

SEDA Autumn Conference 2024



Session Title: In search of 'responsible' Generative AI (GenAI)

Session Type: Provocations (10mins)

Main presenter(s): Sue Beckingham, Sheffield Hallam University

Co presenter(s): Peter Hartley, Edge Hill University

Session Summary: Debates about students' legitimate use of GenAI have tended to focus on 'ethical' practice (i.e. ensuring students do not 'cheat'). This is important but not sufficient. We need to respond to other critical issues for students, staff and institutions – in particular, how do we define and recommend 'responsible' use of GenAI? And then how do we as Educational Developers best advise academic and other staff and students what GenAI to use (how and when)?

Session Outline: Key issues to be addressed:

- What do we mean by 'responsible' use of GenAI?
- Are the typical policies and strategies recommended in universities for the 'effective and ethical' use of GenAI sufficient to guarantee its responsible use? (we don't think so)
- What can we do to support applications of GenAI which are effective, ethical AND responsible?

Our position is that we must incorporate GenAI in our practice because of its:

- educational value (Acar, 2023; Beckingham et al, 2024; Chan and Colloton, 2024; Clark, 2024; Furze, 2024; Khan 2024),
- likely impact on our students' futures (Beetham, 2024; Marr, 2024; Suleyman, 2023), and
- growing impact on society more generally (Barrat, 2023; Harding, 2024).

However, we must adopt critical and analytic perspectives. We're increasingly concerned by several trends which we will briefly summarise:

- Increasing advocacy to 'embrace' GenAI at all levels of education (Fitzpatrick), in our everyday life (Collins, 2024) and at all times e.g. Ethan Mollick's recommendation to 'Always invite AI to the table' (Mollick, 2024, page 47ff). This advocacy often ignores or neglects the issues raised in this provocation.
- Unethical practices across the GenAI industry. A growing body of evidence shows that major GenAI companies can use exploitative employment practices (Murgia, 2024), some

dubious technical approaches (e.g. current legal battles on copyright) and can ‘over-hype’ products (Narayanan and Kapoor, 2024).

- Increasing environmental impact, e.g. Luccioni et al (2024) highlight very significant differences between specific types of GenAI use.
- Lack of transparency and perpetuation of ‘careless speech’ (Wachter et al, 2024).

We need a practical working definition of responsible practice in GenAI which allows students and staff to make best use of the software in ways which are effective and efficient without exacerbating major problems for the environment and sustainability.

We will suggest ways of taking this forward.

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