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Y Drindod Dewi Sant
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Trinity Saint David

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**ASSESSMENT COMPONENT: ACTION
RESEARCH PROJECT**

STUDENT NAME: Dafydd Jones

STUDENT NUMBER: 2223691

Use of Generative AI in Assessment

RESEARCH	For this assessment, you can use Generative AI to support you in research, including searching for bibliography, using tools to summarise, compare and interrogate materials.	Yes ☒ No ☐
STRUCTURE	For this assessment, you can use Generative AI to support you in structuring your submission, including creating a draft argument structure, identifying parts and headings, etc.	Yes ☒ No ☐
PROOFREADING	For this assessment, you can use Generative AI to check your own text/creation for grammatical and syntactical mistakes, including rephrasing of your own work within specific standards.	Yes ☒ No ☐
WRITING	For this assessment, you can use Generative AI to create text for submission.	Yes ☐ No ☒
CREATIVE	For this assessment, you can use Generative AI to create creative materials, such as images.	Yes ☐ No ☒
PROGRAMING	For this assessment, you can use Generative AI to create and check code.	Yes ☐ No ☐
NONE	For this assessment, you are not allowed to use any type of Generative AI support. This includes research support, structure support, writing/proofreading support and creative support.	Yes ☐ No ☒

AI Acknowledgement

I confirm that I have not used any AI tools in the research and creation of this assignment.

I confirm that I have not presented any AI generated materials as my own work.

I confirm that I have copies of my drafts, notes, and other resources I used, which I may be asked to provide in evidence.

How to appropriately use Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the Further Education (FE) curriculum?

Introduction

This is an action research project to identify how to appropriately use artificial intelligence (AI) in the further education (FE) curriculum. I am Dafydd Jones, a 22 year old student from a farming up-bringing in Carmarthenshire, Wales. I have many hobbies which mainly include sports like rugby, football and cycling, however I am extremely passionate about learning, developing and teaching the future generations. I am currently studying full time for a Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) in Post Compulsory Education and Training (PCET) at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David in Swansea. As part of the course there is a minimum requirement of 100 hours of teaching experience at FE and/or higher education (HE) environments.

The placement is at an FE college in rural Wales, and noticed a growing issue and concern regarding students over relying on AI to produce their work. The Level 3 BTEC Sporting and Excellence course being taught is marked through assignments and practical work. Therefore, moderating AI work is challenging and actually multiple assignments have been handed in as majority AI generated. Worryingly, the students don't seem to care about plagiarism or the lack of thinking, knowledge, ideas or development they experience. Students rely and have become dependent on AI for every piece of assignment or question and answer problem solving activity created in the classroom. This poses the question, what type of individuals are we developing and creating for the future?

Additionally, on reflection I found that AI isn't always correct or accurate with every answer, which negatively affects the students' knowledge and understanding of the

topic. As well, other lectures and teachers have witnessed a few students providing work by AI that is first class grammar and using a vocabulary that the students don't understand.

AI generated work lies mostly on the BTEC course as all the work has to be produced and handed in online. There are still issues with Postgraduate, Undergraduate, A-Level and GCSE students, however it's easier to control and monitor those courses as a large proportion of the work are either paper based exams or assignments which are handed through sites like 'Turnitin' which check for AI and plagiarism.

The growing challenges of AI in FE settings raises the need for researching the topic further. The increased research into the topic aims to further my knowledge and understanding of AI, so that I will be able to utilise, monitor and guide students appropriately in the future as a lecturer or teacher.

How can AI be appropriately used within the FE curriculum without negatively impacting student learning and academic integrity?

Literature Review

The literature review looks at a variety of studies on the topic 'How to appropriately use AI in the FE curriculum?' and what methods do teachers, lectures, students and learners favour.

