UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE (UEC)

A meeting of the University Education Committee will be held on **Tuesday 14 January 2025 at 1:05pm**, in the Court Room, University Office, and by **Microsoft Teams**.

Ms Isabella Fausti, Administrative Officer
(isabella.fausti@abdn.ac.uk)

AGENDA

FOR DISCUSSION

1. Approval of the Minute of the Meeting Held on 20 November 2024 *(UEC/140125/001)*

2. Matters Arising/Actions *(UEC/140125/002 and UEC/140125/003)*

3. Substantive Items

3.1 Student Management System update

(Oral Item)

Members of the UEC are invited to **note** the Student Management System update.

3.2 Corporate Parenting Plan *(UEC/140125/004)*

Members of the UEC are invited to **approve** the proposals for the Corporate Parenting Plan.

3.3 Grades Management in MyAberdeen *(UEC/140125/005)*

Members of the UEC are invited to **discuss** the updates relating to the Grades Management in MyAberdeen.

4. Governance / Standing Items

4.1 Sector Updates *(Oral Item)*

4.2 Updates from the Education Deans

4.2.1 Dean for Educational Innovation

(i) GenAI in HE report update *(UEC/140125/006, to follow)*
(ii) Changes to MyAberdeen rollover process *(Oral Item)*
(iii) Institutional course template update *(Oral Item)*

5. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Committee will be held on Wednesday 26 February 2025 at 1:05pm, in the Court Room, University Office, or by Microsoft Teams.

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE (UEC)

Minute of the Meeting held on 20 November 2024

Present: Jo-Anne Murray (Chair), Waheed Afzal, Euan Bain, John Barrow, Lyn Batchelor, Nigel Beacham, Leigh Bjorkvoll, Jason Bohan, Sandie Cleland (in place of Helen Knight), Stuart Durkin, Karim Hurtig, Kirsty Kiezebrink, Colin Lumsden, David McCausland, John Mynott, Stuart Piertney, Michelle Pinard, Amudha Poobalan, Shona Potts, Miles Roetherl, Asha Venkatesh and Joshua Wright with Simon Bains, Robin Cummins, Tracey Innes, Graeme Kirkpatrick, Rhona Moore, Sara Preston, Ian Robotham, Patricia Spence, Louisa Stratton, Emma Tough and Isabella Fausti (Clerk) in attendance.

Apologies: Harminder Battu, Julie Bray, Scott Carle, Debbie Dyker, Nick Edwards, Ken Jeffrey, Helen Knight, Anne-Michelle Slater, and Steve Tucker.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTE OF THE MEETING HELD ON 1 OCTOBER 2024

(copy filed as UEC/201124/001)

1.1 The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed members to the meeting of the University Education Committee (UEC), including members who were new to the Committee. The Chair thanked members for their patience as the meeting was rescheduled and emphasised that feedback is always welcome from members. Members considered the minute of the meeting held on 1 October 2024 and approved it as an accurate representation of discussions held.

MATTERS ARISING/ACTIONS

(copy filed as UEC/201124/002)

2.1 Members of the Committee noted the actions arising following the meeting of UEC held on 1 October 2024 as follows:

(i) The Dean for Entrepreneurship and Employability reported that the action relating to the response rates breakdown on the Graduate Outcomes was in progress.

(ii) The AUSA VP Education reported that sufficient reassurance has been provided to students with regards to the Marking and Moderation policy so the action can now be considered complete.

MICROCREDENTIAL DIGITAL BADGES: MILESTONE PILOT

(copy filed as UEC/201124/003)

3.1 Members of the UEC heard a presentation from the Dean for Employability on acquiring Milestone, a platform provided by Anthology for awarding microcredential digital badges, for a year. The proposal had been previously considered by the Employability & Entrepreneurship Committee, where it was approved unanimously. If approved at UEC, the proposal will be brought to the Digital Strategy Committee next.

3.2 Beyond the initial first year, and if the pilot is successful, the platform would be included in the already existing contract with Anthology for Blackboard Learn. In addition, it was proposed to adapt the current project board for the Training and Documentation Manager to also include Milestone.

3.3 Members of the Committee discussed the proposals, with the following points being raised:

- Use with the bespoke VLEs: students in programmes that use bespoke VLEs would not be precluded from using Milestone, but the implementation details require further discussion and planning.
- At the moment, the plan is for this platform to be used for co-curricular activities and to showcase skills developed, including go abroad and international experiences. There are currently no plans to integrate the platform into curricular activities, unless specific Schools or programmes identify areas where microcredential digital badges would prove valuable without significantly increasing workloads.
- One query related to the potential use of the platform for highlighting skills developed through extra-curricular activities, such as part-time jobs or sports clubs. It was noted that this would be very beneficial, but that further discussion would be needed to determine its practical application. The reflection and articulation of skills gained from part-time work would require some form of verification, which the careers team would be available to facilitate.
- There was also a brief discussion about where the funding identified would come from.

3.4 The Chair noted a concern shared by a member of UEC relating to the lack of transparency of the Digital Strategy Committee, and agreed that further discussions would take place outside of UEC to ensure greater transparency. It was also noted that all University staff can attend the Digital Strategy Forum, which is used for engagement and dissemination of current institutional priorities and projects in this area. Additionally, it was suggested that further discussions occur outside this meeting to determine the appropriate sequence for submitting papers (whether UEC should approve them before DSC, or vice versa) (**Action: Chair and IR**).

3.5 Following the discussion, UEC members agreed to approve the pilot.

NATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY (NSS) OPTIONS

(copy filed as UEC/201124/004)

4.1 The Dean for Student Support provided an overview of the National Student Survey (NSS) options and key dates for next cycle. One of the tasks to complete by 29 November was to check the lists of student contact details. The Dean informed UEC members that School Leads (SAMs and DoEs) would be contacted by Planning soon.

4.2 A UEC member requested last year's employability data to be provided broken down by questions and Schools, rather than just amalgamated (**Action: JBo**).

4.3 A discussion ensued on the importance of the National Student Survey, with the Chair thanking to everyone who attended the NSS Results & Actions workshop.

4.4 Members of UEC approved the options for the NSS 2025.

ACADEMIC STUDENT SURVEY SEASON

(copy filed as UEC/201124/005)

5.1 Members of the UEC heard an overview of the Survey Season, which takes place during Term 2 and comprises the National Student Survey (NSS), the Undergraduate Experience Survey (UES), the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES), and the Postgraduate Research Survey (PRES). During this period no other large-scale educational surveys are allowed to take

place. The UEC heard the current plans for promoting the surveys – include school stories of how feedback has been acted on. Use ezine and blackboard for promotion.

5.2 A discussion ensued, with the following points being raised:

- It was emphasised that PTES and PRES should be given equal importance as the NSS. This includes presenting a report on these surveys at a UEC meeting to enhance their visibility. Additionally, it was suggested that more time be dedicated to considering how the data from these surveys can be used to inform action plans and other strategic initiatives.
- A suggestion to run PRES every two years instead of annually was discussed, with both advantages and disadvantages being considered.
- It was proposed to work more closely with the Planning Directorate to ensure that the data from these surveys is made available at a granular level and in a useable format.
- The idea of having a single action plan to simplify processes was considered favourably by both academic and administrative members. The Chair noted this suggestion for further consideration.
- It was also discussed whether students are being asked to provide too much feedback.

SECTOR UPDATES

6.1 The Chair briefly mentioned the rise of tuition fees in England. Discussions are ongoing on the impact on the Scottish Sector.

6.2 The Chair asked UEC members to provide feedback on the way committee agendas, minutes and papers are shared in order to improve the transparency. Inconsistencies were highlighted between processes in different committees and the need for everyone to use one single system was emphasised. It was suggested that leveraging the staff intranet could enhance accessibility and visibility of these documents within the university community while ensuring these are protected by a staff login so that they cannot be accessed by the general public (**Action: Chair**).

RISK REGISTER

(copy filed as UEC/201124/006)

7.1 It was noted that attendance and engagement has not been monitored at the Doha campus this Term due to limited staffing.

UPDATE ON PGT PORTFOLIO REVIEW

8.1 The Dean for Portfolio and Programme Development provided an update on the PgT Portfolio review, following meetings with all twelve Schools. The need to promote best practices and the PgT Portfolio was noted. The UEC acknowledged that the PMC process is currently being streamlined and colleagues were invited to volunteer for the role of DoE representative on the PMC committee. A paper with these updates will be circulated (**Action: JMy**).

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

10.1 Members of the Committee noted that the next meeting of the UEC would take place on Tuesday 14 January 2025 at 1:05pm in the Court Room, University Office or by Microsoft Teams.

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN
UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

ACTION LOG

ACTIONS ARISING FROM THE MEETING HELD ON 20 NOVEMBER 2024

Minute Point	Identified Action	Individual(s) Responsible	Action Status/Update
3.4	Ensure greater transparency of DSC documentation and determine appropriate sequence for submitting papers (first UEC then DSC, or vice versa)	J Murray and Ian Robotham	
4.2	Contact Directorate of Planning to request a breakdown of NSS employability data by questions and Schools	J Bohan	
6.2	Reconcile inconsistencies between processes in different committees and choose one single system.	J Murray	
8.1	A paper on the PgT Portfolio review to be circulated.	JP Mynott	

ACTIONS ARISING FROM THE MEETING HELD ON 1 OCTOBER 2024

Minute Point	Identified Action	Individual(s) Responsible	Action Status/Update
2.1 (ii)	Confirm process concerning extensions for Tier 4 students	J Bohan	**In progress** Plans to provide bespoke training in response to specific feedback from Schools on this issue and others
2.1 (iii)	Consider Library Services becoming part of the support staff session during the Internal Teaching Review process	S Tucker	**In progress** Ongoing discussions regarding the structure of ITR are taking place
3.2	Arrange for School Directors of Education and School Administration Managers to have a meeting with relevant staff from the Directorate of Planning	S Tucker	
5.2	Contact the Directorate of Planning to request a response rates breakdown on the Graduate Outcomes	J Barrow	**In progress** Update to be provided at meeting (see *UEC/140125/003*)

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

University percentage by Domicile and CAH Level 1 Subject for Response Rate for undergraduate leavers [2021-2024]

CAH Level 1 Subject	Year	UK Domiciled	Non-UK Domiciled
(01) Medicine and dentistry	GO 2021	58.4%	64.5%
	GO 2022	41.2%	70.4%
	GO 2023	63.3%	31.1%
	GO 2024	60.0%	13.2%
(02) Subjects allied to medicine	GO 2021	68.9%	72.0%
	GO 2022	55.2%	49.0%
	GO 2023	70.4%	35.4%
	GO 2024	65.9%	40.1%
(03) Biological and sport sciences	GO 2021	78.0%	64.1%
	GO 2022	63.8%	59.9%
	GO 2023	68.8%	64.2%
	GO 2024	72.6%	58.1%
(04) Psychology	GO 2021	58.1%	68.5%
	GO 2022	61.8%	59.4%
	GO 2023	64.3%	54.5%
	GO 2024	61.3%	55.7%
(07) Physical sciences	GO 2021	63.7%	63.6%
	GO 2022	48.4%	69.4%
	GO 2023	75.1%	61.2%
	GO 2024	56.8%	55.2%
(09) Mathematical sciences	GO 2021	58.8%	72.7%
	GO 2022	71.4%	72.7%
	GO 2023	69.6%	72.2%
	GO 2024	60.0%	63.2%
(10) Engineering and technology	GO 2021	76.1%	69.0%
	GO 2022	42.1%	50.0%
	GO 2023	68.9%	36.4%
	GO 2024	82.0%	35.7%
(11) Computing	GO 2021	65.0%	85.7%
	GO 2022	65.9%	60.0%
	GO 2023	38.1%	65.2%
	GO 2024	68.2%	64.9%
(13) Architecture, building and planning	GO 2021	66.7%	66.7%
	GO 2022	50.0%	32.1%
	GO 2023	71.4%	13.3%
	GO 2024	69.2%	100.0%
(15) Social sciences	GO 2021	67.8%	66.8%
	GO 2022	62.1%	61.1%
	GO 2023	64.1%	60.2%
	GO 2024	65.4%	54.3%
(16) Law	GO 2021	67.4%	62.6%
	GO 2022	55.1%	50.4%

(16) Law	GO 2023	66.0%	60.3%
	GO 2024	58.2%	47.3%
(17) Business and management	GO 2021	61.6%	62.8%
	GO 2022	45.3%	46.9%
	GO 2023	67.1%	25.7%
	GO 2024	56.7%	23.7%
(19) Language and area studies	GO 2021	72.8%	61.4%
	GO 2022	57.0%	59.9%
	GO 2023	59.3%	57.3%
	GO 2024	63.8%	58.6%
(20) Historical, philosophical and religious studies	GO 2021	64.1%	74.9%
	GO 2022	68.9%	51.7%
	GO 2023	67.1%	71.8%
	GO 2024	67.9%	47.4%
(22) Education and teaching	GO 2021	62.9%	56.3%
	GO 2022	50.0%	50.0%
	GO 2023	64.9%	50.0%
	GO 2024	58.7%	66.7%
(25) Design, and creative and performing arts	GO 2021	80.7%	63.3%
	GO 2022	49.3%	52.8%
	GO 2023	57.9%	42.0%
	GO 2024	64.9%	80.0%
(26) Geography, earth and environmental studies (natural sciences)	GO 2021	67.2%	73.6%
	GO 2022	31.9%	45.3%
	GO 2023	65.5%	60.1%
	GO 2024	65.7%	77.9%
(26) Geography, earth and environmental studies (social sciences)	GO 2021	70.5%	69.7%
	GO 2022	76.6%	64.5%
	GO 2023	71.2%	59.9%
	GO 2024	84.9%	100.0%

University percentage by Domicile and CAH Level 1 Subject for Response Rate for postgraduate leavers [2021-2024]

CAH Level 1 Subject	Year	UK Domiciled	Non-UK Domiciled
(01) Medicine and dentistry	GO 2021	67.3%	62.3%
	GO 2022	40.0%	60.0%
	GO 2023	63.8%	47.8%
	GO 2024	71.6%	21.7%
(02) Subjects allied to medicine	GO 2021	56.2%	72.2%
	GO 2022	48.9%	45.5%
	GO 2023	61.4%	32.1%
	GO 2024	61.7%	42.6%
(03) Biological and sport sciences	GO 2021	57.4%	60.8%
	GO 2022	37.9%	53.6%
	GO 2023	60.8%	39.3%
	GO 2024	74.2%	52.2%
(04) Psychology	GO 2021	75.8%	61.1%
	GO 2022	27.6%	54.1%
	GO 2023	52.3%	28.9%
	GO 2024	67.6%	27.5%
(07) Physical sciences	GO 2021	61.5%	62.5%
	GO 2022	52.2%	53.2%
	GO 2023	60.9%	30.6%
	GO 2024	68.0%	34.8%
(09) Mathematical sciences	GO 2021	80.0%	100.0%
	GO 2022	33.3%	55.6%
	GO 2023	75.0%	66.7%
	GO 2024	33.3%	25.0%
(10) Engineering and technology	GO 2021	61.3%	71.2%
	GO 2022	46.2%	51.5%
	GO 2023	64.2%	36.9%
	GO 2024	80.0%	35.5%
(11) Computing	GO 2021	66.7%	60.0%
	GO 2022	45.2%	48.9%
	GO 2023	66.7%	32.4%
	GO 2024	75.0%	29.9%
(13) Architecture, building and planning	GO 2021	46.2%	100.0%
	GO 2022	-	-
	GO 2023	50.0%	-
	GO 2024	50.0%	-
(15) Social sciences	GO 2021	70.1%	66.1%
	GO 2022	42.1%	52.4%
	GO 2023	61.7%	40.4%
	GO 2024	75.0%	41.7%
(16) Law	GO 2021	64.0%	54.4%
	GO 2022	46.9%	55.4%
	GO 2023	60.9%	25.1%
	GO 2024	57.9%	31.4%
(17) Business and management	GO 2021	51.6%	58.1%
	GO 2022	29.6%	33.8%
	GO 2023	59.7%	13.9%
	GO 2024	60.9%	13.5%

(19) Language and area studies	GO 2021	64.0%	56.3%
	GO 2022	36.1%	53.5%
	GO 2023	62.5%	41.7%
	GO 2024	60.0%	20.0%
(20) Historical, philosophical and religious studies	GO 2021	77.6%	72.4%
	GO 2022	31.3%	31.8%
	GO 2023	73.0%	41.7%
	GO 2024	71.9%	25.0%
(22) Education and teaching	GO 2021	62.9%	63.1%
	GO 2022		51.1%
	GO 2023	65.7%	15.2%
	GO 2024	57.7%	16.1%
(25) Design, and creative and performing arts	GO 2021	35.7%	55.6%
	GO 2022	50.0%	0.0%
	GO 2023	83.3%	75.0%
	GO 2024	66.7%	25.0%
(26) Geography, earth and environmental studies (natural sciences)	GO 2021	52.0%	79.6%
	GO 2022	44.8%	61.3%
	GO 2023	62.5%	32.1%
	GO 2024	67.3%	45.2%
(26) Geography, earth and environmental studies (social sciences)	GO 2021	100.0%	-
	GO 2022	100.0%	0.0%
	GO 2023	100.0%	100.0%
	GO 2024	-	-

University percentage by Domicile and CAH Level 1 Subject for Response Rate for all leavers [2021-2024]

CAH Level 1 Subject	Year	UK Domiciled	Non-UK Domiciled
(01) Medicine and dentistry	GO 2021	60.5%	64.0%
	GO 2022	40.9%	65.4%
	GO 2023	63.4%	36.8%
	GO 2024	63.4%	16.4%
(02) Subjects allied to medicine	GO 2021	63.1%	72.1%
	GO 2022	50.9%	47.6%
	GO 2023	66.3%	34.1%
	GO 2024	63.9%	41.7%
(03) Biological and sport sciences	GO 2021	71.3%	62.8%
	GO 2022	53.2%	57.5%
	GO 2023	66.2%	53.1%
	GO 2024	73.2%	55.7%
(04) Psychology	GO 2021	64.0%	65.4%
	GO 2022	52.9%	58.2%
	GO 2023	60.2%	45.1%
	GO 2024	63.4%	43.7%
(07) Physical sciences	GO 2021	63.1%	63.3%
	GO 2022	51.0%	57.7%
	GO 2023	70.3%	37.5%
	GO 2024	60.8%	39.0%
(09) Mathematical sciences	GO 2021	63.6%	76.9%
	GO 2022	60.0%	65.0%
	GO 2023	71.0%	70.8%
	GO 2024	55.6%	45.7%
(10) Engineering and technology	GO 2021	70.6%	69.5%
	GO 2022	44.5%	50.8%
	GO 2023	67.1%	36.7%
	GO 2024	81.1%	35.5%
(11) Computing	GO 2021	65.9%	68.2%
	GO 2022	53.8%	50.9%
	GO 2023	54.9%	40.2%
	GO 2024	72.9%	37.4%
(13) Architecture, building and planning	GO 2021	51.4%	85.7%
	GO 2022	50.0%	32.1%
	GO 2023	54.8%	13.3%
	GO 2024	57.6%	100.0%
(15) Social sciences	GO 2021	68.3%	66.7%
	GO 2022	55.8%	58.5%
	GO 2023	63.5%	50.5%
	GO 2024	68.4%	50.0%
(16) Law	GO 2021	65.9%	59.7%
	GO 2022	48.8%	54.0%
	GO 2023	63.6%	30.1%
	GO 2024	58.1%	36.6%
(17) Business and management	GO 2021	57.0%	61.0%
	GO 2022	32.7%	36.5%
	GO 2023	63.3%	15.7%
	GO 2024	58.3%	15.4%

(19) Language and area studies	GO 2021	70.6%	60.6%
	GO 2022	49.0%	57.5%
	GO 2023	59.8%	51.1%
	GO 2024	62.8%	45.1%
(20) Historical, philosophical and religious studies	GO 2021	66.9%	74.4%
	GO 2022	48.6%	45.0%
	GO 2023	69.3%	57.0%
	GO 2024	69.0%	37.2%
(22) Education and teaching	GO 2021	62.9%	61.3%
	GO 2022	33.3%	51.0%
	GO 2023	65.5%	16.2%
	GO 2024	58.1%	18.5%
(25) Design, and creative and performing arts	GO 2021	69.4%	61.7%
	GO 2022	49.6%	39.6%
	GO 2023	60.9%	52.7%
	GO 2024	65.4%	51.6%
(26) Geography, earth and environmental studies (natural sciences)	GO 2021	62.4%	75.7%
	GO 2022	43.4%	59.3%
	GO 2023	63.6%	34.2%
	GO 2024	66.7%	49.6%
(26) Geography, earth and environmental studies (social sciences)	GO 2021	73.4%	69.7%
	GO 2022	83.3%	54.0%
	GO 2023	73.6%	69.1%
	GO 2024	84.9%	100.0%

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

UPDATE OF THE CORPORATE PARENTING PLAN

1. PURPOSE OF THE PAPER

This paper presents a final draft of the revised Corporate Parenting Plan for approval.

2. PREVIOUS CONSIDERATION BY /FURTHER APPROVAL REQUIRED

	Board/Committee	**Date**
Previously considered/approved by	SSEC	May 2024
Further consideration/ approval required by	Senate, SMT, Court	TBC

3. RECOMMENDED ACTION

The University Education Committee is invited to review and approve the draft Corporate Parenting Plan, as previously approved by the Student Support & Experience Committee (**SSEC**).

4. DISCUSSION

Corporate Parenting is the name given in Scotland to an organisation's commitment and responsibility to Care Experienced and Estranged young people.

As required under Part 9 of The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, the University will publish an updated Corporate Parenting Plan outlining its role as a corporate parent and the support that it provides to young people with Care Experience.

The updated plan for 2024-2027 is due to be published, following approval through the relevant University governance processes. The plan was previously approved by SSEC in May 2024, following which some minor amends have been made in consultation with various stakeholders, to remove out of date information and terminology.

5. FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information is available from Jemma Murdoch, Deputy Head of Student Support Services (j.murdoch@abdn.ac.uk) and Nick Edwards, Deputy Director of People and Head of Student Support Services (n.edwards@abdn.ac.uk).

7 January 2025

Freedom of Information/Confidentiality Status: Open

Corporate Parenting Plan 2024-2027

DRAFT v3.0 (Stevie Kearney, 20/12/2024)

Notes on the draft:

At this stage, notes on the design of the final document have not been included. These will be included in the final draft, as notes to the designer, once the text has been agreed. As the final document is not produced in MS Word, we do not need to consider formatting and any graphics to be included are to be sent as attachments and not embedded in the Word document, as this compresses image quality. The final document should be sent to the design team as plain text, with instruction on any specific design elements we wish to have included.

Contents

Appendices

1) Welcome and Introduction

Corporate Parenting is the name given in Scotland to an organisation's commitment and responsibility to Care Experienced and Estranged young people. Here at the University of Aberdeen, we were founded in 1495 with a mission to be "Open to all and dedicated to the pursuit of truth in the service of others".

More than 500 years on, the University's Aberdeen 2040 strategy still holds the "open to all" ethos at its core. We recognise the challenges and the potential of those who are Care Experienced or Estranged, and are committed to providing the best possible support for our students to ensure everyone realises their potential.

The University of Aberdeen is also a signatory to The Promise, a Scottish Government initiative to empower and support Care Experienced and Estranged young people, directly influenced by their lived experiences. The Promise aligns perfectly with our own mission and vision and links seamlessly with our Aberdeen 2040 strategy.

At the University of Aberdeen, we currently have around 270 students who identify as Care Experienced or Estranged and our Widening Access team works tirelessly to increase these numbers each year and remove any barriers to accessing further or higher education. We also work closely with our partners in the college sector, to provide a pathway from school to college and then to university and beyond.

This work does not exist in isolation and the University of Aberdeen not only works across all departments to ensure we are meeting the needs of Care Experienced and Estranged students, but we work with a wide range of partner organisations to ensure a holistic approach and to recognise our collective responsibility. There is more information on our collaborative work in section 3 of this guide.

This guide will give you with information on how we provide that support from the early stages of considering university or college as an option, to succeeding in your studies and how you then move on from the University into a successful career in your chosen field.

2) Our commitment to care experienced and estranged students

At the University of Aberdeen, we have made the following commitments to Care Experienced and Estranged applicants and current students before, during and after studying with us:

Pre-entry

- Access to pre-entry support from Access Aberdeen and Reach Aberdeen
- Advice and guidance on applying to University, personal statements, and the UCAS process
- A guaranteed offer of admission to all applicants meeting the minimum entry criteria for their chosen course(s), under the University's Contextualised Admissions and Access Thresholds Policy.
- Access to bespoke online transition courses developed to help boost confidence when starting university
- Care experienced students are eligible to apply for a range of scholarship opportunities. Care experienced undergraduate students can also apply for a funding package from SAAS which includes a non-income assessed Care Experienced Students Bursary, while Estranged students are also eligible for additional financial support through SAAS.

During study

- The University offers year-round accommodation to students who are Care Experienced or Estranged
- Our Student Resident Assistants organise events throughout the year, with a focus on holiday periods for students who are remaining in student halls during the winter and summer breaks, to create an inclusive community environment
- Access to the University's Rental Guarantor Scheme for students who choose to rent with a private landlord
- A dedicated contact point within our Student Advice & Support Team and one-to-one support meetings and signposting to other sources of support
- Advice on finances and budgeting and support for students in financial hardship
- Dedicated events for Care Experienced and Estranged students to build a strong community

Graduation and beyond

- Bespoke support from our Careers and Employability Team to plan the next move and realise career goals
- An Alumni discount on tuition fees for a postgraduate course upon completion of an undergraduate degree.

In the Appendix section at the end of this guide, we have shared a detailed plan for how we achieve the above commitment to our students (Appendix 2) and how we monitor and measure our success (Appendix 3).

3) A University-wide approach and working with external partners

A joined-up approach to widening access and student support is central to our strategy to ensure Care Experienced and Estranged students are provided with a learning environment where they can reach their full potential. We've provided more information on our key services in Section 6, along with links and contact details.

Within the University, we have robust student-informed policies in place which underpin our work and the commitment we have made to our Care Experienced and Estranged student community.

Aberdeen 2040

The Aberdeen 2040 strategy is our overarching mission and vision, outlining our aims and aspirations up to the year 2040. Inclusivity is central to what we do and widening access and recognising potential is a core part of that mission.

We have a stated commitment to "Encourage widening access to study, by having fair and flexible entry routes, offering diverse qualifications, and providing a range of modes of delivery; our students will be able to succeed whatever their personal and social background".

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

We ensure all teams and individuals are aligned to our Equality Diversity and Inclusion strategy, so students can be confident they are coming to a university which is truly open to all. You can read more about this work here.

As part of this, we have a strong commitment to recognising Intersectionality, where many students do not belong to just one group or protected characteristic, but several. Every student receives individual support based on their needs, ensuring any and all support needs are identified and the right help is in place to ensure that all of our students have the best possible chance of success in meeting their goals. No two students are the same and we'll always ensure support is tailored to the individual.

Our sector-wide approach to Corporate Parenting

Alongside our University-wide policies and work with our individual support staff and school teams, we deliver our Corporate Parenting plan in collaboration with many key partner organisations.

We contribute to Aberdeen City Council's Corporate Parenting Plan as a member of their city-wide group and also work alongside the team from Aberdeenshire Council. Within the higher and further

education sector, we work alongside North East Scotland College (NESCol) and the Robert Gordon University (RGU) to ensure a joined-up approach when supporting Care Experienced and Estranged students in post-school education.

Other partners include Who Cares? Scotland, to ensure our strategy is informed by their research and insight, ensuring Care Experienced people are central to the work we do.

CELCIS is another organisation we work closely with when ensuring a sector-wide approach to our support and they use data and case studies to influence policy at national and local government level, ensuring the best outcomes for young people in Scotland.

4) Further information and contact details

Within the University of Aberdeen, we have dedicated teams to support Care Experienced and Estranged students at all stages of their learning journey. We've added some information on key support services below, along with links to more information and contact details.

Access & Articulation Team

Our Access & Articulation Team is there to support those seeking to apply to the University and provide support throughout this process. You can find out more about the Team's work here.

You can contact the team by emailing access@abdn.ac.uk

Student Advice & Support Team

The Student Advice and Support Team provides support for all Care Experienced and Estranged students from enrolment to graduation and can be contacted on student.support@abdn.ac.uk. The named contacts for support within the team are Jemma Murdoch and Stevie Kearney.

Further information on the Student Advice & Support Team's work can be found here.

The University also offers a Counselling service for students, with appointments available online or in person. You'll find more information here.

Students' Union

The Students' Union has a dedicated support team all students can access, while they also run all the clubs and societies, as well as organising events and coordinating student representation through

elected officers and class representatives. More information on their activities can be found here and any students seeking independent advice on issues related to their studies can contact ausaadvice@abdn.ac.uk

Student Learning Service

Our Student Learning Service provides academic advice and learning strategies to our student population, at all stages of their studies. They offer one-to-one appointments, group workshops and a range of online resources. You'll find more information here and the team is there to help students adjust to the requirements of their academic studies.

