

Wilful AI Blindness and Negligence in University Assessment

Jim Mienczakowski & Greg Whateley

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The Weekend Australian (30-31 August 2025) recently published an article by an academic claiming nearly 15 years teaching experience at Melbourne Uni (which he describes as Australia's top university). It was sad and troubling reading.

First, the author was exasperated by the lack of a concrete method for identifying AI chatbot written student assignments and the inability of the current dominant cheating detection tool (in his opinion Turnitin) to identify AI cheating. He asserted that students have simply been 'gaming' the system.

Second, as the AI detector often returns low scores on suspicious assignments, the management can set the threshold for raising a case of academic misconduct to whatever height they wish. Essentially, although the article's author states that the university is inundated with record breaking numbers of academic integrity investigations - proving actual misconduct is increasingly difficult without conclusive evidence. The management's detection net, therefore, has a wide mesh. Most cases slip through the gaps.

Third, whilst the worst and most obvious offenders may get caught they are not the majority. Moreover, most tutors and marking assistants are often less academically experienced - so placing the burden of identifying, proving and prosecuting academic AI based cheating on them is a bridge too far. The technological issues around AI, he says, are too much for most staff to comprehend.

Fourth, whilst the author's university is moving towards a model in which by 2028 50% of all marks must be from secure assessments (i.e., supervised exams, etc) the remaining 50% will still be open to the current AI scenario. So, theoretically, we can be confident that by 2028 50% of the work of these future graduates will demonstrate their own scholarship and the remaining 50% might not?

A shocking scenario

This is a shocking scenario to consider. Cohorts of students may be graduating (not just from Melbourne Uni but from all of our universities) with fraudulently gained degrees. Think twice about the doctors, lawyers, engineers and societal leaders of the future! Not only is their grasp of discipline knowledge likely to be fractured – but their ambivalence towards cheating and their integrity as professionals will also be suspect.

Of course, we could overcome all AI based incursions in assessment by fully returning to supervised, face-to-face assessment. *(We have said this previously in the Campus Review (Jan 30th, 2023) and elsewhere)*. This could be an immediate sector-wide response to AI. However, the tertiary sector is deflecting its own responsibilities for guaranteeing the authenticity of its products (degrees and graduates) and the integrity of its academic assurance processes back on to government and students.

Whilst Australia actually leads in secure technological resolutions to the proctoring or supervision of online examinations - *through solutions such as Invigilator Plus* - why are our universities not seizing this valuable approach to rendering not just 50% of all assessments but closer to 100% of them as secure?

Why not indeed?

The answer may lie in large class sizes, large international fee-paying student numbers and the large profits to be made through the current low-cost high throughput assessment processes used in most undergraduate courses. The *Weekend Australian* article describes this lack of traction on AI issues as an indication of 'techno-capitalism.'

Alternative approaches would multiply costs (reduce profits) exponentially. Conducting viva voce style appraisals and invigilated examinations is redolent of an era in which students were also taught and assessed face to face. The current era of Australia's bloated commercial universities has distanced many students from the on-campus experiences of yesteryear.

What do students say?

Talking to students from across Melbourne's breadth of university offerings it is clear that many no longer attend lectures but audit pre-recorded sessions in their own time. Online course sessions are popular as attending classes on campus, for some, interferes with their need to work parttime or engage in other activities.

And yes, of those various students we've spoken to there is a feeling that their universities are not always overly keen on tackling AI incursions. Some suspect wilful blindness or negligence are at play. There are even a few international students (attending various private institutions) who told us they suspect that it is no longer possible to fail their courses as nothing is ever done about AI written assignments by their institution's managements! *If an institution is overly strict on cheating (including AI issues) it is believed to be bad marketing news for its brand in some quarters.*

Giving up the fight

Currently, it is as if the sector is giving up the fight and is either blaming government for policy inaction or feigning control over any AI cheating within their own institutions. *Ultimately, wilfully blind or not, universities are responsible for the integrity of the awards offered within their granting powers.*

Using **online invigilated approaches** (timed, supervised exams and essays) and (online supervised/invigilated) **viva voce assessments** could be a swift solution. Yes, it will cost tertiary institutions more in the short term – but it won't be as expensive as the loss of reputation and value likely to come from graduates who have excelled in AI/Chatbot studies rather than in their own academic excellence.

Fifth, and finally, how sad it is that the author of The Weekend Australian article felt obliged to write under a pseudonym. It speaks volumes...

Emeritus Professor Jim Mienczakowski is a Higher Education Consultant – based in Melbourne

Emeritus Professor Greg Whateley is currently CEO and ED at the Australian Guild of Education (Melbourne)