In 1956 John McCarthy, invented the first AI tool, he developed the (LISP) programming language for symbolic reasoning, and invented concepts like computer time-sharing and commonsense reasoning (McCarthy, 2011). At Stanford University, McCarthy also created the first ever AI laboratory where he was developing a self-driving car. He produced papers on robot consciousness and free will and worked on ways of making programs understand or mimic human common-sense decision-making more effectively, which has now evolved.

Contrastingly, Berners-Lee and Cailliau (2025) suggest that the first known conversational AI was invented in 1966 which was called 'ELIZA' by Joseph Weizenbaum. Then in 1972 'PARRY' was developed by Kenneth Colby, it was a more advanced chatbot, then 'Jabberwocky' in 1977 to simulate conversation, it introduced learning from user interaction. Then in 2016 AI bots began appearing on platforms like Twitter, Facebook and Snapchat. According to Marr (2023), conversational AI as we know it today truly began with the launch of ChatGPT on November 30, 2022, which is the largest generative AI chatbot based on a variety of languages and modules. It could be argued that 'ChatGPT' has also overtaken the general 'Google search' as a source of finding solutions or information.

Within the FE sector, other AI tools used include 'Grammarly', 'Quillbot' and 'Wordtune', which are commonly used by students to support and adapt their writing to improve the quality (Raheem, Anjum and Ghafar, 2023). Grammarly is mainly used by students to improve the grammar, correct spelling, and adapt the tone used specifically to what they require (Lytvyn, Shevchenko and Lider, 2026). Then, QuillBot's specialty is paraphrasing and summarising sentences and paragraphs

(Slater-Robins, 2025). Similarly, Wordtune offers extra support and guidance for rewriting and rephrasing a piece of written work (Kaur, 2025).

The advantages of utilising AI in FE is highlighted by Yang, Huan and Yang, (2020). They described how Chongqing Three Gorges University carried out the 'Massive Open Online Course' (MOOC) and 'Self-Paced Open Course' (SPOC), which united the teaching content into specific teaching scenarios. The suggested teaching approach according to Yang, Huan and Yang, (2020) involves aligning the curriculum and modules with both the practical level of students and the professional standards. The findings of the study recognised that the teaching approach provided should include practical support and encourages individualised and group learning.

Additionally, Xiao and Yi (2020) conveys that artificial intelligence is one of the most significant approaches for implementing personalised training, which can structure and design education in an individualised way. Xiao and Yi (2020) study was broken down to three parts, the first part analysed students data before enrolling in colleges and institutions. Second, technique for creating an AI-based personalised training model. Lastly, proposed a technique that uses the personalised training model to forecast students' developmental trajectory. Therefore, AI can structure the planning of lessons and help deliver the teaching sessions specifically to the students individualised needs and preference.

Furthermore, Li (2023) suggests that AI positively impacts motivation of students as the AI-based system is considered useful and easy to use which positively impacts students' attitude and behavioral intentions. However, Li (2023) acknowledges that despite students being positively towards AI systems, there is an insignificant impact in students' learning motivation of achieving their goals and modules criterias, but research is limited on the topic.

Nevertheless, Ma, Zhang and Hui (2024) created a study on 356 college students from Zhejiang Province, based on resource preservation theory they examined the mechanism of the usage of AI in teaching on students' innovative behavior and well-being. According to the study, students' innovative behaviour and general well-being were greatly and favourably impacted by the use of AI in the classroom, with happy emotions among the students acting as a mediating factor. In addition to

moderating the impact of using AI in the classroom on positive emotion, students' trust in AI also moderated positive emotion's mediating function (Ma, Zhang and Hui, 2024). The findings provided important implications for instructional management and teaching practice within the post-compulsory education and training (PCET) sector.

Similarly, Song et al, (2024) study looked at insights into students' perceptions, engagement, and ChatGPT's overall educational efficiency. The students' perception includes their attitudes, concerns, and usage patterns as the study gathered and examined data about their interactions with ChatGPT. The results recognised that ChatGPT has a lot to offer, including better access to information and more student engagement. However, concerns are raised about the credibility and accuracy of the data AI provides, as it will only work efficiently when teachers or students set clear rules to maximise its usage (Song et al, 2024).

