Galiya Akhmetova
Supervisor: Prof. David Carless
The University of Hong Kong

NOT WORTH DOING: WHY STUDENTS OUTSOURCE COURSEWORK TO AI

Investigating Assessment Design in the Context of Generative AI

> YOU CAN'T JUST IGNORE AI AND PRETEND IT'S NOT THERE
>
> *Interviewee 11, undergraduate student at HKU*

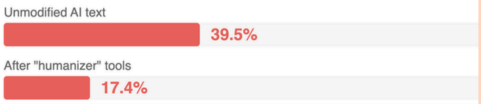
1.INTRODUCTION

95% of undergraduates ***use AI*** in at least one way (Stephenson & Armstrong, 2026)

Universities have responded by trying to catch students

- Detection software
- Tightened policies
- Hidden prompt traps

But detectors are unreliable



(Perkins et al., 2024)

2.RESEARCH QUESTION

Assessment redesign is the obvious alternative, but there is little agreement on its shape.

What tends to be missing is the view of the ***people sitting these assessments.*** This study asks 3 questions:

Questions:

1. **Which assessments resist AI?**
2. **Why do students outsource to AI?**
3. **What would they change in assessment design?**

3.METHODS

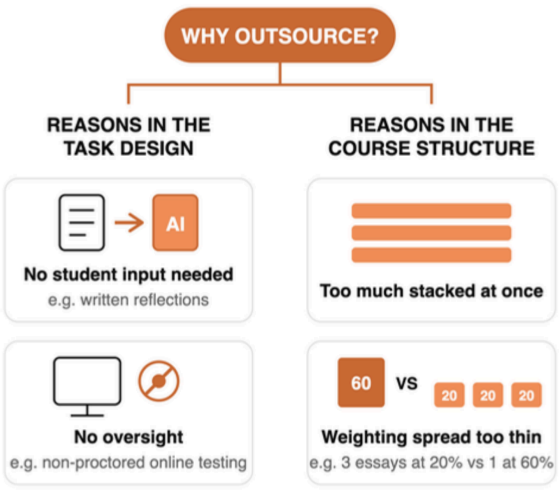
12 **INTERVIEWS**
Semi-structured, with follow-ups on points students raised

10 **DISCIPLINES**
HKU undergraduates, mostly in years 1 and 2

n/12 **THEMATIC CODING**
Themes tagged with the number of interviews supporting them

4. WHY STUDENTS OUTSOURCE TO AI

- ***Most of AI use*** participants described was ***study support***.
- When they outsourced coursework the reasons fell into ***2 groups***:



5."AI-PROOF" ASSESSMENT TYPES

MECHANISM	REMOVING ACCESS	LIVE PERFORMANCE	OWN EXPERIENCE
FORMATS	• Closed-book exams • Weekly in-class quizzes	• Presentations • Podcasts • Roleplay	• Self-experiments • Internships
SUPPORT interviews naming each format	5/12	5/12 4/12 1/12	3/12 3/12
WHY IT RESISTS AI	The tool is simply unavailable	AI can draft a script, but cannot deliver it	Built on what the student did and observed first-hand
TRADE-OFF drawbacks students or staff reported	Stress, cramming, insufficient preparation for career	Depends heavily on how clearly the task is set	Difficult to scale to large classes (Islam & Ahmed, 2018; Vlachopoulos & Makri, 2024)

6.STUDENTS' SUGGESTIONS

Teach legitimate AI use (4/12)
Assignments that train students to use these tools well, rather than banning them

Rebalance the course (2/12)
Fewer components per course, each carrying enough weight to justify the effort

State expectations clearly (1/12)
Open-ended tasks need clear criteria, not less structure

7.LIMITATIONS

12 participants
personal networks, one institution

Mostly years 1 and 2
senior perspectives absent

Self-reported
behaviour described, not observed

One coder
themes reflect a single reading

Counts such as 5/12 show how many interviews supported a theme, not any statistical claim.

8.REFERENCES

- Islam, N. N., & Ahmed, I. (2018). Thinking unconventional: Alternative assessment at tertiary level education in Bangladesh. International Journal of New Technology and Research, 4(1), 18–23. https://www.ijntr.org/download_data/IJNTR04010040.pdf
- Perkins, M., Roe, J., Vu, B. H., Postma, D., Hickerson, D., McGaughran, J., & Khuat, H. Q. (2024). Simple techniques to bypass GenAI text detectors: Implications for inclusive education. International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education, 21, 53. https://doi.org/10.1186/s41239-024-00487-w
- Stephenson, R., & Armstrong, C. (2026). Student generative AI survey 2026 (HEPI Report 199). Higher Education Policy Institute. https://www.hepi.ac.uk/reports/student-generative-ai-survey-2026/
- Vlachopoulos, D., & Makri, A. (2024). A systematic literature review on authentic assessment in higher education: Best practices for the development of 21st century skills, and policy considerations. Studies in Educational Evaluation, 83, 101425. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.stueduc.2024.101425

LAIDLAW FOUNDATION