Approach to the use of AI in teaching and learning at Wits – Jan 2023

Context

Artificial Intelligence (AI) software and other digital models and technologies are becoming increasingly complex and more widely used across the world. While AI has been available for some years, OpenAI's release of its new, free chatbot, ChatGPT, in November 2022 is causing a stir globally. It is publicly accessible and had one million users within five days of its launch.

ChatGPT is a sophisticated large language model, trained on an enormous database of texts, which it can access and combine into well-written responses to prompts. It is being trained to interact with human beings in a conversational way, through generating and mimicking dialogue. These responses can take the form of short answers, essays, reports or even creative works, such as poems or scripts. However, there are limitations to what ChatGPT can do. The responses, based on existing texts, may be incorrect or even made up by juxtaposing text segments in ways that result in statements that are not true. They may also exhibit biases.

Nonetheless, text generated by ChatGPT can look strikingly similar to human-generated text in form, and often content, especially to users who are not domain experts. This raises questions about whether answers to assignment questions that students ask ChatGPT to write will be identified and identifiable by lecturers. It also raises pedagogical questions about what kind of assignments we should be giving students, knowing that they can and will use ChatGPT.

Use of AI in the classroom

Many educators internationally are proposing ways in which ChatGPT-generated text can be incorporated into students' assignments. For example, students could be asked to use ChatGPT to write a response to a question given in an assignment. Then the students' assignment is to engage with ChatGPT's response, such as by fact-checking it against multiple academic sources, critiquing its responses, evaluating its responses from their vantage point in the Global South or in a particular context, or identifying possible biases, with the ChatGPT response included as part of students' submissions.

Academic Integrity

At Wits, there were three institutional developments in 2022 that will help us engage constructively with AI software in our academic programmes. The first one is the new [Wits Student Academic Misconduct Policy](#), which expands the definition of academic misconduct beyond our old plagiarism policy, and which includes guidance on sanctions that should be applied in response to various infractions. The second one is the [Wits Framework for Academic Integrity](#). In this framework, we identify academic integrity as important for the entire institution in underpinning our academic work, and identify several specific approaches to promoting a culture of academic integrity among staff and students. While sanctions for

misconduct are necessary, the more we can foster an ethos of academic integrity, hopefully the less such sanctions will be needed. We will implement a number of initiatives this year to promote academic integrity.

The third development is the new *Senate Standing Orders on the Assessment of Student Learning* (SSOASL). In the SSOASL we identify the need for diverse forms of assessment, including more authentic assessment, which, among other aspects, encourages students to draw from and reflect on their own experiences. We also identify the need to promote academic integrity.

TurnItIn, the company that provides widely used similarity checking software, is also in the process of exploring ways to identify AI generated text.

Institutional plan for the first semester of 2023

The Offices of the Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Vice Chancellor will coordinate a series of webinars and workshops on the use of AI in teaching and promoting student learning at Wits.

Topics that will be addressed include:

- Perspectives from Computer Science on what ChatGPT is within the broader AI landscape, how it works, and what it can and cannot do,

- Exemplars from staff on how ChatGPT can be used productively in assessments to promote student learning,

- Guidance for staff on how to engage with students about academic integrity, including in relation to the use of AI tools,

- Shared ideas of innovative ways to use ChatGPT to support students' writing, particularly in writing-intensive and writing-rich courses,

- AI, innovation and the future of work from the perspective of the Global South, and

- Ethical and moral considerations on the development and use of AI in an unequal society.

The Centre for Learning, Teaching and Development (CLTD) is developing materials on ChatGPT to provide guidance and support for academics on how to use it constructively in course design, including in assessments. These will be available on the CLTD website. CLTD will also incorporate guidance and suggestions on the use of ChatGPT and other AI tools in the staff learning opportunities it offers.

In line with the new SSOASL, lecturers will need to provide students with clear information about how to maintain academic integrity in the courses they teach, including how and when students can use AI tools and how to indicate that such tools have been used.

Conclusion

AI tools will continue to be developed and used in numerous contexts, including education. We will never be able to prevent their use. We therefore need to be imaginative and innovative in how we design assessments, and how, for example, we can capitalise on them to reduce or remove some of the less cognitively demanding tasks (for staff and students) and focus on higher order thinking skills. We need to work with our students to help them value and show commitment to their own learning, in part by what we value in assessing them. We also need to work collaboratively and tirelessly across the institution to promote academic integrity, for the good of the whole institution, and all its stakeholders.