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Edinburgh College

Principles for the use of Artificial Intelligence at Edinburgh College

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1. Introduction

At Edinburgh College, we transform lives, and as part of this we are committed to ensuring our employees and our students have the skills they need to thrive in a world increasingly influenced and impacted by the application of AI technologies, and our aim is for our people to be equipped for this world. There are however many ethical and societal concerns about AI which, if unaddressed, would negatively impact on our core values of respect, integrity and inclusiveness. These Principles have been designed with AI safety and the prevention and mitigation of harms from AI for our students and colleagues in mind. Running parallel to this, we want to cultivate an environment that encourages students and colleagues to be aware of the potential of the platforms, when used effectively, and feel empowered to do so.

2. Definitions

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

There is no single agreed definition for Artificial Intelligence (AI). Put simply, however, AI is concerned with a computer system performing a task that usually requires human intelligence. Most of the time, these AI systems learn and can become more efficient by themselves, which is called machine learning. This technology (in a variety of forms) underpins a wide range of tools and platforms, ranging from simple automated tasks to more complex decision-making systems. Generative AI refers to a category of AI systems which can generate original content from a prompt, whereas traditional Artificial Intelligence's strength lies in analysis and automation.

Generative AI

Generative AI is a specific type of AI that can generate content like text, pictures, or computer code. It does so by using a predictive method based on probable outcomes depending on the question or prompt given. It is able to do this by drawing from large data models and generating something new based on a user's input. Some examples of these tools are:

- Text Generators: Such as ChatGPT or Microsoft Copilot, which can produce text responses that can look as though they have been written by a person. They're also able to help with the generating, writing and amending of coding languages.
- Image Creators: Such as DALL-E, which can make pictures from descriptions.

As stated above, generative AI is one strand of this technology and, whilst currently the most impactful, it needs to be acknowledged that there is a notable difference between general AI capabilities and generative AI specifically.

3. Principle 1: Our College will place safe, ethical and responsible use of AI at the forefront of considerations

3.1 Safety, security and robustness

We will place the safety of students and colleagues at the forefront of the use of AI. This includes ensuring all systems are fully evaluated before being used, and that they are appropriate for the age group of students, including obtaining informed parental consent when needed.

Our staff and students will understand how AI will be used, and they will be supported to make informed decisions about their own use of generative AI, including considerations about how their data might be used for model training, and how any personal data might be used.

Staff will be given clear guidance as to the appropriate contexts in which they can engage with generative AI platforms. Anything outside of these contexts will require the staff member to complete a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) screening form. This process will ensure that staff feel confident in the parameters in which they can engage with this technology and are given ample support in navigating it.

The College commits to not using the work and/or personal data of students or staff in the training of generative AI models without

appropriate safeguards, appropriate lawful basis or exemption to copyright.

3.2 Transparency and explainability

We aim to be transparent about our use of AI, and provide information on how, when, and for which purposes an AI system is being used. We will be as open and transparent as these systems will allow, ensuring that our students understand when AI is used to create learning resources, support learning delivery or at any stage throughout the assessment and monitoring process. If it is necessary to process the personal data of staff and students using AI tools, we will ensure that they are fully informed.

Most generative AI systems are, by design, opaque in the processes they undertake to generate outputs. As a result, it can be difficult to make this process wholly transparent. With this in mind, we will ensure that any AI systems we deploy have additional learning materials made available to users.

The College will also provide resources for staff to ensure that they are aware of the ramifications of engaging with generative AI, and the importance of doing so in a capacity which can help increase efficiency, whilst also protecting user data, as well as any intellectual property of the College.

We are aware that generative AI is designed to generate content in the median. Overreliance on this is likely to result in a degradation of quality over time. Edinburgh College's strongest asset is its people. As such, we aim to foster a culture whereby staff feel confident to engage with this technology to increase efficiency, when contextually relevant, but are also aware that its use is limited and specific to those contexts.

3.3 Fairness

Whilst Edinburgh College acknowledges that the elements of bias within the datasets of any generative AI and its resulting output will be an ongoing challenge, we aim to ensure that any AI systems used will ensure fairness for all, including considering issues around bias,

data protection and privacy and accessibility. This will be built into the procurement and selection process of any potential tools used.

3.4 Accountability and governance

As with any IT system, AI systems should have a clear governance structure, with a clear line of accountability for their use. As AI systems performance may change over time, for example when the underlying AI models change or encounter new types of data, extra measures will be put in place to periodically review the performance of any AI system, and this will be built into any AI project.

Within the guidance and training resources made for staff, users will be made aware of the College's stance that they must only use college business accounts when engaging with generative AI platforms. In addition, they'll be encouraged to scrutinise whether engaging with the technology is necessary and/or beneficial for the task in question in the first instance.

Any generative AI platform should be considered 'high risk' until confirmed as safe. As such, we will require any staff member who is seeking to use an AI platform which hasn't been previously approved, to complete a DPIA screening form. These forms need to be completed if using a new AI product (not previously approved) but would also apply if they were making a change to a current system e.g. processing personal data in a different way on an approved product. For example, if someone has previously submitted a DPIA to use an AI system for a specific purpose but then wanted to use that same AI system to process data for another reason then they would need to consider this under a DPIA screening form (e.g. to assess if human review was in place/if bias had been considered).

3.5 Contestability

As AI systems are increasingly used in a way that directly impacts on outcomes for students (such as exam proctoring, or the use of AI detection in assessment processes), we will aim to ensure students

and employees have clear guidance on how to contest the output of any AI system if they feel they have been unfairly disadvantaged.

