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EXPLORING THE ROLE OF GENERATIVE AI IN CREATING AN INCLUSIVE BUSINESS CURRICULUM THROUGH STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND COLLABORATION

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INTRODUCTION

The concept of inclusivity within a higher education context stemmed from the need to support government agendas relating to widening participation and disability equality.¹ Concerns over the sector-wide ethnic-minoritised and other disadvantaged groups of students' attainment, have led to calls for a more inclusive approach to curriculum design.²

The growth in generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) software such as Chat-Generative Pre-Trained-Transformers (ChatGPT) has challenged traditional methods of assessment,³ whilst offering opportunities for a more inclusive approach to curriculum delivery.

Researchers emphasise the need for the introduction of GenAI into university assessment.⁴ However, this implementation requires careful consideration of appropriate training, academic integrity, and student support mechanisms. This project explores how GenAI might be harnessed to create a more inclusive curriculum, including assessment, within a large business school, through staff development and collaboration.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The arrival of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI), demonstrated by tools such as ChatGPT, has caused a need for rapid shift across the Higher Education (HE) sector. Described as "Generative AI's breakout year" in 2023,⁵ its adoption is widely regarded as irreversible, requiring an institutional response to develop 'future-facing curricula'.⁶ This literature review supports the core purpose of the proposed research project, which seeks to explore how GenAI can be connected to create a more inclusive curriculum through staff development and collaboration within the Sheffield Business School (SBS).

Despite the widespread recognition of GenAI's potential for enhancing teaching, learning, and assessment, HE institutions face significant challenges related to academic integrity, ethical use, and staff preparedness. Research underscores the immediate need for this project's focus on policy, guidance, and training, this includes areas such as:

Misuse and integrity concerns

A majority of respondents across the academic community believe AI is being misused. 95% of survey participants (students, educators, and academic administrators) think AI is currently being misused in some capacity at their institution,⁷ and 57% report that AI poses a threat to academic integrity.⁸ Students themselves are more likely to consider the use of AI to write an entire piece of work cheating (63%) compared to educators (55%) and academic administrators (45%).⁹

The knowledge and support deficit

Academic staff feel ill-equipped to effectively integrate AI. 47% of educators and academic administrators state they would like to leverage AI to make better decisions for teaching but "don't necessarily know how".¹⁰ Furthermore, 50% of educators and 41% of academic administrators are worried about the use of AI within education.¹¹ This suggests a substantial intention-behaviour gap, where staff struggle with implementation due to a lack of clear frameworks and policies.¹²

Students need for guidance

In a recent survey from Turnitin and Vanson Bourne, students, who report higher concern (64%) about AI use than staff,¹³ are actively seeking direction. Half (50%) of students report that they do not know how to get the most benefit out of AI in their studies.¹⁴ These statistics suggest the research premise that a systematic exploration of staff development needs and current use is essential to inform the design of a necessary Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Programme.

Academic integrity, ethics and equity

GenAI directly challenges traditional assessment practices.¹⁵ Concerns about academic integrity, notably cheating and plagiarism, are paramount. The capability of GenAI tools to generate passable, human-like responses requires Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to re-evaluate traditional assessment methods to maintain academic standards.¹⁶ This over time has often left even experienced markers struggling to consistently differentiate between student-written work and text generated by large language models.¹⁷

The literature strongly suggests a shift towards authentic assessment and assessment focused on the process not the product. This involves leading students through the creation process, having them log search strategies and keywords, and critically evaluate the validity of content, including AI-generated text.¹⁸ However, the ethical pitfalls of GenAI must be addressed, which constitutes a core theme of the project. Ethical considerations, including data privacy, algorithmic bias, and lack of transparency, are significant concerns.¹⁹

Digital inequity is a concern, as sophisticated AI functions often sit behind paywalls.²⁰ Research indicates that AI detection tools can be biased against non-native English writers,²¹ potentially leading to false accusations of misconduct.²² However, research conducted by Bedford et al. does show signs of movement in this space, reporting that GenAI can also offer opportunities to support diverse learners; for instance, responsible GenAI use can enhance autonomous learning and boost confidence for English as Additional Language (EAL) students.²³