The use of AI by students can vary considerably. Sinatra and Hofer (2023) identified that students will use generative AI for a number of reasons such as generating a first draft or ideas for an assignment or developing an outline for an exam paper. The generic person might be searching for information about a “scientific phenomenon, works by a writer or musician, or just background information for a report” (Sinatra and Hofer, 2023). Nevertheless, Sinatra and Hofer (2023), similarly to Song et al, (2024) raised concerns on the reliability and accuracy of AI tools. Sinatra and Hofer (2023) suggested that ChatGPT is less reliable than Google search. This is down to the fact that ChatGPT has been trained to base the response on language patterns. As a result, AI tools can put together the wrong or made up information by incorporating what it gathered from existing online information. This is the case for ChatGPT as it relies on the language, which can alter and affect the factually or logically correct answers.

Contrastingly, Jia, Santhosh Kumar and Parthasarathy (2021) suggests that AI technology is successfully and efficiently used in a number of educational institutions as it enhances academic performance and learning. In comparison, lower learning engagement is caused by issues with the traditional teaching and learning approaches, as students rely too heavily on teachers for all study materials, and a

stronger emphasis on theory learning rather than balancing between a practical and theory approach. It could be argued that AI-based integrated teaching-learning model strategy for student education would decrease barriers to learning, automating administrative procedures, and optimising learning outcomes in order to accelerate the achievement of educational goals (Jia, Santhosh Kumar and Parthasarathy, 2021).

The traditional teaching methods have altered. Fauzi et al (2024) recognised that at the post-compulsory level, technological advancements have altered the model of teaching and learning. AI has surfaced as a means of transforming the educational process through the use of games, quizzes and structure to increase the efficiency of learning in higher education, but there's limited research that understands how AI might enhance post-compulsory education (Fauzi et al, 2024).

The study by Fauzi et al (2024) proposed to examine how AI enhances learning in post-compulsory education and how it prepares students' for careers. Content analysis and literature review were the research methods used. Afterwards, the data was examined to find patterns, advantages and difficulties related to using AI in educational settings. According to the findings, the application of AI in higher education has improved learning personalisation, improved information retention, and enabled more accurate and timely feedback. Furthermore, Fauzi et al (2024) states that AI is crucial in assisting students in acquiring skills like teaching, learning, and decision-making that will be useful in their careers. Although the full potential of AI in education is currently not met, issues like over reliance on technology and the requirement for appropriate training for teachers and students must be addressed.

Golding et al (2024) created a questionnaire for students in the college to answer regarding the use of AI in the classroom. Most of the students replied that they were familiar with different types of AI websites to support with assignments and exam revision. The study identified that the majority of students had not used AI in college lessons, but they had used AI primarily to receive help with assignments and writing tasks. Additionally, the minority stated the reasons for not using AI applications was "getting caught" and "cheating" as responses. Additionally, almost all the students believed that using AI to support or guide their work should be classed as cheating.

Golding et al (2024) states that these responses have led the teachers to debate whether AI has a pedagogical benefit which should be embraced and included in the college lesson or are they just another means for cheating.

Nevertheless, Cheng and Wang (2021) states that including artificial intelligence to evaluate and gain ideas of classroom approaches in higher education learning provides a more efficient and comprehensive method of analysing teaching and learning behaviours. Furthermore, suggesting that digital tools should be used to track and assess classroom interactions, institutions can significantly reduce the time required for evaluation, expand the range of assessment criteria, and enhance overall evaluation efficiency. This enables real-time feedback and allows students to respond immediately to the effectiveness of teaching strategies within the lesson. According to Cheng and Wang (2021) AI also benefits and aids professional development in teachers. Through accurate, data-informed insights, educators are better positioned to identify areas for improvement, clarify pedagogical approaches, and address teaching challenges in a timely and evidence-based manner. Consequently, the overall quality of teaching and learning is strengthened.