Careers and Employability Service

Our comprehensive Careers and Employability Service is on hand to guide students when considering their next steps as they approach then end of their course, whether they are looking for an graduate job or seeking further study opportunities. They offer one-to-one appointments, group workshops, CV workshop, tips on interview technique and a lot more. Their advisers have subject-specific knowledge to help guide our students in their next steps.

Additionally, part-time work is vital for many of our students to help finance living costs, so the team can also assist students to search for employment during their studies.

Final thoughts…

Whether you are a potential applicant, current student or support worker for a young person who is Care Experienced or Estranged, we hope this guide has been helpful in outlining our support for our students at the University of Aberdeen.

The appendices section below outlines our specific actions as part of our Corporate Parenting Plan and our monitoring and reporting processes.

If you are looking to apply to study with us, please email access@abdn.ac.uk and we'll be delighted to support you through the process.

For current students, please email us on student.support@abdn.ac.uk and we can discuss your individual support needs and ways we can help.

Appendices

Appendix 1 - The University's legal responsibilities as a Corporate Parent

This section summarises the University's responsibilities as a Corporate Parent, under the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014:

Section 58 (1): *It is the duty of every corporate parent, in so far as consistent with the proper exercise of its other functions-*

(a) to be alert to matters which, or which might, adversely affect the wellbeing of children and young people to whom this Part applies,

(b) to assess the needs of those children and young people for services and support it provides,

(c) to promote the interests of those children and young people,

(d) to seek to provide those children and young people with opportunities to participate in activities designed to promote their wellbeing,

(e) to take such action as it considers appropriate to help those children and young people—

(i) to access opportunities it provides in pursuance of paragraph (d), and

(ii) to make use of services, and access support, which it provides, and

(f) to take such other action as it considers appropriate for the purposes of improving the way in which it exercises its functions in relation to those children and young people.

Section 59 outlines the planning responsibilities of Corporate Parents:

(1) *A corporate parent must—*

(a) prepare a plan for how it proposes to exercise its corporate parenting responsibilities

(b) keep its plan under review.

(2) *Before preparing or revising a plan, a corporate parent must consult such other corporate parents, and such other persons, as it considers appropriate.*

Section 60 outlines the legal obligation to work collaboratively with other Corporate Parents where the Corporate Parent "*considers that doing so would safeguard or promote the wellbeing of children or young people*".

Finally**, Section 61** details the legal obligation to report to Scottish Ministers on how the Corporate Parent has exercised its responsibilities under the act, with a focus on, "*standards of performance and the outcomes achieved*".

2) Corporate Parenting Action Plan

2.1 Raising Aspirations and Pre-entry Outreach Activities:

The actions and outcomes described in this section will enable the University to fulfil three of the duties described in Part 9 (Section 58) of The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014: 1) To promote the interests of care experienced children and young people, 2) To seek to provide looked after children and care leavers with opportunities to participate in activities designed to promote their wellbeing, 3) To take action to help looked after children and care leavers access the opportunities being provided and make use of the services, and access the support, which they provide.

Raising Aspirations and Pre-entry Outreach			
No.	**Action**	**Outcome**	**Lead**
2.1.1	Maintain working partnerships and liaise with those local authorities and agencies that support care leavers.	This action allows the University to more readily identify and subsequently support potential applicants throughout the recruitment process. This action allows us to share information more easily with the relevant partners and will open up opportunities to further improve the institution's practice when working with this category of students	Access & Articulation, with support from wider university where appropriate

2.1.2	Ensure that outreach activities are accessible for care experienced individuals by offering bespoke support and opportunities. This will be accomplished by working with care experienced applicants and those who support them to identify any barriers and ways in which to reduce or remove these.	This action will help to remove any barriers to information and advice for this category of potential applicants. This support will help care experienced applicants to make more fully informed choices when thinking about going into Higher Education.	Access & Articulation, Student Recruitment and Admissions Service.
2.1.3	Ensure that costs are not a barrier to accessing information on applying to the institution and to accessing outreach activities. Work with care experienced individuals and those who support them to identify what is stopping them for attending events and then try to remove or reduce these factors. Also, we will offer financial assistance for costs to those who are care experienced upfront. For example, we will offer to help pay the travel costs for a care experienced applicant to attend University Open Days.	Children and young people from care backgrounds will be able to make more informed choices about going into Higher Education. The University will be better equipped to support this category of students throughout the recruitment process.	Access & Articulation, Student Recruitment and Admissions Service.

2.1.4	Take action to encourage children and young people who are in care / care experienced to access Higher Education through appropriate outreach materials and activities. This will be accomplished by continuing to work with local education departments, social work departments and through targeted marketing materials. The University will measure the success of these efforts by looking at how many care experienced individuals engage in outreach activities and their possible post-secondary education destinations.	Care experienced children and young people will be able to make more informed choices about going into Higher Education. The University will be better equipped to support this category of students throughout the recruitment process.	Access & Articulation, Student Recruitment and Admissions Service.
2.1.5	Include care experienced as a specific target group (category) for the institution's access schemes – the Summer School for Access and Access to Degrees programmes.	This action will allow the University to assist more potential applicants into Higher Education where they need additional support and / or do not meet the normal entry requirements. Students from this category will be better prepared before starting a full time H.E. course.	Access and Articulation, Student Recruitment and Admissions Service, the Access to Degrees Programme co-ordinator.
2.1.6	Provide pre-entry guidance, to care experienced applicants, on HE study, including the offer of a visit to campus to meet with key support services	Potential applicants from care backgrounds will be able to make more informed choices about going in	Access and Articulation, Student Recruitment and Admissions Service, Student Support Services.

	and a named contact within Student Support Services.	Higher Education. They will have more information on what courses and options are available to them.	
2.1.7	Provide pre-entry financial advice and information on the types of support that is available to those with care experience in Higher Education. This can include a meeting (in person or remote) with the named contact in Student Support Services and Access and Articulation.	Potential applicants from care backgrounds will be better informed about the types of pastoral and financial support that can be made available to them in Higher Education – which may help to improve their confidence in applying and remove barriers to entry.	Access and Articulation, Student Recruitment and Admissions Service, Student Support Services.
2.1.8	Effectively publicise the support which is on offer to potential students who are care experienced. Ensure that the relevant webpages are up to date and give more prominence to case studies, which are more relatable for applicants. Use social media channels to publicise the support and case studies.	This action will ensure that the University is better able to reach this category of potential students and that applicants who are considering going in HE have an opportunity for support.	Marketing team within Experience Engagement & Wellbeing, with support from wider university.

2.2 Application, Entry and Induction Support:

The actions and outcomes described in this section will enable the University to fulfil three of the duties described in Part 9 (Section 58) of The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014; 1. Being alert to matters which adversely affect the wellbeing of looked after children and care leavers, 2. Assessing the needs of those children and young people for the services and support they provide, 3. Taking action to help children and young people access such opportunities and make use of the services and support provided.

Application, Entry and Induction Support			
No.	**Action**	**Outcome**	**Lead**
2.2.1	Ensure that information on the full range of support mechanisms offered to applicants with care experience is readily available and easily accessible.	This action will help potential students from care backgrounds who are thinking about applying to the University of Aberdeen to be fully informed about the process and to have confidence that they will be supported.	Access & Articulation, Student Support Services, Experience Engagement and Wellbeing's Marketing Team.
2.2.2	Review and update information on the website to clearly outline the support available, both during the application process and during studies. Develop and include more video content and/or case studies.	Care experienced applicants are clear on the support on offer, the contacts for support and are better informed about their potential university experience through relatable case studies.	Access & Articulation, Student Support Services, Experience Engagement and Wellbeing's marketing team.
2.2.3	Offer personalised support before the course start and identify arrangements for continued support	This will enable the University to offer the types of support needed by this category of students during	Access and Articulation, Student Support Services.

	once a place is offered. (If required) This support will be provided by Student Support Services in conjunction with Access and Articulation.	the application process, ensuring it is flexible and responsive to each individual's needs.	
2.2.4	Offer flexible application arrangements for young people in care or estranged students, e.g. guaranteed interviews, guaranteed entry for those meeting the minimum requirements, feedback on applications and general support from the admissions team	This action will enable the University to better support the individual application needs of this category of students. A guaranteed interview would give potential students an opportunity to explain their needs and how their experiences have impacted on education. This process would also help the University to identify those students who could potentially benefit from going on one of the access programmes.	Access and Articulation, Student Recruitment and Admissions Service, Admissions Selectors.
2.2.5	Ensure the 2024 Corporate Parenting Plan is publicly available on the University's website and produce an accompanying report outlining our successes and case studies relating to this work. This report should be given the same design support as other marketing materials and should be bright and meet the University's accessibility requirements.	Any interested person or group should have access to our Corporate Parenting Plan and this helps generate confidence in applicants and other stakeholders that the University is a responsible and successful supporter of Care Experienced young people.	Corporate Governance, with marketing support

2.2.6	Create a suite of induction events for Care Experienced students on topics such as budgeting and financial support, academic and welfare support, sports and societies, getting to know Aberdeen, cookery and other useful skills etc.	These sessions will ensure students have the skills and knowledge to settle into university life as quickly and easily as possible, giving them the best possible start to their studies	Student Support Servies and Access and Articulation
2.2.7	Set up a series of student focus groups or one-to-one discussions to get student input on their experience, challenges, successes, and areas for development.	This will ensure the University's Corporate Parenting Plan is informed by Care Experienced students and thus more likely to meet their needs in the future and eliminate barriers to success.	Student Support Service, Experience, Engagement and Wellbeing team, Student Union

2.3 Accommodation:

The actions and outcomes described in this section will enable the University to fulfil three of the duties described in Part 9 (Section 58) of The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014; 1. Being alert to matters which adversely affect the wellbeing of looked after children and care leavers, 2. Seeking to provide opportunities which will promote the wellbeing of looked after children and care leavers, 3. Taking action to help children and young people access such opportunities and make use of the services and support provided.

Accommodation			
No.	**Action**	**Outcome**	**Lead**
2.3.1	Where required, support students seeking accommodation to secure a 365-day lease in the University's halls – this type of contract would be available to the student for the entire length of their stay. See also 2.4.4 in reference to accommodation support for graduates	By providing an opportunity for year-round accommodation the University will be effectively removing one of the main barriers to attracting Care Experienced applicants in H.E. This type of accommodation scheme should also help students to remain for the duration of their course. Students would also be provided with a range of specific support mechanisms whilst in University Accommodation.	Access and Articulation, Student Recruitment and Admission Service, the Accommodation Office
2.3.2	Ensure that care experienced students are provided information about support in university owned accommodation. Making sure that	This action will help to ensure that there is joined up and cohesive support in place for care experienced students. The structure of support	Access and Articulation, Student Recruitment and Admission Service

	students are aware of the support available to them through student support services. Furthermore, raising awareness of the SRA team, that is based in the accommodation setting to help get students settled through a rolling programme of activities and events focused on wellbeing and supporting to make friends. The SRA team are also a point of contact for students to find out information and signposting to support. The SRA team will also highlight concerns for welfare to student advice and support who will ensure suitable support is enacted.	recognises the importance of stable and supported transitions in housing in student success, as well as helping to combat common concerns that arise such as loneliness or difficulty settling in.	Student Advice & Support Student Resident Assistants Site Services / campus services Accommodation office
2.3.3	Work with the Aberdeen University Student Union in order to consider improvements to help integrate students into the University's community.	This action with help students with experience of being in care to better integrate into the University's community. This will hopefully allow the students to more fully enjoying the "student life" aspect of their time at University. Students will be better able to integrate into the University's culture – meeting new friends, finding out about societies and other extra-curricular activities.	Aberdeen University Students' Association, Student Residents Assistants, Student Support Services, Experience, Engagement and Wellbeing

2.3.4	Ensure all Care Experienced students are aware of the University's rental guarantor scheme.	Care experienced students will be able to use the university's scheme if they do not have a guarantor, which is particularly important in the current rental market, where suitable privately-let accommodation can be hard to find.	Student Advice & Support, Accommodation Office, Experience, Engagement & Wellbeing team

2.4 Health and Wellbeing:

The actions and outcomes described in this section will enable the University to fulfil four of the duties described in Part 9 (Section 58) of The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014; 1. Being alert to matters which adversely affect the wellbeing of looked after children and care leavers;, 2 Assessing the needs of those children and young people for the services and support they provide; 3. Seeking to provide opportunities which will promote the wellbeing of looked after children and care leavers; 4. Taking action to help children and young people access such opportunities and make use of the services and support provided.

Health and Wellbeing			
No.	**Action**	**Outcome**	**Lead**
2.4.1	A designated member of staff will be identified to act as a key point of contact and advisor throughout the duration of the student's course. Students will also be given information on the University's support services. The Student Support Services team will work to ensure that support is signposted throughout the holidays.	This action will mean that students are offered support throughout their relationship with the University – the recruitment / application process, the degree programme and holiday times. A support plan, where appropriate, should help to remove barriers to individuals gaining their desired outcome from their studies and moving to a positive destination post-study.	The Head of Student Support Services and the wider Student Support Team and the named Care Experience contact person within the team.
2.4.2	Ensure that any available sources of financial support for the students are in place throughout the duration of their studies.	This action will enable the University to better support students from care backgrounds whilst they are studying. By ensuring that available sources of	Student Support Services, Access and Articulation, the University's Development Trust.

		financial assistance are in place, this will help to remove a potential source of stress for the student and will remove a barrier to them successfully completing their studies.	
2.4.3	Offer appropriate transitional support for those learners who have completed their course – in partnership with the appropriate agencies. Consider opportunities for transitional accommodation options and support.	Leaving university, where there is considerable pastoral support and secure accommodation, is recognised as a potentially difficult transitional period for this category of students. By offering an appropriate transitional service the University can help to make this a less stressful and problematic time for the student.	Student Support Services and the Careers Service, Accommodation
2.4.4	Work with the Students' Association to consider the creation of a new society for Care Experienced and Estranged students, as this has worked well at several other universities.	For those who are comfortable disclosing their care experience, students can often bond well with those who have faced similar challenges, barriers and experiences and, for those who wish to participate, the society could be a source of support and a place to make new friends.	Student Support Services, SU presidents and support staff.
2.4.5	Build upon current events planning for holiday periods with social events on campus as well as in student halls, to provide support and social	Holiday periods, especially at Christmas time, can be very challenging for those without the contact of family, foster parents or carers. As a university, we	Student Support Services, Experience, Engagement and

	opportunities for those staying in Aberdeen for the holiday period and without family/carer support.	need to ensure anyone in this position is fully-supported and is given opportunities for socialising during holiday periods to support positive mental wellbeing.	Wellbeing, Accommodation Services.

2.5 Educational Support

The actions and outcomes described in this section will enable the University to fulfil four of the duties described in Part 9 (Section 58) of The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014; 1. Being alert to matters which adversely affect the wellbeing of looked after children and care leavers;, 2 Assessing the needs of those children and young people for the services and support they provide; 3. Seeking to provide opportunities which will promote the wellbeing of looked after children and care leavers; 4. Taking action to help children and young people access such opportunities and make use of the services and support provided.

Education Support			
No.	**Action**	**Outcome**	**Lead**
2.5.1	Ensure that care leavers are offered appropriate educational guidance and support services.	Care experienced students will be better able to cope with their studies and will have reduced levels of stress. Specific Learning Differences can be properly identified and support offered. By ensuring that an appropriate level of educational support is offered the University can help to increase retention rates for care experienced students.	Student Support Services, Student Learning Service, Personal Tutors.
2.5.2	Financial assistance for books, outings, learning materials, IT equipment. This can be covered by	Financial support can reduce barriers into education, and can help to alleviate stress and poor	Access and Articulation, Student Advice and Support

	ensuring applicants are aware of the Care Experienced Student Bursary and through the Discretionary Fund process if struggling financially during studies.	mental health while studying for a degree, which in turn improves academic performance and graduate outcomes	

2.6 Partnership Working and Regional Support

The actions and outcomes described in this section will enable the University to fulfil three of the duties described in Part 9 (Section 58) of The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014; 1. Promoting the interests of those children and young people; 2 Seeking to provide opportunities which will promote the wellbeing of looked after children and care leavers; 3 Taking action to help children and young people access such opportunities and make use of the services and support provided.

Partnership Working and Regional Support			
No.	**Action**	**Outcome**	**Lead**
2.6.1	Work with regional partners to support and take part in Champions Board, Working Groups and other appropriate committees	Senior management will be able to directly contribute towards the development and continuous improvement of services	Access and Articulation
2.6.2	Develop and implement a joint regional framework / plan with NESCol and RGU.	By working in partnership with the other local FE and HE providers the University will be able to help shape and improve services for care experienced applicants and students. The sharing of resources will allow each of the local institutions to better support this category of students.	Access and Articulation

2.6.3	Develop links with other appropriate agencies e.g. STAF, CELCIS	By working closely with partners like CELCIS and STAF the University can continually improve its understanding and knowledge of this category of applicants and students. The University can then improve the services that it offers. Also by engaging with national partners the University can contribute towards local and national dialogues and efforts to improve services for students with experience of being in care.	Access and Articulation
2.6.4	Further develop partnerships with appropriate Social Care and Health Care agencies.	This action will allow both the University and its partners in health and social care to better support applicant and students with experience of being in care.	Access and Articulation Lead

2.7 Monitoring and Reporting

Monitoring and Reporting			
No.	**Action**	**Outcome**	**Lead**
2.7.1	Senior management and the appropriate committees will ensure the implementation of this action plan across the institution and ensure that the monitoring and evaluation process is carried out. Quantitative and Qualitative measures will be used to analyse the success of the plan's implementation.	This action will drive forward the implementation of this plan and ensure that each of the actions is delivered.	The Vice Principal for Education, the University Management Group,
2.7.2	The senior sabbatical officers of the Aberdeen University Students Association will be consulted during the process of writing the report – with their input included where appropriate.	This action will ensure that the views of the student population and their representatives will be considered during the reporting process.	TBC
2.7.3	The University Court will receive a copy of the three yearly report and regular updates on the progress on the implementation of the Corporate Parenting plan.	This action will ensure that the views and input of the University's governing body are considered during the reporting process.	TBC

		It will also ensure that the members of the Court are aware of the University's progress as a Corporate Parent.	
2.7.4	The University will seek guidance and advice re the monitoring of it corporate parenting plan from CELSIS and other national / local agencies.	This action will ensure that the University produces a plan and support mechanisms that allow it to both meet its statutory obligations and provide an excellent service for care experience students.	TBC

Appendix 3: Corporate Parenting Reporting process

3.1 Reporting Process

- As required under Part 9 of The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, the University will publish reports reviewing its role as a Corporate Parent and the support that it provides to young people with care experience.
- These reports will be published once every three years.
- The University will use three sets of data when reviewing the implementation of its corporate parenting plan; Students Admission Data, Student Support Data and Qualitative data.

Student Admissions data: The University will gather annual statistics on the number of applicants who have indicated that they have experience of being in care. The University will also gather statistics on the number of care experienced students that gain entry and subsequently register with the University.

Student Support data: The University will gather annual data on the number of (self-declared) care experienced students who access student support services.

Qualitative data: The University will work with the Aberdeen University Students' Association to gather qualitative data on the experience of care experienced students. The University will gather data on the experience of applicants by working directly with the young people and the key local partners e.g. local authority through care services.

- The reports will contain a statistical analysis, data comparisons with other institutions and case studies.
- A completed draft of the Corporate Parenting report will be submitted for approval by the appropriate committee and senior management. The report will then be submitted to the Scottish Government via the designated channels.
- It is anticipated that the way in which the University reports on its corporate parenting duties will evolve as the University seeks to continually improve upon its performance as a corporate parent.

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

UPDATE: GRADES MANAGEMENT IN MYABERDEEN

1. PURPOSE OF THE PAPER

This paper provides an update on the paper discussed at UEC on 5 November 2024, which returned to the Quality Assurance Committee on 11 December, for discussion and approval of the key recommendations outlined for enhancing the transparency of grades in MyAberdeen course areas and enhancing the return of grades from MyAberdeen to SRS. The latter will ultimately result in reduced workloads for staff and a more robust and secure grades transfer process.

This paper is for information, in relation to the key recommendations approved by QAC, and for discussion of outstanding recommendations and guidance.

2. PREVIOUS CONSIDERATION BY /FURTHER APPROVAL REQUIRED

	Board/Committee	Date
Previously considered/approved by	QAC UEC QAC	25 September 2024 5 November 2024 11 December 2024
Further consideration/ approval required by		

3. RECOMMENDED ACTION

The committee is invited to note the approval by QAC on 11 December of the following key recommendations:

- All assessment grades in MyAberdeen to be published as grade points (e.g. 14, 16, 22) from AY 2025/26 onwards. The associated alphanumeric grade will no longer be published in MyAberdeen course gradebooks. If an assessment is graded in percent, the percentage will be published with an **additional** item in the course gradebook which displays the grade point for that assessment (Section 4.1).
- Assessment grades to be represented as whole numbers unless it can be clearly demonstrated why the work can be graded to a grade point value to 2 decimal places (Section 4.1).
- The final overall course grade in MyAberdeen to be the grade point to two decimal places from AY 2025/26 onwards. This is to reduce staff workloads by removing unnecessary duplication (Section 4.2)
- The establishment of a Task and Finish Group in early 2025 to scope the implementation of the grades journey, a more robust and secure grade transfer process from MyAberdeen to SRS (Section 4.4)
- Minor changes to Section 2 (sub section 2.1 and 2.2) of the Code of Practice on Assessment, reflecting the first recommendation outlined above. The proposed changes to Section 2 are included in Appendix 2.

Outstanding recommendations / guidance for further discussion:

- The terms “grade(s)” and “grading”, reflecting the use of the CGS for grading, and the University’s international outlook, to be adopted in documentation and communications, for consistency (Section 4.3)
- Guidance for cases where the assessments for a course are all graded in percentages, or components of assessments are all graded in percentages, and when these grades are presented as grade points.

4. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The move, over ten years ago, from the Common Assessment Scale (CAS) and Grade Spectrum to the Common Grading Scale (CGS) and Grade Point Averages (GPAs) has resulted in an evolution of our approach to managing grades using the CGS and mixed practice across the institution. The latter creates confusion for students and for staff.

The introduction of the CGS resulted in grades being presented as both alphanumeric grades and grade points respectively, e.g. D3 / 9, B2 / 16, A1 / 22. The alphanumeric grades provided an easier scale for external audiences to understand, and the grade points enabled a course grade point to 2 decimal places to be calculated and used to determine the overall GPA for Honours degree classification and for progression and award for PGT awards.

Initially, the overall course grade in the Student Hub was only shown as an alphanumeric grade. This caused confusion for students who tried to calculate their programme GPA from their course alphanumeric grade by replacing it with the associated grade point. Such students could, understandably, not comprehend why their calculation differed to that performed by the institution. The discrepancy resulted from the institution's calculations using the course grade point to 2 decimal places, not the grade point associated with the course alphanumeric grade.

Steps were taken from 2019 onwards to change what students saw in the Student Hub and in MyAberdeen, in relation to their course component grades and overall course grade, to provide clarity and transparency to students in relation to their course grades and their programme GPA.

These included:

- In AY 2019-20 Schools were encouraged to show students their overall course grade point to 2 decimal places in MyAberdeen while enhancements were made to the Student Hub to ensure students were able to see their overall course grade both as an alphanumeric and as a grade point to 2 decimal places.
- In AY 2020-21 the practice of displaying a 17.65 as an A5 was stopped, so only grades between 18.00 and 18.99 would result in an A5 being displayed to students. At the time this was referred to as 'stopping the rounding up of grades' though nothing changed in terms of GPA calculations for degree awarding as these always used the course grade point to 2 decimal places.
- Showing students their course component grades as grade points, as this made it easier and simpler for students to calculate their course grade point to 2 decimal places, if this was not yet available to them. The move from Original to Ultra resulted in more Schools showing students course components as grade points, for transparency.

To encourage consistency and transparency for students, and prevent confusion from mixed practice across the institution, it is important to provide clarity on how we manage and present grades in the gradebook of MyAberdeen.

Students have been consulted on the recommendations provided in this paper (Appendix 1).

4.1. Presenting Course Component Grades to Students

Currently there is a mixed approach to displaying course component grades to students. Grades are currently presented as:

- CGS alphanumeric
- CGS numeric grade points
- Percentages, with details available in the course guide/handbook of the QAC-approved conversion from percentages to CGS

Recommendation approved by QAC:

- All assessment grades in the MyAberdeen course gradebook are shown as CGS grade points.

- For assessments that are graded in percentages, students should be provided with an additional item in their gradebook displaying the grade point for that assessment, as well as being provided with details of the QAC-approved mapping of percentages to CGS grades in the course guide/handbook.
- All assessment grades must be presented as whole number grade points unless it can be clearly demonstrated why the work can be graded to a grade point value to 2 decimal places.

It should be noted that staff must have the ability to override the grade point produced by a rubric, such as in situations where an essential outcome has not been met by the student. As with any grade in the gradebook that has been overridden, staff must articulate the reason for the change to the students.

All the recommendations made above ensure a transparent approach to calculating final course grade point values to 2 decimal places.

4.2. Presentation of the overall course grade

Students access their final course grades through the Student Hub, where they can access their grade for a course as:

- The CGS alphanumeric
- The CGS grade point to 2 decimal places

It is therefore not necessary to show students their Overall Grade in MyAberdeen both as a CGS alphanumeric and a CGS grade point to 2 decimal places, at the end of the course.

Providing the course grade as an alphanumeric as well as a grade point in MyAberdeen course gradebooks currently requires Schools to duplicate the calculations, which increases staff workload and can lead to errors. When final course grades are transferred from MyAberdeen to SRS, the SRS only uses the course grade point, which is provided to 5 decimal places and rounded to 2 decimal places in the SRS. The SRS will present both the course grade point and the associated alphanumeric.

Recommendation approved by QAC:

- The Overall Grade in MyAberdeen is presented as the grade point to 2 decimal places
- No change to the SRS which will continue to present overall course grade as both the alphanumeric and grade point to two decimal places

4.3. Terminology used in relation to the CGS

We currently use a mixture of grades and grading, and marks and marking, in our documentation and communications in relation to assessment. After the adoption of the Common Grading Scale, it was decided to align the terminology in MyAberdeen to reflect the fact that we provide grades, and grade work submitted for assessment. However, we still use the terms “marking” in our documentation and communications in relation to assessment.

We recommend that:

- The terms “grade(s)” and “grading”, reflecting the use of the CGS for grading, and the University’s international outlook, be adopted in documentation and communications, for consistency.

The above recommendation is for further discussion as it involves significant resource in standardising our terminology.

4.4. Defining the scope of work for embarking on the Grades Journey

The “Grades Journey” in Blackboard is designed to streamline the process of transferring grades between Blackboard and our Student Record System (SRS). We currently do not use this functionality although it is freely available to us.

Key features of the “Grades Journey” include:

- Automated Grade Exchange:

Grades Journey allows for the automated exchange of grade data between Blackboard and the SRS, significantly reducing manual steps and the potential for errors.

- Flexible Grade Transfer Workflows
  We can create customised grading workflows appropriate for the transfer of grades. For example, grades can be transferred to the SRS based on Course Coordinator or School Admin approval. This approach is usually desirable as it adds an extra layer of verification before grades are finalised.
- Robust integration with the SRS
  The SRS can define items in the gradebook for retrieval by the SRS. The integration ensures that the grading data is consistent and up to date across both systems. It also avoids the time-wasting process of manually downloading gradebooks prior to their automatic upload to SRS.

Recommendation approved by QAC:

- Establishment of a Task and Finish Group in early 2025 to define the scope of work required for transferring grades between MyAberdeen and SRS using the "Grades Journey". Such a group will include colleagues from IT, CAD, Academic Services, School representatives (Academic and Admin).

4.5. Outstanding recommendations / guidance for further discussion

At QAC, it was highlighted that there are instances where the assessments for a course are all graded in percentages, or components of assessments that are all graded in percentages, and therefore guidance providing clarity on when these grades are presented as grade points would be useful.

UEC are invited to discuss the following recommendation to address the above:

- We recommend that where there is a course where all the assessments are graded in percentages or a portfolio assessment consisting of individual assessments graded in percentages, that a weighted average should be carried out to reflect an overall percentage grade, and that this is the grade which is then displayed as a grade point to students.

In addition, UEC is invited to further discuss the recommendation on the standardisation of grading terminology (Section 4.3).

5. FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information is available from Professor Kirsty Kiezebrink, Dean for Educational Innovation (k.kiezebrink@abdn.ac.uk) and Dr Sara Preston, Senior eLearning Adviser, (s.preston@abdn.ac.uk) Centre for Academic Development.

