Students Perspective on the Use of AI for Their Studies: An "Open University" Viewpoint

Nareerut Seerasarn, Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University, Thailand
Servel A. Miller, Open University, United Kingdom

The Paris Conference on Education 2025
Official Conference Proceedings

Abstract

As highlighted by the recent Global Student AI Survey by the Digital Education Council (2024), over 84% of university students are using Artificial Intelligence (AI) for their study on a regular basis. There is a need to examine university students' attitude towards AI and their experience of using it (AI) to gain insights into how it can be integrated in higher education to enhance teaching and learning. The research explored students' perception of AI use in their study, focusing on respondents from an "Open University", using questionnaire survey. The sample consist of 304 students studying at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. 74% of respondents indicated that AI tools are an essential part of their education, with 66% saying they currently use AI for their assignment. 80% of respondents wants to learn more about how AI can be used as part of their study, with 66% saying AI gives them more confidence in their education. Students indicated that university guidelines are clear (68%), but at the same time 81% want to learn more about responsible use of AI. This may be due to the belief that AI is giving some students an advantage, with almost 50% saying AI should be banned from being used in assignments. Over 21% of respondents indicating that more than 50% of their assignment is written by AI. This is one area that may need addressing and why some students indicate AI is providing an unfair advantage to others who may be less ethical in its use.

Keywords: AI, Open University, students, technology, teaching, learning

iafor

The International Academic Forum
www.iafor.org

Introduction

Increasingly students are recognising that AI is having a profound impact on the way they engage with their studies and want to be upskilled in its use for future career benefits (Adiguzel et al., 2023; Bisdas et al., 2021; Gong et al., 2019). As highlighted by the recent Global Student AI Survey, over 84% of university students are using Large Language Model (LLM) Artificial Intelligence (AI) for their study on a regular basis (Digital Education Council, 2024). Students are rapidly adapting to the use of AI (for example getting ideas for projects and refining language). As AI tools such as; CHAT GPT, Deep seek (Chat bots), Jasper (Content creation), SUNO (Voice and music generation) Mem (Knowledge management and AI grounding), Teal (Resume builders), Beautiful.ai (presentation generation) and Adobe Photoshop (image manipulation), evolve and become more accessible, students are increasingly indicating their intention to utilise these (AI) tools in their learning and future practice (Bisdas et al., 2021; Lee et al., 2022; Zhou, et al., 2025). However, whilst broadly university are aware of Student using AI as part of their university study, there is still limited understanding of the level of usage, how it is being used, motivation for its, use, how they would like universities to be incorporating within the curriculum. In Additional, with universities getting more concern about academic integrity with the proliferation of the use LLM it is of paramount importance to gain insight into how their AI-related guidelines/regulations are being viewed/adhere to and student's ethical use of AI. The perspectives of students is essential for teaching faculty to understand the extent to which they could make use of AI to support or enhance students' learning, whilst at the same time developing policy to maintain academic integrity. This research, explored students' perception of AI use in their study, focusing on respondents from an "Open University".

Methodology

The project aims to explore students' level of knowledge, current use, proposed future use, ethical use and emerging issues with Large Language Models (LLM) Artificial Intelligence (AI) as a learning support tool of engagement, as well as how they are engaging regulations. This research focus on students from an Open University that delivers most of their courses mainly through "distance learning" /online. Students at the open the university predominantly classed as "Mature" (over 30s) and in some form of employment. Students in the faculty of Environment and agriculture were targeting as part of this study. Online Questionnaire were used to collect data from the students over a two-week period. In total 304 questionnaires were complete and analysed. Statistical and thematic analysis was done on the data collected. The results are presented below.

Results

One of the first objective of the study was understand the level to which the university current students were use AI as part of their university study. Respondents were asked to provide their level agreement with the statement "I use AI to support to my university studies". From the survey 74% of respondents were in partial or total agreement with this statement (see Table 1). Less than 6% indicated they were totally or partial disagree with this statement. Almost 20% of student indicated they neither agree nor disagree with this statement. When respondents were asked to highlight the AI tools they use in the later part of survey, 295 (90%) of the respondents indicated they have used "Deepseek".

With the popularity of Generative AI chatbots, Deep Seek and Chat GPT, the assumption is that these were the main tools being used by students. This survey bears this out but highlight that students use of AI tools were more diverse, with respondents listing 15 AI-tools they are using (see Table 2). In terms of AI tools used by student Chat GPT (75%) was second to Deepseek followed by Microsoft Bing translator (65%). However, as Table 2 highlights, there is much more diverse range of AI Tools (15 indicated) that students are using, some paid for example Paper pal and SmartCat (see Table 2). Students indicated they are using Ai tools for a range of purposes from creating new content, to image interpretation and language interpretation.