AI is considered not only beneficial for teaching development, but also encourages students to engage in meaningful self-assessment, encouraging greater learner individualism and reflective practice (Cheng and Wang, 2021). Combining personalised feedback with structured evaluation frameworks, learners are supported in achieving both individualised development and consistent academic standards (Cheng and Wang, 2021).

In conclusion, the literature review identified that AI is increasingly influencing teaching and learning within the further and post-compulsory education sector. The development of AI, from early conversational models to contemporary generative tools such as ChatGPT, demonstrates a rapid evolution in both accessibility and capability. Current AI applications used within FE, including writing support tools and adaptive learning systems, suggest significant potential to enhance personalisation, improve feedback processes, and support student motivation and engagement (Fauzi et al, 2024); (Song et al, 2024).

A number of studies highlight the pedagogical benefits of AI, particularly in relation to personalised learning pathways, innovative behaviour, well-being, and real-time evaluation of teaching practice. Evidence also suggests that AI can contribute positively to professional development by providing data-informed insights that strengthen reflective practice and instructional decision-making. Furthermore, AI-supported models may address limitations associated with traditional teaching approaches, particularly where learner engagement and individualism are concerned (Jia, Santhosh Kumar and Parthasarathy, 2021); (Li, 2023).

However, the literature also identifies important challenges. Concerns regarding academic integrity, reliability of information, over-reliance on technology, and insufficient staff training remain significant barriers (Sinatra and Hofer, 2023). Student perceptions of AI often fluctuate between recognising its academic benefits and fearing accusations of misconduct (Golding et al, 2024). Moreover, while AI appears to enhance learning experiences in some contexts, it could be argued that the full impact on long-term motivation and achievement is not yet comprehensively understood.

Overall, the research suggests that AI has considerable potential to enhance the FE curriculum when implemented thoughtfully, ethically, and with clear pedagogical guidance. Effective integration requires structured policies, professional development for educators, and explicit guidance for learners to ensure AI is used as a supportive tool rather than a substitute for critical thinking. Nevertheless, this literature review highlighted that further research is needed to explore best practice models and to determine how AI can be embedded in ways that promote both academic integrity and meaningful learning outcomes within the post-compusory sector.

Methodology

This project is action research which combines bridging theory and practice, action and research to solve real-world problems. In this case, the education setting is used to identify issues, implementing changes, and reflecting on outcomes to improve practice. It involves planning, observing, researching and reflecting to develop practical, specific real-life solutions to increase and develop knowledge (Bradbury, 2015).

This action research will be using the secondary research approach to increase the authors understanding of AI. On reflection, I noticed an issue with students over relying on AI to generate answers, but more worryingly many students were generating entire pieces of course work and assignments with AI. This was noticed at a School / College in Carmarthenshire, location is not disclosed for the protection of the children's privacy and confidential information (Crow & Wiles, 2008). The students were between the ages of 16-18 years old with different genders, backgrounds, beliefs and with a variety of sporting abilities.

The author would have preferred to use primary research, however due to the time scale of the project and the time it takes to get the ethical process completed it was not realistically possible. However, the use of secondary research enables engagement with a wide range of existing studies within a limited timeframe. However, the absence of primary data may limit the depth of insight into students' direct experiences of AI use within the FE sector.

The data collected will be analysed and evaluated in the discussion, which involves comparing and contrasting the studies researched in the literature review. A variety of research, including quantitative and qualitative data will be analysed. The aim of analysing valid and reliable data that can further develop my understanding of AI. All information gathered from the literature review and discussion are focused around utilising AI in the FE curriculum.

