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Navigating Generative AI in Higher Education: Insights from Two Empirical Studies

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Abstract

This contribution synthesises findings from two empirical studies examining how generative AI (GAI) mediates university teachers' practices and reconfigures professional roles. In the first study, involving teachers from humanities and social sciences, four Turing Test-inspired experiments were conducted in which participants blindly assessed responses to home-examination questions written either by students or ChatGPT. The results reveal the difficulty of distinguishing between them, raising questions about assessment validity. The findings also show that participants in certain cases suspected GAI involvement and appeared more critical of student texts. The second study, based on workshops and focus groups, explores how teachers perceive GAI in broader teaching practices. The findings suggest that teachers experience GAI as both disruptive and potentially transformative. They report feelings of vulnerability, inadequacy, and ethical tension, while also recognising opportunities to reconsider assumptions about knowledge, assessment, and the purpose of teaching. Participants were compelled to rethink assessment formats, teaching priorities, and their own roles in fostering critical and ethical engagement with technology, yet limited preparedness and support left them vulnerable. Together, the studies underline the importance of strengthening AI literacy and creating collaborative spaces for critical exploration if higher education is to navigate the uncertainties of GAI meaningfully.