Table 1
Students' Response to the Question "I Use AI to Support to My University Studies"

	Level of Agreement	Frequency	Percent
Valid	Total disagreement	6	2.0
	Partial disagreement	10	3.3
	neither agree or disagree	59	19.4
	Partially agree	133	43.8
	Total agreement	93	30.6
	Total responses	301	99.0
Missing	No response	3	1.0
Total		304	100.0

Table 2
AI Tools Students Indicate They Are Using (NB. Respondent Can Provide Multiple Responses)

AI tool	Use	Frequency
Chat GPT	Chat Bot- generates dialogue, support writing, planning, translate between languages, Debug and fix code, Solve math equations	233
Deep Seek	Chat Bot, Similar to Chat GPT and marketed as having more advanced mathematic and coding capabilities.	275
Grammarly	Grammar and style checks	47
Notion Ai	Organizing projects and collaborating with others. Its AI features can assist with summarizing	105
Co-pilot	Analyse text, writing support, summarising, Coding	92
Socrates	Tool for deep document analysis	44
QuillBot	Use for paraphrasing text	98
Jasper	Structuring report/essay	175
Research Rabbit	Literature review, making it easier to find relevant sources and analyse information	75
Medeley	Reference management tool that helps students organize citations	76
Paper Pal	Translation of Academic papers	105
SmartCat	Language translation	78
Microsoft Bing Translator	Language translator	198
Wolfran Alfa	Answers factual queries and visualisation by computing answers from externally sourced data and deliver structured answers	25

Most students were using AI for general analysis (77%) and data analysis (92%). Use for language related translation and Language verification (65%) as feature prominently as key uses of Ai by students. Students are using AI to translate and summarise academic document from language which is not their native tongue. As one masters student stated, "there are

more academic literature in Chinese and English, AI allow us to explore a whole new world, which we did have access to before". Another Undergrad student stated, "using literature from more international sources, let me feel more confident in what I am producing for homework, I just feel more brilliant!" Students were also using AI to check for errors in their work (58%). Errors were most referred to ensuring grammar was correct for example use of Grammarly but also, in terms ensuring the language was appropriate, particularly where they are producing outputs in English. Typical response from students included "AI give me more confidence to write and speak in English (student working in Agricultural extension)" and "with AI, I get better grades as it helps me to check my work before submitting and suggest corrections to make it better". Problem solving also feature prominently in students AI use (59%) see Figures 1. Students were using AI to carryout complex analysis and explore different scenarios and provide options for critical analysis. One Engineering student stated, "before AI, I would do one analysis as it takes so much time, now I can do several analyses with AI and propose different solution". Student s perceive AI is allowing them deal with more complex problem, provide more in-depth information as well critical employability skills (see Figure 2). 40% of respondents indicated they were using AI to create voice message. This was one aspect of AI use which was unclear in the context of their university study. Although responded alluded to collaboration and presentations, this is one area that needs further exploration. Image/sound analysis was least use of AI (less than 5%). This may reflect the limitation of freely available Generative AI tools available. AI- related specialised image analysis tools were not mentioned in any of the ones listed by students, which is reflected in low use here. Respondents are mainly from science/agricultural/environment field and as such, image analysis is not a dominant aspect of their university curriculum.