[8 January 2025]
Freedom of Information/Confidentiality Status: Open

Appendix 1

Summary of responses from School Conveners / Class Representatives to the proposed changes.

School Conveners / Class representatives were asked to complete a form indicating their level of agreement with the following proposed changes.

There were 23 respondents to the form, representing a variety of disciplines:

- All assessment grades in MyAberdeen will be published as CGS Grade Points (e.g. 14, 16, 22).

  All respondents agreed with this proposal.

- If an assessment is graded in percent, the percentage will be published with an additional item in the gradebook which displays the CGS Grade Point for that assessment

  All bar one student agreed with this proposal.

- Assessment grades will be published as whole numbers, unless it has been clearly demonstrated how a Grade Point to two decimals was arrived at

  5 students disagreed with this proposal. All others agreed.

- The final Overall Course Grade in MyAberdeen will be published as the Grade Point to two decimal places

  All bar one student agreed with this proposal.

- The terms "grade(s)" and "grading" will be adopted as the standard terminology and webpages, MyAberdeen, documentation and communications will reflect this, for consistency (ie "marks" will be replaced with "grades" and "marking" will be replaced with "grading")

  All bar one student agreed with this proposal.

Appendix 2

Extract of the Code of Practice on Assessment

Reflecting Changes to Simplify the Return of Grades

Section 2: Marking

Subsection: Return of Grades

2.1 The Senate has agreed that Schools must inform students of their CGS grade for individual elements of in-course assignments irrespective of whether the ~~marks~~ grades are to contribute to the overall course CGS grade. Thus, for example, for a course assessed entirely by three in-course essays, Schools should inform students of the ~~it~~ individual essay grade awarded, in grade point form, (usually via MyAberdeen Course Gradebooks) and the Student Record (or Student Record Card via the Student Hub) will inform students of their overall course grade point and associated alphanumeric grade.

2.2 If a course is assessed by a combination of a written examination and continuous assessment Schools should inform students of their individual essay grade, in grade point form (usually via MyAberdeen Course Gradebooks) and the Student Record (or Student Record Card via the Student Hub) will inform students of their overall course grade point and associated alphanumeric grade. However, it is important for students to be able to see the grades awarded for individual questions in an exam; this gives them important feedback on which areas of the course they understand well and which they may need to work at. A breakdown of exam grades can be released to students via MyAberdeen if the MyAberdeen Course Gradebook is set up accordingly. If not, Schools should find an alternative way to give students this vital feedback on their exam performance.

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

GenAI use in higher education: stakeholder perceptions and attitudes

Kirsty Kiezebrink, Sara Preston, Rosemarie McIlwhan, Louise Drumm, Natalie Lafferty

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Contents

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Special thanks go to all focus group and survey participants for their time and contributions.

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Executive summary

This project investigates the attitudes and perceptions of higher education students and staff, both academic and professional services, to the use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) in higher education. The integration of GenAI in Higher Education (HE) is a rapidly evolving topic, yet there remains limited data on the attitudes and perceptions of diverse stakeholders within the sector. While recent studies have begun to explore student perspectives, the broader implications of GenAI on instructional methodologies and educational delivery remain underexamined. Most of the current discourse has focused on academic integrity, leaving a gap in understanding the wider impact of GenAI across different levels of study and stakeholder groups.

This research project aimed to fill this gap by conducting research across a range of HE institutions to gather data on the attitudes and perceptions of students, academic staff, and professional services staff towards the use of GenAI in education. Additionally, the research examined the views of academic and professional services staff on both their own and students' use of GenAI in educational settings, an area that has been notably under-researched.

By capturing the perspectives of a wide range of HE stakeholders, this report offers valuable insights that will help universities implement targeted interventions and allocate resources effectively to maximise the benefits of GenAI in education.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

At the outset of this project, there were limited data on the attitudes and perceptions of diverse higher education (HE) stakeholders regarding the use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) in HE. While Artificial Intelligence (AI) and GenAI have existed for some time, it wasn't until November 2022, when OpenAI released an early demo of ChatGPT, that significant attention was directed toward the intersection of GenAI and higher education.

In the first half of 2023, much of the discourse – spanning academic publications, mainstream media, and social media – centred on the impact of GenAI tools on academic integrity. However, significantly less attention was given to the perspectives of staff and students regarding the use of these tools in the wider context of academic practice. As these technologies have evolved, the conversation has shifted, with growing emphasis on how they can be effectively integrated into higher education to enhance learning, reduce workloads, and uphold academic integrity.

This research builds upon the research on student perceptions of Generative AI (Attewell, 2023) and on "ChatGPT and Me: The Student Voice on Future Learning in the Age of Artificial Intelligence" (Drumm, 2023), by conducting research across a range of HE institutions to gather data on the attitudes and perceptions of students, academic staff, and professional services staff towards the use of GenAI in education.

Furthermore, this research investigated the attitudes and perceptions of academic staff and professional services staff to their own and students' use of GenAI in Higher Education, an area in which there is a distinct lack of research. The outcomes of this research will aid universities in implementing appropriate interventions and focus their resources where they will have the greatest impact.

1.2 Project aims and objectives

The project aimed to provide comprehensive insights into the multi-faceted attitudes toward GenAI in higher education, thereby providing valuable insights for policymakers and educators to foster an inclusive, evidence-based approach to decision-making on the use of GenAI in HE.

The project objectives:

Objective 1: explore perspectives of academic staff and support services staff:

+ Investigate how staff envision GenAI influencing their teaching methods and supporting student learning.
+ Identify the skills and support staff need to use GenAI, and disciplinary perspectives.

+ Analyse how staff perceive GenAI contributing to or reshaping the overall educational landscape.
+ Examine how staff perceive their colleagues' and students' use of GenAI.

Objective 2: explore student perceptions:

+ Investigate how students perceive the impact of GenAI on their learning.
+ Identify the skills and support students need to use GenAI, and disciplinary perspectives.
+ Explore students' perceptions of GenAI use by other students, academic staff and support services personnel.
+ Examine how students envision staff incorporating GenAI tools into teaching methods and support services.

Objective 3: identify convergence and divergence between staff and student views:

+ Identify common ground in perceptions of staff and students regarding GenAI integration.
+ Explore areas where significant differences emerge in how staff and students perceive the role and impact of GenAI in education.
+ Examine how demographic factors (e.g. age, gender, discipline, education experiences) influence these differences in perspectives.

2 Methods

Ethical approval was granted by the Committee for Research Ethics and Governance in Arts, Social Sciences and Business at the University of Aberdeen.

The study adopted a sequential exploratory mixed methods design whereby the qualitative phase comprised of focus groups, the results of which informed the development of survey questions for the quantitative phase, as described below.

2.1 Qualitative phase

2.1.1 Recruitment

The qualitative phase aimed to explore the questions outlined in objectives 1 and 2 above. Nine online focus groups were conducted between April and May 2024 with stakeholders across the four universities represented by the core project team, University of Aberdeen, University of Dundee, Edinburgh Napier University and Heriot-Watt University. Three focus groups were held for each of the three stakeholder groups, ranging from 3 to 8 participants per group and with a total of 18 students, 17 academic staff and 13 professional services staff participating.

Purposive sampling for staff and students was employed to ensure diverse representation across the sampling framework outlined below:

Student population

+ Students from each year of study.
+ Undergraduate, taught postgraduate and research postgraduate students.
+ Male, female and non-binary students.
+ Students from different disciplines.
+ Students from different institutions across Scotland.
+ Students from diverse cultural and educational backgrounds.
+ Student with diverse learning needs.

Staff population

+ Staff representing professional service and academic roles.
+ Staff across pay grades.
+ Male, female and non-binary staff.
+ Staff from different disciplines.
+ Staff from different institutions across Scotland.

+ Staff from diverse cultural backgrounds.
+ Neurotypical and neuro-divergent staff.

Participants were recruited through a variety of methods, customised for each participating university, and involved leveraging existing communication channels at each university, utilising established staff and student publications to disseminate research information, targeted email campaigns to reach specific stakeholder groups, and digital and/or print posters placed across campuses.

Informed consent was sought before the start of each group, with participants supplied with a Participant Information Sheet in advance and invited to ask any questions before taking part.

A limited amount of demographic information was collected for participants that expressed an interest in participating in the focus groups, to ensure we had a diverse range of participants invited to take part in the focus groups.

2.1.2 Topic guide and data collection

Separate topic guides were developed for staff and student focus groups to ensure relevance to the specific groups. The topic guides were first piloted with appropriate groups and amended as necessary prior to use with study participants. Student focus groups were facilitated by student interns to enhance participant comfort and encourage open contributions, whereas staff focus groups were led by a knowledgeable staff member, ensuring that complex institutional contexts could be expertly navigated. The choice of facilitators optimised the dynamic and participatory nature of the focus groups, allowing for a nuanced exploration of stakeholder perspectives.

Focus groups took place online via MS Teams. Two members of the research team were present at each of the focus groups with one facilitating and one taking notes. Focus groups lasted approximately an hour and were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim using auto transcription software before being checked for accuracy and corrected where necessary by a member of the research team. Transcriptions also included non-verbal cues and contextual details as recorded in a researcher reflexive journal, providing a comprehensive dataset for analysis.

Student participants were given a £10 online shopping voucher code in recognition of their time.

2.1.3 Data analysis

Focus group data was thematically analysed, with initial independent coding undertaken by two members of the research team. Researchers reached a high level of agreement, with consensus reached on minor differences via discussion. Following consensus agreement between coders, a comprehensive codebook was created and systematically applied to all

focus group transcripts to identify themes that captured the main ideas and concepts emerging from the focus group discussions to inform the construction of the survey.

2.2 Quantitative phase

2.2.1 Recruitment

From the insights gained in the qualitative phase, data was utilised to construct an online survey to quantitatively assess the most commonly held views on the use of GenAI tools among staff and students across HE institutions, to address objective 3.

Non-probability convenience sampling was employed, and a purposive recruitment approach was utilised to engage participants from various backgrounds, academic disciplines and roles within higher education institutions. The recruitment strategy emphasised inclusivity, and stakeholders from different departments, levels of education, and roles within the academic community were recruited to ensure that the survey results reflected a diverse range of opinions and experiences regarding GenAI in higher education.

The sampling frame was the same as that applied to the recruitment of the focus groups as outlined above. Participants were recruited through the utilisation of strategic partnerships with networks including Advance HE, internal learning and teaching networks within each of the 4 lead institutions involved, and professional networks of the project team, to ensure access to a broad and diverse pool of respondents. Participants were then invited to respond to the survey with clear instructions provided on how to access and complete it.

2.2.2 Data collection

Insights gained from the qualitative phase were used to develop a survey to systematically explore the key themes, concepts, and variables identified in the focus group discussions. Survey items were designed to measure various aspects related to the integration of GenAI in education, including perceptions, experiences, skills, and support needs of academic staff, professional services staff, and students. Single response questions (mostly using a Likert scale), matrix questions (using a Likert scale), multiple response questions, open-ended questions and ranking questions were included to capture a range of responses and perspectives. The survey was piloted with a small group of participants representing the target population to enable issues with clarity, wording and format to be addressed before being finalised for full-scale implementation.

The survey was constructed and deployed online using SNAP, an electronic survey tool and participants completed the survey between 31 May and 2 August 2024.

2.2.3 Data analysis

Quantitative analysis was undertaken using SPSS, employing statistical techniques to analyse survey responses and quantify the most commonly held views on GenAI usage. We

utilised descriptive statistics, such as means and frequencies, to summarise quantitative findings.

Comparisons of responses across different stakeholder groups were conducted to determine variances and similarities, highlighting how perceptions of GenAI differ among roles.

This report provides a top-level summary of the key findings. Further investigation of the extensive data set will form part of future research projects and outputs.

3 Results: Key themes and insights

3.1 Demographics of survey respondents

The survey successfully recruited a total of 774 participants, distributed across three primary groups, reflecting a diverse cross-section of the higher education environment.

- Students, who comprised 47% (n=363)
- Professional services staff 22% (n=168)
- Academic staff 31% (n=243).

In terms of response completeness, 66% of the participants provided complete responses, while 34% submitted partial responses. Unfortunately, those participants who reported never having engaged with GenAI were more likely to provide partial responses. As a result, some subgroup analyses could not be performed when comparing frequent users with those who had never used GenAI. This limitation may impact the comprehensiveness of our analysis, particularly regarding insights into the experiences and perceptions of non-users.

3.1.1 Student specific demographics

In terms of widening access, 41% of the student respondents did not report any of the six widening access markers:

- 12% (n=45) one marker of widening access
- 5% (n=17) two markers of widening access
- 1% (n=3) three markers of widening access
- No student had more than three markers.

The most common marker was "I regard myself as coming from a low-income household" with 10% (n=38) selecting this, this is followed by 9% (n=32) for "I am the first person in my family to go to university" and "I have successfully completed a pre-entry programme before starting university", then 1.9% (n=7) for "I am responsible for the unpaid care and wellbeing of a dependent". A final 1% (n=4) of student respondents had experience of being in care or had refugee status or were asylum seekers.

Regarding learning or accessibility requirements, 18% (n=64) of the students reported having diverse learning or accessibility needs.

Of the 363 students who responded, 46% (n=166) reported being full-time students, and 10% (n=37) were part-time students. Additionally, 44% (n=160) did not provide data on this question.

Among those who responded, 23% (n=83) identified as studying fully on campus, 9% (n=34) as studying fully online, and 2% (n=8) as participating in a hybrid model, with 66% (n=238) not providing data on their mode of study.

3.2 Level of GenAI tool usage

There were 773 participants that responded to the question on the level of GenAI usage in their personal activities (Figure 1). When examining the combined data for all respondents, for GenAI usage frequency, the following was observed:

- 30% (n=232) used them very frequently (more than once a week) or frequently (once per week).
- 27% (n=209) used them occasionally.
- 43% (n=332) used them rarely (once or twice a year) or never.

When comparing GenAI tool usage for personal activities between students and staff, the student population exhibited patterns broadly similar to that of professional services staff, with 33% of students and 29% of professional service staff reporting frequent usage, 27% of students and 35% of professional service staff reporting occasional use, and 40% of students and 36% of professional services staff reporting that they rarely engaged with.

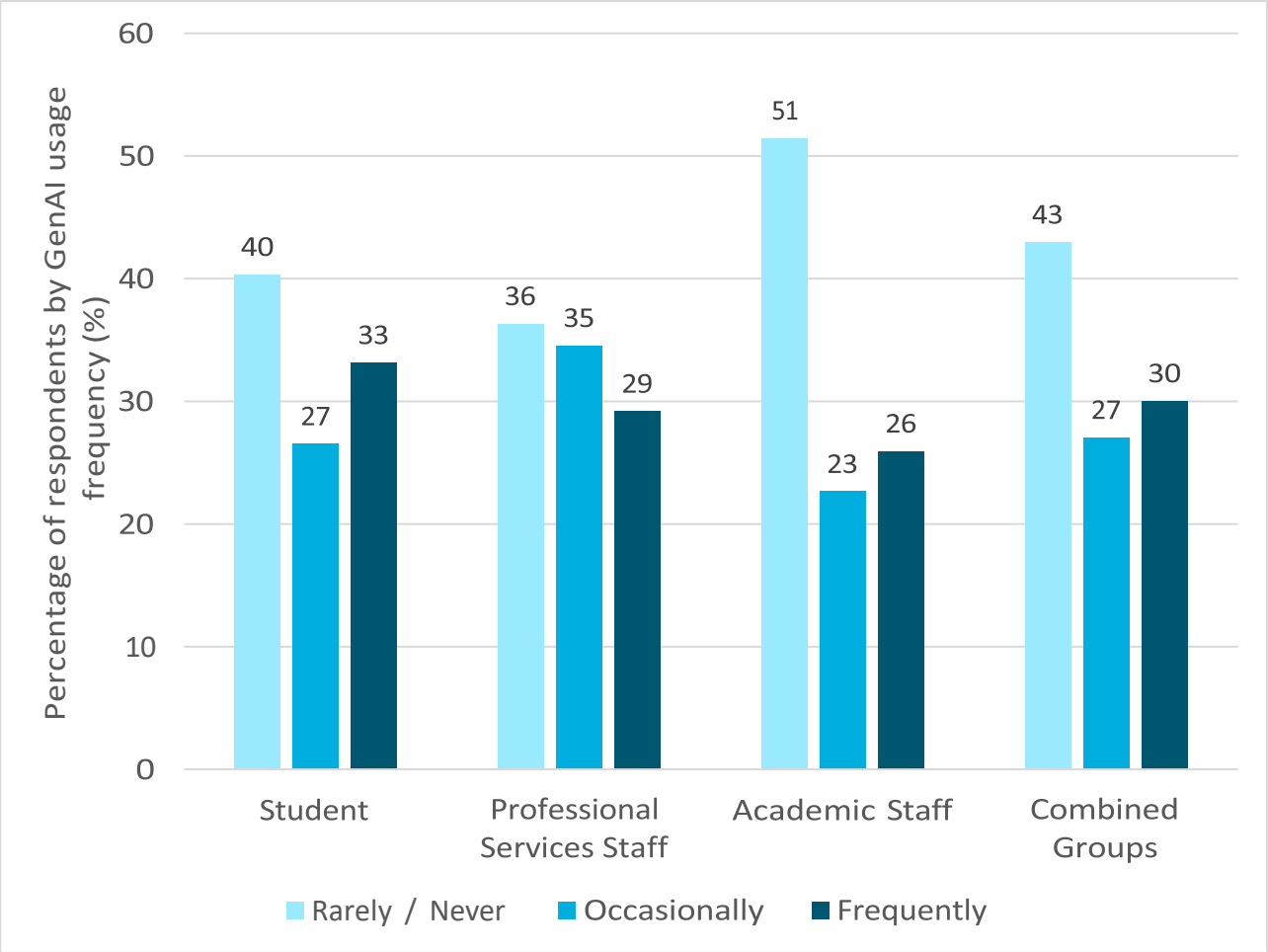

Figure 1. Use of GenAI tools for personal activities.

GenAI tools. In the case of academic staff, the percentage reporting frequent or occasional use, 26% and 23% respectively, is lower than for students and professional services staff. Conversely, the percentage of academic staff reporting to have rarely or never use them, 51%, is higher than for students and professional services staff (Figure 1).

When examining the frequency of GenAI tool usage for professional activities, staff were asked, “How often do you use GenAI tools to support your professional practice?” while students were asked, “How often do you use GenAI tools to support your university studies?” This distinction was made to ensure that students were reporting on their academic work rather than any paid employment they may have alongside their studies.

There were 757 participants that responded to the question on the level of GenAI usage for professional activities (Figure 2). The combined data for all respondents indicated a slight increase in the proportion using these tools frequently, and a modest decrease in using it occasionally and rarely or never.

- 38% (n=286), used them very frequently (more than once a week) or frequently (once per week).
- 24% (n=180) used them occasionally.
- 38% (n=291) used them rarely (once or twice a year) or never.

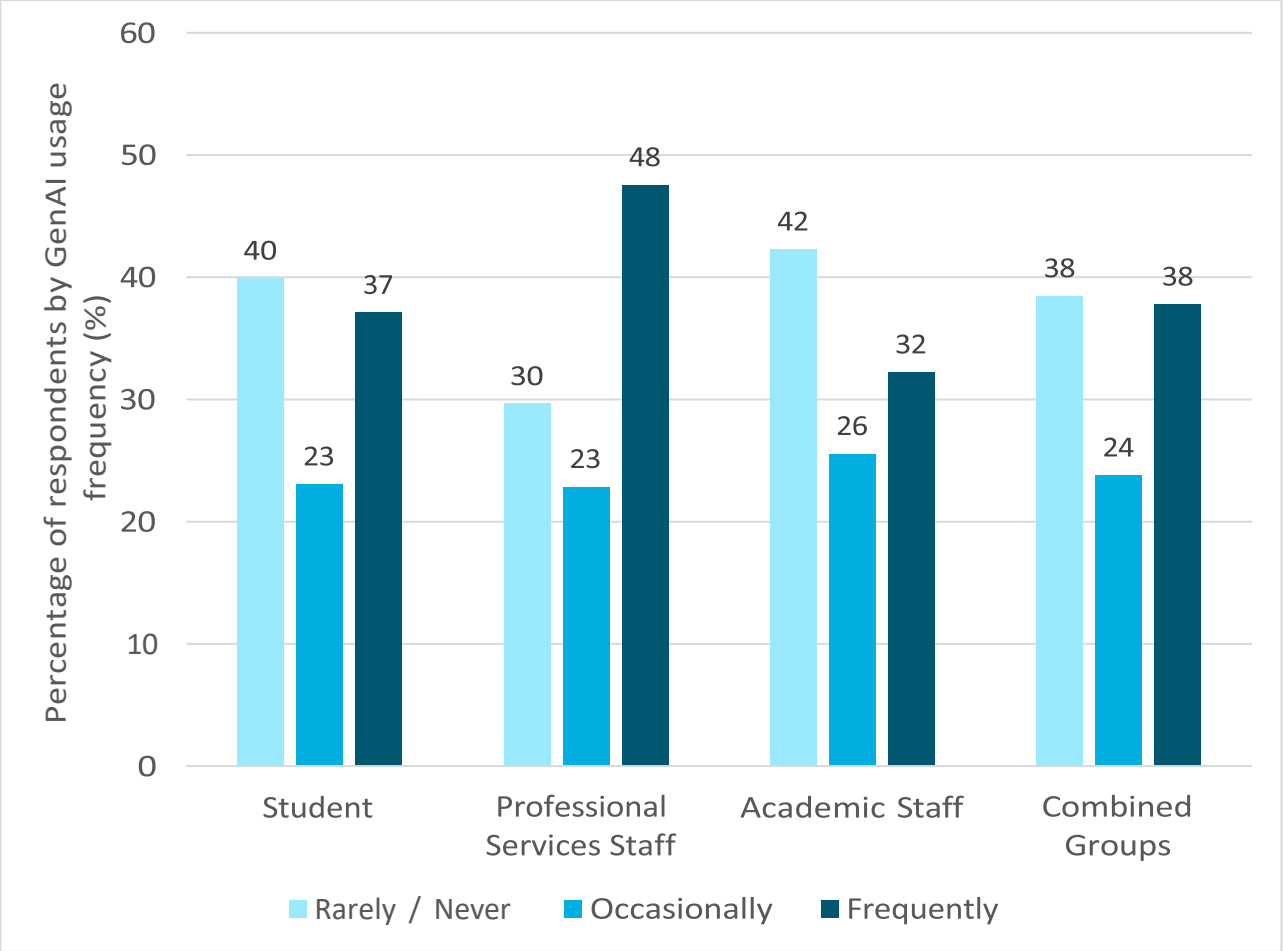

Figure 2. Use of GenAI tools to support university studies / professional practice

Examining the data by respondent group reveals a modest increase in the number of students using them frequently, rising to 37% (n=132) and a modest decrease, down to 23% (n=82), in those using them occasionally. There was no difference in the percentage of those using them rarely or never. In the case of professional services staff, there is an increase in the number using them frequently, rising to 48% (n=77), and a decrease in the number using them occasionally, down to 23% (n=37), as well as a decrease in the number using them rarely or never, down to 30% (n=48). A similar pattern is observed among academic staff, who exhibited an increase in using them frequently, rising to 32% (n=77),

and in using them occasionally, rising to 26% (n=61), and a decrease in using them rarely or never, down to 42% (n=101).

3.3 Engagement with GenAI tools

Those participants that indicated they used GenAI tools frequently or occasionally were invited to select which of 11 common prompt types match those which they use regularly. The prompt types offered were: Explain, Generate, How do I, Summarise, Suggest, Translate, Create, Improve, Calculate, Analyse, Correct.

From the 466 participants who reported using GenAI tools, there we 411 participants that responded to the question on prompt types (Figure 3). The most commonly selected prompt type was "Summarise," chosen by 57% (n=236) of respondents. This was closely followed by "Explain," which was selected by 56% (n=229) of respondents.

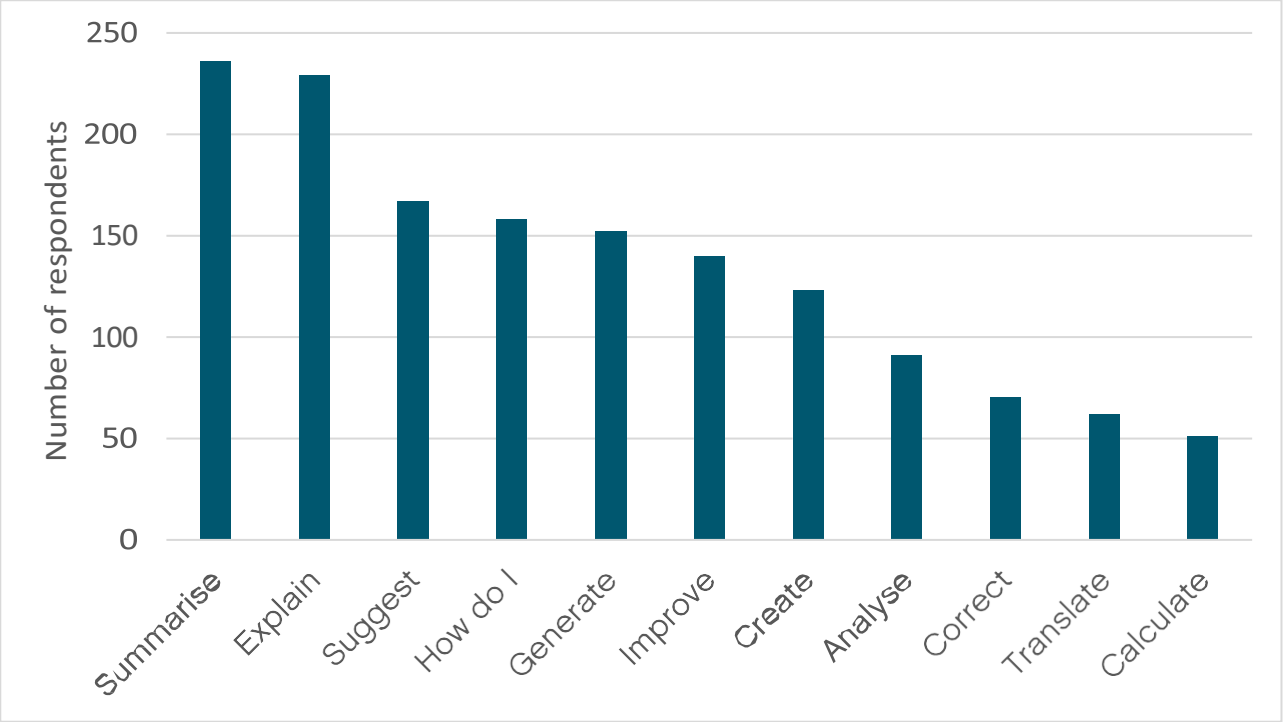

Figure 3. Prompts used by staff and students who use GenAI tools.
Only 57 respondents reported using 6 or more of the 11 possible prompt types presented to them (Figure 4). In contrast, 354 participants, reported using 5 or fewer prompt types.

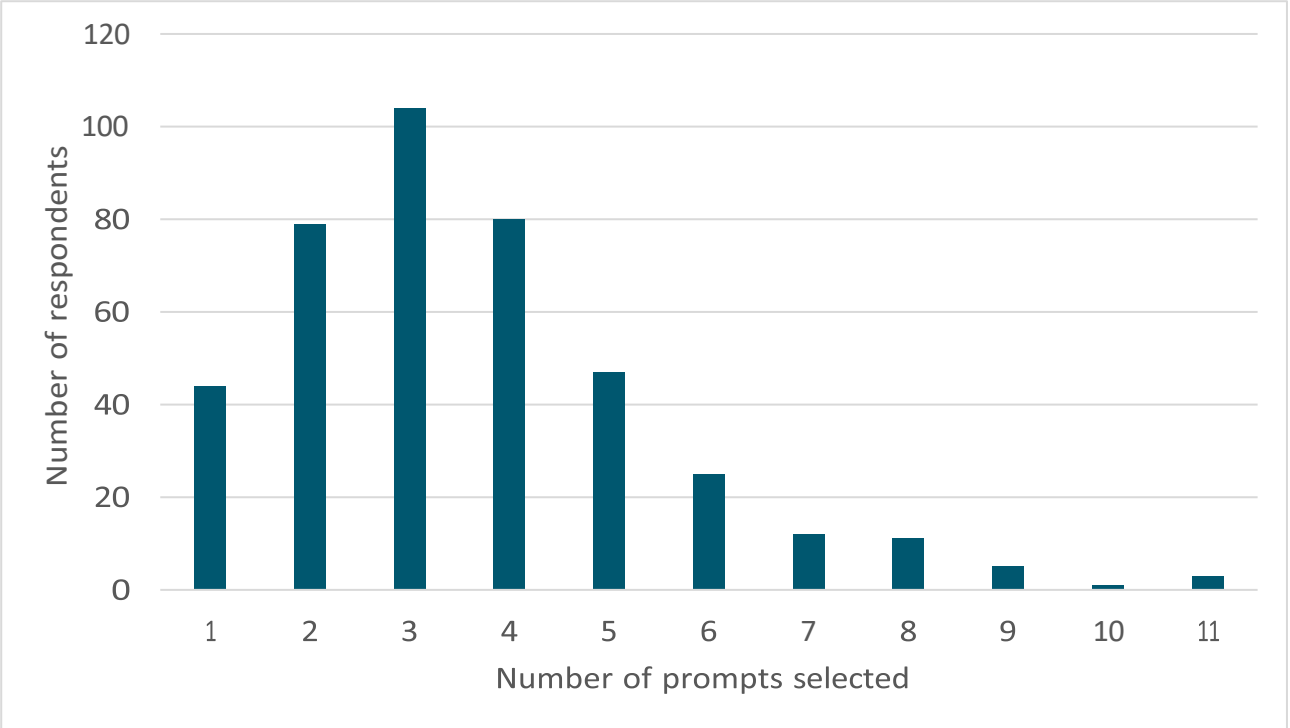

Figure 4. Total number of prompts selected by respondents.

