-reported confidence with GenAI, their confidence level remained high throughout the intervention. They reflected using GenAI as support tool to brainstorm ideas, draft outlines, restructure content and refine referencing styles. Most described structured prompting strategies, including role-playing prompts (“Assume you are...”), verb-first instructions (“generate, design, provide...”) and specifying tone, audience or length. This suggests that the intervention primarily influenced the depth rather than the level of their ethical understanding, but it does enhance their engagement with improved prompt literacy. After the intervention, participants voiced a stronger sense of responsibility for accuracy and originality. They admitted GenAI could accelerate writing but were concerned about the increasing dependence on the technology and the potential risk of diminishing originality and critical thinking.

Discussion

Theoretical Implications

This study contributes to the theoretical understanding of how GenAI can be meaningfully integrated into journalism assessment through the design of an ethical framework that preserves academic integrity while developing students' industry-relevant skills. First, the study showcases

how learning grounded in experience was implemented through the practise-based intervention and further deepened with educational design, instruction and assessment within journalism context. Second, it extends Beard's (2022) argument on engaging experiences with reflection, action, and context by proposing an ethical framework to engage students with real AI challenges in the news industry and builds their capacity to engage AI tools in news writing.

Third, the study highlights the interplay between cognitive and affective dimensions of learning. The implementation of experiential learning through classroom intervention not only engage students cognitively (Kolb & Kolb, 2017) but affectively (Beard, 2022). While engaging in hands-on learning activities in class, students demonstrated deeper disciplinary understanding of GenAI skills and knowledge. They were affectively engaged when navigating ethical tensions related to authorship, transparency, and professional identity.

Furthermore, the study answers the research question that the intervention is deployed to move students from Bloom's lower cognitive levels to higher-order thinking, especially when they are required to analyse ethical dilemmas and evaluate the functionality of GenAI in journalistic practice. Findings show students believe that the technology supports automation reshaping, but not replacing core journalistic and ethical skills (Beckett, 2019; Pavlik, 2023; T. Thomson et al., 2024). Students' concerns regarding authorship and disclosure of GenAI use also indicate a shift in their reasoning and engagement toward evaluative and reflective judgement.

However, students self-reported concern about reduced professionalism among journalists who use GenAI – suggesting a tension between their conceptions of traditional journalistic values and technological utility. This contradiction reflects a transformative phase of experiential learning, during which students confront previously held assumptions, reflecting Beard's (2022) experiential learning tenet that “doing”, in real-world contexts delivers strong learning outcomes. After the intervention, they verbally expressed possibilities in taking up curator/editor role with AI outputs in their news stories and becoming future digital journalists who increasingly supervise algorithmic content rather than produce it from scratch (Aksar et al., 2025; Beckett, 2019; Wenger et al., 2025).

Practical Implications

The curriculum redesign has practical implications for engaging journalism students toward responsible use of AI outputs in news writing: specifying source requirements, flagging factual uncertainties, and maintaining authorship clarity. These skills not only support academic integrity but also prepare graduates for workplaces where AI-assisted content generation is normalised.

Educators wishing to apply this ethical framework in other contexts might find it useful to begin by distinguishing the core elements of the framework from the context-specific elements. The core elements are the four values (disclosure, independence, accuracy, integrity), the experiential sequencing, and the alignment to the values-processes-competencies model. These elements are deliberately expressed as high-level concepts that can be adapted to a range of contexts, activities and assessments in numerous subject areas specific to, and adjacent to journalism. The context-specific elements of the framework are the unit learning outcomes, local journalism codes, and the choice of GenAI tools present in each unit of learning. These values must be adjusted with each application of the framework to align with the relevant requirements of units and tasks to which the framework is applied.

At the marking level, the application of the four values hinges on clear rubrics that express the values in assessable terms. This ensures that the work is evident to markers (and can be evaluated), and provides students with a bridge between high-level values, for instance, 'disclosure,' and discrete competencies such as statements addressing conflict of interest or omission of sources or information.

The classroom activities proposed in the intervention and refined with students' perspectives will guide educators about undergraduate students' GenAI practices as well as successful strategies for embedding GenAI into journalism education. By sequencing experiences—such as reading contrasting academic research, debating on authorship and originality, and discussing bias in GenAI image generation— before and after a human-only task, the intervention creates a structured experience integrated with AI and reflection. These activities are aligned with Beard's experiential learning cycle and support students through Bloom's cognitive anchors from applying to analysing, evaluating and creating. This approach also extends the work of the AI Assessment Scale when applied to journalism. Perkins et al.'s (2024) Level 4 ("AI Task Completion, Human Evaluation") assumes disclosure but does not specify how students should develop the ethical reasoning that underpins disclosure decisions. The intervention with the ethical framework adds a process dimension—explicit classroom activities—to build that reasoning, and frames it as an extension of the values articulated by the framework.

Limitations and Future Research

The findings of this study were limited by a single classroom setting at the Australian global campus in Malaysia as data collection and analysis are mainly based on reflection and discussion with a small cohort from journalism. However, it provides structured classroom activities and detailed formative evaluation of journalism students' self-reported understanding and engagement with the ethical process. Future research should examine the framework's effectiveness with larger samples across campuses in different countries and include students and lecturers' reflective experiences. A contextual comparison between different countries would provide a more holistic view of how undergraduate students engage in GenAI in the journalism discipline as well as validate the effectiveness of the intervention and ethical framework.

Conclusion

This paper has presented the development of a practice-based intervention for embedding GenAI into undergraduate journalism assessment. Grounded in the triad of values, processes and competencies, aligned with national and institutional quality expectations, and operationalised through Beard's Experiential Learning Design and Bloom's taxonomy anchors, the intervention based on an ethical framework guides journalism students' understanding and engagement with ethical process. To conclude, successful intervention for GenAI integration not only depends on its technical robustness or theoretical grounding but also on how effectively it supports students' understanding and engagement with their learning and assessment ethically while equipping them with skills to meet the industry demands.

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