Institutions have a responsibility to address ethical issues and critical digital literacies.²⁴ The necessity of clear guidance, policies, and training to address these issues is frequently underscored.²⁵ This should also support institutions on creating an inclusive curriculum addresses wider HE responsibilities regarding widening participation²⁶ and addressing attainment gaps among disadvantaged student groups.²⁷

The literature identifies the need for targeted and detailed professional development to address the barriers to GenAI integration.²⁸ Successful adoption requires training that extends beyond technical

skills to support embedding ethical frameworks, design, critical pedagogical development, and bias detection.²⁹ Institutional support requirements are extensive, including standardised guidelines, clear policies, and the establishment of communities of practice.³⁰

METHODOLOGY

The study is based in one of the UK's largest Business Schools offering full-time and part-time undergraduate and postgraduate studies, and Higher Degree apprenticeships to approximately 5,000 students.

It aims to address the following questions:

1. What are the key areas to consider when integrating GenAI into the curriculum, including assessment?
2. How is GenAI integrated in the curriculum within the different Business School disciplines and what have been the benefits to date?
3. What are the perceived staff development needs?
4. What are the implications for designing a CPD Programme to integrate GenAI across Sheffield Business School (SBS) and beyond?
5. What is the impact of implementing such a programme across SBS?

This study adopts a mixed-method pragmatic research design, as it seeks to develop a practical and context-specific response to the challenges and opportunities presented by Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) within the Business School. A pragmatic approach was judged appropriate because it focuses on identifying workable solutions to real institutional needs, prioritising methods that best address the research questions rather than aligning with a single epistemological position. Pragmatism also supports methodological flexibility, enabling the combination of quantitative and qualitative data to produce both breadth and depth of understanding.³¹

Drawing from this pragmatic orientation, the study integrates a narrative literature review, survey research, and case study evidence to identify key considerations for integrating GenAI into curriculum and assessment, and to inform the design of a staff development programme.

Narrative literature

The study begins with a narrative literature review, following the iterative, interpretive process described by Juntunen and Lehenkari, who characterise such reviews as involving “an intertwined combination of searching, evaluating, selecting, pre-analysing and reading the literature” in a non-linear and recursive manner.³² This form of review is particularly appropriate in emerging fields such as GenAI in higher education, where conceptual boundaries, pedagogic implications, and institutional responses continue to evolve.

The literature review focuses on identifying key themes relevant to curriculum integration, including ethical considerations, assessment design, academic integrity, disciplinary differences, and staff development needs. It also incorporates internal and external case studies of practice, allowing the project to generate an initial set of protocols for integrating GenAI into the curriculum, which are later compared with empirical findings from the staff survey.

Survey of academic staff

To complement and extend the insights generated through the literature review, the study surveys approximately 500 academic staff within the Business School, resulting in 48 responses. The aim is to gauge current uses of GenAI, perceived benefits and challenges, areas for development, and disciplinary approaches to integration. The survey contains a mixture of closed Likert-scale questions and open-ended qualitative questions, allowing for the collection of both quantitative and qualitative

data. This design aligns with the mixed-method pragmatic approach, ensuring that the survey can capture large-scale patterns while also providing space for staff to elaborate on individual experiences and needs.

Data analysis

Quantitative data from the survey are analysed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies, means, and percentages. These analyses identify broad trends across the school, highlight areas of variability between disciplines, and reveal staff confidence and engagement levels.

Qualitative data from open-ended questions are analysed using thematic analysis, enabling the identification of recurring concepts, concerns, and examples of practice. Themes are generated through systematic coding and iterative refinement, allowing the analysis to reflect the diversity of staff perspectives while identifying common developmental priorities.³³ Findings from both strands of analysis are then compared with the literature-derived protocols to validate, refine, and extend the emerging framework for integrating GenAI into teaching, learning, and assessment.

Design of the Staff Development Programme

Drawing from the literature review, internal/external case studies, and the staff survey findings, the project findings feed into a Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Programme. This programme will be designed to support academic staff in integrating GenAI effectively and ethically into their curriculum. The impact of the CPD Programme will also be evaluated through a short participant survey. This focuses on the preliminary empirical findings based on survey to inform the staff development programme.