The 466 participants that indicated they used GenAI tools frequently or occasionally were also asked the extent to which they thought it had improved their productivity. There were 392 participants that responded to the question. Out of these participants, the student group were more like to report a greater perceived improvement in productivity compared to the professional services staff group and academic staff group (Figure 5).

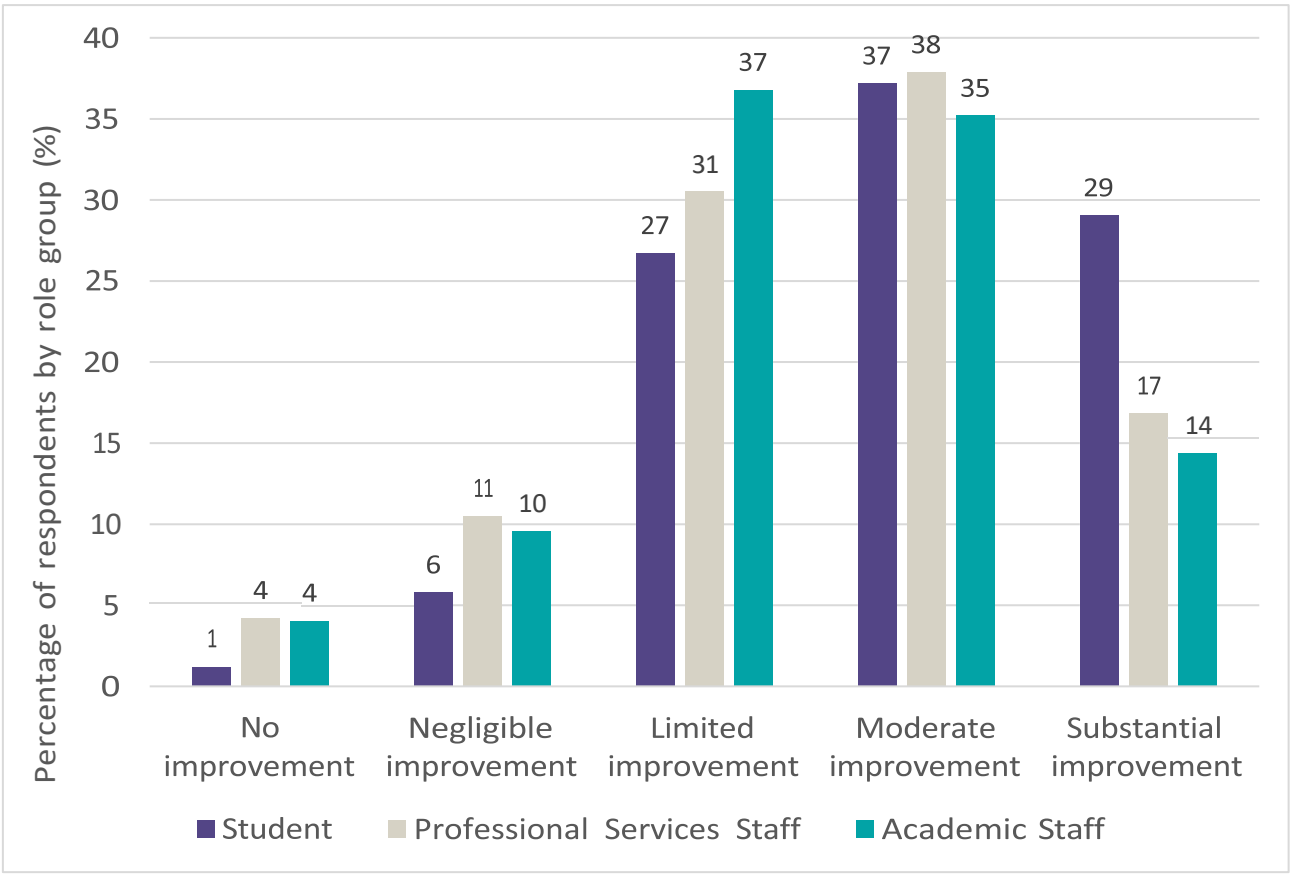

Figure 5. Extent to which the use of GenAI tools were perceived to have improved productivity.

The 291 participants that indicated they rarely or never used GenAI tools for their work or studies were invited to identify the reasons for their lack of engagement with GenAI tools.

There were 272 participants that responded, with 33% of the respondents identifying a key reason being due to doubts about the quality, accuracy, and reliability of the outputs. In addition, 30%, expressed concerns about the ethical implications of using these tools, highlighting potential ethical dilemmas as a barrier to adoption (Figure 6).

In contrast, only a small percentage of participants attributed their non-use to other factors. Only 3% found the tools too confusing to use, while only 4% pointed to a lack of institutional support, training, and resources or concerns about the costs associated with some GenAI tools (Figure 6).

Figure 6. Reasons for non-use of GenAI tools by participants who reported rarely or never using GenAI tools for their work or studies.

Towards the end of the survey all participants were asked about the standard of the outputs from GenAI tools, whether they were beneficial within their discipline / area of work and whether they had any intention of engaging with any GenAI tools in the next 12 months. The differences between user groups and GenAI usage frequency was marked (Figures 7 – 12).

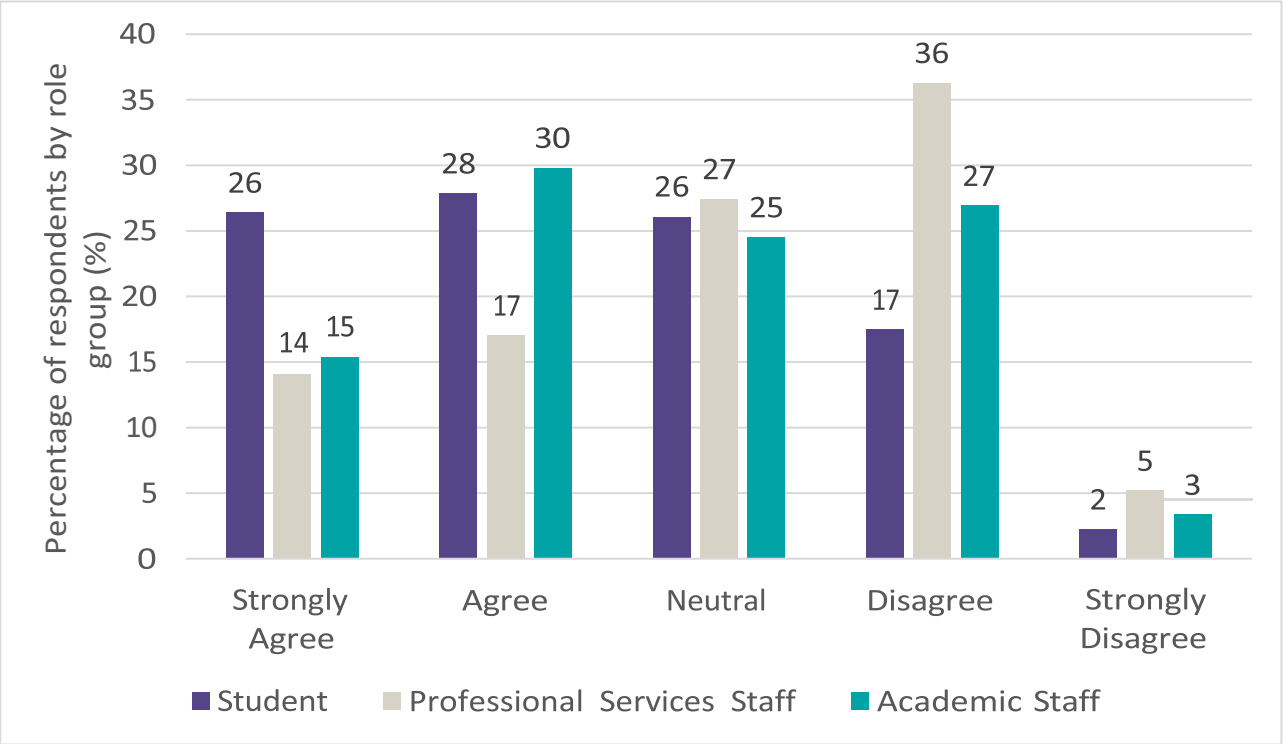

Figure 7. Level of agreement with the statement "Most of the outputs from GenAI tools are not of a high enough standard to be genuinely useful" by role group.

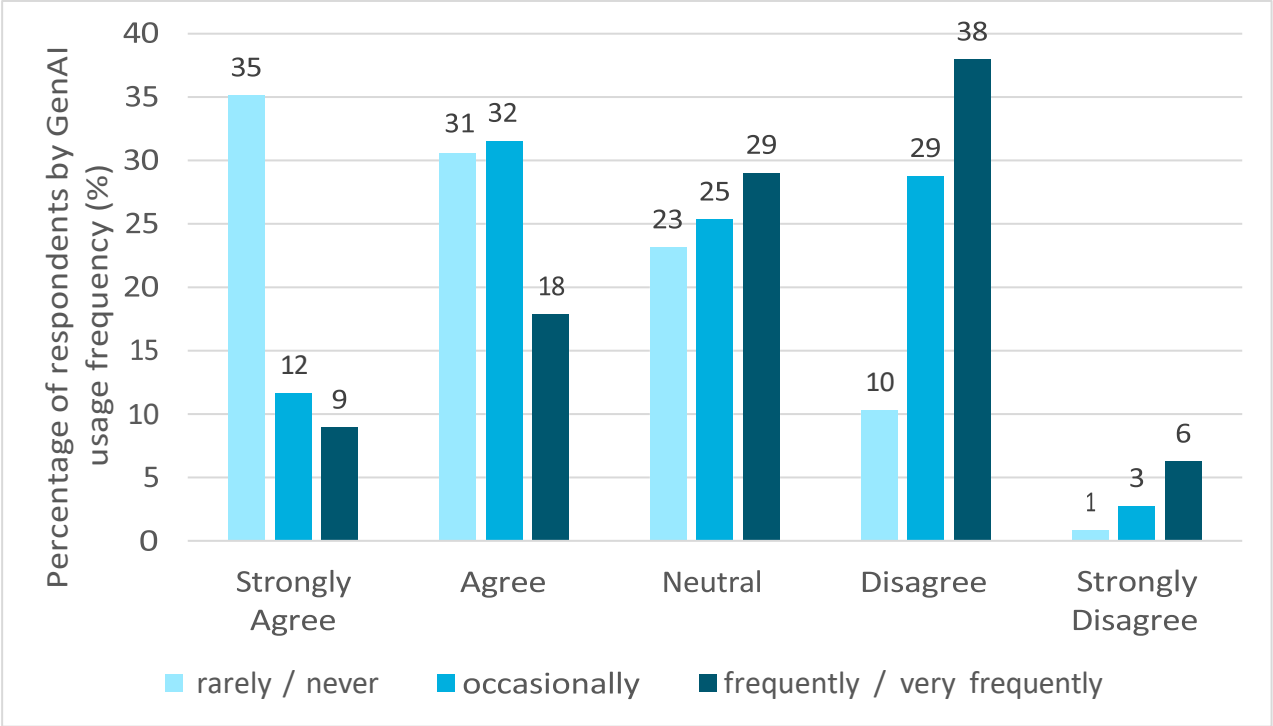

Figure 8. Level of agreement with the statement "Most of the outputs from GenAI tools are not of a high enough standard to be genuinely useful" by GenAI usage frequency.

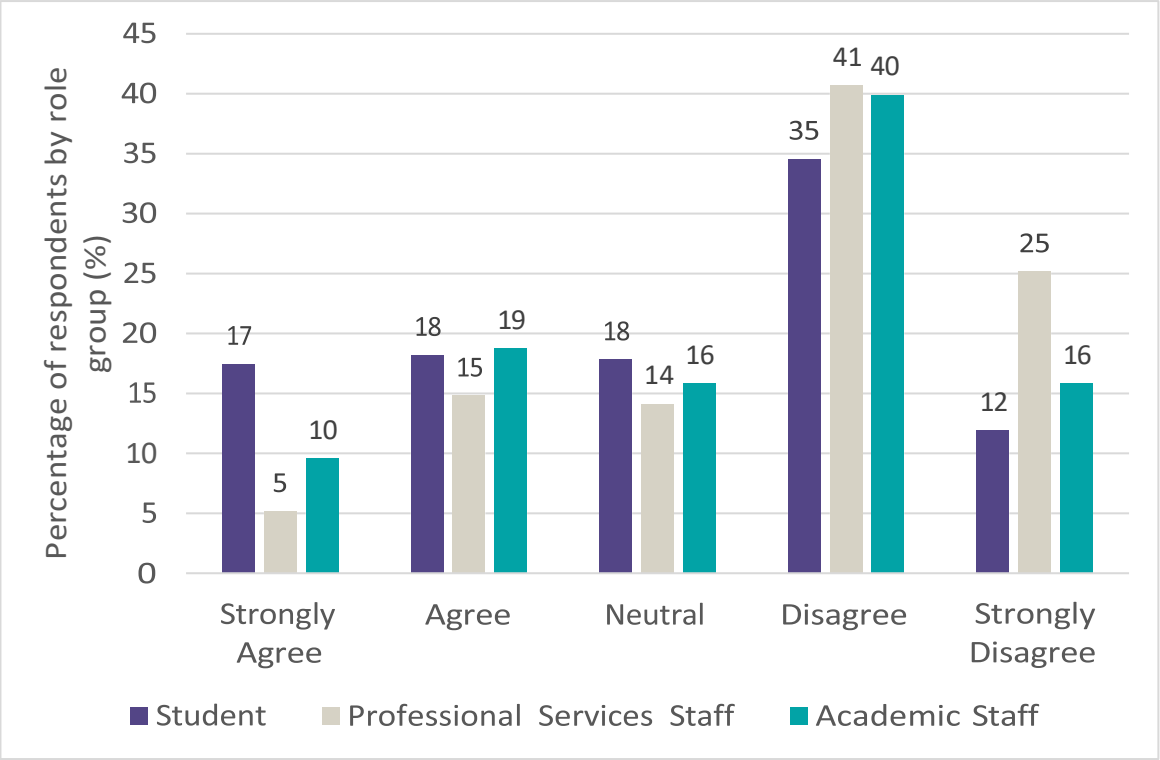

Figure 9. Level of agreement with the statement "I do not believe that there is much benefit in using GenAI tools within my discipline / area of work" by role group.

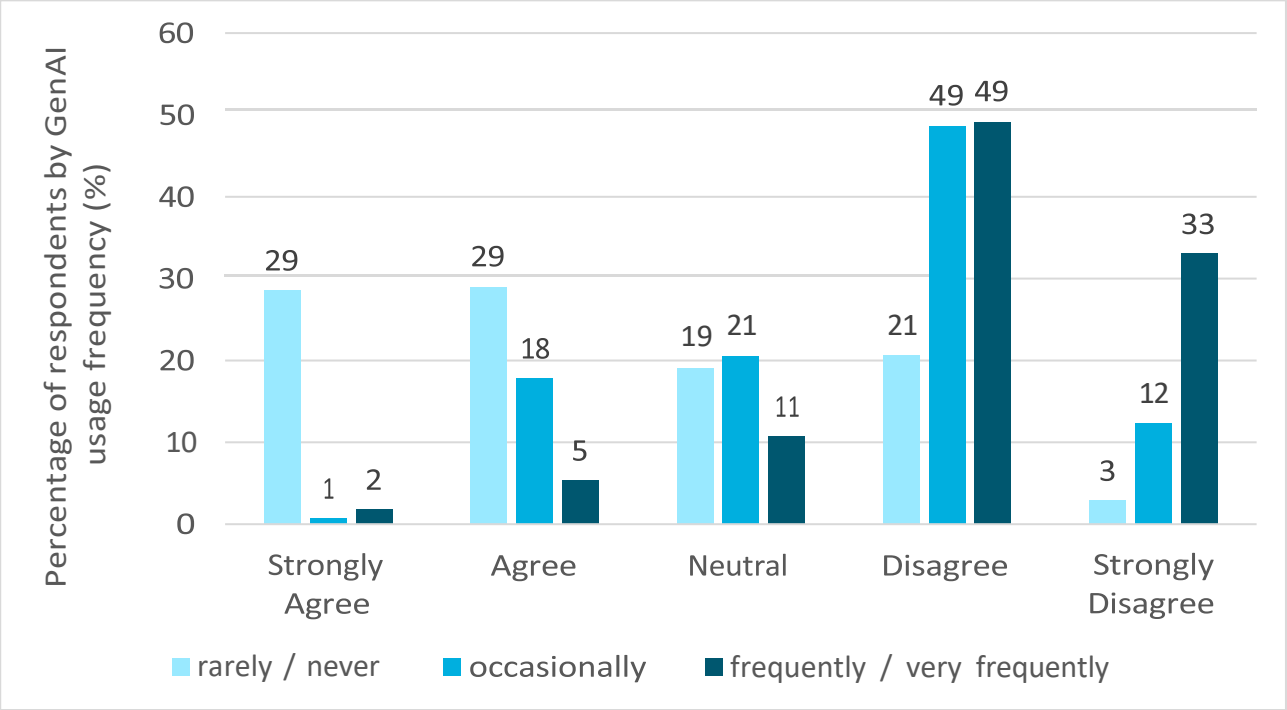

Figure 10. Level of agreement with the statement "I do not believe that there is much benefit in using GenAI tools within my discipline / area of work" by GenAI usage frequency.

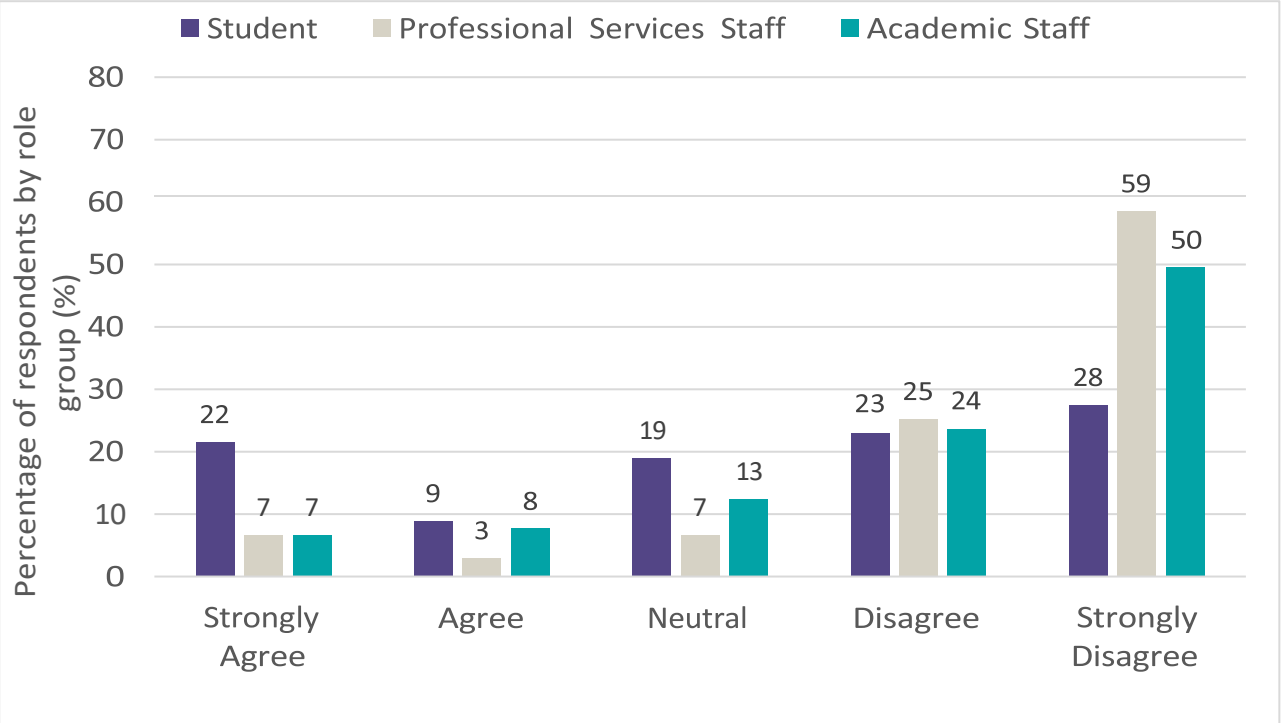

Figure 11. Level of agreement with the statement "I have no intention of engaging with any GenAI tools in the next 12 months" by role group.

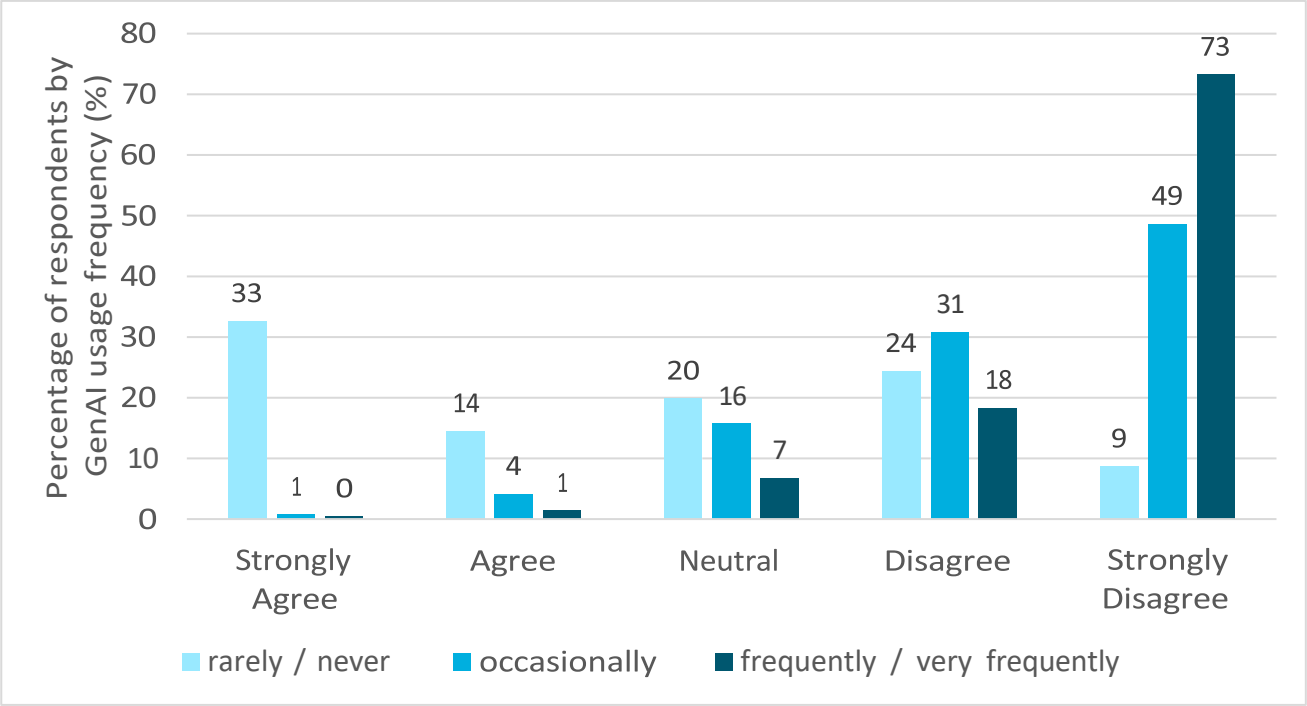

Figure 12. Level of agreement with the statement "I have no intention of engaging with any GenAI tools in the next 12 months" according to GenAI usage frequency.

3.4 Attitudes towards GenAI tool usage

Respondents were also asked to choose from a list of 12 words which they most associated with GenAI tool use. The list was evenly divided into 6 positively framed words (Efficient, Upskilling, Empowering, Enhancing, Innovative, Personalised) and 6 negatively framed words (Cheating, Biased, Unfair, Formulaic, Unethical, Divisive). Participants could select as many words as they desired.

Of the 673 respondents who provided answers to this question, the most commonly selected words were “Efficient” (49%) followed by “Enhancing” (45%) (Figure 13). The majority of respondents selected 4 or fewer words (71% n=578). With only 14% (n=94) selecting more than six words (Figure 14).

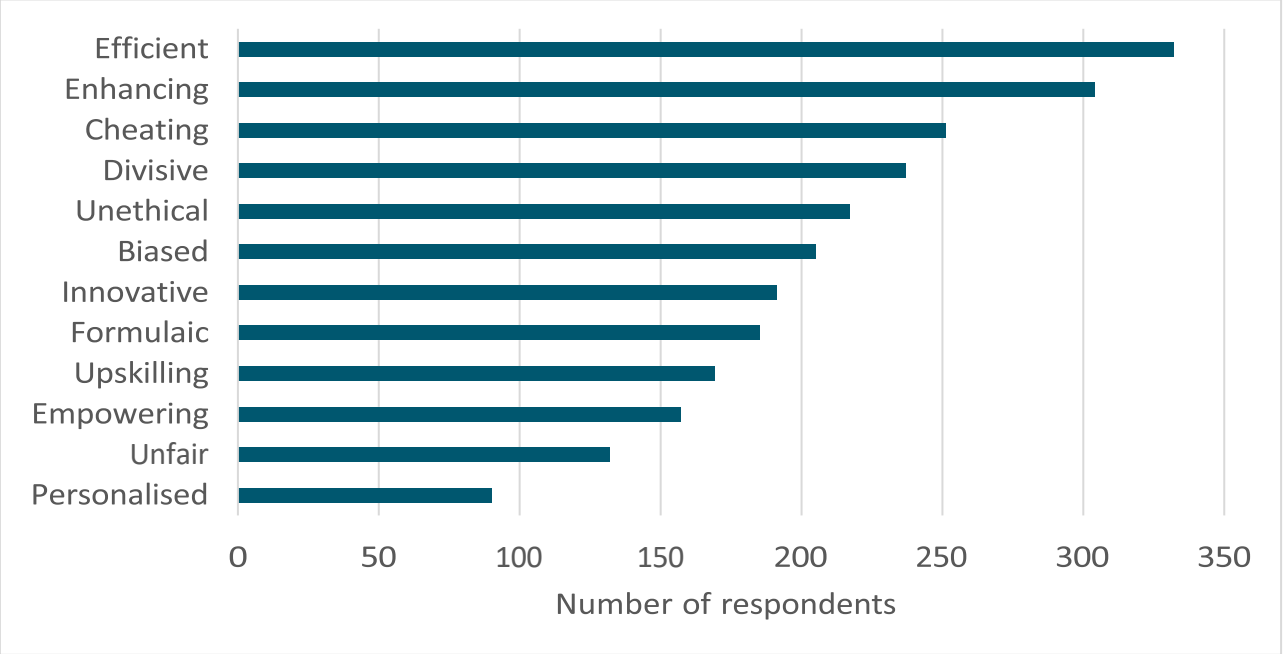

Figure 13. Words most strongly associated with the use of GenAI tools within Higher Education.

