How to Assess the Benefits of Generative AI in Higher Education

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1.0 Introduction

Generative AI (GenAI) is rapidly transforming everyday life, with the global artificial intelligence market valued at USD 279.22 billion in 2024 and projected to reach USD 1,811.75 billion by 2030 — reflecting a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 35.9% over this period (Grand View Research, 2024). Despite this rapid expansion, research into the broader societal impacts of AI remains relatively nascent. As with other disruptive technologies such as the internet and cryptocurrency, AI has faced public scepticism, with three in ten UK adults perceiving it as a negative influence on both individuals and society (GOV.UK, 2024).

Within higher education, AI is already exerting a profound impact. Recent studies suggest that approximately 86% of university students actively use AI tools in their academic work, many viewing them as indispensable to the learning process (Digital Education Council, 2024). AI now shapes multiple aspects of student and academic life — from idea generation and drafting to research and report writing. However, this growing reliance has raised institutional concerns regarding the accuracy, interpretation, and ethical use of AI-generated content (Digital Education Council, 2024).

GenAI's widespread popularity is based in the tangible benefits it offers to students in higher education. Studies consistently show that GenAI tools enhance personalisation, writing fluency, and learning efficiency — leading to faster and higher-quality academic output (Chan & Hu, 2023; Krause et al., 2025; Srivastava et al., 2024).

However, assessing the benefits of GenAI in higher education is not yet standardised — despite its critical role in helping institutions understand how AI affects student learning. Without clear assessment frameworks, universities lack the evidence needed to adapt teaching methods and redesign curricula that deliver equal or greater value in the AI era. With more universities experimenting with AI integration, the ability to quantify its benefits becomes essential. Institutions must understand how much to implement AI, where it adds value, and how to guide its ethical use in assessments. At the same time, they must carefully balance potential risks, such as over-reliance, bias, or academic misconduct.

In this context, assessing the benefits of AI is not just about evaluating its usefulness — it is also fundamental to informing policy, investment decisions, and institutional readiness.

This report explores **how institutions should assess the benefits of generative AI in higher education.** It begins by examining the current benefits of GenAI for students and educators, followed by an analysis of the various methods used in existing literature to evaluate these benefits. The report concludes by proposing a new assessment framework designed to support universities in measuring the value of AI integration in a structured and evidence-based way.

Keywords: *generative AI, higher education, assessment, benefits, GenAI (generative AI)*

2.0 Research Question and Scope

Research Question: How can we assess the benefits of generative AI in higher education using both qualitative and quantitative methods?

The aim of this research question is to evaluate how the benefits of GenAI can be assessed in a holistic and evidence-based manner, through evaluating both qualitative and quantitative approaches in published literature.

The literature reviewed is limited to studies published between 2022 and 2025 and sourced from scholarly databases including Google Scholar and UCL Explore. The scope of the research is confined to the higher education sector, excluding primary and secondary education. It does not examine the technical architecture of AI tools, nor does it explore legal or ethical dimensions unless directly relevant to the evaluation of educational benefits.

The emphasis is on understanding how universities can measure the real-world value of GenAI across key areas such as teaching, learning, assessment, and skills development. The final objective is to synthesise findings into a new, holistic assessment framework that integrates both qualitative and quantitative measures of benefit.

3.0 Literature Review

The literature review examines the benefits of GenAI for students and educators through a synthesis of existing studies.

3.1. Benefits of GenAI in Higher Education

GenAI offers a wide range of benefits in higher education, with emerging distinctions between those experienced by students and those reported by educators. This literature review critically synthesises existing research to examine the nature, frequency, and scope of these benefits across both stakeholder groups.

3.1.1 Benefits for Students

Recent educational research consistently highlights the value of GenAI for students in higher education, with certain benefits appearing more frequently and prominently across the literature than others.

- **Academic Writing Support**

Academic writing is one of the most frequently cited benefits, with statistically significant improvements in grammar, structure, and fluency, an advantage especially influential for non-native speakers (Chan & Hu, 2023; Huni et al., 2024). Not only does AI help with the creation of academic writing but also in the ideation stage, assisting with brainstorming, research, idea generation, and formatting, making it applicable across a wide range of higher education disciplines (Michel-Villarreal et al., 2023).