Ethical considerations

The study seeks ethical approval from the University prior to data collection. All participants receive clear information about the project's purpose, and a consent statement is embedded within the survey to ensure voluntary participation in accordance with the University's Ethics Code of Practice. All data are anonymised during analysis, stored securely on the University server, and retained for a maximum of six months after the project's completion.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section integrates quantitative and qualitative survey findings to examine academic staff engagement with Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI), explicitly linking results to the literature. Overall, adoption is emerging but uneven, shaped by pragmatic use, confidence gaps, and ongoing concerns regarding academic integrity, ethics, assessment design, and institutional support.

Extent and nature of GenAI use

Quantitative data show that fewer than half of respondents (47.9%) currently use GenAI in teaching, which aligns with literature describing adoption in Higher Education as fragmented and largely driven by individual experimentation rather than institutional strategy.³⁴ While 75% of respondents are open to future use, 24.1% reported no intention to adopt GenAI in the next delivery period, indicating some resistance and uncertainty.³⁵ This reflects the "intention-behaviour gap" identified in the literature, where staff express interest in AI but hesitate to integrate it fully without guidance or confidence in its ethical and pedagogical application.³⁶

Qualitative analysis revealed four dominant themes in current use: efficiency and timesaving, resource and content generation, student engagement, and development of critical and digital skills. Respondents reported using GenAI to support lesson planning, summarisation, and assessment

preparation, noting significant time savings. Some reported that AI “saved about two hours of writing and editing” or enabled them to “do more for the benefit of the students in less time.” This mirrors literature emphasising that GenAI can alleviate workload pressures while providing space for more student-focused teaching.³⁷

Staff also used GenAI to generate bespoke teaching materials, including case studies, scenarios, quizzes, and lecture content. Participants highlighted the ability to rapidly produce materials that would otherwise be time-consuming, echoing research on AI’s role in enhancing curriculum responsiveness and pedagogical flexibility.³⁸ This suggests that staff value AI not only as a productivity tool but also as a means of tailoring learning experiences to diverse student needs.

Student engagement and development of critical skills

Both quantitative and qualitative findings indicate purposeful use of GenAI to enhance student engagement. Staff reported creating interactive activities such as quizzes, role-play scripts, and icebreaker exercises, perceived to improve understanding of key concepts. This aligns with literature advocating GenAI as a tool to support active learning and student participation.³⁹

Several respondents described using GenAI pedagogically to develop critical thinking skills, such as comparing their own work with AI-generated outputs. This mirrors literature highlighting the potential for AI to encourage reflection, critical evaluation, and awareness of the limitations of AI-generated content.⁴⁰ However, such practices were not widespread, suggesting that more structured CPD and guidance may be needed to embed critical skills development across the curriculum.⁴¹

Confidence and advising students

Quantitative findings show moderate confidence in using GenAI, with 39.6% reporting they are fairly confident. Confidence decreased when advising students, with only 29% confident and 25% lacking confidence. This aligns with literature noting staff uncertainty when supporting students and managing assessment integrity in the context of GenAI.⁴²

Qualitative data reinforce this, with participants reporting uncertainty about what constitutes appropriate use, how to support students without fostering dependency, and how to ensure fair assessment. These findings reflect literature highlighting that a lack of structured guidance and training limits staff capability, even among those willing to experiment with AI tools.⁴³

Academic integrity, ethics, and assessment

Concerns about academic integrity were the most frequently cited support need (79.2%), followed by ethics (56.3%). These concerns mirror literature describing the challenges GenAI poses to traditional assessment, including the risk of plagiarism and disguised AI-generated work.⁴⁴

Qualitative responses highlighted staff worries that AI enables students to conceal GenAI-generated work, particularly in coursework assessments. Many staff reported low confidence in detecting such outputs, consistent with research demonstrating the difficulty of distinguishing AI- from human-authored text.⁴⁵ Ethical resistance was also evident, with participants citing concerns about meritocracy, authenticity, and data privacy.⁴⁶ Existing assessment formats were considered increasingly vulnerable, reinforcing literature advocating process-focused approaches that emphasise the creation process rather than the final product.⁴⁷