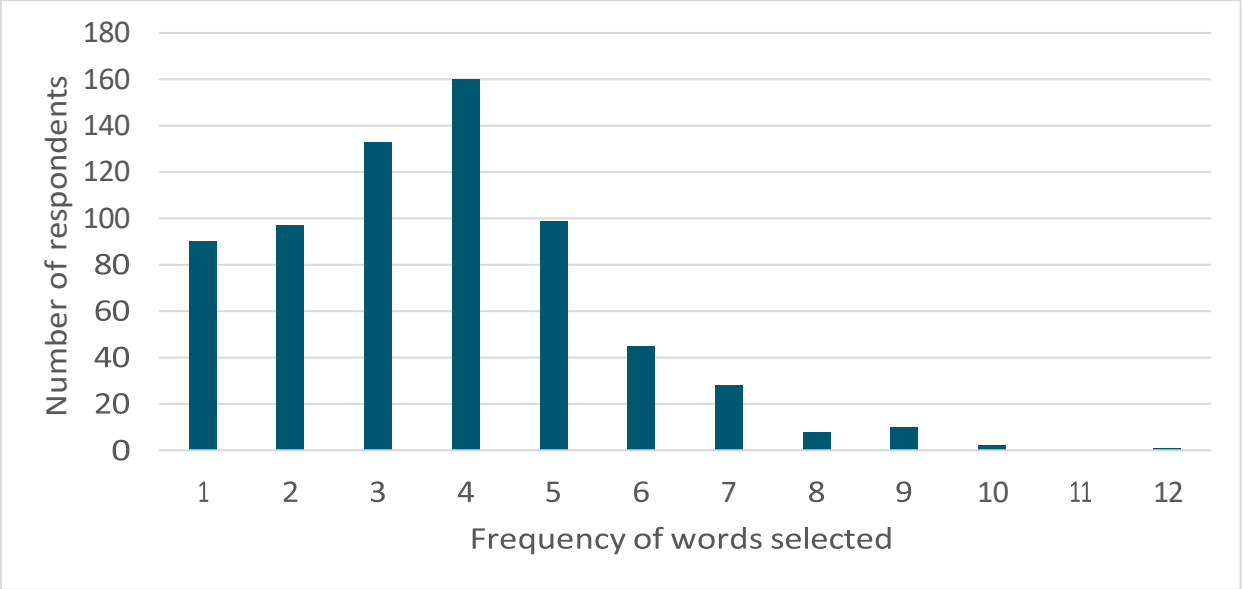

Figure 14. Frequency of words selected.

When comparing academic staff, professional services staff, and students, there was a clear difference in the selection of negative words (Table 1). Students were significantly less likely to select negative words compared to both academic and professional services staff, no significant difference was found between the two staff groups in their selection of negative words.

There was no significant difference observed in the number of positive words selected from the list between the participant categories (Table 2).

This suggests that while students and staff have similar perceptions of the positive aspects of GenAI tools, students tend to have fewer negative associations compared to staff.

Table 1. Number of negative words selected

Participant Category	0 negative words selected	1-2 negative words selected	≥3 negative words selected
Student	153	119	89
Professional Services Staff	65	59	43
Academic Staff	73	74	96
Total	291	252	228

Table 2. Number of positive words selected

Participant Category	0 positive words selected	1-2 positive words selected	≥3 positive words selected
Student	135	126	100
Professional Services Staff	50	59	58
Academic Staff	91	95	57
Total	276	280	215

When examining the responses of participants based on their frequency of using GenAI tools, distinct trends were observed. Respondents who selected no negative words were much more likely to be frequent users compared to occasional or rare / non-users (Table 3).

Conversely, those who selected three or more negative words were more likely to be rare / non-users than frequent users.

Table 3. Usage behaviour and selection of negative words

Usage Behaviour	0 negative words selected	1-2 negative words selected	≥3 negative words selected
Rarely / Never	46	65	135
Occasionally	69	78	61
Frequently	161	108	32
Total	276	251	228

The opposite pattern emerges with the selection of positive words, where frequent users dominate (Table 4).

Table 4. Usage behaviour and selection of positive words

Usage Behaviour	0 positive words selected	1-2 positive words selected	≥3 positive words selected
Rarely / Never	165	63	18
Occasionally	59	100	49
Frequently	37	117	147
Total	261	280	214

Interesting trends were observed for participants responses to statements around the use of GenAI tools in Education. There were 623 responses to the five questions asked around their attitudes to the use of GenAI tools. (Figures 15 - 24).

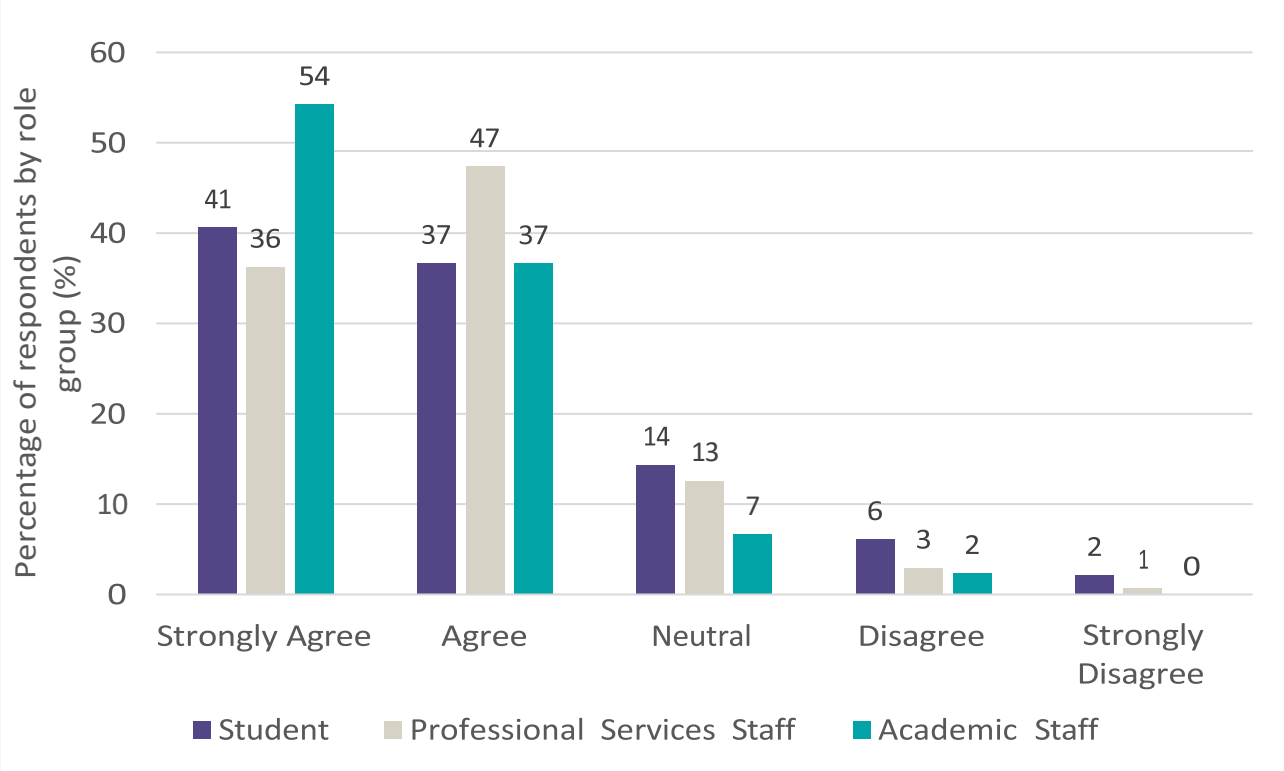

Figure 15. Level of agreement with the statement "Using GenAI tools in higher education work can lead to academic misconduct" by role group.

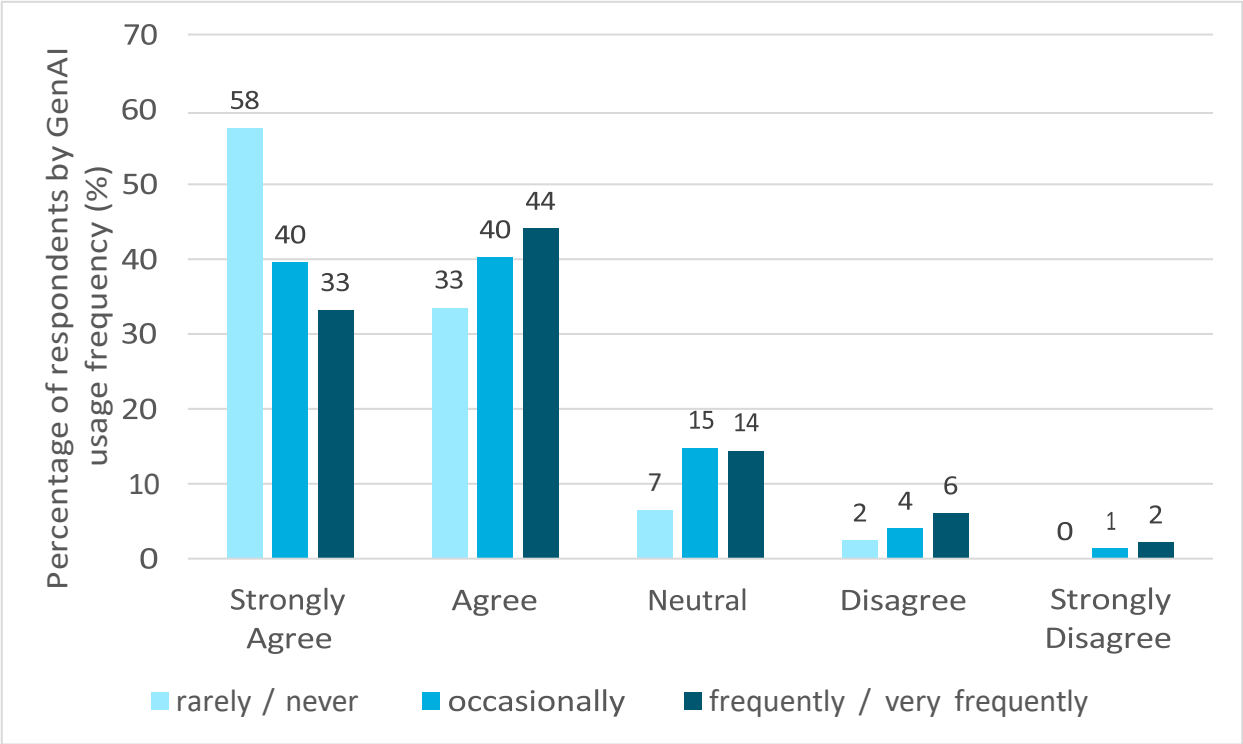

Figure 16. Level of agreement with the statement "Using GenAI tools in higher education work can lead to academic misconduct" by GenAI usage frequency.

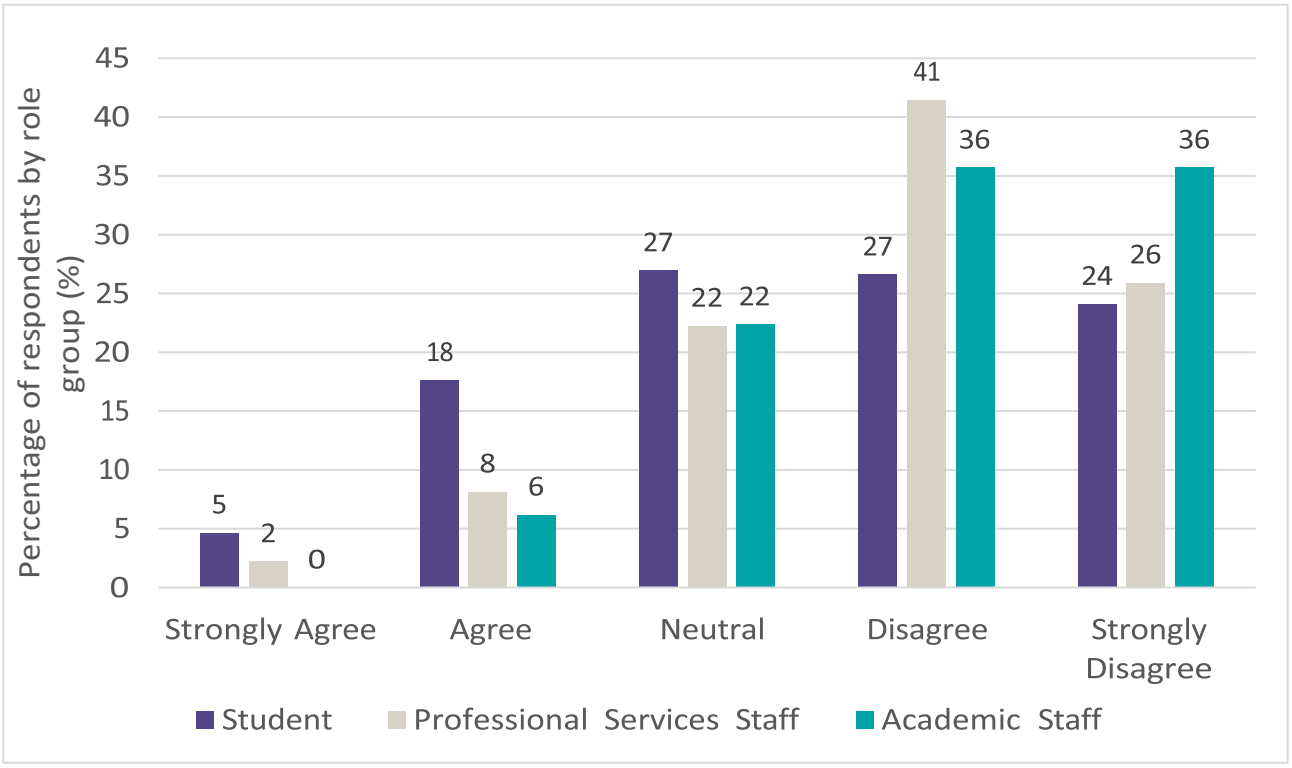

Figure 17. Level of agreement with the statement “GenAI tools are more objective and can reduce human bias” by role group.

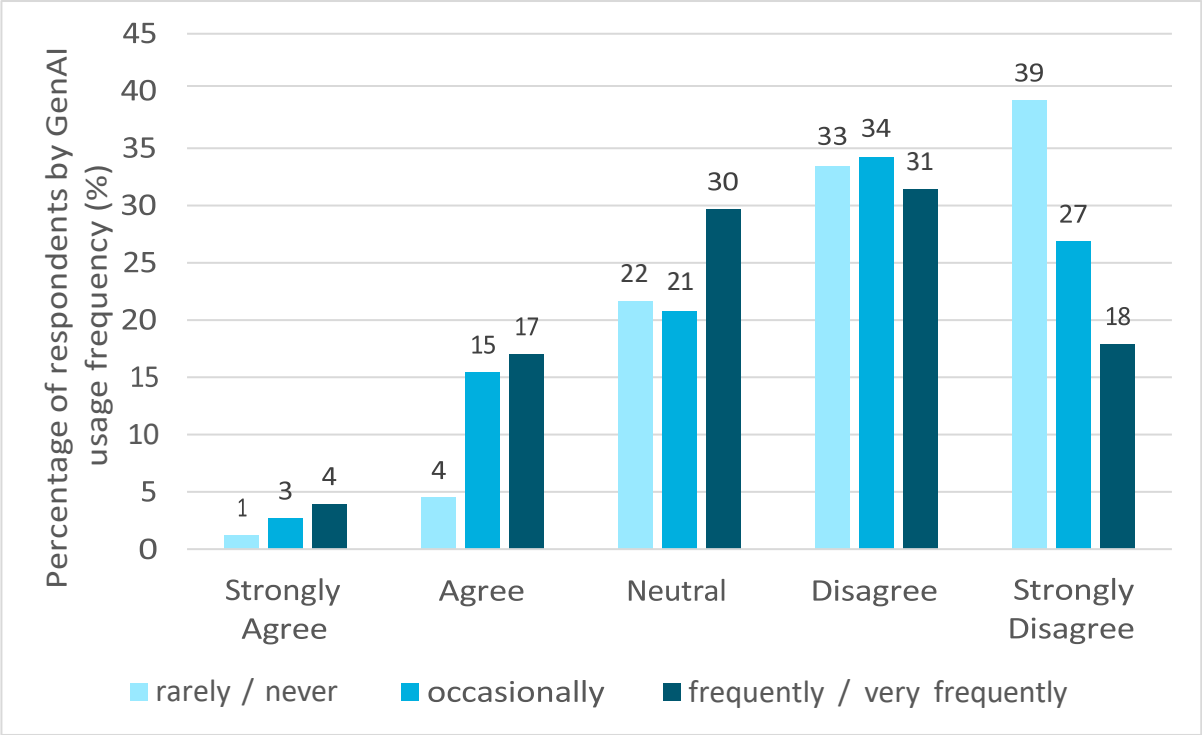

Figure 18. Level of agreement with the statement "GenAI tools are more objective and can reduce human bias" by GenAI usage frequency.

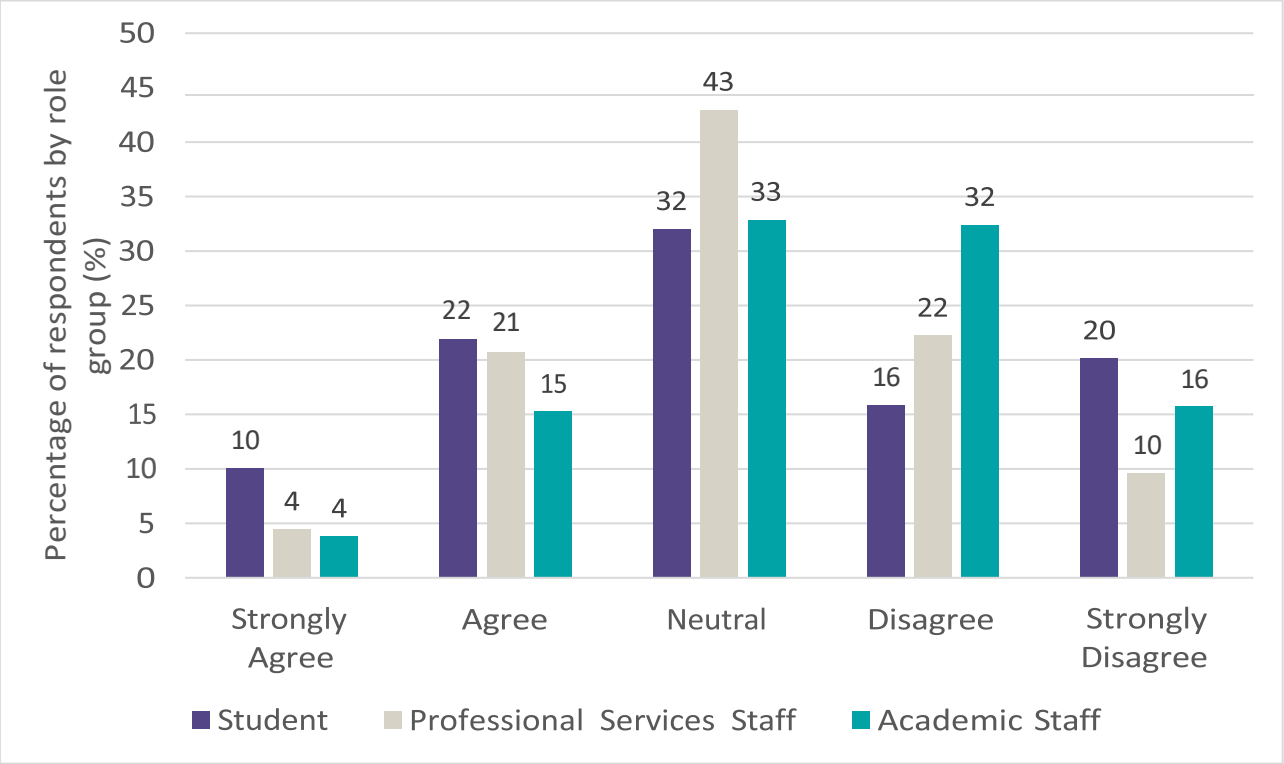

Figure 19. Level of agreement with the statement "GenAI tools are likely to have an overall positive impact on equity and inclusion" by role group.

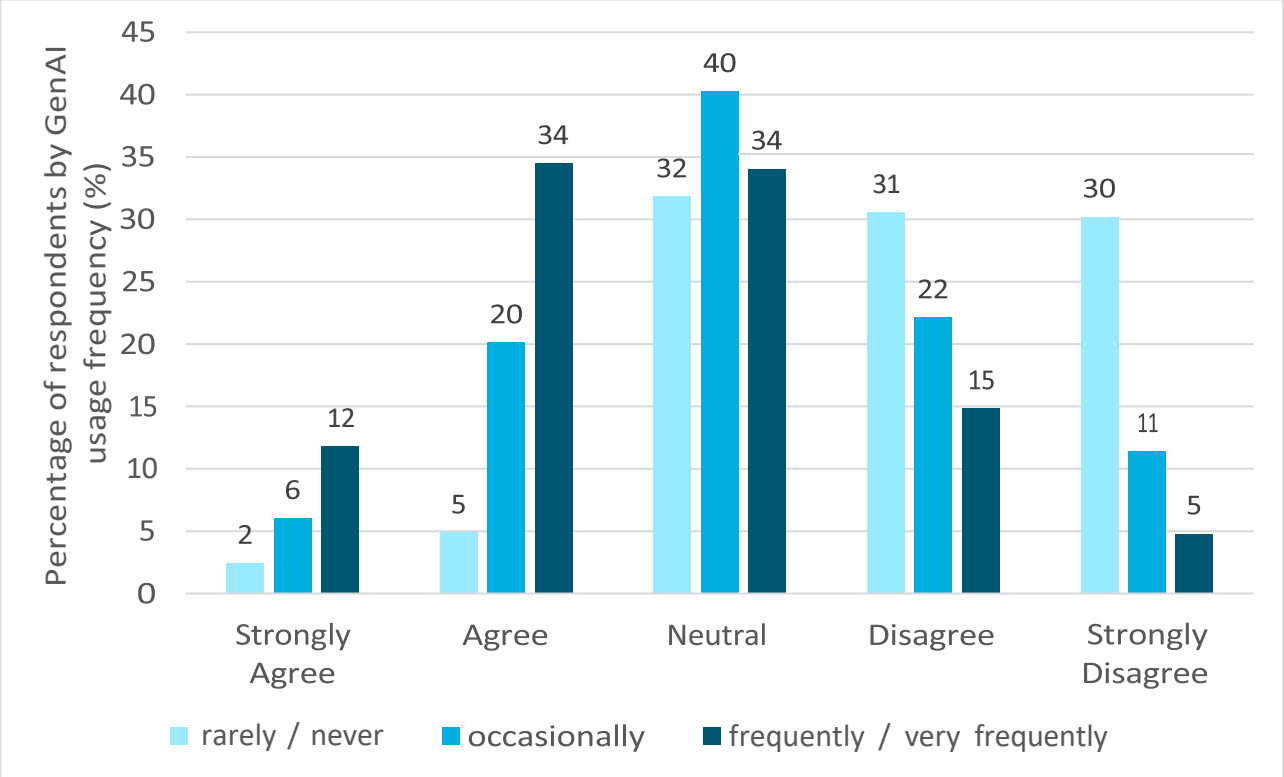

Figure 20. Level of agreement with the statement “GenAI tools are likely to have an overall positive impact on equity and inclusion” by GenAI usage frequency.

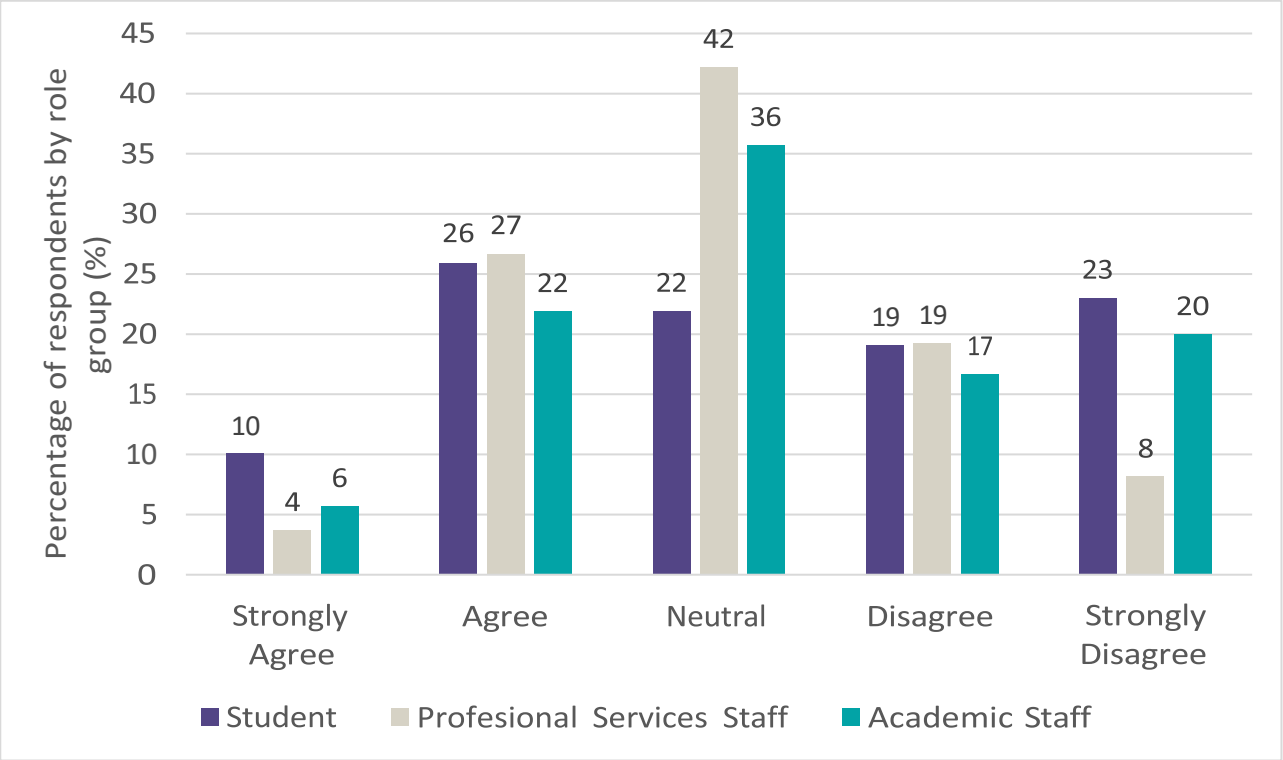

Figure 21. Level of agreement with the statement "GenAI tools are likely to increase creativity and innovation in higher education" by role group.

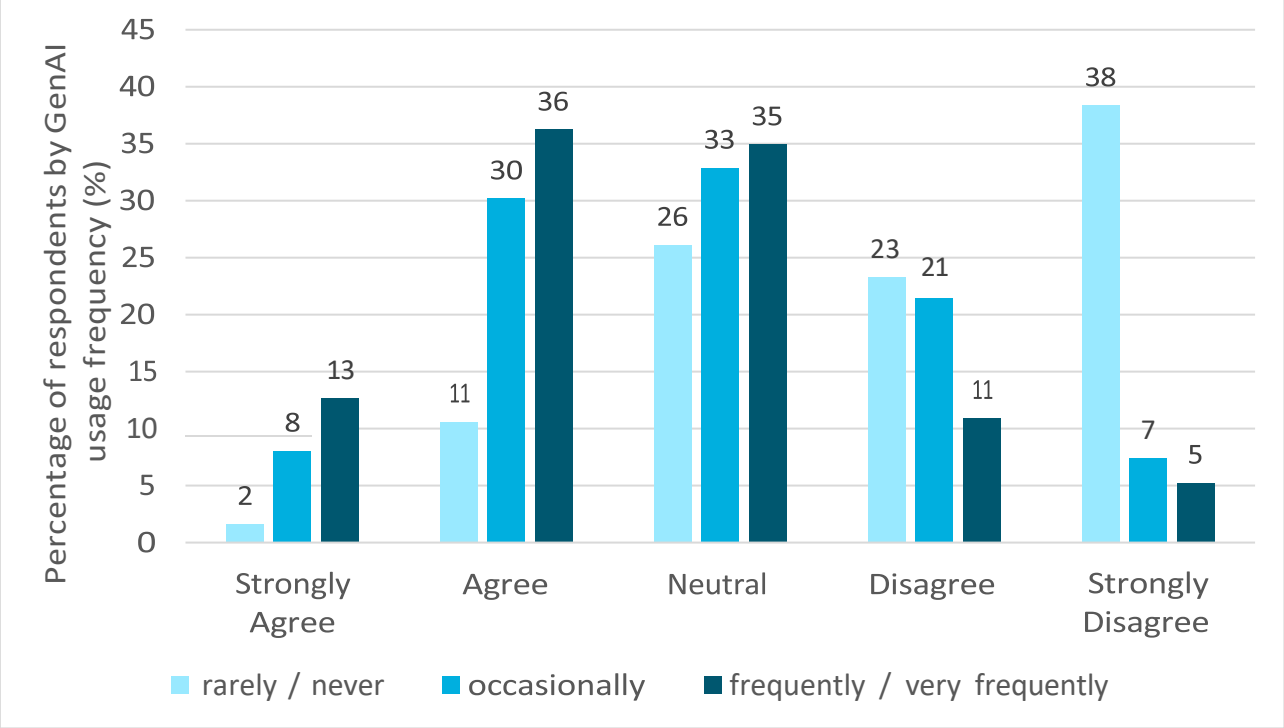

Figure 22. Level of agreement with the statement "GenAI tools are likely to increase creativity and innovation in higher education" by GenAI usage frequency.