4. Principle 2: We will support students to develop the skills they need to make appropriate use of AI tools in their studies and thrive in an AI-enabled workplace and wider world.

4.1 AI skills and literacy

AI is evolving at a rapid pace and is likely to continue to do so. Whilst teaching learners to use the AI tools of today and pro-actively evaluating their positive and negative impact is valuable, this needs to be supplemented to include a broader AI literacy, to enable learners to critically evaluate tools of the future.

4.2 AI workplace literacy

Whilst many AI skills in use in education translate directly to the workplace, a broader understanding of where AI fits into the workplace will also be needed, as well as a finer understanding of the ethical considerations that come about as a direct result of this technology. We will work with employers, and other key stakeholders to support our students in acquiring the AI skills that are relevant and useful for their future employment in their sector.

4.3 AI citizens and the wider world

As well as preparing our students for studies and work, we will help them become AI Citizens equipped to navigate the use of AI in their everyday lives. In using the term AI Citizens, we are referring to all persons who understand their role and responsibility in using AI, and who demonstrate a commitment to its ethical and responsible use. AI is becoming embedded into the services we all use on a daily basis, and is impacting on broader societal issues, such as our democratic processes, climate and environment, and the way we consume and share information. We will aim to ensure the students have the critical AI skills to navigate this world safely and confidently. These technologies, whilst filled with potential, also

have inherent limitation, biases and other drawbacks which can be negatively impactful if used without a comprehensive awareness. Our goal is to help learners navigate these technologies responsibly.

4.4 Assessment for an AI-enabled world

Authentic and relevant assessment, both formative and summative need to be aligned to this aim. We will work with awarding bodies and relevant networks to move towards a consistent approach for the use of AI in assessments, with the aim of making assessments authentic and relevant to an AI-enhanced workplace and society, for all students.

5. Principle 3: We will aim to ensure staff have the skills to maximise the value of AI, to help improve efficiency and support effective learning and teaching

5.1 Efficiency

Initial pilots and reports show that the promise of this technology in helping staff achieve greater efficiency and efficacy, when applied in specific contexts, is being born out in practice. Examples include improved differentiation for learners, using AI to create resources in multiple ways and using AI to create formative assessment resources and materials. We aim to ensure this benefit is felt by all staff, by providing access to selected AI tools, and the training they need to take advantage of them.

5.2 New learning and teaching opportunities

There are already examples of how AI can present new learning and teaching opportunities (these include providing guidance on coding, helping students optimise designs in engineering subjects, creating interactive simulations in sciences, and creating interactive conversations in language learning, ideas generation for English, and step by step explanations in maths). We will provide appropriate forums to support our staff in developing new learning and teaching

opportunities and approaches relevant to their subject area, and for sharing practice within teams and beyond.

6. Principle 4: We will aim to ensure all learners have access to AI tools that they need.

6.1 Equality of access to AI tools

AI tools have the potential to improve equality, for example by providing proof reading and feedback expertise to all, and by enabling learners to obtain resources in a format and time that supports them. As a college, we will work to level this playing field as much as possible. This includes working to ensure that access is not restricted for learners with disabilities and/or support needs.

6.2 Equality of access to data and devices

While acknowledging foundational issues that limit access to AI, including data and devices, we will again work towards levelling access as much as possible, this includes initiatives such as the laptop loan scheme, as well as managing and maintaining on campus access to appropriate hardware and software.

7. Principle 5: We will ensure academic integrity is maintained, whilst allowing students to develop the skills they need

7.1 A college-wide approach

We will work with awarding bodies and will continue to take reasonable steps to prevent malpractice involving the use of generative AI. We will provide clear guidance, well-designed assessments and implement appropriate use of AI detection tools to support assessors and assessment decisions.

7.2 Clear guidance to students

We will provide clear guidance to students on appropriate use of AI in assessments. These will include:

- Training packages covering the practical and ethical concerns for learners to be mindful of when using generative AI in their learning.
- Ensuring an awareness of course and accreditors stances in if/how the technology can be used in their learning.
- What does and doesn't constitute academic malpractice (as governed by the relevant validating awarding and accreditation bodies).

7.3 Appropriate use of technology such as AI detection

We recognise that, whilst AI detection tools are important in maintaining academic integrity, they are by no means a full solution. We recognise that AI detection can unfairly discriminate and compound existing bias, therefore, users of AI detection need a clear understanding that such systems cannot conclusively prove text was written by AI.

Where they are used, our staff will be given training and guidance to help understand these limitations, and be made aware that such tools are not designed to be used punitively, but instead be seen as an additional layer of information for a lecturer to be able to ascertain where a learner has engaged with such technologies in development of their work.

8. Principle 6: We will work collaboratively and share best practice

We recognise the size and speed of change in the world of AI. Best practice is still emerging, and we will work together with a wide range of partners and stakeholders to share what works, and what doesn't. These will include the wider network of Scottish colleges, our network of commercial partners and other stakeholders.

9. References

Current College Guidance for Staff
Current College Guidance for Students
College statement on Modern Slavery
College statement on Sustainability
College statement on Data Protection
College statement on Academic Malpractice

10. Acknowledgements

Jisc Further Education (FE) and skills – Principles for the use of AI in FE colleges:
https://www.jisc.ac.uk/further-education-and-skills/principles-for-the-use-of-ai-in-fe-colleges