- **Personalisation**

Another key benefit is the provision of customised and immediate feedback, enabling students to engage in self-paced and iterative learning. This constant review allows students to produce higher-quality work. Studies suggest that the 24/7 support the GenAI fosters a boost in learner confidence, alleviates academic pressure, and enhances revision practices (Batista et al., 2024; Huni et al., 2024).

This is valuable for students with demanding workloads or those navigating complex learning environments, with some students even reporting a decrease in anxiety during assignments in a busy period (Huni et al., 2024).

- **Productivity & Time Efficiency**

Most apparently GenAI enhances productivity and time efficiency, allowing students to complete tasks more efficiently without compromising the standard of work. Furthermore, other research points to improvements in conceptual understanding and student engagement, with GenAI acting as an auxiliary tutor capable of simplifying complex concepts, allowing students to more efficiently and independently learn content and produce greater amounts of work per hour (Chan & Hu, 2023; Michel-Villarreal et al., 2023).

Collectively, these studies show that GenAI has fundamentally reshaped the student learning experience in higher education. Its benefits are multi-dimensional, and it is increasingly growing in its influence in everyday academic practice. An emerging theme throughout the literature is the conceptualisation of GenAI as a "cognitive partner" rather than a tool. Framing GenAI in this manner represents that the technology does not solely support admin tasks but rather acts as another party facilitating deeper learning, creativity, and collaboration.

However, the importance of ensuring scholars consistently use GenAI in an ethical way through robust institutional policies is vital to maintain a balance between the benefits and the risks of over-reliance and autonomy of work. This underscores the importance of a standardised framework to objectively assess the benefits to both measure and guide generative AI's impact.

3.1.2. Benefits for Educators

Most of the focus of the research has been on student-facing benefits for GenAI; however emerging studies also highlight the growing utility the technology poses for educators.

- **Productivity and Time Efficiency**

GenAI significantly improves teaching efficiency by minimising the time allocated to tasks including report writing, data analysis, grading, and providing feedback. Instructors observe that these time savings enable greater focus on pedagogy and student interaction, consequently enhancing instructional quality and job satisfaction (Lee et al., 2024; Khlaif et al., 2024).

- **Assessment & Feedback**

A notable advantage is GenAI's capacity to personalise feedback and assessment. Tools are currently employed to generate assignment prompts, deliver immediate feedback, and automate grading based on rubrics. These functions promote more adaptive learning environments and reduce cognitive load for educators. Effective integration of these tools depends on institutional readiness, sufficient instructor training, and the establishment of clear usage policies (Khlaif et al., 2024).

- **Curriculum Reform**

Chan and Colloton (2024) assert that GenAI acts as a disruptive element in curriculum design, fostering inclusive learning experiences and facilitating a transition to AI-informed pedagogical frameworks. Their study highlights the increasing significance of AI literacy for educators, not only as users of tools but also as digital leaders capable of guiding students in the ethical and effective use of AI.

There is widespread agreement in the literature that GenAI should not be considered a substitute for teachers, but rather a means to enhance their abilities in teaching, assessment, and innovation. The successful implementation relies on robust professional learning opportunities, coordinated institutional policies, and continuous critical reflection.

4.0 Methodology

A mixed-methods inquiry is conducted through a traditional literature review of recent peer-reviewed literature that investigates the educational impact of GenAI tools, with a primary focus on ChatGPT, as well as Bard, Bing AI, and Microsoft Copilot. To ensure a comprehensive and focused understanding of how the benefits of generative AI are assessed in higher education, a structured search strategy was established. Firstly, identifying relevant peer-reviewed literature, research reports, and academic reviews that explored both the benefits of GenAI in higher education, but also the methodology employed to evaluate those benefits.

4.1 Search Strategy

Two academic search platforms were used. Google Scholar was selected for its broad access to peer-reviewed publications, and UCL Explore was included to expand the database coverage and provide access to papers requiring institutional credentials. Together, these databases were chosen to ensure both breadth and credibility of sources.

