

University Assessment: Wilful AI Blindness or Cheating Redefined?

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The Weekend Australian (30-31 August 2025) published an article by an academic claiming nearly 15 years teaching experience at Melbourne University. Its author (known only as A) was (like the entire university sector) 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 A*'s opinion, Turnitin) to reliably identify AI cheating.*

Author A* asserts that cheating with AI is prolific and that students have simply been 'gaming' the system. Unfortunately, the current massification of online submitted assignments plays into that assessment system vulnerability.

In truth, the likelihood of a failsafe (and litigation proof) AI detection app is not yet with us - and even if it were, it would most likely be swiftly superseded with newer Generative AI cheating approaches.

Universities, naturally, remain unwilling to accuse students of *Chat Bot hijinks* unless they possess indisputable evidence – which is hard to find.

Wider acceptance of Generative AI assignment assistance in organising students' work (summarising ideas, content and managing assignment information and structure) may soon be seen as *not cheating* within some state schooling systems as Education Departments concede to AI and redefine both learning and cheating.

Are the replaceable functions now being considered as merely 'AI supportive of student learning' representative of '*unnecessary, unedifying, time-wasting assignment activities*' in earlier school assessment approaches or is it a sign of systemic capitulation to AI?

Degrees without guarantees

Irrespective, cohorts of university students could now be graduating 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 possibly fractured – their ambivalence towards cheating and their integrity as professionals will also be suspect.

What will be at risk if our universities also move the goalposts and simply redefine tertiary learning and cheating to overcome current AI failings?

The scenario facing academic integrity in the university sector is complex and problematic. And as Tanee Leeman points out in CR Sept 10, 2025, "every institution is grappling with the impact of artificial intelligence (AI) on academic integrity (AI)."

But how hard are they grappling?

A*'s university is said to be moving towards a model in which (by 2028) 50% of all marks must be from secure assessments (i.e., supervised exams, etc.) though the remaining 50% will presumably still be open to the current AI scenario?

Cars without brakes

So, as far as *grappling* goes, would car manufacturers be able to sell cars if their ads promised that by 2028 their vehicles' brakes would work for at least 50% of the time?

No. That would be unlikely. And so too is the prospect of confidence remaining in current university degrees awarded during the present Generative AI cheating epidemic.

Revoking awards

It is hard to imagine universities allowing any shadows to be cast over the important, glorious graduation days when student hard work and academic prowess are acknowledged.

But, when the technology to do so appears, will universities review the many, many thousands of assignments and awards given during the *AI Insertion Era* (2023 - TBA) and revoke degrees awarded through AI malpractice?

Of course not!

Doing so is as unlikely as it is unpalatable. It would not only be a nightmare scenario in respect to potential disputation and litigation, administrative complexities and institutional reputational harm, but also a business killing behaviour.

It is a scenario that would pit the integrity and authenticity of any university's awards against its commercial interests.

The Higher Education sector is unquestionably in a very hard and shockingly uncomfortable place. It does not wish to stall the valid efforts of those who are not cheating- nor interrupt its revenue streams with a vastly complex and majorly expensive move to fully supervised assessments for all assignments.

The Herd Instinct Rules

As usual, the university sector is closely watching how other institutions and sectors respond to the new AI reality - *to follow suit*. It could be a long wait.

Guaranteeing the authenticity of a university's products (degrees and graduates) and the integrity of academic assurance processes is the responsibility of any self-accrediting university. At this moment in time - the value and credibility of university degrees need more than Sector indecision.

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