Evidence / Discussion

The purpose of this action research project was to explore how artificial intelligence (AI) can be appropriately used within the Further Education (FE) curriculum while maintaining academic integrity and supporting meaningful student learning. The findings drawn from the literature review highlight that AI is rapidly transforming the educational environment, particularly within the Post-Compulsory Education and Training (PCET) sector (Raheem, Anjum and Ghafar, 2023). However, while AI presents several opportunities to enhance teaching and learning, it also raises concerns regarding academic honesty, over-reliance on technology, and the potential impact on students' cognitive development (Kirschner and De Bruyckere, 2017); (Zawacki-Richter et al, 2019).

The most recurring theme identified throughout the literature was the growing accessibility and use of generative AI tools with students. According to Marr (2023), the launch of ChatGPT in 2022 significantly accelerated the widespread use of conversational AI technologies. These tools allow the students to generate written responses, summaries, and explanations within seconds, which has considerable implications for coursework-based programmes such as BTEC qualifications. This is particularly relevant to the context of my own experiences, where students studying on a Level 3 BTEC Sporting course submit most of their assignments online rather than through traditional examinations. The literature therefore supports the concern identified within my teaching placement, where students appear to rely heavily on AI-generated tools when completing assignments, and lean on their own thinking, creativity and emotional thought process.

Similarly, research by Golding et al. (2024), Yang, Huan and Yang, (2020) and Sinatra and Hofer (2023), suggested that students are increasingly aware of various AI tools and commonly use them to assist with coursework tasks. Nevertheless, they also highlight that students had variable attitudes towards AI while many students reported using AI for writing support, the majority simultaneously believed that using AI to produce work could be considered cheating. The difference in opinion

indicates that although students recognise the usefulness of AI tools, there remains significant uncertainty regarding what is considered appropriate or inappropriate use. Furthermore, within the FE sector, the lack of clarity may contribute to the misuse of AI tools when completing assignments.

Reflecting on practice, seeing students using AI was not considered a threat as it is here to stay. However, personally students must still read and get an understanding of the results provided by AI and then should only utilise the knowledge gained, not cut and paste. The information needs to be written in their own words and be factually correct to support their work. Although I understand that this will be difficult to monitor, there has to be a way to maintain the level of learning in the classroom by incorporating AI.

In practice I witnessed several successful teaching sessions. The method of presentation assessments and tasks, which requires the students to perform in front of a class and explain their work enables the students to show that they understand the topic. Other methods seen by more knowledgeable teachers on placement were holding more one-on-one sessions with students to check the understanding of their own work and limiting the amount of tasks and assessments using electronic devices. .

It could be argued that the only way to have a firm control on AI tools is having better checks for plagiarism and a check for AI percentage in the work. Despite this, a number of studies emphasise the potential benefits of AI when used appropriately within educational settings. Xiao and Yi (2020) and Yang, Huan and Yang (2020) recognised that AI can support personalised learning by adapting educational content to suit individual student needs and integrate teaching materials into structured learning environments that support both individual and collaborative learning. These findings suggest that AI does not necessarily undermine learning but instead has the potential to enhance educational experiences when implemented with clear pedagogical guidance.

Furthermore, research conducted by Ma, Zhang and Hui (2024) and Jia, Santhosh Kumar and Parthasarathy (2021) conveys that the use of AI in teaching can

positively influence students' innovative behaviour and emotional well-being. Research found that when students perceived AI tools as trustworthy and beneficial, they demonstrated higher levels of engagement, positive emotional responses within learning environments, which consequently improved educational outcomes. This may also contribute to improved learning experiences when students are guided on how to use AI wisely, responsibly and effectively.

The literature review consistently acknowledged that effective use of AI within education requires careful management by teachers. Fauzi et al. (2024) and Cheng and Wang (2021) highlighted that although AI has the potential to transform teaching and learning practices, its full potential cannot be reached without appropriate training for both teachers and students. Furthermore, without clear guidance, students may misuse AI technologies in ways that impair their learning. This reinforces the need for educational institutions to develop clear policies regarding AI use within coursework and assessments. Both studies recognised that through accurate, data-informed insights, educators would be better positioned to identify areas for improvement, clarify pedagogical approaches, and address teaching challenges in a timely and evidence-based manner (Fauzi et al, 2024); (Cheng and Wang, 2021).