To capture relevant literature, advanced search techniques were applied, including Boolean operators, phrase searching, and truncation. For studies evaluating the benefits of GenAI in higher education, the following search strings were used:

- "generative AI" AND "higher education" AND (benefit* OR impact* OR "learning outcomes")
- ("generative AI" OR ChatGPT OR "large language models") AND ("higher education" OR universit* OR college) AND (benefit* OR enhanc* OR efficien*)

To identify literature focused on methods of assessing GenAI's benefits in higher education, the search string applied was:

- ("generative AI" OR ChatGPT OR "large language models") AND ("higher education" OR universit* OR college) AND (benefit* OR impact* OR outcome*) AND (assess* OR evaluat* OR measur* OR "learning analytics" OR "performance indicators")

Phrase searching with quotation marks ensured that key terms were captured accurately, while Boolean operators such as AND/OR were used to broaden or narrow the search depending on the combination of terms. Finally, truncation was applied to retrieve multiple variations of a word. For example, the search term "benefit*" would capture "benefit," "benefits," and "beneficial."

To maintain academic rigour and topic relevance, an inclusion criterion was applied. Articles were initially screened based on titles and abstracts, then underwent a filtering process to narrow down the relevant literature. This process included:

- Peer-reviewed journal articles or reputable research reports
- Publications between 2022 and 2025
- A focus on higher education contexts

Correspondingly, an exclusion criterion was established, whereby the following types of studies were removed from analysis:

- Articles focusing solely on primary or secondary education
- Grey Literature (non-academic blog posts, news articles, or unverified online commentary)
- Non-peer-reviewed research papers
- Research focused exclusively on the ethical risks of GenAI

This structured approach ensured that the literature reviewed was both credible and directly aligned with the research objectives.

4.2 Selection Process

After undergoing the initial screening and inclusion-exclusion filtering process, full texts were reviewed to confirm alignment with the research question. Final selections were then logged in a literature review table and were thematically coded based on stakeholder (student vs educator), assessment methodology, and the benefits reported.

5.0 Findings

5.1 Current Assessment Methods

In researching the ways that current scholars assess the benefits of GenAI in higher education has shown that researchers have chosen to apply a wide range of quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-method approaches.

The most commonly adopted methodology across the reviewed studies is a mixed-methods approach, typically combining surveys with an additional form of analysis such as scenario-based evaluation, rubric-based grading, or thematic coding. This enables researchers to compare perceived benefits of GenAI with its actual performance or impact in educational settings.

Student and teacher attitudes towards GenAI effectiveness have been quantified in studies through standard surveys and interviews. Krause et al. (2025), for instance, combined 188 students' survey answers with scenario-based analysis to identify responsible and irresponsible use patterns and shed light on the perceived value of GenAI in educational terms. Moreover, Denecke et al. (2023) employed a mixed-methods strategy with surveys and SWOT analysis, both quantifying the effect of AI adoption and qualitatively noting its risks and benefits in education.

A notable and promising trend is the use of rubric-based evaluations. In this approach, GenAI outputs are evaluated against established academic grading criteria, allowing for a more objective comparison with student work. Ogunleye et al. (2024) applied this method by testing ChatGPT and Bard across three university-level subjects with rubrics that emphasised comprehension, problem-solving, and critical thinking. This enabled the researchers to examine the efficacy of AI in replicating or enhancing student performance across academic settings. Similarly, Srivastava et al. (2024) compared student work produced with and without AI assistance using a rubric assessing coherence, originality, and analytical depth.

The findings indicated that GenAI performs strongly in admin tasks such as grammar and structure but weaker in supporting conceptual reasoning. This is more apparent when assessing the benefits across different disciplines, with AI performing well in analytical open-source fields like data science but worse in more complex/ project-based thinking fields like construction (Srivastava et al., 2024; Ogunleye et al, 2024). Domain-specific evaluations have also emerged, with GenAI in dental

education being compared against clinical standards using faculty-led grading. The findings highlighted that discipline-sensitive, standardised rubrics can reveal the nuanced effectiveness of GenAI in highly technical fields, underscoring their importance (Giannakopoulos et al., 2023).

These findings highlight a common emphasis on moving towards systematic and transparent evaluation frameworks that go beyond self-reporting, instead integrating evidence based on performance. However, the wide range of methodologies, combined with the complexity of assessing differences across disciplines, has left a gap in the development of a holistic, standardised tool.

6.0 Discussion

While recent studies have provided valuable insights into the perceived and demonstrated benefits of generative AI in higher education, they do have drawbacks, with studies varying widely in approach, depth, and consistency.