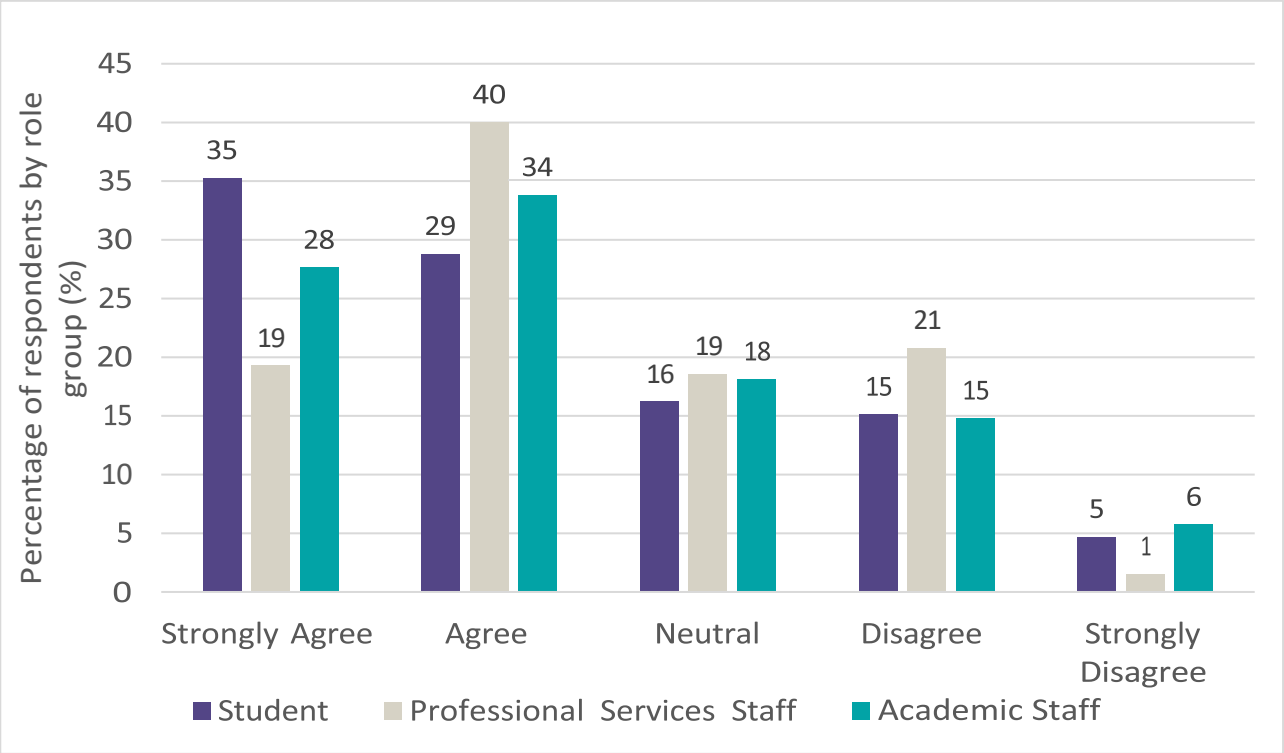

Figure 23. Level of agreement with the statement "GenAI tools pose a threat to critical thinking in Universities" by role group.

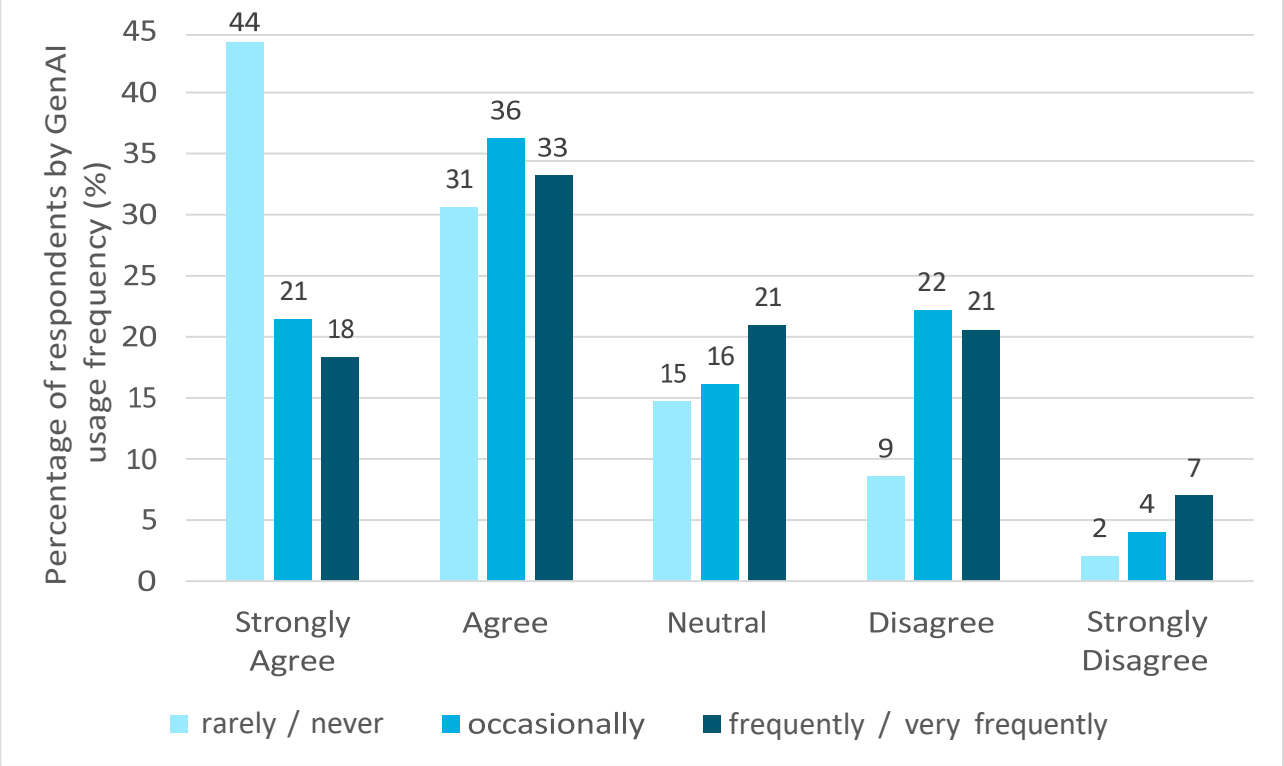

Figure 24. Level of agreement with the statement "GenAI tools pose a threat to critical thinking in Universities" by GenAI usage frequency.

3.5 Acceptable usage of GenAI tools

Staff and students were asked to select from a list of tasks that could potentially be performed using GenAI tools, identifying which they deemed acceptable for staff use.

There were 268 students that responded to this question, 133 professional services staff and 207 academic staff (Figure 25). Only a very small proportion of respondents believed that none of the listed tasks were acceptable for staff use:

- Students: 9%
- Professional services staff: 4%
- Academic staff: 4%

The least acceptable task for staff to use GenAI tools for was marking students' summative assessments

- Students: 6%
- Professional services staff: 11%
- Academic staff: 7%

For the professional services group there were 12 tasks that the majority (>50%) of respondents indicated were acceptable tasks for staff to use GenAI tools for, with most of these tasks having the highest level (between 60 – 76%) of task acceptability among all role groups. These tasks were:

- Generation of text (e.g., emails, web pages, social media posts): 76%
- Helping to understand new/complex concepts: 73%
- Generation of ideas: 73%
- Summarising long documents, policies, guidance, etc.: 72%
- Generation of learning materials, activities, or course structures: 67%
- Language translation: 67%
- Acting as a "critical friend": 65%
- Generation of code: 65%
- Generation of quizzes / assessment: 61%
- Enhancement of staff-created content e.g. images, code, lyrics, prototypes, text: 61%
- Generation of images: 60%

- Summarising a published academic paper: 59%

Among students, there were only 3 tasks that a majority (>50%) of students felt were acceptable tasks for staff to use GenAI tools for. These tasks were:

- Language translation: 56%
- Helping to understand new/complex concepts: 54%
- Summarising long documents, policies, guidance, etc.: 53%

For academic staff, there were 10 tasks that reached majority agreement:

- Generation of text (e.g., emails, web pages, social media posts): 58%
- Language translation: 57%
- Generation of images: 56%
- Generation of learning materials, activities, or course structure: 56%
- Acting as a "critical friend": 53%
- Helping to understand new/complex concepts: 52%
- Enhancing staff-created content (e.g., images, code, lyrics, prototypes, text): 52%
- Generation of quizzes / assessment: 52%
- Summarising long documents, policies, guidance, etc.: 51%
- Generation of ideas: 51%

The data suggest that professional services staff were generally more accepting of the potential use of these tools than either students or academic staff.

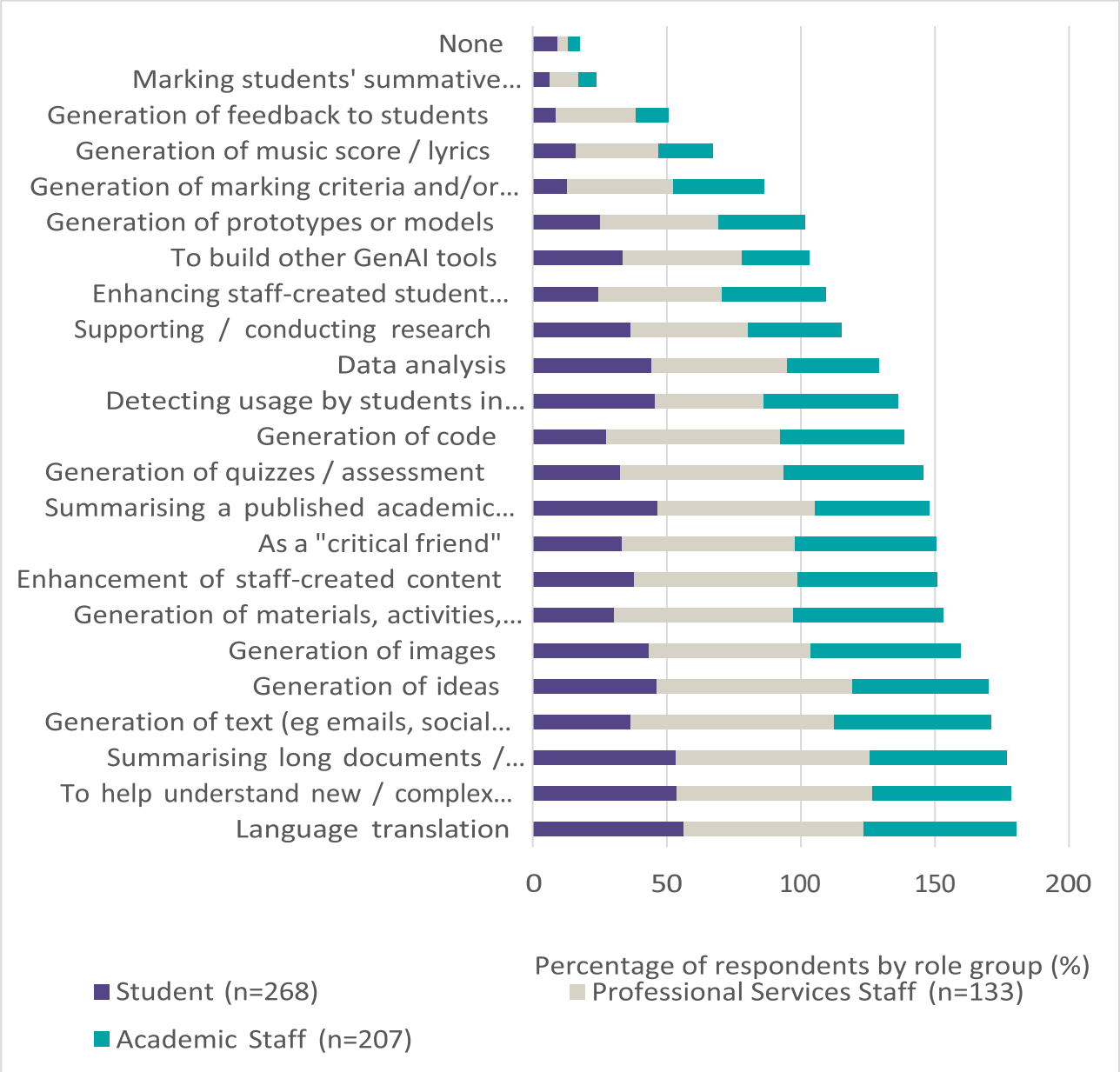

Figure 25. Percentage of respondents for each role group that agree that the task is an acceptable use of GenAI tools by staff.

For those who rarely or never use GenAI tools for work (n=219), there were only two tasks that the majority (>50%) agreed were acceptable uses of GenAI tools by staff (Figure 26). These tasks were:

+ Language translation (55%)
+ Detecting usage of GenAI tools by students in assessments (54%)

Frequent and very frequent users (n=235) identified a broader range of acceptable tasks, which included the following 14 tasks:

+ Helping to understand new or complex concepts (74%)
+ Summarising long documents, policies, guidance, etc. (71%)
+ Generating ideas (71%)
+ Generating text (e.g. emails, web pages, social media posts) (68%)
+ Generating learning materials, activities, or course structure (64%)
+ Generating images (63%)
+ Language translation (63%)
+ Summarising a published academic paper (62%)
+ Enhancement of staff-created content e.g. images, code, lyrics, prototypes, text (60%)
+ As a "critical friend" (60%)
+ Generation of quizzes / assessment (60%)
+ Generation of code (58%)
+ Data analysis (57%)
+ Supporting / conducting research (52%)

Respondents who occasionally used GenAI tools (n=154) followed a similar pattern to that of frequent and very frequent users, with the first 11 tasks detailed above also having majority agreement.

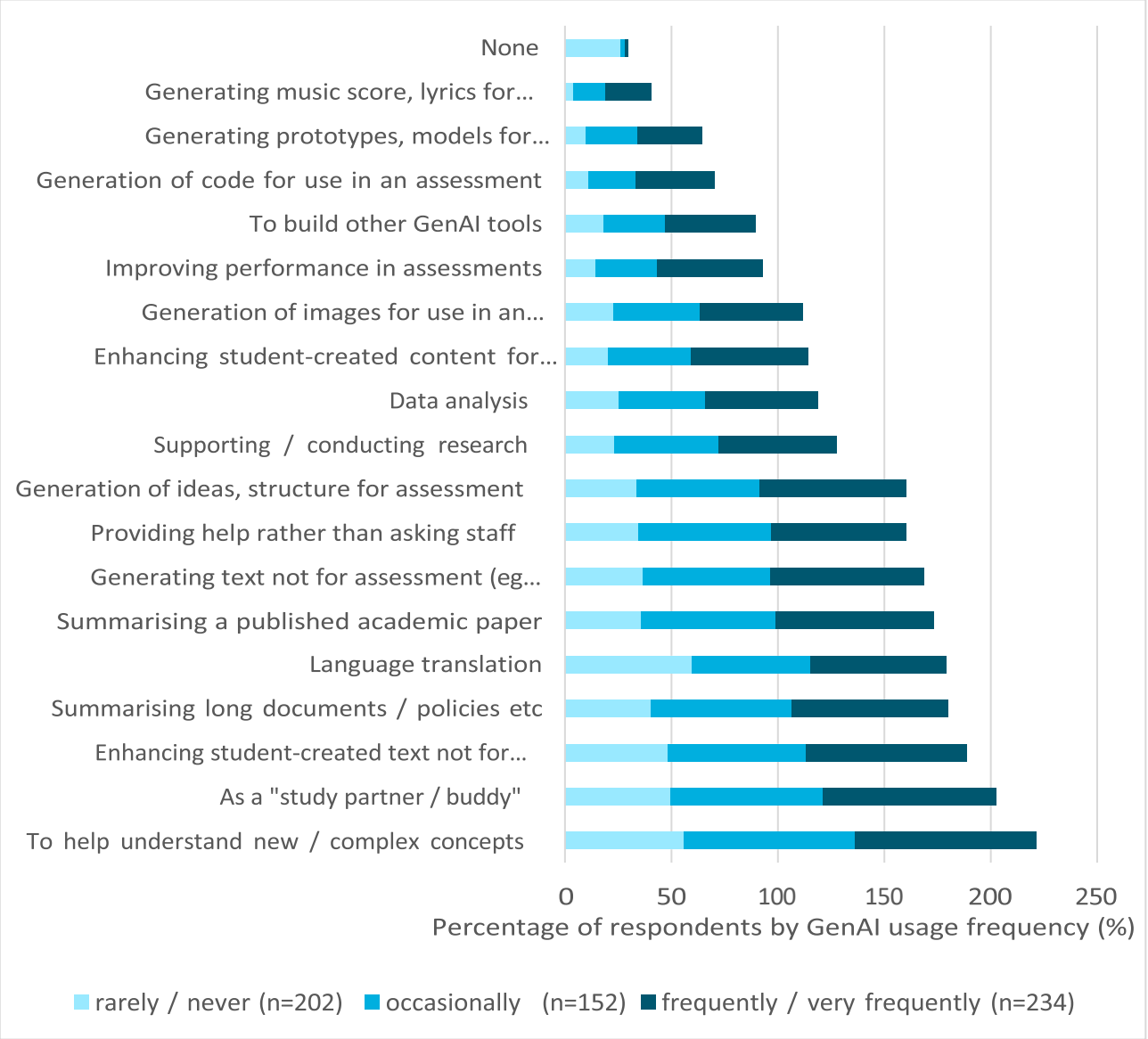

Figure 26. Percentage of respondents by GenAI usage frequency that agree the task is an acceptable use of GenAI tools by staff.

Respondents were also asked to select from a similar list of tasks those which they believed were acceptable for students to use GenAI tools for (Figure 27). There were 253 students that responded to this question, 130 professional services staff and 205 academic staff. There were 9 tasks where the majority (>50%) of student respondents agreed that those tasks were acceptable uses of GenAI tools. These tasks were:

+ To help understand new / complex concepts: 70%
+ As a "study partner / buddy": 62%
+ Summarising long documents, policies, guidance, etc.: 60%
+ Summarising a published academic paper: 58%
+ Enhancing student-created text that is not submitted for assessment (e.g. emails, messages, discussion posts): 55%
+ Language translation: 55%
+ Generation of ideas / structure for use in an assessment: 53%
+ Generation of text that is not submitted for assessment (e.g. emails, messages, discussion posts): 52%
+ Providing help rather than asking staff: 52%

Academic staff showed majority agreement on 8 out of the 9 tasks highlighted above:

+ To help understand new / complex concepts: 71%
+ As a "study partner / buddy": 66%
+ Enhancing student-created text that is not submitted for assessment (e.g. emails, messages, discussion posts): 66%
+ Language translation: 61%
+ Generation of text that is not submitted for assessment (e.g. emails, messages, discussion posts): 57%
+ Summarising a published academic paper: 55%
+ Summarising long documents, policies, guidance, etc.: 53%
+ Generation of ideas / structure for use in an assessment: 51%

There was agreement between students and academic staff on what the two most acceptable uses of GenAI tools were, which were to help understand new / complex concepts and as a “study partner / buddy”.

However, use of GenAI tools for summarising content were perceived as a more acceptable use of GenAI tools by students than by staff. Professional services staff identified 10 tasks as acceptable uses of GenAI tools by students. These included the same 9 tasks identified by students and in addition the use of GenAI tools for data analysis. Overall, there was a higher level of agreement on task acceptability among professional services staff compared to academic staff and students. The tasks professional services staff showed majority agreement on are:

+ To help understand new / complex concepts: 86%
+ As a "study partner / buddy": 82%
+ Enhancing student-created text that is not submitted for assessment (e.g., emails, messages, discussion posts): 76%
+ Summarising long documents, policies, guidance, etc.: 71%
+ Language translation: 68%
+ Generation of text that is not submitted for assessment (e.g., emails, messages, discussion posts): 67%
+ Summarising a published academic paper: 65%
+ Generation of ideas / structure for use in an assessment: 62%
+ Providing help rather than asking staff: 60%
+ Data analysis: 52%

The tasks specifically related to the generation of content for assessment (except for the generation of images) and improvement of performance in assessments ranked the lowest across all three groups:

+ Generation of music score/lyrics for use in an assessment
+ Generation of prototypes or models for use in an assessment
+ Generation of code for use in an assessment
+ Improving performance in assessments

These tasks were ranked as the least acceptable by all groups (on average less than 25% of respondents identified them as acceptable uses of GenAI tools).

The task “To build other GenAI tools” was ranked as less acceptable than the “Enhancement of student-created content for use in an assessment” and “Generation of images for use in an assessment” by both students and academic staff. For professional services staff, the acceptability of building GenAI tools was ranked equally low (Figure 27).

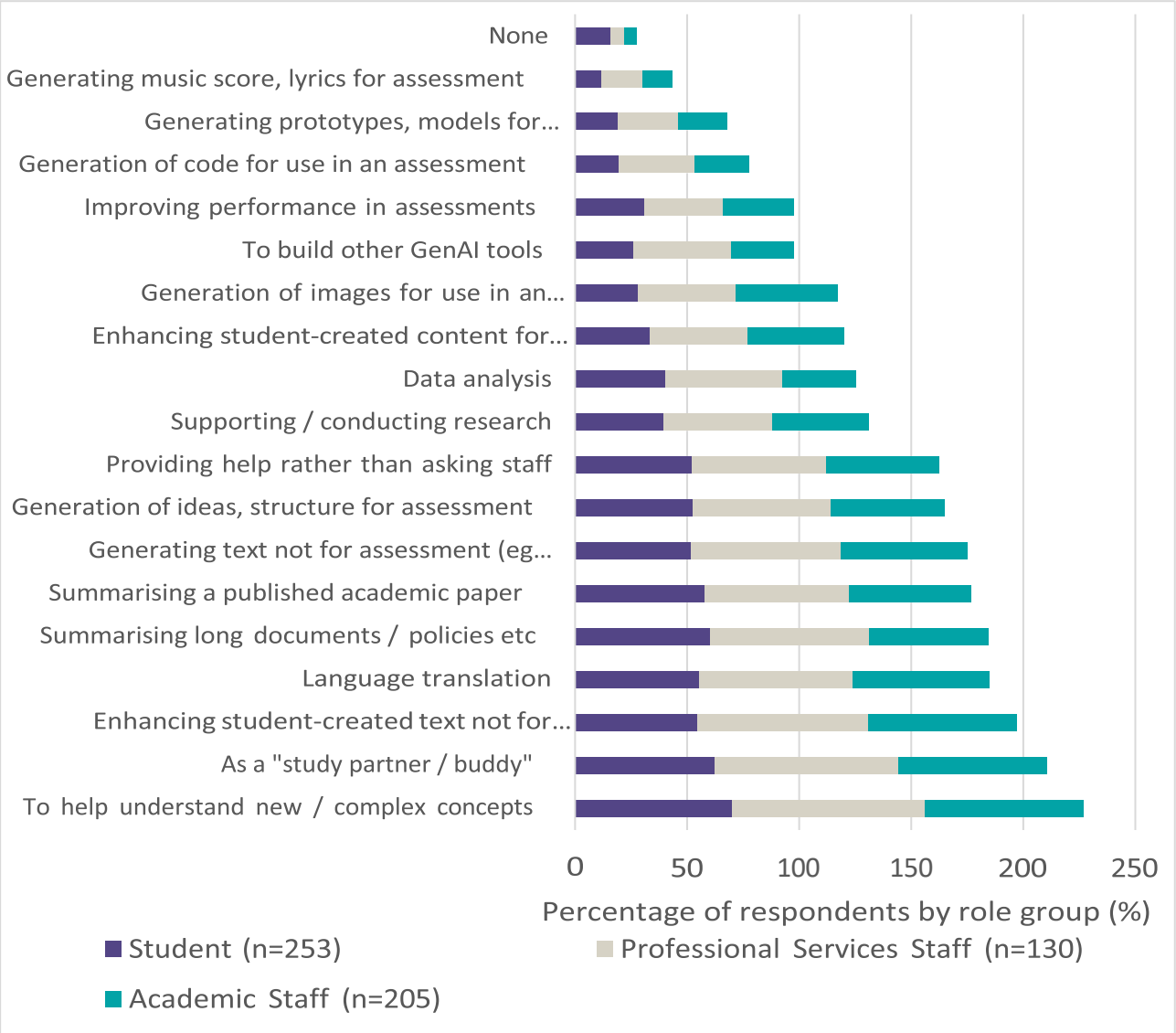

Figure 27. Percentage of respondents for each role group that perceived that it was acceptable for students to use GenAI tools for the task outlined.

For those who rarely or never use GenAI tools for work (n=209), there were only two tasks that the majority (>50%) agreed were acceptable uses of GenAI tools by students (Figure 28). These tasks were:

+ To help understand new / complex concepts: 56%
+ Language translation: 59%

Frequent and very frequent users (n=234) identified a broader range of acceptable tasks, which included the following 12 tasks:

+ To help understand new / complex concepts: 85%
+ As a "study partner / buddy": 82%
+ Enhancing student-created text that is not submitted for assessment (e.g., emails, messages, discussion posts): 76%
+ Summarising long documents, policies, guidance, etc.: 74%
+ Summarising a published academic paper: 74%
+ Generation of text that is not submitted for assessment (e.g., emails, messages, discussion posts): 72%
+ Generation of ideas / structure for use in an assessment: 69%
+ Language translation: 64%
+ Providing help rather than asking staff: 63%
+ Supporting / conducting research: 56%
+ Enhancing student-created content for assessment: 55%
+ Data analysis: 53%

Respondents who occasionally used GenAI tools (n=254)followed a similar pattern to that of frequent and very frequent users, with the first 9 tasks detailed above also having majority agreement.

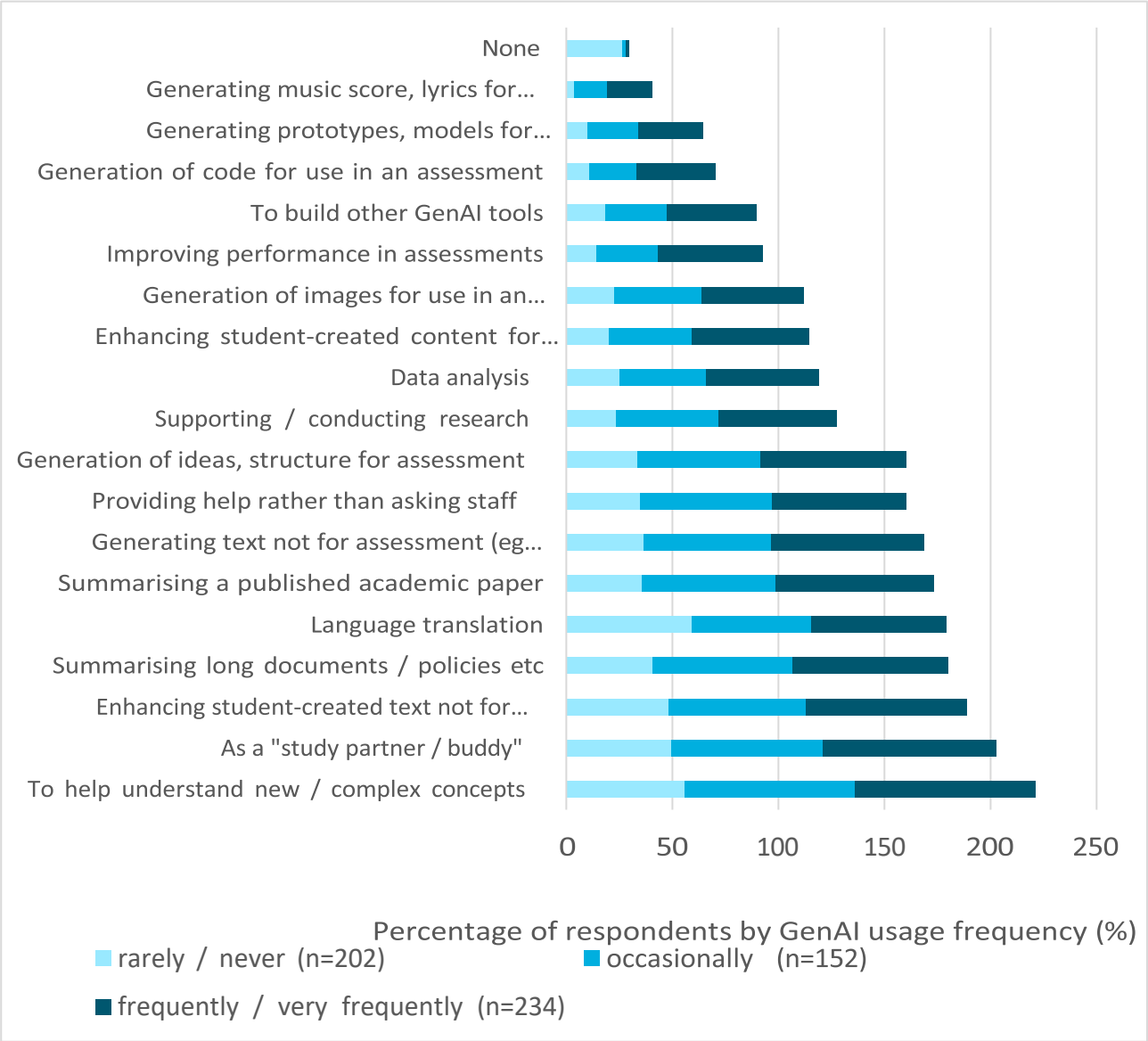

Figure 28. Percentage of respondents by GenAI usage frequency that agree the task is an acceptable use of GenAI tools by students.

