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AI in Assessment and Academic Integrity

Integrity in the Age of Algorithms

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Opening Reflection

Assessment is more than a measure, it is a moment of trust. It asks learners to show what they know, and educators to honour that process with fairness and care. As Artificial Intelligence enters the classroom, that trust is being tested. Tools that detect plagiarism, generate feedback or even write essays raise urgent questions: What does integrity mean when machines can mimic mastery? And how do we protect the soul of learning in a world of synthetic knowledge?

What's Happening Now

- Turnitin roundtables in Johannesburg and Cape Town brought together South African educators to explore AI's impact on academic integrity. Key themes included transparency, trust and the need for formative AI tools that support, not just police, student growth.
- Stellenbosch University released interim guidelines on responsible AI use in assessments, distinguishing between ethical use and misconduct, and encouraging declarations of AI assistance in student work.
- UKZN's Senate approved formal principles for generative AI in academic work, emphasising capacity-building, disclosure and secure deployment.
- Institutions are grappling with how to balance innovation with authenticity, especially in uninvigilated assessments and online learning environments.

What's Changed: From Cheating Detection to Ethical Co-Creation

Before AI:

Academic integrity focused on plagiarism detection, exam invigilation and honour codes. Technology was used to catch misconduct, not to support learning.

Now:

AI tools can generate essays, solve problems and simulate student voice. Integrity now includes how learners use AI, how educators design assessments, and how institutions define originality.

Key Shift:

From reactive policing to proactive pedagogy, from catching dishonesty to cultivating ethical engagement with intelligent tools.

Why It Matters

AI challenges traditional notions of authorship, effort and evaluation. If used wisely, it can enhance feedback, personalise learning and support skill development. But if left unchecked, it may erode the very values education seeks to uphold.

From a systems-thinking lens, integrity must evolve alongside technology. This means redesigning assessments, rethinking feedback, and teaching learners how to use AI responsibly. Philosophically, this aligns with transformative learning, constructivist ethics and Ubuntu pedagogy, where integrity is not imposed, but nurtured.

Reflective Responses

What does academic integrity mean in an AI-enabled classroom?

It means transparency, reflection and responsible use. It means learners declaring AI assistance, and educators designing tasks that reward thinking, not just output.

How do we design assessments that resist automation?

By focusing on process, context and originality. Oral presentations, iterative drafts, and community-based projects can reveal authentic engagement.

What support do institutions need to uphold integrity?

- Clear AI use policies and declaration guidelines
- Training for educators in AI-aware assessment design
- Tools that support formative feedback, not just detection
- Ethical frameworks rooted in local values and global standards

Sidebar: Facts and Philosophy

Insights from Turnitin Roundtables and SU Guidelines (2024–2025):

- Educators want AI tools that support writing development, not just catch misconduct
- SU recommends three approaches: allow, disallow or require AI use, with clear declarations
- UKZN's guidelines emphasise capacity-building and ongoing adaptation

"Academic integrity is not about resisting technology, it's about guiding its use with wisdom, purpose and care." - <i>Esther Venter, Dean at Stadio Holdings</i>
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