The primary issue identified is the lack of standardisation across studies. As different studies employ varied methodologies, a unified method to assess the benefits effectively and holistically has not been established. What one study may classify as effective or beneficial for students may not align with another's definition or may not even be considered at all. This not only makes cross-study comparison difficult but also creates a barrier for institutions seeking to assess the benefits at scale.

In addition, many studies rely too heavily on student perceptions of GenAI's benefits. These risks skew the findings, as students cannot objectively measure the advantages GenAI provides, and may be incentivised to support its continued implementation in higher education. Furthermore, while some benefits may appear in the short term, the literature reviewed gives limited attention to holistic, long-term outcomes—such as the applicability of GenAI to future employment.

The studies that attempt to address these issues are primarily rubric-based; however, these rubrics tend to be most effective when they are field-specific, as this allows researchers to identify niche benefits that would not be captured by a standardised, broadly applicable rubric. In addition, some studies lack sufficient depth or transparency in their scoring, failing to explain how the statistics relate to academic standards. This makes the resulting data difficult to apply to curriculum adjustments or to inform effective use.

7.0 Proposal

To address the gaps identified in the literature on methods for evaluating the benefits of AI in higher education, this report proposes a hybrid rubric. Anchored in the established standards of higher education institutions, the rubric follows a "70-30" approach that provides a standardised framework for assessing the benefits of GenAI holistically across a student's academic journey. The "70-30" model also mitigates the challenge of rubric specificity: 70% of the rubric would apply universally across disciplines, assessing dimensions such as *knowledge and understanding, scholarly skills, application to industry and careers,* and *professionalism*. The remaining 30% would be designed by discipline-specific staff to capture field-level benefits, ensuring that the nuanced advantages of GenAI are recognised across diverse academic contexts. Unlike previous methods, this approach is a structured, transparent, and transferable evaluation of GenAI's impact on students' higher education.

This report suggests a follow-up study that uses a pilot study at UCL to apply the hybrid assessment rubric. The objective would be to use the rubric in an actual academic environment to assess how much generative AI helps students in a particular field. Given its heavy emphasis on written

assessments, decision-making, and real-world applicability—areas where GenAI is frequently integrated—management education would be the chosen focus. The rubric would be used to measure important aspects like knowledge acquisition, intellectual research abilities, and career readiness and would be in line with UCL's academic assessment standards. The effectiveness of the rubric would be empirically validated by this pilot, which would also offer useful insights into how academic institutions can evaluate and incorporate AI tools in discipline-specific contexts.

8.0 Reflection

This research project has deepened my understanding of artificial intelligence and its growing impact on higher education. As a student myself, I found it fascinating to use academic literature to critically examine how generative AI is shaping my own daily learning experience at university. The findings were both insightful and eye-opening, allowing me not only to analyse existing research but also to develop a proposed solution to a real challenge: how to standardise the assessment of AI's benefits in a meaningful and holistic way.

Beyond enhancing my academic research skills, this project strengthened my critical thinking, encouraged independent analysis, and prompted deeper reflection on how this emerging field can evolve. I now feel more confident contributing to ongoing discussions around AI in education and am excited about the possibility of developing this work further in future academic or applied research contexts.

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10.0 Appendix

UCL Management Course Assessment Rubric (70-30 Split)

