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## ChatGPT: A tool to embrace or ban in Academia?

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## **ChatGPT: A tool to embrace or ban in Academia?**

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ChatGPT is a recent phenomenon under the spotlight and the focus of many discussions in academia for its future promises, together with some concerns that may raise alarms.

However first, what is ChatGPT? It is a human-like conversational AI chatbot that allows users to engage in dialogue and conversation on a variety of topics, making it look impressive for the benefit of humans and society. ChatGPT needs human-like intelligence and compelling arguments to hold a conversation, which comes from the large volume of text data on which the tool is trained, that basically acts as the intelligent part of memory.

Therefore, it is obvious that anything not part of ChatGPT's memory will serve as an unknown shred of information and hence, become a natural limitation, i.e. ChatGPT cannot answer questions concerning the missing data from its memory.

Furthermore, to strike a real conversation, ChatGPT generates a non-deterministic response, taking a probabilistic approach to generate responses, which means if one asks the same question twice, the response will be different and composed of different word choices.

However, the underlying theme of the response would be very similar; in other words, the central idea would be the same, making the human trust conversations with ChatGPT. This behaviour makes ChatGPT analogous to a new and very modern calculator, which can now operate over qualitative data instead of merely quantitative data, which is how traditional calculators serve. Nonetheless, this new calculator can only be as good as the questions asked by the user and can only magically give sensible answers when there is no practical question. It can also be taken as a modern search service, where a user can ask an open-ended question, engage with the service through a conversation and distil it down to the detail where the value

of responses truly lies; but of course, engaging with technology requires human awareness of the topic and also an understanding of how to use the technology.

Although ChatGPT offers considerable value and learning opportunities, it comes with its fair share of challenges, such as the possibility of students submitting plagiarised answers for graded assignments. Besides that, there are other concerns such as privacy (Browne 2023), requiring regulations to come into effect so as to tap into the power of conversational AI responsibly. However, while these concerns may lead to a temporary ban on the technology, it can eventually lead to fit-for-purpose regulations making way for more integrated ChatGPT opportunities in the lifecycle of daily tasks. Nevertheless, the challenge posed to academia regarding plagiarism will remain a significant concern until academia takes action and finds a resolution. One thing that we cannot do is ban students from using it; this will be impractical (Sadasivan, *et al.* 2023), as the technology is out there, and it is going to be used in a professional setting, so there is no real value in banning it. Instead, academia should find ways to embrace it. After all, this is a new calculator; it is here to stay with us, and we cannot pretend otherwise. Even though this technology may be banned for some time, initially within some academic settings, it cannot remain forever prohibited, so it is pointless to think a ban would fix everything.

On the contrary, we must accept that ChatGPT, and other artificial tools (AI) tools like it, are a current disruption and find ways to incorporate it as part of our strengths, rather than seeking ways to ban it. Therefore, the real question is how we can truly embrace it in an academic setting. Firstly, for the type of assessments which are open-book in nature, the lecturer needs to use ChatGPT and design the questions by interacting with ChatGPT to understand what value it can offer, along with recognising the potential limitations of the technology, and then adjust the question according to the merit. Here, the idea of establishing

a working group at the faculty level that discusses how to use ChatGPT effectively within academia can be beneficial rather than leaving this as the sole responsibility of the lecturer to figure out themselves. Also, a way to understand the limitations is to take help from ChatGPT to solve the assessment set by the lecturer and observe where ChatGPT cannot provide a clear response repetitively, ultimately turning that into an opportunity for grading a student's effort. Similarly, an approach to embrace the technology would be to encourage students to use ChatGPT during the assessment, score them for using it to improve their response and ask students to reference where the technology was used and how; finally score them on the merit of engagement and refinement of their response. Besides this, lecturers can design in-classroom activity that uses ChatGPT for the purpose of creating a positive environment that enables ethical embracement of the technology within a learning experience.

In addition to other considerations, ChatGPT can contribute to EDI (Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion) objectives in an academic context. Students who suffer from writing and language skills may benefit from the technology to improve the quality of their responses through ChatGPT. To sum up, ChatGPT and related AI are here to stay; the sooner we adopt this technology and in the right way, the better it will be for changing society. This technology has the potential to positively impact the learning experience of the modern classroom environment, and as with any new technology, it is important to use ChatGPT in a way that maximises its benefits while minimising its drawbacks.

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