Equity and inclusion

Equity concerns appeared in qualitative responses, with participants noting that GenAI may advantage stronger students and exacerbate attainment gaps, consistent with literature cautioning against assuming AI is inherently inclusive.⁴⁸ While literature highlights potential benefits for EAL

students,⁴⁹ this was less evident in staff perceptions, suggesting a need for targeted professional development to embed inclusive practices and to ensure that all students benefit from AI tools equitably.⁵⁰

Support requirements and institutional role

Quantitative data indicate strong demand for guidance on referencing AI (62.5%), ethics (56.3%), and practical “how-to” support (50%). Qualitative findings reinforce the need for clear, consistent institutional policies to reduce ambiguity and ensure fairness in assessment.⁵¹ Staff emphasised the importance of academic integrity processes, structured ethical guidance, and training to build pedagogical confidence. Literature supports coordinated institutional approaches, standardised policies, and professional development extending beyond technical skills to include ethics, assessment redesign, and inclusive curriculum design.⁵² Access to endorsed AI tools was also highlighted as necessary, reflecting concerns about digital inequity.⁵³

FRAMEWORK FOR CPD DESIGN

Based on both the narrative literature review and empirical survey data, the following pragmatic framework is designed to bridge the ‘intention-behaviour gap’ and inform an effective staff development programme. While 75% of staff are open to using GenAI, a significant ‘knowledge deficit’ persists, with 47% of educators expressing a desire to leverage the technology but admitting they ‘don’t necessarily know how’. This framework addresses the demand for guidance on areas such as academic integrity (79.2%) and AI referencing (62.5%) by shifting the focus from product-focused to process-based assessment. By integrating staff needs for practical ‘how-to’ support with literature-lead ethical safeguards, the CPD programme will provide a structured pathway to move from fragmented, individual experimentation toward a systematic and inclusive institutional strategy (Table 1).

CPD Protocol	Staff Needs (Survey Findings)	Conceptual Framework (Literature)
1. Ethical Integrity and Referencing	High demands for referencing guidance and ethics. Focus on identifying misuse, as opposed to use of GenAI tools.	Academic integrity needs to move beyond imperfect detection tools to establish clear ethical boundaries and transparent use.
2. Process-based pedagogy	Desire to use GenAI for resource generation and timesaving.	Authentic assessment can mean a focus on the creation process, requiring search logs and critical evaluation of AI outputs.
3. Inclusive practice and equity	Need for targeted development to support EAL students and close attainment gaps.	Digital inequity and challenging this mean mitigating the impact of paywalls and leveraging AI as an autonomous learning confidence-booster.
4. Practical capability and strategy	Addressing the 25% of staff who lack confidence in advising students and a need for practical ‘how-to training’.	Establishing Communities of Practice and standardised guidelines to ensure cross-disciplinary fairness.

Table 1. CPD Design Protocol for GenAI Integration

CONCLUSION

This research provides a pragmatic conceptual framework for integrating Generative AI (GenAI) into the Business School curriculum (Table 1). By bringing together the narrative literature review with the staff survey data, the study has established protocols focused on academic integrity, ethical use, and inclusive pedagogy.

Findings indicate that while current integration is fragmented, there are significant benefits, including pedagogical efficiency and the rapid generation of bespoke teaching materials. To address the research questions regarding curriculum integration, this study advocates for the shift towards authentic, process-based assessment to maintain academic standards.

The identified staff development needs, specifically regarding AI referencing, ethical frameworks, and confidence in advising students, will inform the design of a targeted CPD programme. Key elements for this design include building communities of practice and providing standardised institutional guidelines to bridge the ‘intention-behavior gap’. Positive research elements highlight GenAI’s potential to enhance active learning and critical thinking. However, further development is required to address bias detection and to better support English as Additional Language (EAL) students.

Further research could focus on evaluating the long-term impact of the CPD Programme on staff practice and student attainment. Additionally, given the rapid evolution of the field, a continued evaluation of current literature is essential to ensure a future facing and inclusive curriculum.

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