HEQF Level 6 – Final Undergraduate Level

Criteria	0–19 (Fail F)	20–39 (Fail E)	40–49 (Third D)	50–59 (Lower Second C)	60–69 (Upper Second B)	70–79 (First A)	80–100 (High First A)
Knowledge & Understanding (20%)	Major gaps in knowledge and understanding of management concepts and theories. Substantial inaccuracies and misconceptions. Unable to identify core ideas of the discipline.	Gaps in knowledge, with only superficial understanding of management frameworks. Some significant inaccuracies. Reliance on unsupported assertions rather than established knowledge.	Understanding of key aspects of management, but limited breadth and depth. Coherent knowledge only in parts, at least partially informed by current research in the subject discipline.	Systematic understanding of management fields of study, consistent with subject benchmarks. Evidence of grasping core theories, but with some omissions or descriptive treatment.	Good understanding of management concepts and practices; coherent knowledge, in line with subject benchmarks, informed by relevant research. Awareness of competing perspectives demonstrated.	Excellent knowledge and understanding of the main concepts and key theories of management. Clear awareness of their strengths and limitations. Integration of contemporary debates and global perspectives.	Highly detailed, authoritative knowledge and understanding of the discipline. Demonstrates nuanced awareness of ambiguities and limitations of management knowledge, with outstanding synthesis of theory and context.
Intellectual Skills (20%)	No evidence of analytical or evaluative ability. Unsubstantiated generalisations made without evidence. Illogical or missing conclusions.	Limited ability to analyse. Arguments largely descriptive, illogical, or contradictory. Weak or irrelevant conclusions.	Some evidence of logical thinking and emerging argumentation. Conclusions attempted but inconsistent or weakly supported.	Reasonable ability to structure arguments with some analysis. Awareness of different perspectives. Broadly valid but underdeveloped conclusions.	Good analytical ability and synthesis. Arguments generally logical, coherent, and supported by relevant evidence. Sound conclusions drawn.	Very good analysis throughout. Perceptive points made, with explicit acknowledgement of multiple perspectives. Arguments consistently well-articulated, logically developed, and supported with evidence. Strong,	Exceptional, highly articulate analysis and synthesis. Demonstrates ability to interrogate contradictory evidence and generate compelling, original arguments. Highly persuasive conclusions,

						persuasive conclusions.	showing creativity and independence of thought.
Research & Enquiry (15%)	Little or no evidence of research skills. Unable to collect, interpret, or apply data. No awareness of enquiry methods.	Limited evidence of basic research tasks. Reliance on inappropriate or weak sources. Findings, if presented, are irrelevant or miscommunicated.	Some ability to collect and interpret data. Research tasks attempted but require significant guidance. Evidence communicated with weaknesses.	Competent ability to collect and interpret data. Undertakes straightforward research tasks with some independence. Evidence communicated appropriately, though with limited critical reflection.	Good competence in applying research skills. Uses a range of relevant sources and communicates findings clearly and consistently in appropriate formats.	Very strong research skills. Collects and interprets data autonomously, evaluates sources critically, and communicates findings persuasively for specialist and non-specialist audiences.	Exceptional ability to undertake sophisticated research tasks independently. Demonstrates originality in framing and interpreting data. Communicates findings with real professionalism, showing innovation and methodological awareness.
Scholarly Practices (10%)	No evidence of relevant reading. Views unsupported, academic conventions ignored, referencing absent.	Limited and indiscriminate reading. Weak or inconsistent use of academic conventions. Minimal engagement with relevant sources.	Some relevant sources used, but superficial engagement. Referencing evident but inconsistent.	Appropriate range of literature consulted. Academic conventions generally followed. Literature used descriptively.	Good engagement with the field of literature. Research-informed sources integrated into work. Consistently accurate referencing.	Critical engagement with a wide range of appropriate reading. Sources embedded in argument. Academic conventions consistently applied with sophistication.	Exceptionally wide and critical use of relevant literature, integrated seamlessly into argument. Academic conventions applied with assured professionalism.
Professional & Life Skills (5%)	No evidence of transferable or professional skills. Cannot work	Limited evidence of teamwork, communication, or self-management.	Basic ability to work with others and meet obligations.	Competent teamwork and project management. Some	Good professional skills. Works effectively in	Very good transferable skills, including leadership where appropriate.	Outstanding professional skills. Works exceptionally well

