



## Case Study 1: University of Westminster

### Addressing Institutional Generative AI Challenges through a Systems Approach

#### What issue were we trying to address and why?

The project began as a response to the rapid emergence of generative AI tools and the need to proactively assess their implications for higher education. Westminster recognised that both the opportunities and challenges of Generative AI required a coordinated institutional response. Several interconnected issues were identified:

1. Administrative and Support Overload – Support teams are increasingly stretched, particularly in addressing frequently asked questions and triaging basic queries.
2. Academic Support and Student Learning – Students need timely, relevant, and accurate guidance to navigate learning environments effectively.
3. Wider Student Support – There was potential for AI to support low-stakes queries and reduce anxiety among students seeking help.
4. Language Barriers and Inclusion – Multilingual or neurodiverse students often find navigating systems and accessing help particularly difficult.
5. Engagement and Retention – Sustaining student interest and attendance, particularly among those studying online or part-time, required new forms of engagement.

The LIDE team recognised that simply reacting to student use of tools like ChatGPT was insufficient. A deeper institutional engagement with Generative AI was necessary, both to shape its use and to support a culture of innovation and responsible practice.

#### What we did

In response, Westminster adopted a proactive stance by developing a number of interlinked activities and pilot interventions:

- Establishing the Westminster Position on Generative AI: This public position made clear that the institution is open to the use of Generative AI in learning, teaching, and professional services, provided it is ethical, transparent, and aligned with policy.
- Proof-of-Concept Projects: Targeted pilots were launched to test how Generative AI could support both student-facing and colleague-facing activities. This included a chatbot trained on internal content such as Learning, Innovation and Digital Engagement (LIDE). LIDE was set up to support the University's ambitions to enhance its digital learning environment for colleagues and students. It leads on the development of the use of learning technology within classroom spaces and drives forward the enhancement of digital capability across student and colleague stakeholder groups.
- Development of a Module AI Assistant (MAIA): This assistant was embedded in Blackboard sites for some taught modules and trained on module materials. It was

deployed in nine modules during semester two of the academic year, enabling real-time insights into its impact.

- **LibGuides Review and Re-scraping:** Nearly 500 library guides were checked for relevance and accuracy, then used to train a conversational AI Assistant to support student engagement with the library guides.
- **Monitoring and Feedback:** A dashboard was available in the Learnwise admin interface to track activity and feedback, helping to iteratively refine any AI Assistant's performance.

This phased, practical approach allowed the institution to test Generative AI capabilities in live environments while building internal capacity and understanding.

### **Who was involved**

The initiative was led by Professor Gunter Saunders, Director of Digital Capability Development and AI Leadership. A core institutional team oversaw the technical and strategic development of Learnwise, with input from several areas:

- Academic Staff from nine modules volunteered to trial the taught Module AI Assistant (MAIA) and provide pedagogical feedback.
- Academic Engagement and Learning Development colleagues worked to curate and update foundational content used in the knowledge base.
- Senior Managers and Leadership were engaged throughout, helping to align the initiative with broader university goals and ensure appropriate governance.
- Students played a key role, interacting with the Learnwise assistants and offering real-time feedback on their usefulness.

This cross-institutional collaboration was critical to the project's success and ensured that insights were shared across academic and professional services.

### **Measures of success**

While the project is still evolving, several indicators point to a successful proof of concept:

- **Student Feedback** has been largely positive. Comments suggest students found the Learnwise Assistants informative and reassuring.
- **Usage Data** from the Learning admin dashboard indicates consistent engagement across the nine modules in which MAIA was deployed.
- **Increased Awareness and Buy-In** from university leaders and colleagues across departments, who are now more attuned to the potential of Generative AI.
- **Better Use of Existing Resources:** The Learnwise assistants unlocked the value of "rich" learning resources such as the Library Guides and blogs by making them more accessible through conversational AI.
- **Learning About Student Needs:** The interaction data offered new insight into the types of queries students make, which can feed back into teaching and support strategies.

## How do you plan to develop the intervention/activity?

Looking ahead, the University is planning to expand and deepen its Generative AI activities:

- **Scaling the Learnwise Taught Module Assistant (MAIA):** The assistant will be introduced to additional modules in semester 1 of the 25/26 academic year.
- **Knowledge Management:** The university aims to develop a robust framework for managing and updating AI-readable knowledge bases, including those on our public-facing website and on SharePoint.
- **Training and Development:** A structured programme of training will be rolled out for both academic and professional services colleagues to build confidence and fluency in working with Generative AI tools.
- **Student Support Centre:** Plans are underway to integrate Generative AI into core student support services, providing 24/7 assistance in ways that augment—not replace—human contact.