3.6 Skills and training

Participants were asked to indicate if they understood the concept of GenAI and its applications in higher education, if they were concerned about being left behind and if GenAI tools should always be acknowledged (Figure 29 - 33).

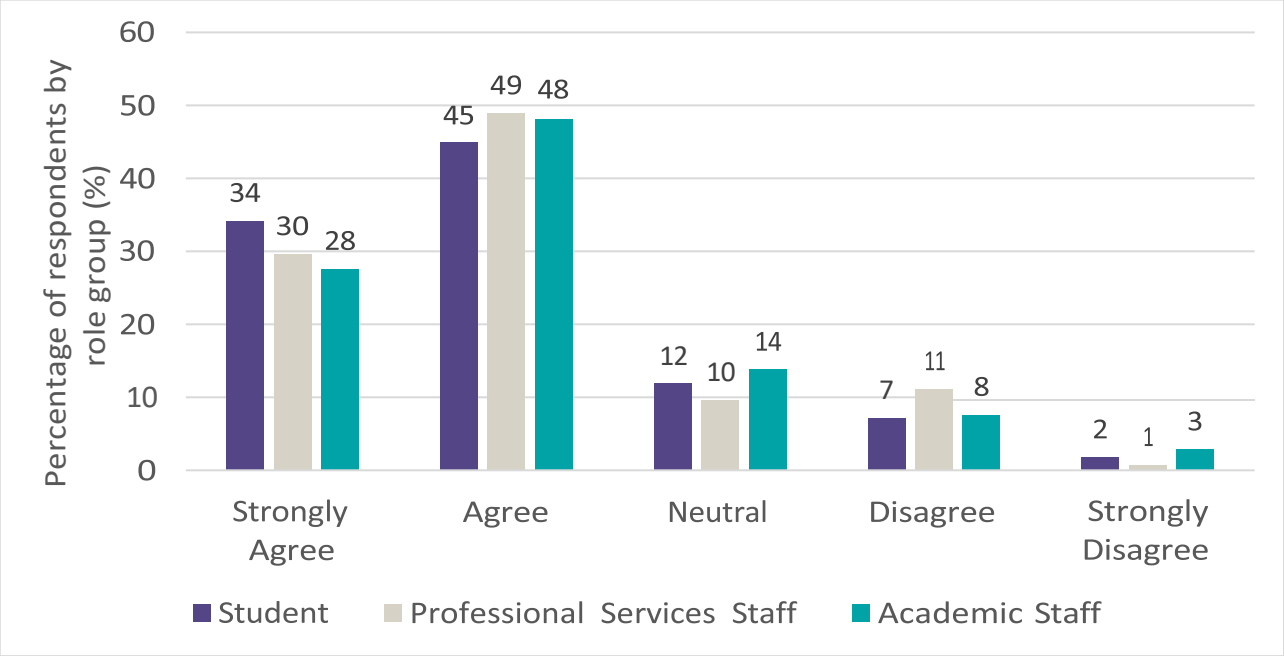

Figure 29. Level of agreement with the statement "I understand the concept of GenAI and its applications in higher education" by role group.

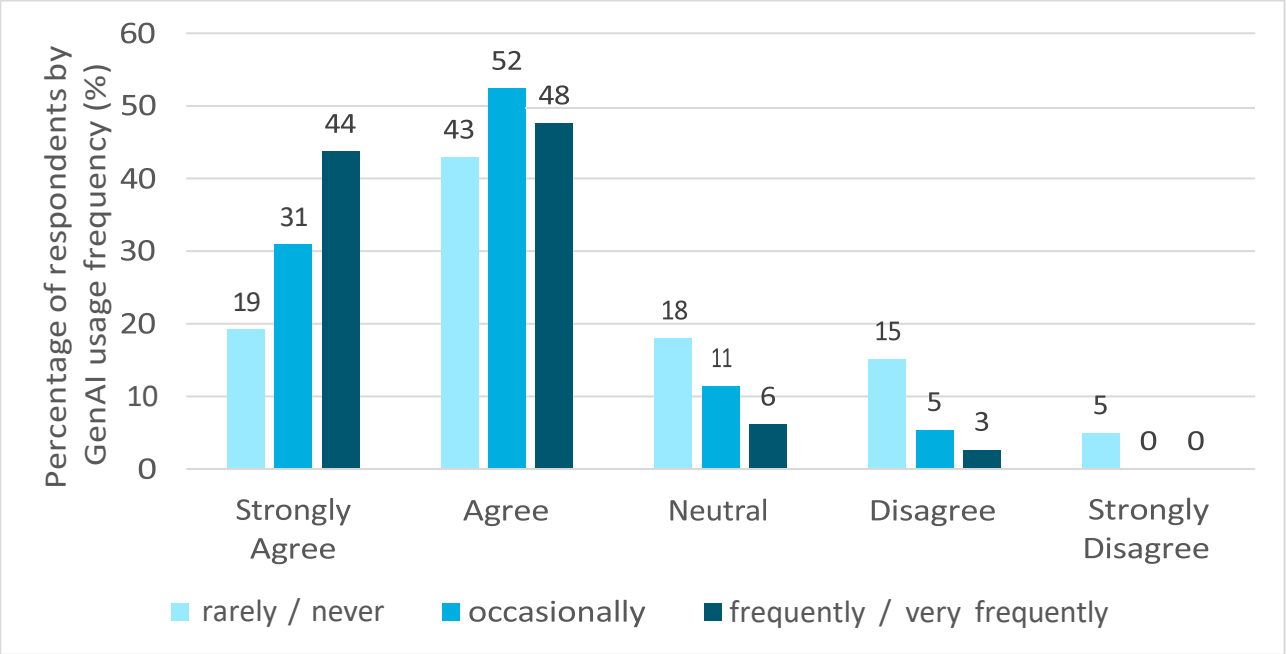

Figure 30. Level of agreement with the statement "I understand the concept of GenAI and its applications in higher education" by GenAI usage frequency.

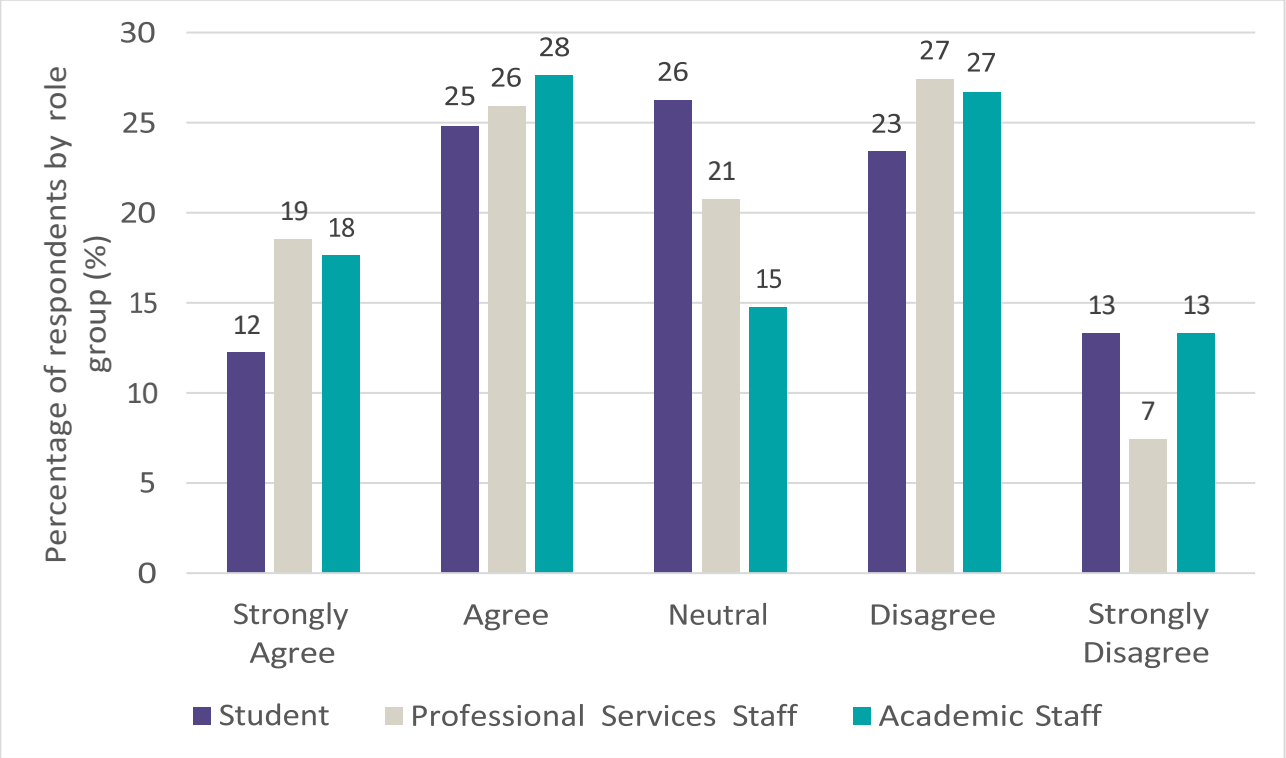

Figure 31. Level of agreement with the statement "I am concerned about being left behind in the use of GenAI tools in my work" by role group.

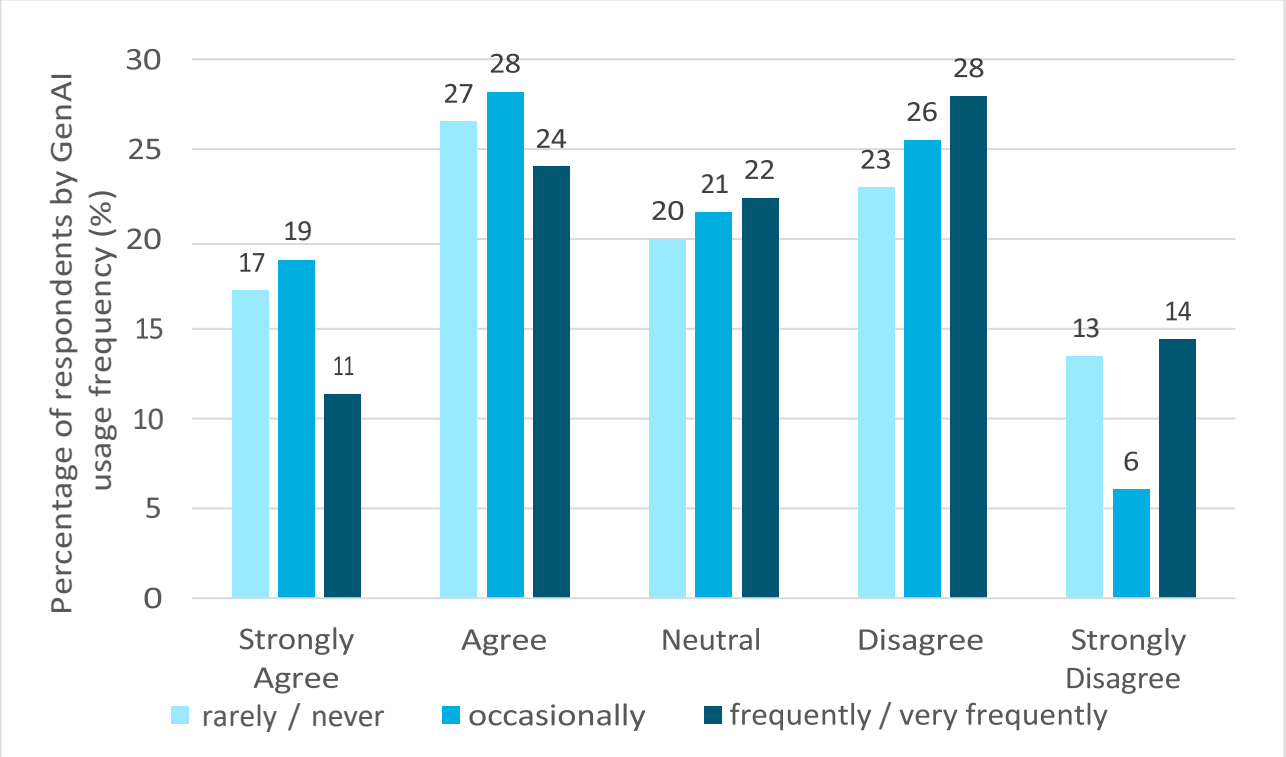

Figure 32. Level of agreement with the statement "I am concerned about being left behind in the use of GenAI tools in my work" by GenAI usage frequency.

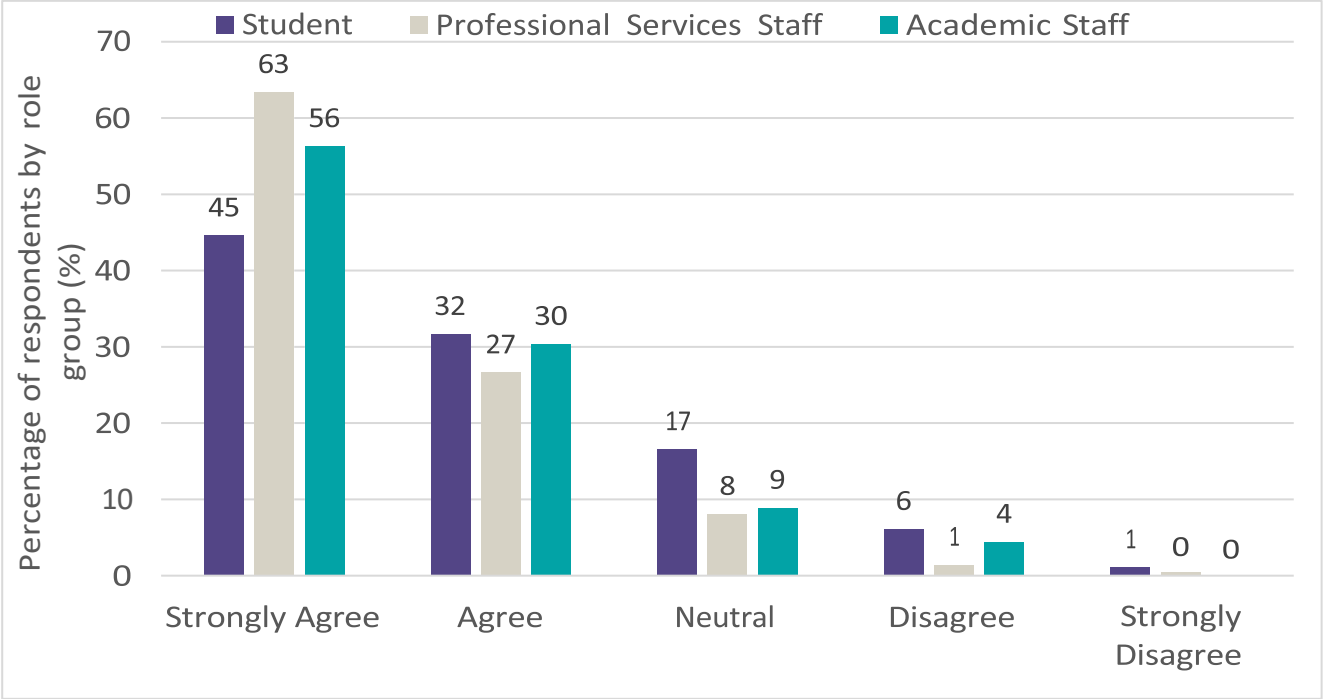

Figure 33. Level of agreement with the statement "The use of GenAI tools should be acknowledged wherever they are used" by role group.

Participants were divided when it related to concerns about being left behind in the use of GenAI tools in their work (Figure 31-32).

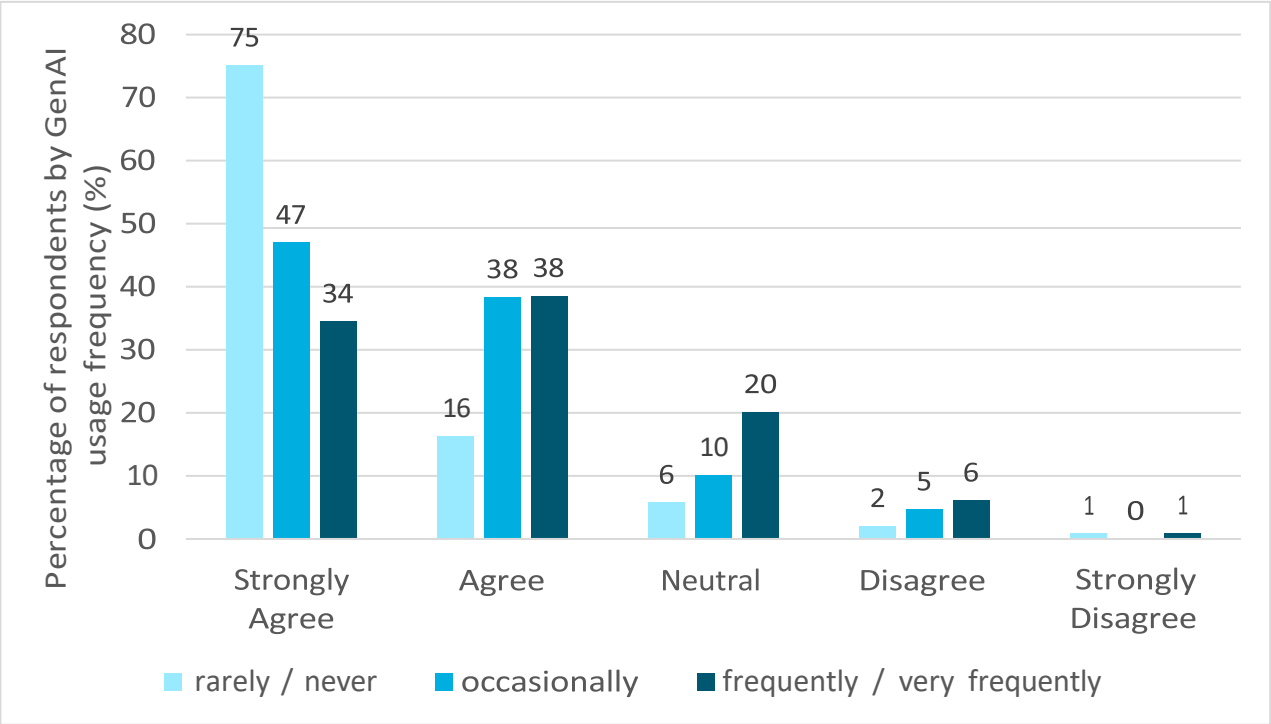

Figure 34. Level of agreement with the statement "The use of GenAI tools should be acknowledged wherever they are used" by GenAI usage frequency.

Participants were also invited to select skills they thought they needed to develop to use GenAI tools more effectively (Figure 35).

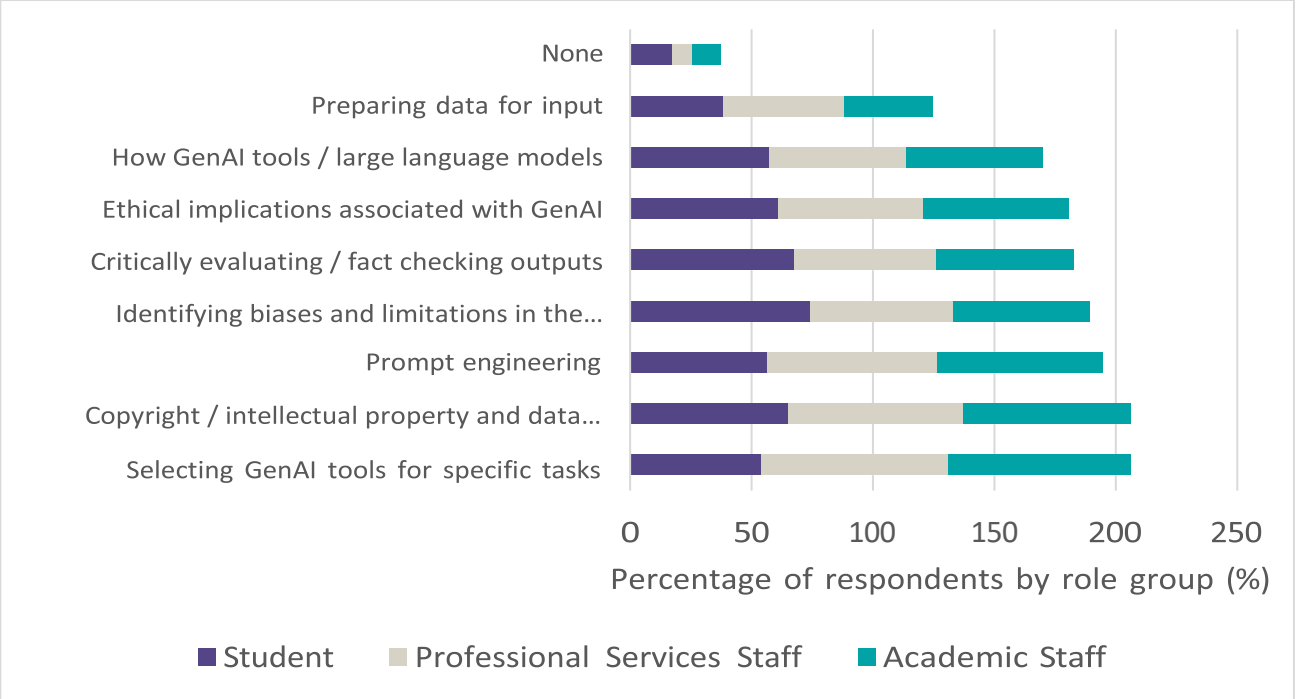

Figure 35. Percentage of respondents by role group that indicated that they thought they would need to develop these skills to use GenAI tools effectively.

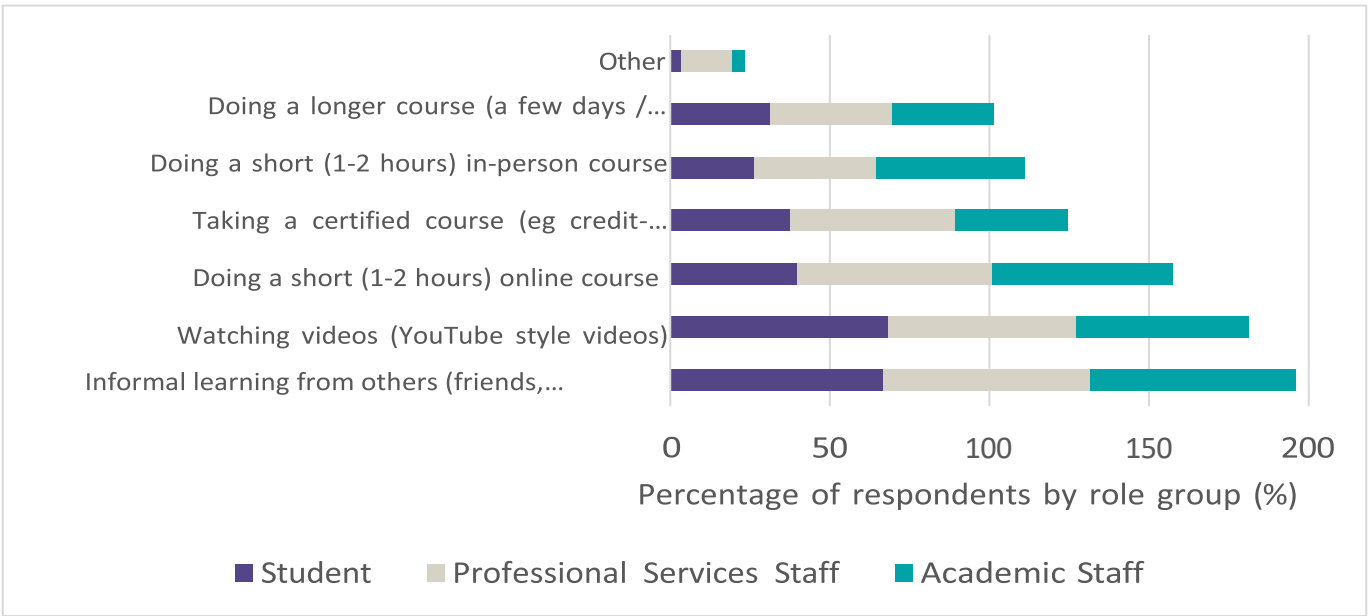

Figure 36. Percentage of respondents by role group that indicated their preferred approach to developing their skills.

3.7 Institutional policies and approaches

The majority of respondents indicated that their institution has policies or guidelines regarding the use of generative AI tools (Figure 37). However, a notable percentage of students 47% responded with "Don't know" when asked about the existence of such policies. This contrasts with lower rates of uncertainty among professional services staff (26%) and academic staff (19%).

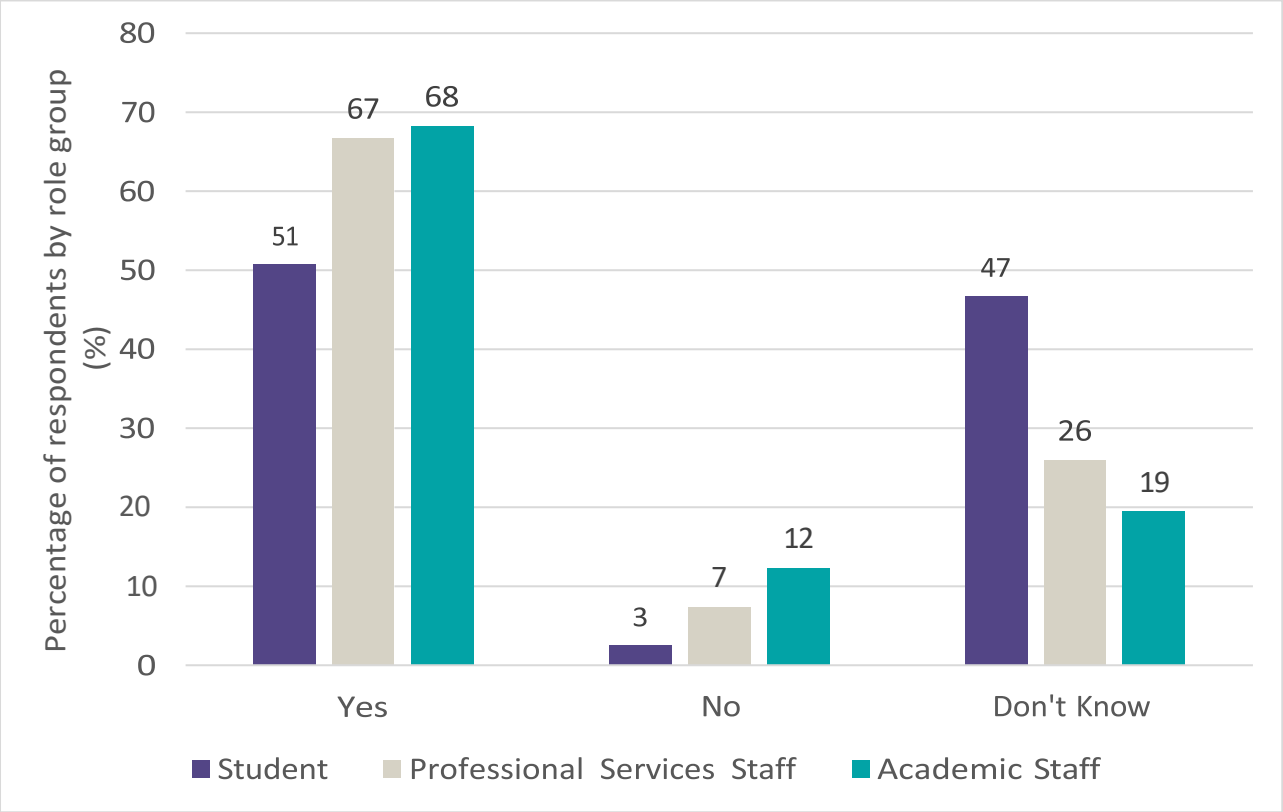

Figure 37. Responses to the question “Does your university have a policy or guidelines on the use of GenAI tools?”, by role group.

This suggests that students may be less aware of these policies, highlighting a potential communication gap between institutions and their student bodies. Professional services and academic staff seem to have greater awareness, though there is still some level of uncertainty across all groups.

The majority of respondents that confirmed that their university has a policy on GenAI tools subsequently said that they were either "somewhat familiar" or "very familiar" with these policies (Figure 38).

