



Case Study 12: University of Birmingham

Implementing a Framework for the Use of Generative AI Across a Diverse School

What issue were we trying to address and why?

Expectations and standards for the use of Generative AI vary significantly across academic disciplines. At the University of Birmingham, we are advised to engage with Generative AI and implement University-wide principles across programme, School, and College levels. The School of English, Drama, and Creative Studies (EDACS) presents a particular challenge in this regard, encompassing a diverse range of taught programmes that afford vastly different applications of Generative AI and face distinct educational and professional challenges. EDACS includes taught undergraduate programmes in Digital Media and Culture, Linguistics, Literature, Drama and Theatre Arts, Film and Creative Writing, alongside Master's programmes in English teaching that serve large numbers of international students. This programmatic diversity is reflected in equally diverse faculty and student experiences with Generative AI, spanning both positive and negative perspectives. For example, while some colleagues in the Department of Linguistics conduct research on large language models, others in Film and Creative Writing offer sharp critiques of Generative AI's impact on the creative industries.

Additionally, the advent of Generative AI has introduced new challenges for assessment and academic integrity, often requiring colleagues to develop knowledge and understanding of rapidly evolving technology outside of their expertise and interests - itself a significant burden. Thus, it is important to minimise additional workload for colleagues who already carry heavy teaching and research responsibilities, particularly those with no scholarly investment in Generative AI.

This diversity of EDACS poses significant challenges for developing a coherent school-wide framework for the use of AI in assessments. Our solution needed to satisfy three key requirements:

1. **Ease of use:** Enable colleagues who are less interested or comfortable with Generative AI to easily address its use in their modules while clearly stipulating boundaries of acceptable use to students.
2. **Flexibility for the engaged:** Provide sufficient adaptability for colleagues who want to integrate Generative AI more deeply into their pedagogical practice.
3. **Reduced ambiguity:** Minimise the need for nuanced, often ambiguous judgments - such as distinguishing between proofreading, editing, content creation, and translation—that cannot be performed reliably given the nature of generative AI systems.

These requirements guided our development of a three-tier traffic light system that balances simplicity with flexibility while addressing the varied needs of our diverse academic community.

What we did

For academic year 2024/25, we implemented a default three-level “traffic light” system for the use of AI in assessments.

This included the following levels of use:

- **Red - No Generative AI.** Generative AI should not be used for any aspect of the assessment. This level ensures that students rely solely on their knowledge, understanding, and skills.
- **Amber - Generative AI-assisted research and idea development.** Generative AI can be used in the assessment for researching, brainstorming and developing ideas. It may not be used for the generation of content that is directly included in the assessment. No AI-generated content is allowed in the assessment.
- **Green - Generative AI-assisted editing, translation and task completion.** Generative AI can be used to complete the assessment, including editing and translation, as well creating content and completing tasks. AI-generated content is allowed in the assessment. Students must provide a log of all generative AI inputs and outputs that contribute to content in the assessment.

Colleagues were introduced to the system during School briefings. The three levels and respective information were pre-loaded on the Canvas page for each module, providing colleagues the ability to easily select the desired level and make it visible to students. At the same time, colleagues were encouraged to engage more deeply with Generative AI in their modules and assessments, and in these cases, they were free to over-ride the three-tier system with more specific instructions for the use of Generative AI. The EDACS Generative AI lead was available during this period to consult with colleagues on these decisions.

Who was involved

- Head of Education for the School.
- Lead for Generative AI for the School.
- Academic colleagues in the School.
- UG and MA students in the School.
- Information Technology staff.

Measures of success

1. Students understand the boundaries of acceptable Generative AI use for each assessment and can confidently apply the appropriate level of Generative AI engagement without risk of academic integrity violations.
2. Staff can easily implement clear Generative AI guidelines in their modules without requiring extensive technical knowledge or additional training.
3. Colleagues who want to integrate AI more deeply into their pedagogy have sufficient flexibility to develop innovative, discipline-appropriate applications beyond the three-tier framework.

4. The system reduces ambiguous decision-making about AI use, eliminating the need for staff to make complex judgments about borderline cases of AI application.
5. Implementation does not create additional administrative burden for colleagues who are already managing substantial teaching and research workloads.

How do you plan to develop the intervention/activity?

We are collecting feedback from module instructors, colleagues involved in academic integrity, and students. This feedback focuses on both the implementation of the three-tier system and broader experiences with Generative AI use within modules and assessment, encompassing both sanctioned and unsanctioned applications. Drawing on this feedback, we will refine the framework for the following academic year with two primary objectives: enhancing clarity around AI use expectations for both colleagues and students and encouraging more strategic pedagogical integration by colleagues across their modules.