Figure 1
*The Ways Students Are Using AI to Support Their University Study N = 304*
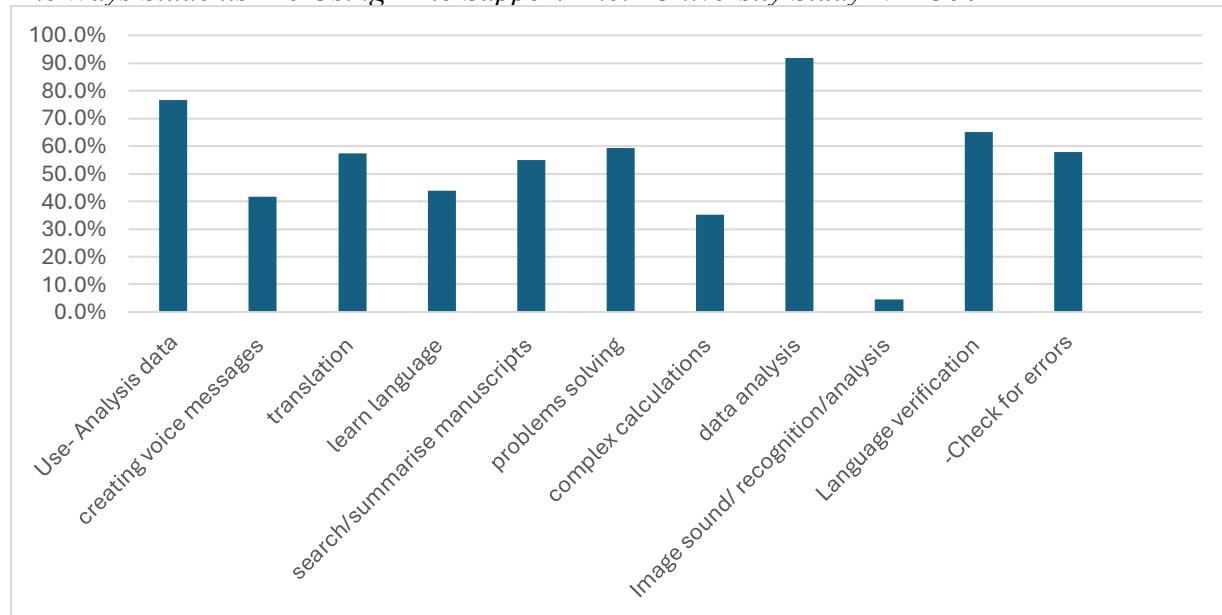
Figure 2
Why Students Are Using AI Tools in Their Study
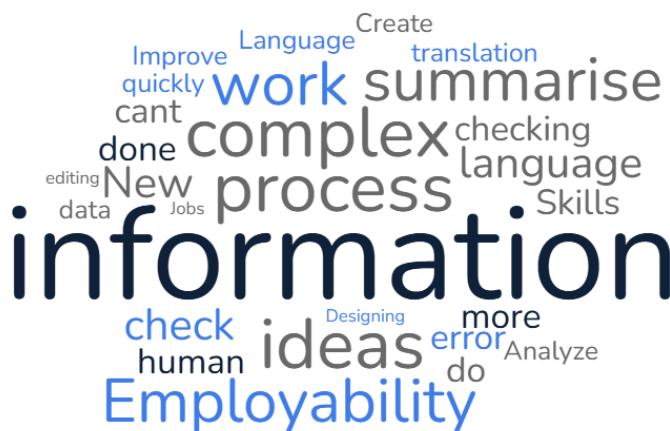
Motivation and Confidence With AI

The research to explore student perception on their level of confidence in using AI tools, as well as if AI motivate them to engage more with their study. Responded indicated they were confident in using new and emerging digital technologies like AI but would still like further training. They believe that universities should actively be providing more training to upskill in Ai usage (92%) as it is a key employability skill. 61% of students showed agreement in that they are confident in using AI tools. There is almost 40% of student who are not as confident in using AI tools. Several students alluded to the fact that they are actively encourages to use AI in the workplace to increase productively and this needs to be reflected in the University Curriculum. "My workplace wants us to use more AI tools and is surprised that the university is not teaching us these skills" (34-year-old Agriculture student, working in local government). Another respondent stated, "using Ai tools may feel more confident that I will get my assignment done in time and with less error, which is a problem I had before". When responded were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the statement "AI give me more confidence to engage with my university education", 67% of students indicate partial/total agreement. Less 5% totally/partially disagree (see Table 3). The responses were almost similar when asked about if AI motivate them to engage with their studies with 68% agreeing.

Table 3
Confident and Motivation in Using AI Tools

Level of Agreement	AI gives more confidence in their education	Confident using AI tools	Motivated to study more when using AI
Total disagreement	1.3	1.3	1.3
Partial Disagreement	3.3	5.3	4.3
Neither agree or disagree	28.6	31.9	26.6
Partial agreement	46.2	39.2	43.2
Total agreement	20.6	22.3	24.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Ethic and University Guidance

When students were asked if they understand the ethical use of AI for their studies, over 70% indicated that they did. Most students 69% indicated that the guidelines were clear, with a slightly lower proportion (64%) indicated that they were sufficient (see Table 4). Whilst a high proportion of students believe they are using Ai ethical and understand university guidance there is around 30% of students who may not be on this should be of concerns for university. It is encouraging to see that almost 80% of respondent want to learn more about responsible use and it is important that university seize on this opportunity and put in place sufficient training and programmes to raise awareness on ethical used of Ai in their university study.

