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Safeguarding Academic Integrity in Higher Education: Empirical Pathways to Assessment Innovation Amid the AI Paradox

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Abstract

The rapid integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into higher education presents both unprecedented opportunities and pressing challenges. On one hand, AI tools can enhance students' learning journeys by supporting research and improving writing quality. On the other hand, a growing paradox has emerged: while universities encourage students to embrace AI as a learning aid, many students increasingly rely on these technologies to complete entire assignments, thereby bypassing the human intellectual effort essential to academic growth. This tension raises serious questions for educators about how to balance innovation with integrity.

This paper presents an empirical investigation of this paradox, examining how students and faculty navigate AI use in academic work. The plan is to employ mixed method approach, including surveys, focus groups, and assignment analysis across multiple stakeholders and disciplines. The study will assess the extent to which students substitute AI for original work, the motivations behind such practices, and perceptions of fairness regarding institutional policies. In parallel, it will explore faculty strategies for addressing these challenges, focusing on assessment redesign, transparent guidelines for AI usage, and the cultivation of reflective learning practices.

Positioned within wider discussions on academic integrity and innovative assessment design, the study aims to generate evidence-based recommendations for universities striving to integrate AI responsibly into teaching and learning.

Keywords: academic integrity; artificial intelligence (AI); assessment innovation; learning and teaching; paradox