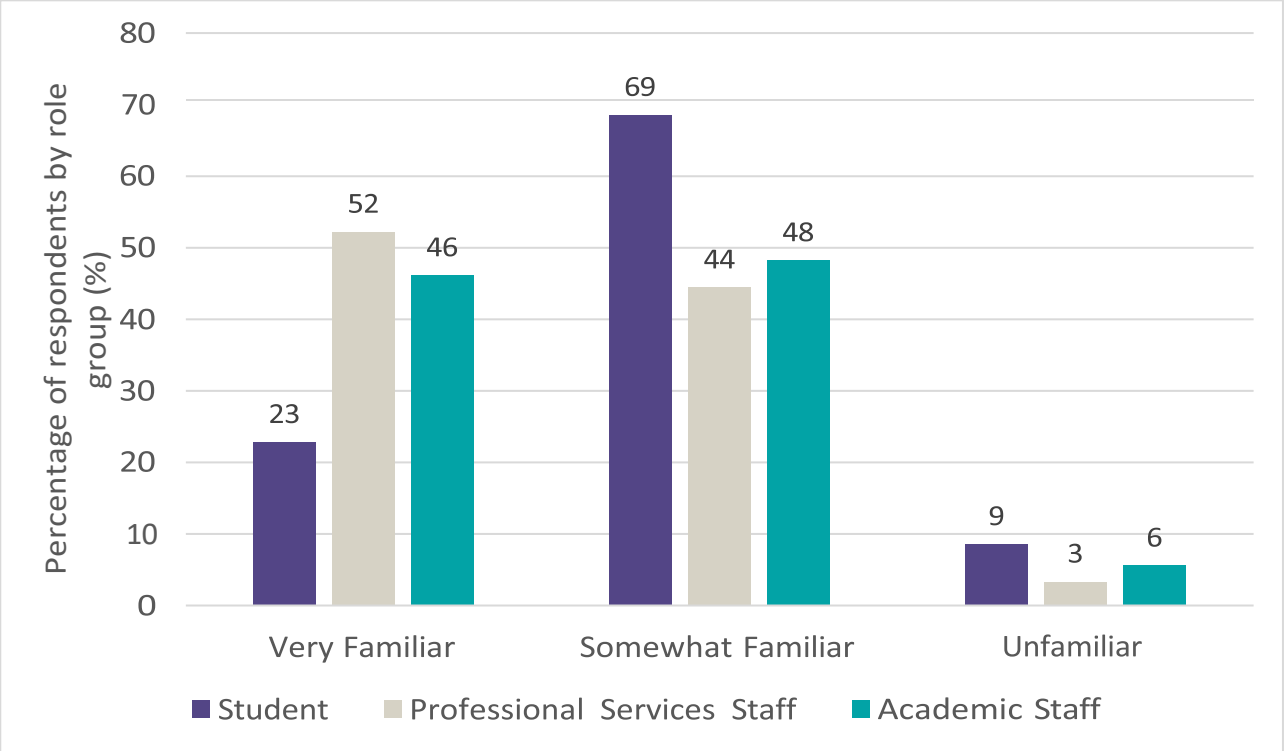

Figure 38. Responses to the question “To what extent are you familiar with your university's policy or guidelines on the use of GenAI tools?” by role group.

Among those who reported their institution having a policy, it is notable that students are less familiar with these policies than professional services staff and academic staff, highlighting that there is still room for improvement (Figure 38).

Staff and students who reported their institution as having a policy were also asked to what extent they believed their university’s policy or guidelines were useful in guiding students on the use of GenAI tools (Figure 39). The same question was asked of staff only, in relation to the extent they believed their university’s policy or guidelines were useful in guiding staff (Figure 40).

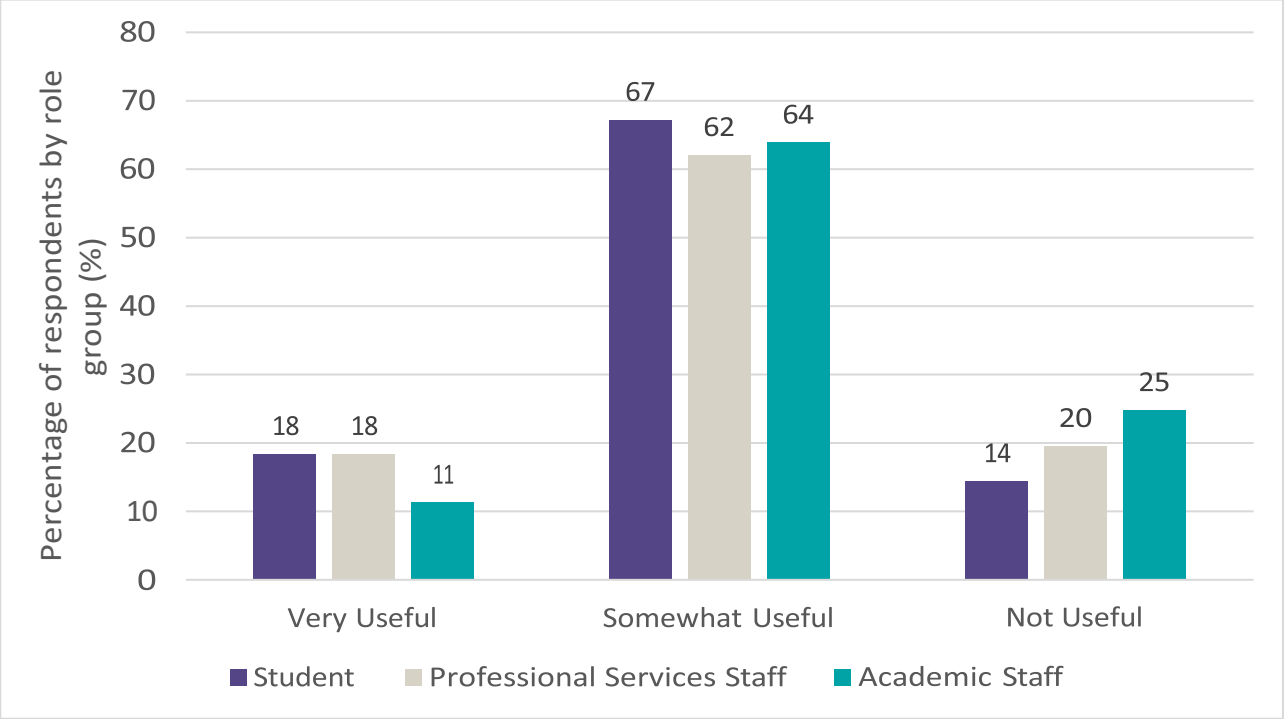

Figure 39. Extent to which their university's policy or guidelines are useful in guiding students on the use of GenAI tools.

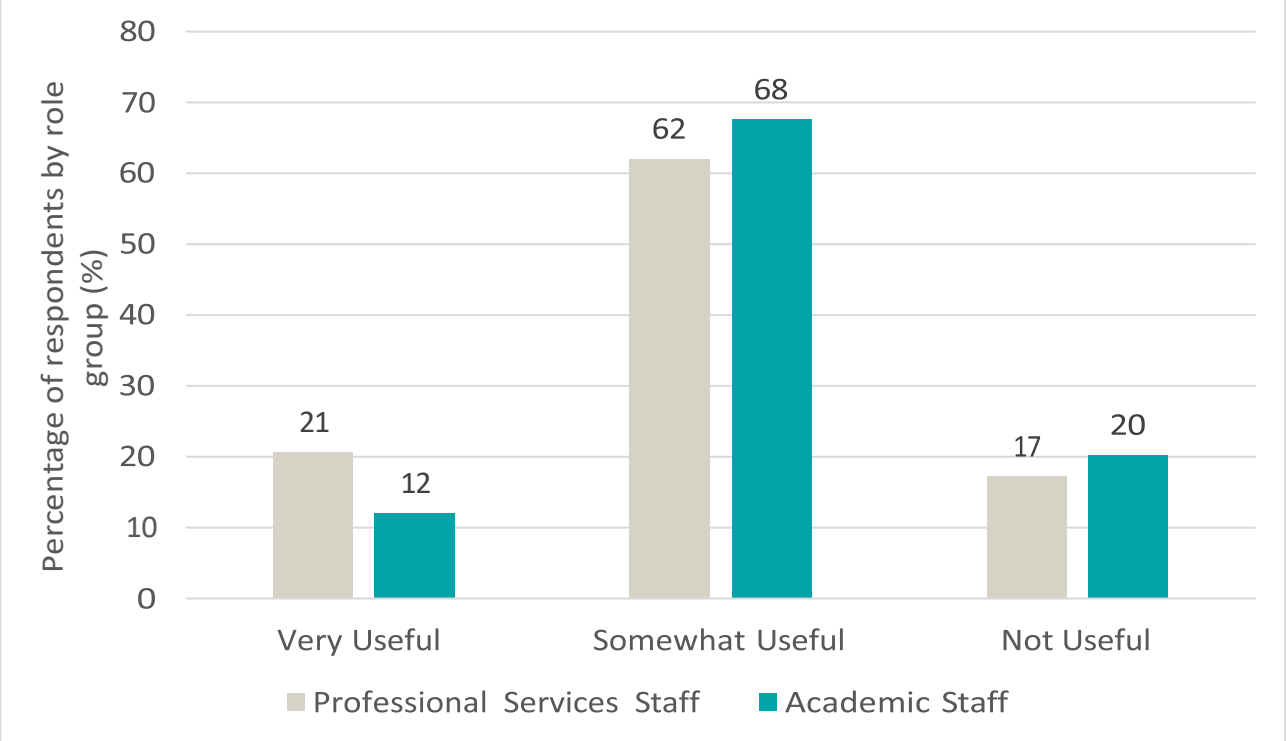

Figure 40. Extent to which their university's policy or guidelines are useful in guiding staff on the use of GenAI tools.

Respondents were asked whether their institution's approach to managing the use of GenAI tools is appropriate, upholds academic integrity, and enhances learning opportunities. The largest proportion of each group – whether staff or students – expressed a neutral stance on this question (Figure 41).

However, both professional services staff and students had a notable number of respondents who agreed with the statement. On the other hand, academic staff were almost evenly split between agreeing, being neutral, and disagreeing, indicating a more divided opinion among academics on the institution's approach.

This suggests that while some groups, particularly students and professional staff, may have a relatively positive or indifferent view of the institution’s handling of GenAI tools, academic staff show a broader range of perspectives, possibly reflecting different concerns about the impact of these tools on academic integrity or learning.

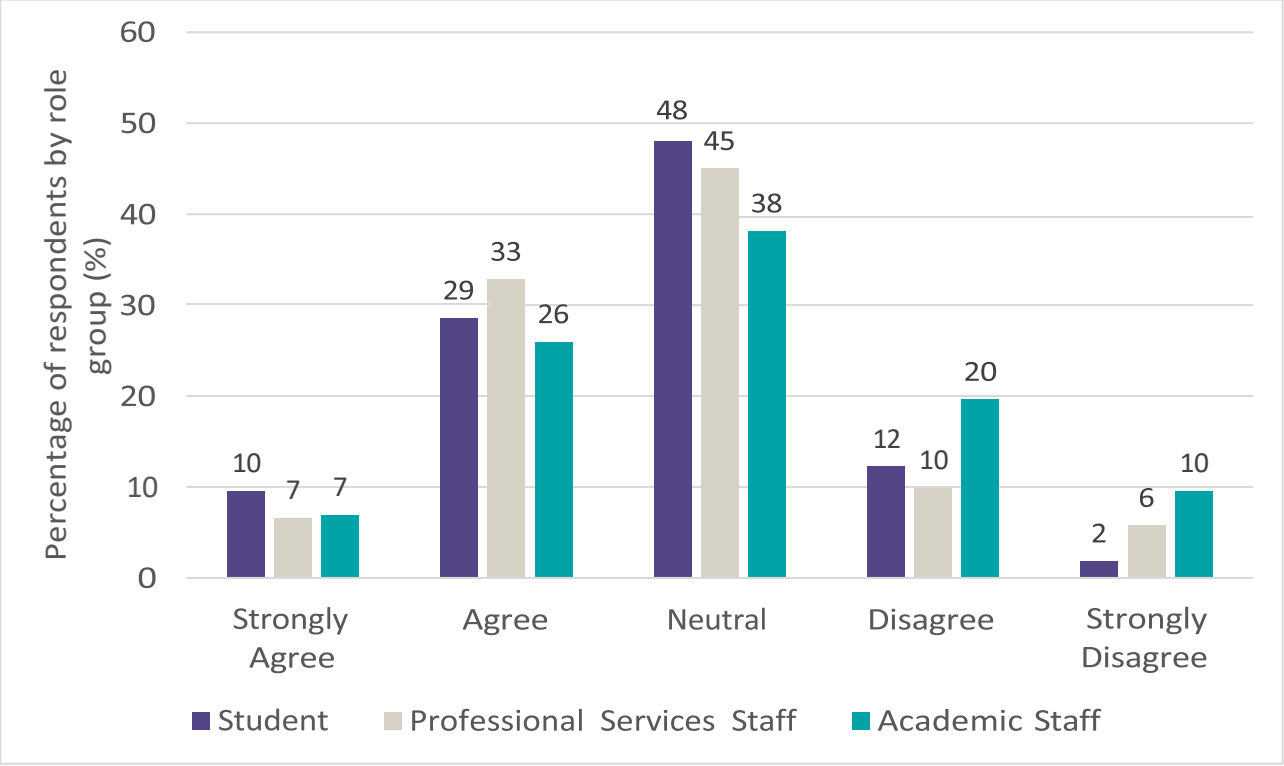

Figure 41. Level of agreement with the statement “My institution's approach to managing the use of GenAI tools is appropriate, upholds academic integrity, and enhances learning opportunities.

4 Discussion

4.1 Views and behaviours on the use of GenAI tools in higher education

The analysis reveals notable convergence and divergence in how staff and students perceive and engage with GenAI tools, particularly in terms of frequency of use and purpose.

4.1.1 Convergence in views

Students and professional services staff demonstrated broadly similar patterns in their personal use of GenAI tools, with approximately one-third of both groups using these tools frequently. This suggests that non-academic staff and students may share similar motivations or contexts for using GenAI in personal activities, such as convenience, exploration, or solving everyday problems. Both groups also reported comparable levels of occasional use and similar proportions of those who rarely or never use these tools, indicating a potentially shared familiarity and behaviours across these demographics.

4.1.2 Divergence in perspectives

In contrast, academic staff reported significantly lower levels of frequent or occasional use of GenAI tools for personal activities (26% and 23%, respectively), with over half (51%) indicating rare or no usage. This divergence suggests that academic staff may face barriers to adoption, such as unfamiliarity, perceived irrelevance, or scepticism about the value of these tools in their personal lives.

When examining professional use, students and professional services staff again reported relatively high levels of frequent usage, particularly among professional services staff, where frequent use rose to nearly half (48%). Academic staff also showed increased professional use compared to personal use, but their overall adoption remained lower than other groups, with 32% reporting frequent use. This indicates a shift in attitudes among staff toward GenAI tools when they are applied in a professional or academic context but highlights a lingering gap in adoption compared to other groups.

4.1.3 Influence of demographic factors

Demographic factors, including roles (student, academic, or professional services), likely play a significant role in shaping perspectives on AI. Academic staff may be more influenced by discipline-specific norms, hesitancy regarding the pedagogical implications of GenAI, or limited exposure to its potential benefits. In contrast, students' higher engagement with AI tools might reflect curiosity, adaptability, and greater exposure to new technologies within their educational experiences. Additionally, it has been suggested that agreeableness and younger age predict more positive views toward AI technology as a single construct (Stein *et al.*, 2024). The relatively younger age demographic of students, compared to academic or professional staff, may partly contribute to this divergence in views.

The differences between staff and student engagement with GenAI tools were relatively minor, with all three roles - students, academic staff, and professional services staff - showing a significant proportion of members who either never used these tools or engaged with them only to a very limited extent. This finding highlights the importance of examining not only the divergence in views based on institutional roles but also the broader convergence and divergence of perspectives between individuals who actively engage with GenAI tools and those who avoid them.

By focusing on these patterns of engagement, institutions can gain a deeper understanding of how familiarity and usage influence perceptions of GenAI. Those who engage frequently may offer insights into the practical benefits, and use case scenarios, while those who avoid them may shed light on barriers such as ethical challenges of these tools, concerns about academic integrity. Recognising these differing levels of interaction allows institutions to tailor training, support, and communication strategies to bridge gaps in understanding and foster a more unified approach to GenAI integration across the academic community.

Our findings align with those presented in the 2024 Insight Report*:* Attitudes Toward AI *(*Elsevier, 2024), which indicates that while awareness of AI is high among clinicians and researchers, regular usage remains comparatively low. Similarly, within our study, 100% of respondents were aware of GenAI tools, but only about 30% of them, across all three roles, were using these tools frequently.

4.1.4 Common usage patterns

Among participants who use GenAI tools frequently or occasionally, "Summarise" and "Explain" emerged as the most common prompt types, with 57% and 56% of users selecting them, respectively. This indicates a possible shared preference for tools that provide concise information or clarify complex concepts, suggesting that these functionalities align well with the needs of both students and staff. Despite these similarities, most users reported engaging with a limited range of prompt types, with only 14% using six or more of the investigated prompt types regularly. This suggests that many users may not fully explore the breadth of capabilities offered by GenAI tools, potentially limiting their utility.

4.1.5 Divergence in perceived productivity gains

Students were more likely than professional services staff and academic staff to report significant improvements in productivity from using GenAI tools. This difference may reflect students' greater adaptability to emerging technologies and their focus on academic efficiency. Academic and professional services staff, by contrast, may use these tools more conservatively, perhaps reflecting discipline-specific needs or scepticism about their practical value in professional contexts, as well as potentially the threat to professional identity through either using or being seen to use these tools.

4.1.6 Barriers to adoption

Among those who rarely or never use GenAI tools, the primary barriers include concerns about quality, accuracy, and reliability of outputs (33%) and ethical implications (30%). These concerns were more prevalent than technical or institutional barriers, such as difficulty of use (3%) or lack of support and resources (4%). This suggests that overcoming scepticism and addressing ethical concerns are more critical to increasing adoption than providing training or institutional support.

4.1.7 Variability across user groups

The intention to engage with GenAI tools in the future varied significantly between groups, with frequent users showing more confidence in the quality of outputs and their relevance to their discipline or area of work. This divergence underscores the need for targeted interventions to address the hesitations of infrequent or non-users. Showcasing discipline-specific applications and demonstrating improvements in reliability and ethical practices could foster greater trust and engagement.

Implications for future integration

To enhance engagement with GenAI tools, strategies should focus on:

Expanding user awareness: Encouraging users to explore a wider range of prompt types, and different tools for different tasks to maximise the tools' potential.

Building trust: Addressing concerns about accuracy and ethics through transparent discussions, user guides, and case studies that highlight successful applications in education and professional contexts.

Promoting productivity gains: Sharing evidence of productivity improvements, especially among students and academic staff to inspire broader adoption.

4.2 Perceptions and attitudes towards the use of GenAI tools in higher education

4.2.1 Perceptions of GenAI tools

The selection of descriptive words associated with GenAI usage showed notable trends. Positive words like “Efficient” (49%) and “Enhancing” (45%) were the most commonly selected across all groups, suggesting broad recognition of the benefits these tools can bring. However, the number of negative words selected varied significantly, with students selecting fewer negative terms compared to both academic and professional services staff.

This difference indicates that students may have a more optimistic view of GenAI tools, potentially due to their familiarity with or reliance on these technologies in academic settings. In contrast, staff, particularly academic staff, may approach these tools with greater scepticism, possibly reflecting concerns about ethical implications or reliability.

Interestingly, no differences were observed in the selection of positive terms across groups, suggesting a shared acknowledgment of the tools’ potential benefits, even among those with reservations about their use.

4.2.2 Acceptable uses of GenAI tools

The acceptability of GenAI tools for staff use varied significantly across different groups, with professional services staff demonstrating the highest levels of acceptance. This group identified 12 tasks out of 22 where a majority of respondents (greater than 50%) agreed that these tasks were acceptable for staff to use GenAI tools for. Additionally, for 4 of these tasks, over 70% of respondents deemed them as acceptable for staff use. In comparison, students exhibited a more cautious approach, with only 3 tasks where the majority agreed that it was acceptable for staff to use GenAI tools for. Academic staff showed greater alignment with professional services staff, identifying 10 tasks that were considered acceptable for staff use, though none of these tasks reached 60% agreement.

All three roles reported low acceptance of using GenAI tools for supporting or conducting research. In contrast, a recent systematic review identified six key domains where AI has been or could be used to aid academic writing and research: 1) facilitating idea generation and research design, 2) improving content and structuring, 3) supporting literature review and synthesis, 4) enhancing data management and analysis, 5) assisting with editing, review, and publishing, and 6) aiding in communication, outreach, and ethical compliance (Khalifa & Albadawy, 2024). However, the 24 papers included in the review highlighted several concerns, particularly regarding writer accuracy, ethics, and AI's limited ability to produce high-quality outputs.

However, when considering those who rarely or never use GenAI tools for work or study, only two tasks garnered majority acceptance: language translation (55%) and detecting the

usage of GenAI tools by students in assessments (54%). Interestingly, in this group, the primary reason for not engaging with the tools was a lack of trust in the quality, accuracy, and reliability of their outputs. This highlights a potential contradiction, where concerns about the accuracy and reliability of the tools are seemingly overlooked when considering the use of tools for detecting GenAI in work submitted for assessment by students.

Not surprisingly, we also found that individuals who engaged with GenAI tools frequently had low concerns about their use, and believed that others who were similar to them also held the same views. In contrast, those with low engagement and high concerns perceived that the majority of others shared their views. This suggests that people tend to surround themselves with others who share similar perspectives.

This aligns with the work by Ivanov *et al.* (2024), which demonstrated that the strengths and benefits of GenAI applications had a positive and significant impact on all three core components of the Theory of Planned Behaviour (attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control) for both lecturers and students. Their findings underscore the importance of showcasing the advantages and attributes of GenAI tools to promote positive attitudes, subjective norms, and user perceptions of usability – all of which can eventually lead to the acceptance and effective use of these tools in higher education institutions (HEIs). Interestingly, Ivanov *et al.* (2024) also noted that weaknesses and opportunities for abuse were not crucial in shaping lecturers' and students' attitudes, social norms, or perceptions of behavioural control; instead, it was the strengths and benefits of GenAI that had a greater impact.

In comparison, when reviewing which tasks were acceptable for students to use GenAI tools for, professional services staff remained the most accepting, identifying 10 out of 18 tasks as acceptable. Academic staff, however, became the most cautious, identifying 8 out of 18 tasks as acceptable, while students identified 9 tasks that were acceptable for their use. This suggests that students are more cautious than academic staff about staff usage, whereas academic staff are more cautious about student usage than staff usage, with professional staff maintaining consistent acceptance.

Staff and students both identified the same 8 tasks, but students identified an additional acceptable task “providing help rather than making staff”. This may indicate a concern among academic staff that students could be relying on what is perceived as a less trustworthy source, rather than engaging with staff.

Similar to the views on acceptable use of GenAI tools by staff, those who rarely or never engaged with GenAI for work or study identified only two tasks that the majority agreed were acceptable uses. These were language translation (which was also identified as acceptable for staff usage) and helping to understand new or complex concepts, which was not identified as an acceptable use for staff (only for student usage). This suggests a nuanced perspective from those who do not engage with these tools on how staff and students

should interact with them, highlighting distinct expectations for each group in their use of GenAI tools.

Future research should address the limitation posed by incomplete responses, as 66% of participants provided complete responses while 34% submitted partial ones. Notably, participants who had never engaged with GenAI were more likely to submit partial responses, restricting the ability to perform subgroup analyses comparing frequent users with non-users. This limitation highlights the need for strategies to ensure a higher response rate among non-users to enhance the comprehensiveness of future analyses and provide deeper insights into their experiences and perceptions.

4.2.3 Divergence in perspectives

The data suggest a divergence between students and staff regarding the risks and benefits of GenAI tools. Students' limited association of negative terms and openness to GenAI use align with their higher reported productivity gains and adaptability to emerging technologies. On the other hand, staff, particularly in academic roles, appear more concerned about ethical and quality issues, which may limit their acceptance of GenAI tools for professional tasks.

Changing Attitudes and Perceptions

To enhance engagement with GenAI tools, strategies should focus on:

Enhancing social norms: Offer tailored workshops and ongoing support, emphasising the relevance of GenAI tools to users' specific needs, while showcasing examples of how others are successfully utilising these tools.

Foster a culture of open dialogue and peer support: Encourage dialogue about the use of GenAI tools, promoting transparency around issues such as accuracy, ethics, and reliability. Providing platforms for open discussions, case studies, and peer-led sharing of successful applications can help reduce scepticism and increase comfort with these tools.

Leverage evidence of productivity gains: Share evidence of how GenAI tools have led to productivity improvements, particularly in academic settings.

4.3 Institutional policies and approaches on the integration of GenAI in higher education

4.3.1 Clarity and accessibility of policies

The data reveal a significant communication gap between institutions and students regarding policies on GenAI tools, with 47% of students unaware of whether such policies exist. This contrasts with higher awareness among professional services (26% "Don't know") and academic staff (20% "Don't know"). While staff groups demonstrate greater familiarity with existing policies, the data suggest that institutions need to make these policies more accessible and understandable to students.

4.3.2 Consistency in perception of institutional approaches

The neutral stance taken by most respondents regarding the appropriateness of institutional approaches to managing GenAI tools indicates a lack of strong opinions or clear communication about how these tools are governed. However, the division among academic staff reflects deeper concerns about balancing academic integrity with the opportunities GenAI tools can provide. This divergence may point to the need for more inclusive discussions among staff to address specific apprehensions, particularly those tied to maintaining educational standards.

4.3.3 Enhancing policy familiarity and engagement

The survey findings emphasise the importance of moving beyond simply establishing policies for the use of GenAI tools. Institutions must focus on proactive dissemination and engagement strategies to ensure these policies are understood and adhered to by all stakeholders. A significant proportion of students reported being unaware of the existence of institutional policies, which underscores the need for targeted communication efforts.

One approach to addressing this gap could involve implementing interactive orientation sessions or workshops for both staff and students. These sessions could focus on the ethical use of GenAI tools, highlight their potential benefits, and clarify institutional expectations. By incorporating interactive elements, such as real-world scenarios and open discussions, these workshops would not only improve familiarity but also encourage active engagement with the principles underlying the policies.

Additionally, fostering a collaborative approach to policy development and refinement could ensure that institutional guidelines remain relevant and inclusive. By involving all stakeholders - students, academic staff, and professional services staff - in ongoing discussions about policy updates, institutions can better address ethical concerns, adapt to evolving uses of GenAI, and maintain sensitivity to emerging issues. This inclusive strategy would help build a sense of ownership and shared responsibility, ultimately leading to greater trust in and adherence to institutional policies.

Through these efforts, institutions can bridge the awareness gap, reduce uncertainty, and support the responsible and effective use of GenAI tools across all levels of their community.

Implications for future integration and policy

To enhance engagement with GenAI tools, strategies should focus on:

Building trust and confidence: Addressing the concerns of academic staff through evidence-based discussions about the reliability and ethical use of GenAI tools is crucial to increasing acceptance.

Highlighting practical benefits: Demonstrating how tasks like summarisation and concept explanation can enhance efficiency without compromising academic integrity may bridge the gap between user groups.

Engaging students: As students are more optimistic about GenAI, leveraging their experiences and feedback in developing institutional policies can create more inclusive and balanced guidelines.

Ethical clarity: Establishing clear rules around GenAI use in assessments can address shared concerns across all groups.

5 Conclusions

The survey findings underscore the complex and evolving role of GenAI tools in academic and professional environments. While these tools are widely used and often perceived as beneficial, significant barriers remain, including trust in their outputs, concerns about ethical use, and limited awareness of institutional policies.

To address these challenges, institutions should prioritise clear communication and targeted training efforts to enhance policy awareness and foster responsible use of GenAI. Tailored resources that cater to the specific needs of students, academic staff, and professional services staff could help bridge the gaps in perception and adoption. Furthermore, engaging academic staff in open discussions about their concerns could help reconcile divided opinions and inform more balanced institutional strategies.

Ultimately, while GenAI tools hold great promise for improving productivity and learning, their integration into educational settings requires careful management to ensure they are used effectively and ethically. By addressing the barriers identified in this survey, institutions can better harness the potential of GenAI tools to enhance educational and operational outcomes for all stakeholders.

6 Recommendations and Resources

Higher education institutions need to foster engagement with GenAI Tools by:

+ Expanding awareness - showcasing the capabilities of GenAI tools and encouraging experimentation and discovery
+ Building trust - addressing concerns about accuracy and ethics through transparent communications and discussion forums
+ Evidencing productivity gains – sharing evidence of productivity improvements, to inspire engagement
+ Encouraging open dialogue to share experiences and address concerns
+ Establishing clear guidelines for the ethical use of GenAI tools

A set of resource cards to support conversations between staff and students are available at: https://abdn.site/AHE-GenAI-HE-Report. In addition, the data is openly licenced, together with a full copy of the survey questions.

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