Table 4
Ethics and University Guidelines

Level of agreement	Understand the ethical use of AI	Guidelines are Clear	Guidelines are sufficient	Want to learn more responsible sue
Total disagreement	1.7	1.3	1.0	1.7
Partial Disagreement	4.0	3.7	8.0	1.3
Neither agree or disagree	23.9	25.9	26.6	15.9
Partial agreement	44.5	41.9	43.2	42.5
Total agreement	25.9	27.2	21.3	38.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

When students were asked directly about whether they are using AI to support the production of assignment, 67% indicated they were. Only 10% indicated they were not. Respondent were asked further to indicate on Average how much of their assignment may produce using A! tools. Just on 10% of respondent indicated that less than 5% of their work was produce using Ai tools (see table 5). Just over 21 percent indicated that more than 50% of their work was produced using Ai tools/content. Students did highlight that indicate where sources were from AI. They also indicated AI tools were used to refine work but is their work, "I use AI tools to check my work for error and to help with referencing, it is my work. I use Ai as a support tool, just as I did before with Google". Other similar comment includes, "yes I use Ai to summarise and paraphrase things, but the final work is mine"; "I rewrite the content Ai produce and add my own, this is no different than me summarising a paper and citing it. AI just does it quick for me". AI can provide summary and content, but I will still have to critically discuss it if I am going to get good grades.

Table 5
What Percentage of Your Assignment Uses AI Content/Tools to Produce?

Percentage of assignment produce AI tools	Valid Percent
None	1.3
Less than or equal to 5	8.4
6-10	13.8
11-20	23.5
21-50	31.9
Greater than or equal to 51	21.1
Total	100.0
Total N = 304 (6 missing values)	

Whilst most students think they are being ethical in their use of Ai, they cite this as one of their main challenges of it is in Universities "not everyone is ethical and some students are getting better grades, because they can buy better software or use commercial companies to produce assignment" Student has also indicated that AI is producing errors which could be detrimental to their studies. Students are also concerned with "Safety and risk" (85%). It is unclear what is meant here, and this is an area for further exploration. Whilst students understood the value of Ai to their study and prospect of developing employability skills,66% of respondents indicate that AI is threat and could have negative impact on them if data and information is mis-used and AI tools lead to less jobs for them in the future.

Discussion

According to Bisdas et al., (2021) Artificial Intelligence + Actual Intelligence = Increased Student Engagement. Spivakovsky et al. (2003) has highlight the value of using AI to enhance learning through the creation of interactive activities, near-real-time feedback on tasks given to students, generate new scenario for students to critically analyse, and the creation of virtual environments where they can interact with classmates and teachers. Students have identified the benefits of using Generative AI like and Chat GPT and Deep seek. Whilst their ethical concerns around the use of the Ai tools, they do have the potential enhance engagement in students, improve writing skills, access resources that would not have easily be accessible before and visualize data in new ways. AI does not only provide content and improve grammatical accuracy, it provides students to develop creativity, gain insights in complex concepts and visualize data in ways not imaged before. Generative AI tools provide an opportunity that help weaker students to engage much better in a way that was previously difficult for tutors to do consistently. University should embrace the ethical use of AI tools and provide more opportunities and resources to their students. The diversity of AI tools the students highlighted being used goes beyond what was expect and provide valuable insight how quickly students are adapting to AI. Students are starting purchase more advanced AI tools to support their university study. Whilst this can be a good think, it risk widen digital gaps between who can afford them and who can't. As such, it important that university invest in more Ai tools that can be freely available to students ensure the digital gap does not widen. Student also cited the lack of learning opportunity as they want to be upskilled in AI. However, most academics and learning technologies are still unaware and/or does not have the skills and knowledge to readily incorporate AI into the curriculum (Bos et al., 2021; Nguyen et al., 2024; Russo & Emtage, 2023; Spivakovsky et al., 2023). This may be down to a number of factors including; academics lack of awareness of the value of the use of AI in curriculum development and for student engagement, lack/limitation of the appropriate knowledge/skills of AI application in teaching and learning, limitation of university "structure" policies and framework that does not readily facilitate the use of AI into module structure, the fare of AI and the role it may have on Academic integrity (Spivakovsky et al., 2023). Students are expecting the integration of AI as an essential part of university curricula (Abdelwahab et al., 2022; Bisdas et al., 2021; Gong et al., 2019; Miller & Seerasarn, 2025) but universities are lagging and this needs to address.

Whilst student has indicated that ethical in use of Ai and understand university guidelines, they still required further training and information in this area. If this is not addressed by universities, they risk compromising on academic integrity. It also important to universities design assessments that are more "AI proof" that encourages students to utilise more of their critical and creative skills. Students do fare, some are students are getting an unfair advantage

in their use of Ai. Whether this is real or perceived this is needs to address to ensure confidence in the assessment process and maintain academic integrity.