	effectively with others or manage tasks.	Weak awareness of professional expectations.	Limited reflection on strengths and weaknesses.	initiative in self-awareness and skill development.	groups, communicates clearly, and manages tasks responsibly. Reflective in evaluating strengths and weaknesses.	Demonstrates creativity, initiative, and clear self-management.	with others, demonstrates leadership, creativity, and self-direction. Reflects critically on strengths and weaknesses with insight and autonomy.
Application to Practice & Industry Relevance (10%)	No attempt to apply theory to practice. Discussion remains abstract, detached from real-world organisational contexts. Case studies, if mentioned, are irrelevant or factually incorrect. No awareness of how management knowledge translates into practice.	Very limited application of theory to practice. Occasional reference to business examples, but vague, inappropriate, or inaccurate. Connections between theory and practice are descriptive and uncritical. No reflection on the complexity of applying management knowledge in real contexts.	Some evidence of applying theory to practice, but limited in scope and depth. Uses one or two simple case examples without deeper integration. Explanations tend to be descriptive, lacking analysis of why theory works or does not work in practice. Application may be inconsistent or superficial.	Reasonable attempts to link management theory with practice. Examples are relevant but sometimes underdeveloped. Limited analysis of contextual differences (e.g., cultural, organisational, or sectoral). Application tends to assume theory is universally applicable rather than critically adapted.	Good application of theory to practice, consistently using relevant case studies and industry data. Demonstrates an understanding of how managerial tools operate in real contexts. Recognises complexity and limitations in applying theory. Provides evidence-based reasoning to support practical implications.	Excellent integration of theory and practice. Case studies and industry examples are well-chosen, current, and used critically to illustrate nuanced insights. Demonstrates the ability to adapt theory to different managerial contexts (e.g., multinational vs. SME, digital vs. traditional). Shows awareness of implementation challenges.	Outstanding ability to bridge theory and practice. Application is sophisticated, demonstrating not only “what” works but “why” and “how” within specific industry or organisational settings. Provides innovative, original insights into practice, underpinned by deep contextual awareness (e.g., global competition, digital transformation, cultural variation).
Strategic & Ethical	No evidence of awareness of strategic decision-	Minimal recognition of strategy or ethics. Mentions concepts	Some recognition of strategic or ethical issues, but	Adequate awareness of strategic trade-offs	Good awareness of strategic choices and	Excellent, critical engagement with strategic and ethical	Outstanding ethical and strategic awareness.

Awareness (10%)	making or ethical considerations. Management treated as a purely technical exercise with no reference to consequences, trade-offs, or stakeholders.	superficially (e.g., "business should be sustainable") but without analysis. Fails to acknowledge multiple stakeholders or long-term consequences of decisions.	understanding remains descriptive. Tends to identify "problems" without explaining their significance. Little appreciation of trade-offs or stakeholder complexity.	and ethical considerations. Shows ability to identify basic stakeholder perspectives (e.g., employees vs. shareholders) but lacks deeper evaluation. Ethical issues acknowledged but underdeveloped (e.g., CSR seen as add-on rather than integral).	ethical implications. Demonstrates ability to balance competing priorities (e.g., profit vs. sustainability, short-term vs. long-term). Integrates ethics and strategy into analysis, recognising consequences for different stakeholders.	considerations. Demonstrates nuanced understanding of managerial trade-offs, sustainability, and stakeholder perspectives. Analyses both opportunities and risks of strategic decisions. Shows clear awareness of how ethics and strategy are intertwined in responsible management.	Anticipates and critically evaluates complex dilemmas, including unintended consequences of managerial actions. Integrates sustainability, ethics, and stakeholder theory into a sophisticated, globalised strategic evaluation. Demonstrates thought-leadership in responsible management.
Problem-Solving & Innovation (10%)	No evidence of problem-solving. Does not identify problems or propose solutions. Work is purely descriptive.	Very limited attempt at problem-solving. Proposes generic or impractical "solutions" with little justification. Minimal or no creativity shown.	Some evidence of problem identification and solution generation. Solutions are basic, feasible only in idealised conditions, and show limited originality. Lacks evaluation of effectiveness or practicality.	Adequate ability to propose solutions to management problems. Solutions are feasible but conventional and not well-adapted to context. Limited evaluation of alternatives. Creativity is minimal but present.	Good problem-solving ability. Identifies problems clearly and proposes feasible, context-sensitive solutions. Shows some creativity in approach. Evaluates different options with consideration of strengths and weaknesses.	Excellent problem-solving demonstrated. Solutions are innovative, well-argued, and feasible in real-world contexts. Demonstrates ability to integrate multidisciplinary perspectives (finance, HR, operations, strategy) in problem-solving. Critically evaluates	Outstanding originality in generating solutions. Demonstrates visionary problem-solving, producing highly innovative and practical ideas that address both current and future challenges. Integrates diverse perspectives and anticipates unintended consequences.

implementation challenges.	Solutions demonstrate strategic foresight and creativity at the highest level.