Case Study 6: Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen

Embedding AI Literacy through a School-Wide, Nuanced Approach to Integration and Assessment

What issue were we trying to address and why.

In the School of Computing, Engineering and Technology (SOCET) at Robert Gordon University, we recognised the urgent need to address the growing presence and impact of generative AI tools, particularly large language models like ChatGPT and CoPilot, on higher education. As a School rooted in technology, we felt a responsibility to embrace innovation while simultaneously safeguarding academic integrity and pedagogical standards.

The core issue we were addressing was how to integrate AI into the curriculum meaningfully, in a way that is both ethically sound and pedagogically purposeful. We faced a tension between two extremes: banning AI use outright, which risked disengaging students and missing out on valuable skills, or fully embracing it without boundaries, which could undermine learning outcomes and assessment validity. Our challenge was to find a nuanced approach that prepared students for the realities of a rapidly evolving AI-enabled workplace, while ensuring they still gained core disciplinary knowledge and skills.

Rather than issuing a blanket policy, we empowered staff to take ownership of how AI could be integrated in their modules and assessments. The School took a holistic approach, guided by open dialogue, staff experimentation, and a shared commitment to pedagogical integrity, guided by conversations led by our Teaching Committee and our Pedagogy research group. The process culminated in the development of a forthcoming MSc programme focused on AI, which will formalise our evolving practices into a coherent academic offering.

What we did

Key interventions over the year included:

- **Pedagogical experimentation:** Staff were encouraged to innovate with AI integration. Module leaders were empowered to determine whether and how AI could be used in assessment, in line with the pedagogical aims of the module. For example, one module leader required students to submit their CoPilot prompt logs alongside their assignments, using them as a tool to reflect on AI usage and adapt future teaching. In another module, students were permitted to use AI tools for asset creation, provided the core project work remained their own. These varied approaches provided both flexibility and clarity within module-level expectations, with what constitutes acceptable usage being explicitly detailed within module assessment briefs.
- **AI-enhanced learning materials:** We developed what we termed “shadow podcasts” using Google’s NotebookLM to create short, digestible podcasts based on lecture content, transcripts and slide decks. These served as supplementary resources and

were particularly appreciated by students who preferred auditory or asynchronous learning modes. While not everyone engaged with them, anecdotal feedback suggested that those who did found them helpful for reinforcing key concepts.
- **Staff development and collective discussion**: At the beginning of the academic year, we hosted numerous formal and informal conversations about how and when AI could or should be used, particularly in assessments. These discussions helped teaching teams identify their students' stages of development and determine when AI integration was appropriate. For instance, in first-year programming modules, AI was not permitted largely because students needed to build foundational coding skills. In later years, its use was gradually introduced, reflecting both student competency and industry expectations.

Who was involved

Academic staff at all levels contributed to the initiative, from lecturers to the senior executive team. These were collective, iterative developments. The overall willingness to explore, pilot, and share best practices was instrumental in shaping a rich, context-sensitive implementation. Support was also sought from educational developers and external collaborators, including number of research projects across various international institutions to further understand the impact of these technologies.

Measures of success

Success has been measured both formally and informally. While full evaluation data is still being compiled, initial indicators are promising:

- Anecdotally, there were fewer reported incidents of AI-related misconduct this year. We attribute this in part to the transparent, guided use of AI in assessments, which made it less necessary or attractive to misuse.
- Where AI use was permitted with clear boundaries, students responded well. They appreciated the clarity and opportunity to explore emerging tools without fear of penalty.
- Perhaps most significantly, staff have become more confident in discussing, using, and guiding students in AI-related tasks. This culture of openness and inquiry represents a foundational success upon which further progress can be built.
- The development of the MSc in AI is itself a marker of institutional confidence and momentum, reflecting both internal learning and the external demand for graduates who are AI-literate. These learnings are embedded through assessments that, where appropriate, permit unrestricted AI use, shifting focus to how effectively students apply theoretical understanding to real-world tool use.
  The deliberate embedding of the use of generative AI tools and techniques in assessment submissions was commended by the validation panel for this course, who highlighted it as evidence of innovative practice.

How do you plan to develop the intervention/ activity?

We are conscious of the fact that this work is ongoing. Based on what we've learned, we are keen to develop a standardised implementation for AI use in teaching and assessment that includes a consistent taxonomy and nuanced permissions model and the School is feeding into institutional discussions regarding this approach. Such a model would reflect varying levels of AI engagement appropriate to students' progression and module content.

Finally, we are investing in scholarship and publication to share our findings with the wider HE community. Our work on shadow podcasts, AI literacy progression, and assessment frameworks is in development for future dissemination.

The integration of AI in higher education is not a question of whether, but how. Through a school-wide, exploratory approach grounded in pedagogical integrity and ethical awareness, we have begun to craft an answer that balances innovation with responsibility. Our work continues—but what is clear already is that embracing AI thoughtfully has not only avoided harm but actively enriched our curriculum and student experience.