Conclusion

The results of this research align with recent studies regarding the level to which AI is being used by university students for their studies. Most students have made the transition to using AI for their study and it is important that university develop the appropriate framework and guidelines for ethical use. This study highlights that there are over 14 freely available and Commercial AI tools being used by students for a range of activities from language translation to providing solution to complex mathematical and science problems related to their course work. Students want AI to be used more in a fair and balance manner without giving some students an unfair advantage. It is imperative that universities need to be more stringent in this regard to ensure academic integrity and confidence in their courses are maintained. Students feel more confident and motivated when using AI as a "Study buddy" and want more AI literacy as part of their university curriculum. There is a disparity between what students want and what university is providing, creating a "digital needs- gap" between students and university. This gap in curriculum development and AI tool provision needs to be closed through investment, upskilling of tutors and more AI focused curriculum and activities. If this is not done in timely manner, student could be left unsatisfied about their university courses and the value of what they are learning in today's current higher education environment.

References

Abdelwahab, H. R., Rauf, A., & Chen, D. (2022). Business students' perceptions of Dutch higher education institutions in preparing them for artificial intelligence work environments. *Industry and Higher Education, 37*(1), 22–34. https://doi.org/10.1177/09504222221087614

Adiguzel, T., Kaya, M. H., & Cansu, F. K. (2023). Revolutionizing education with AI: Exploring the transformative potential of ChatGPT. *Contemporary Educational Technology, 15*(3), ep429. https://doi.org/10.30935/cedtech/13152

Bisdas, S., Topriceanu, C.-C., Zakrzewska, Z., Irimia, A.-V., Shakallis, L., Subhash, J., Casapu, M.-M., Leon-Rojas, J., Pinto dos Santos, D., Andrews, D. M., Zeicu, C., Bouhuwaish, A. M., Lestari, A. N. (2021). Artificial Intelligence in Medicine: A Multinational Multi-Center Survey on the Medical and Dental Students' Perception. *Frontiers in Public Health, 9,* 795284. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2021.795284

Bos, D., Miller, S., & Bull, E. (2021). Using virtual reality (VR) for teaching and learning in geography: fieldwork, analytical skills, and employability. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education, 46*(3), 479–488. https://doi.org/10.1080/03098265.2021.1901867

Digital Education Council. (2024). *Global Student AI Survey*. https://www.digitaleducationcouncil.com/post/digital-education-council-global-ai-student-survey-2024

Gong, B., Nugent, J. P., Guest, W., Parker, W., Chang, P. J., Khosa, F., & Nicolaou, S. (2019). Influence of artificial intelligence on Canadian medical students' preference for radiology specialty: A national survey study. *Academic Radiology, 26*(4), 566–577. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acra.2018.10.007

Lee, Y.-F., Hwang, G.-J., & Chen, P.-Y. (2022). Impacts of an AI-based chabot on college students' after-class review, academic performance, self-efficacy, learning attitude, and motivation. *Educational Technology Research and Development, 70*, 1843–1865. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11423-022-10142-8

Miller, S., & Seerasarn, N. (2025). Extended reality (virtual and augmented) and metaverse in geography student's recruitment and engagement. *INTED2025 Proceedings*. https://doi.org/10.21125/inted.2025

Nguyen, A., Kremantzis, M. D., Essien, A., Petrounias, I., & Hosseini, S. (2024). Enhancing Student Engagement Through Artificial Intelligence (AI): Understanding the Basics, Opportunities, and Challenges. *Journal of University Teaching and Learning Practice*. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/379957626_Enhancing_Student_Engagement_Through_Artificial_Intelligenc

Russo, K., & Emtage, N. (2023). The Digital Divide and Higher Education. In D, Radovanović (Ed.), Digital Literacy and Inclusion (pp.81–97). Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-30808-6_6

Spivakovsky, O. V., Omelchuk, S. A., Kobets, V. V., Valko, N. V., & Malchykova, D. S. (2023). Institutional policies on artificial intelligence in university teaching, learning and research. *Information Technologies and Learning Tools, 97*(5), 181–202. https://doi.org/10.33407/itlt.v97i5.5395

Zhou, A., Fang, L., & Rajaram, K. (2025). Exploring the digital divide among students of diverse demographic backgrounds: A survey of UK undergraduates. *Journal of Applied Learning & Teaching, 8*(1). https://doi.org/10.37074/jalt.2025.8.1.22

Contact email: Servel.miller@open@ac.uk