



UNIVERSITEIT VAN AMSTERDAM



Summary University Forum

# Generative AI

6 November 2025

## Introduction

The current and rapid advancements in generative AI (GenAI) confront the university with existential questions, ethical dilemmas, and practical problems. Various core functions of the university, including teaching and fostering critical and independent thinking, are at risk. This is due not only to the ways in which GenAI works, but also to the actors and methods involved in the development of it. Yet, GenAI also offers opportunities for research and education. Moreover, it appears inevitable that students will (have to) use GenAI in their future careers.

Although the UvA has worked persistently in recent years to develop a framework for GenAI use, the rapid rise of GenAI often still feels overwhelming. How can we ensure that we use GenAI responsibly in both research and education?

On Thursday afternoon, November 6<sup>th</sup>, 2025, a new edition of the University Forum took place at the Openbare Bibliotheek Amsterdam (OBA) on the Oosterdokskade in Amsterdam. During this event, participants engaged in a conversation about the use of GenAI at the university.

The University Forum hosts an event twice a year in which participants discuss an urgent topic within the UvA. Members of the executive board, as well as faculty deans, are present. Participants are randomly drawn from students and employees of the UvA.

After a plenary introduction to the theme by the moderator, Joris van Hoboken (Professor Information Law), and a guest speaker, Felienne Hermans (Professor Computer Science at VU), attendees separated into groups to discuss the two statements below. The main conclusions of these discussions are summarised in this report.

## Statements

1. Students will (have to) use GenAI in their future professional lives, so it is important that the university teaches them how to do so.
2. The use of GenAI in research jeopardises academic integrity.

## 1. Students will (have to) use GenAI in their future professional lives, so it is important that the university teaches them how to do so.

Amongst most participants, there was broad agreement that Generative AI (GenAI) is here to stay and that many students will (have to) use it in their future professional lives. Some participants even argued that if the university were to reject the technology, it would risk becoming irrelevant. However, opinions diverged on what this would mean for teaching: should the university actively train or educate students in using GenAI, and if yes, what should such education look like?

Many attendees argued that students should be educated by the university to use GenAI in a critical, ethical and environmentally responsible way. This would involve teaching not only how the technology can be helpful – including the differences between models – but also its flaws and potential risks, from academic integrity issues to broader concerns such as environmental impact. In this view, the goal would not be to teach students how to use GenAI, but to help them understand what its use entails and to bring that knowledge into their professional lives.

Some participants believed that the university has already positioned itself with regards to GenAI by developing its own ‘UvA AI Chat’. This system would allow the university to control (input) data without having to rely on external partners. In other words, through such developments, the university could create ownership over technological advancements.

Counter to this, other attendees argued that the university should not encourage the use of GenAI to its students. Some, including the guest speaker, furthered this argument by saying that the university should actively discourage the use of it, because it impedes too much on students’ critical thinking skills. This group pleaded for more thorough discussions about the ethical concerns surrounding GenAI.

Despite the differing opinions, most participants maintained that universities should aid students in cultivating unassisted critical thinking skills. Many expressed concern that extensive use of GenAI could erode essential academic abilities such as writing, researching, and critical reasoning. A solution for this would be to teach students not only how to use GenAI responsibly, but also how to perform academic work without the assistance of GenAI services. In essence, the university should focus on nurturing distinctively human skills that are not easily replicated by GenAI.

To address the above stated concerns, some recommendations were provided to the university:

1. The development of policies on the use of GenAI at the university should be a **collaborative effort** between students, employees and the executive level. There is a persistent gap between what is happening at the administrative level and the realities of students. The university should work towards closer and more meaningful collaboration between students, lecturers, and the developers or policymakers shaping these policies.
2. The university (in collaboration with its employees and students) should **define shared ethics and core values** about future education and learning. This could serve as a guideline

for employees and students in the development of GenAI policies and the use of GenAI at the university.

