FMBusinessDaily

Principles on AI literacy produced by UK universities

2 years ago

UK universities [have announced they are drawing up a set of guiding principles to ensure that students and staff are AI literate](#).

The news comes as the sector struggles to adapt teaching and assessment methods to deal with the growing use of generative artificial intelligence.

Vice-chancellors at the 24 Russell Group research-intensive universities have signed up to the code. They say this will help universities to capitalise on the opportunities of AI while simultaneously protecting academic rigour and integrity in higher education.

While once there was talk of banning software like [ChatGPT](#) within education to prevent cheating, the guidance says students should be taught to use AI appropriately in their studies, while also making them aware of the risks of plagiarism, bias and inaccuracy in generative AI.

Staff will also have to be trained so they are equipped to help students, many of whom are already using ChatGPT in their assignments. New ways of assessing students are likely to emerge to reduce the risk of cheating.

All 24 Russell Group universities have reviewed their academic conduct policies and guidance to reflect the emergence of generative AI. The new guidance says: "These policies make it clear to students and staff where the use of generative AI is inappropriate, and are intended to support them in making informed decisions and to empower them to use these tools appropriately and acknowledge their use where necessary."

Developed in partnership with experts in AI and education, the principles represent a first step in what promises to be a challenging period of change in higher education as the world is increasingly transformed by AI.

The five guiding principles state that universities will support both students and staff to become AI literate; staff should be equipped to help students to use generative AI tools appropriately; the sector will adapt teaching and assessment to incorporate the "ethical" use of AI and ensure equal access to it; universities will ensure academic integrity is upheld; and share best practice as the technology evolves.

Russell Group chief executive Dr Tim Bradshaw said: "The transformative opportunity provided by AI is huge and our universities are determined to grasp it. This statement of principles underlines our commitment to doing so in a way that benefits students and staff and protects the integrity of the high-quality education Russell Group universities provide."

University of Manchester head of health sciences Prof Andrew Brass said: "We know that students are already utilising this technology, so the question for us as educators is how do you best prepare them for this, and what are the skills they need to have to know how to engage with generative AI sensibly?

"From our perspective, it's clear that this can't be imposed from the top down, but by working really closely with our students to co-create the guidance we provide. If there are restrictions for example, it's crucial that it's clearly explained to students why they are in place, or we will find that people find a way around it." Gillian Keegan, the education secretary, launched a call for evidence on the use of generative AI in education last month, which asked for views on risks, ethical considerations, and training for education workers.