From my own experience, parents have started to question the grades and marks given by teachers to students as they copy their children's work into various AI tools to check what grade they should be awarded. When the grade does not match the teacher then the parents are complaining to the college and waiting for a response of why their child was undermarked. This will increase the pressure on teachers and might influence the way they mark assignments. However, it could be argued that this might benefit students more than teachers, as AI tools like 'ChatGPT' will provide students with an estimated grade and immediately highlight areas for improvement, with suggestions.

Nevertheless, it could be argued that increased reliance on AI tools for thinking, review and marking guidance in assessments can actually raise the concern of 'cheating' or reduce students' development in writing academic work and being able to manage in exam conditions (Cotton et al, 2023).

The findings suggest that rather than attempting to eliminate AI from education, FE teachers should focus on developing clear structure for its best use. Also, including digital literacy within the sector and developing assessment methods that require explanation, discussion and reflection might help to ensure that AI tools support learning rather than replacing it. However, a limitation of this action research project is that the findings from practice are based on observations within a single teaching placement, single teaching module and with a small group of Level 3 BTEC students. The results may not be fully transferable to other FE colleges or subject areas.

Similarly, the majority of studies highlighted the benefits of AI in supporting personalised learning, much of the existing research focuses on Higher Education (HE) settings rather than the FE sector. This may limit the sustainability of some findings to FE environments, where coursework-based assessment models such as BTEC qualifications are more common. As a result, there remains a need for further research that specifically explores how AI tools influence learning behaviours within the FE sector. However, according to the Joint Council for Qualifications JCQ (2026), the UK education system has organisations such as the Joint Council for Qualifications which highlights that submitted work must represent a student's own understanding. The increasing use of AI tools therefore raises questions regarding how institutions can maintain the validity of assignments while still embracing technological innovation.

Although, from a pedagogical perspective, increased reliance on AI-generated responses may conflict with constructivist learning principles, which emphasise the importance of learners actively constructing knowledge through engagement and reflection. If students rely on AI-generated answers without critically evaluating the information, the depth of learning and cognitive development may be reduced.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this action research project highlights how AI can be appropriately integrated into the FE curriculum while maintaining academic integrity and supporting effective student learning.

The literature review identifies that AI tools are increasingly transforming educational environments, particularly following the emergence of AI tools such as ChatGPT. These technologies offer significant opportunities to enhance learning through increased accessibility to information, personalised support and improved engagement, although they also present challenges related to academic honesty, over-reliance on automated tools and potential impacts on students' critical thinking and independent learning.

The findings suggest that the main concern for AI in the FE curriculum is not the presence of AI within education, but the lack of clear guidance surrounding its appropriate use. Many students appear to use AI tools to support coursework while simultaneously recognising that excessive reliance may be considered academically dishonest. This contradiction highlights the need for clearer institutional policies and improved digital literacy among both students and educators. Without structured guidance and training, there is a risk that AI technologies may undermine learning rather than enhance it.

Reflection on teaching practice emphasised the importance of adapting assessment methods to ensure that learning remains authentic and meaningful. Strategies such as presentations, verbal questioning and one-to-one discussions were identified as effective ways of assessing student understanding beyond written submissions. These approaches allow educators to evaluate learners' knowledge, reasoning and communication skills while reducing the likelihood of over-reliance on AI-generated content.

The findings conveyed AI should not be viewed as a threat to education but rather as a tool that can support learning when correctly implemented with pedagogical

strategies. The challenge moving forward for the FE sector will be to balance the benefits of emerging AI tools with the need to maintain academic integrity and develop students' independent critical thinking. Achieving this balance will require clear institutional guidance, ongoing professional development for teachers, clear rules and guidelines for students to follow. Additionally, continued adaptation of assessment practices to reflect the rapidly evolving digital learning society within FE is required.

4294 total words

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