

Universities should pay close attention to chatbots

Recently, I read a New York Times article titled "Alarmed by AI chatbots, universities begin to revamp the way they teach."

I would like to highlight and share key aspects of this article, with some minor changes, and especially for administrators and university professors. They are entrusted to protect the integrity of academic institutions in an age when wise minds have to fight against the human mediocrity exponentiated by technological tools.

The article discusses the concern of universities in the United States and around the world in view of the emergence of ChatGPT, an Artificial Intelligence tool that can potentially facilitate plagiarism.

The name 'ChatGPT' is derived from the English word "Chat" which means to converse and the acronym "GPT," which stands for Generative Pre-trained Transformer. GPT serves to generate a preordained response to a question asked by a person in the chat. So far, we have asked these questions in the Google search engine or other Internet search engines.

ChatGPT provides information, explains concepts and generates ideas in simple sentences. It can also create an essay or document for students, which has caused concern in several US universities.

It represents a new technological wave known as **generative artificial intelligence** and was launched in November 2022 by the OpenAI artificial intelligence lab, which is at the forefront of this change.

Although ChatGPT generates detailed and well-crafted answers in various areas of knowledge, it is still in its early stages of development. Therefore, the answers may contain inaccuracies, and at time, ChatGPT may it incorrectly explains ideas or misquote sources.

In response to ChatGPT, university administrators and professors have initiated the review of teaching-learning processes, which will cause significant and profound changes in the academic environment. Some teachers are even completely redesigning their courses, making changes that include more oral exams, group work and handwritten assignments instead of relying solely on computer-based assignments.

Universities are already taking some measures to prevent plagiarism through the use of AI tools such as:

- Phasing out take-home, open-book assignments, which became a dominant method of assessment in the pandemic but now seem vulnerable to chatbots. Instead, universities are opting for in-class assignments, multiple-choice and oral exams as well as group work.

- Requiring students to write first drafts in the classroom, using browsers that monitor and restrict chatbot activity. In later drafts, students have to explain each revision they have done.
- Posing questions to students that are too clever for chatbots, asking students to write about their own lives and current events or teaching newer or more niche texts that ChatGPT might have less information about.
- Including ChatGPT in lessons by asking students to evaluate the chatbot's responses. In classes discussions should not only be among human beings (professors and students) but also involve the opinion of the ChatGPT.
- Including the use of generative artificial intelligence in the definition of plagiarism such as "using text written by a generative system as one's own". For example, plagiarism would include asking a question to an artificial intelligence tool and reproducing the answer in a paper.
- Adopting plagiarism detector services such as Turnitin or GPTZero, a program aimed at detecting AI-generated text.
- Making AI chatbots a priority issue in the academic agenda, encouraging university administrators to establish task forces and hosting university-wide discussions to respond to these tools, with much of the guidance being to adapt to this technology to teaching-learning process.
- Teaching mandatory courses about AI tools and academic integrity to entering or freshman students.

OpenAI, the creator of ChatGPT, is expected to soon release another tool, GPT-4, that is better at generating text than previous versions.

Additionally, Google has developed LaMDA, a rival chatbot, and Microsoft is discussing a US\$10 billion investment in OpenAI. Other Silicon Valley startups, such as Stability AI and Character.AI are also working on generative AI tools. Microsoft's intention to pour money in OpenAI will intensify the competition with Google to dominate the AI software market.

However, there could be a good value for students, teachers, researchers and other academic actors if universities properly regulate the use of AI tools. These tools could encourage brainstorming in the preparation of theses or essays and debug coding problems.

Without proper policies and regulations regarding the use of ChatGPT and other AI tools, universities will struggle to detect and control plagiarism. Dishonest students will submit assignments written and solved by ChatGPT, encouraging their peers to cheat as well.

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