3. The university and its study programs should **differentiate between courses** that incorporate GenAI and those that require students to do unassisted research. Additionally, students should be given the option to choose whether they prefer to use the assistance of GenAI services or not.
4. GenAI, as a topic, should be integrated into the **introductory courses** of academic programs. This allows the university to teach students about GenAI and digital literacy early on in their studies, ensuring that they understand its implications as part of their core academic training.
5. Education on the use of GenAI should be **tailored to fit the specific needs of each field of study**. This is because different disciplines may require distinct types of technological assistance.

## 2. The use of GenAI in research jeopardises academic integrity.

There was broad consensus amongst the attendees that (the use of) GenAI jeopardises academic integrity. The following reasons were mentioned:

1. **Plagiarism:** GenAI systems are often trained on work without its author's permission and fail to cite these publications as sources. Moreover, when they do, the systems frequently provide wrong citations.
2. **Fabrication and inaccurate output:** GenAI systems regularly fabricate data and images that are presented as the truth. The systems also do not provide factual truth; they present what they calculate to be an optimal output based on their own definitions of success and statistical assessments.
3. **Difficulty of distinction:** when papers are published that make GenAI-generated claims, it may eventually become impossible to distinguish fact from fiction. Research (re)produced in this way risks replicating empty or misleading conclusions, thereby increasing the volume of "noise" and false information within the research domain.
4. **Accountability problems:** GenAI lacks clear accountability and authorship which places a greater burden on editors to evaluate and confirm its output.
5. **Biased information:** GenAI could reproduce biases that are found in the data used to train these models.

Researchers and reviewers often lack the time needed to thoroughly verify the quality of GenAI output. However, if the earlier mentioned issues go unaddressed, the resulting trade-off between research quantity and -quality could undermine trust in research and researchers. Resultantly, some participants maintained that researchers should refrain from using GenAI because it reduces the quality of research and the capability of innovative thinking.

Most of the group agreed that a high-performance culture within academia exacerbates the risks produced by GenAI even further. Researchers feel the urge to take shortcuts – which GenAI can provide – to cope and comply with the high pressure to publish. Similarly, GenAI proves useful for students in keeping up with the pace of their courses as it aids them with their reading and writing. Thus, if the university wants to address the risks of GenAI, they must also pay attention to the high pressure to perform in academia and the ways in which this encourages GenAI-use.

To forego the negative effects of GenAI on academia, several arguments and/or proposals were made:

1. The university should **defend 'academic integrity' in this context**, so that researchers and students have a point of reference when they make use of GenAI. In addition, some participants expressed the view that as new technologies – such as GenAI – emerge, this calls for a reconsideration and possible rearticulation of how we approach and perceive academia and consequently academic integrity. In other words, it is important to consider whether our current perspective on academic integrity still fits in a world of continuous technological development.

2. As was mentioned before, the university should teach students and researchers how to **use GenAI responsibly**. This includes educating students and researchers about the code of conduct for research integrity and the implications of the use of GenAI.
3. Researchers should view GenAI as merely a (possible) tool or method within their research process. They remain fully responsible for the eventual research results and conclusions. Resultantly, researchers should be **transparent** about how and why the technology is used and not use it in a way that harms research integrity and quality.
4. There is a need for more **regulations or guidelines** governing the appropriate and ethical use of GenAI.

## Conclusion

During this edition of the University Forum participants reflected on the use of generative AI in education and research and the role of the university in teaching students digital literacy. Central to the discussion were two statements.

1. Students will (have to) use GenAI in their future professional lives, so it is important that the university teaches them how to do so.
2. The use of GenAI in research jeopardises academic integrity.

Whilst there was not complete agreement, most participants emphasised that students would use GenAI in their future professional lives. They, however, also voiced a common concern that GenAI could impede heavily on the critical thinking skills of students and, more broadly, on academic integrity. Therefore, a large group suggested that the university should not only educate students on responsible and ethical use of GenAI but also nurture the performance of traditional academic skills without assistance of GenAI services. It should be noted, however, that there were still participants that requested the university not to align with current trends and to actively discourage the use of GenAI due to, among others, ethical and environmental concerns.

To ensure that clear and communal guidance is provided for the use of GenAI in universities, participants suggested that GenAI policy development should incorporate more student and staff input and provide clear definitions of shared ethics, core values for future education and training, and the principles of academic integrity.



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