



Case Study 11: Robert Gordon University

Implementing AI Turnitin Detection

What issue were we trying to address and why?

The launch of ChatGPT 3 in November 2022 was a pivotal moment that pushed Generative AI to the top of many institutional agendas. Like other universities in the sector, Robert Gordon University (RGU) was faced with the challenge of how to support staff and students to embrace Generative AI while also ensuring the maintenance of academic standards.

In early 2023, a steering group was formed chaired by the Vice Principal Academic Development and Student Experience to lead the university's response. The initial focus of the group was AI and academic integrity. Early actions included defining the unauthorised use of AI as 'false authorship' within the university's Student Misconduct Procedure and developing institutional guidance for staff and students on the use of AI in teaching, learning and assessment.

When Turnitin launched its AI writing detection tool in April 2023, the institution had to decide whether to switch on this functionality as part of its approach to promoting academic integrity in the context of AI. There is debate in the sector regarding the reliability of AI writing detection. While Turnitin claims a 98% confidence level in the accuracy of its tool, suspected AI-generated content cannot be compared with an original source for verification and research has indicated that the accuracy of detection software may be impacted by factors such as the AI tool used and number of times content has been iterated (Elkhatat et al, 2023; Halaweh et al, 2024).

What we did

Despite these concerns, RGU took the decision to switch on Turnitin AI Detection. The key drivers for this were:

- To provide an additional support to academic staff when identifying unauthorised use of Generative AI in assessment. Despite potential limitations, it was perceived that AI Detection could help to inform an academic judgement as to whether academic misconduct had occurred when taken into consideration alongside other evidence such as knowledge of the student's previous writing, stylistic features, use of references, and preparatory work.
- To act as a deterrent to students concerning the unauthorised use of Gen AI. It was recognised that assessments being subject to AI detection would help to highlight the need for appropriate usage, focus attention on academic integrity, and help to assure students of the equity of assessment.

The functionality was switched on in October 2023 and RGU's institutional guidance for staff and students on the use of AI was updated accordingly. Further guidance on using the tool was made available for staff via the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). The software was

also introduced through staff development sessions on AI in teaching, learning and assessment run by RGU's Academic Quality and Learning Enhancement Department. At the same time, work was undertaken to redevelop the university's Assessment Brief Template, which is used for all assessments, to enable colleagues to specify whether the use of Generative AI is authorised or unauthorised.

Who was involved

A steering group was formed led by the Vice Principal Academic Development and Student Experience and comprising representation from Academic Schools, Professional Services and the Students' Union to lead the university's response.

How do you plan to develop the intervention/ activity?

Looking ahead, RGU appreciates the need to continue to evolve its approach to fulfil the university's aim of embracing AI in teaching, learning and assessment while assuring academic standards. For example, given the proliferation of Generative AI and its incorporation into widely used technologies, the university recognises that a binary distinction between authorised and unauthorised use of AI is no longer tenable. Consequently, an institutional move towards a tiered approach to AI in assessment is planned for 2025/26. This will enable more nuanced distinctions to be drawn between acceptable and unacceptable usage, support colleagues to further integrate AI in assessment, and help students to use AI appropriately in their submissions. We are confident that AI detection will continue to play an important role in this new model, supporting academic judgements as to whether AI has been utilised and acknowledged according to expectations.

References

Elkhatat, A.M., Elsaid, K. & Almeer, S. Evaluating the efficacy of AI content detection tools in differentiating between human and AI-generated text. *Int J Educ Integr* 19, 17 (2023). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40979-023-00140-5>

M. Halaweh and G. E. Refae, "Examining the Accuracy of AI Detection Software Tools in Education," 2024 Fifth International Conference on Intelligent Data Science Technologies and Applications (IDSTA), DUBROVNIK, Croatia, 2024, pp. 186-190, doi: 10.1109/IDSTA62194.2024.10747004.