

Academic integrity and assessment in the context of digitalisation and the rise of generative AI: student perspective

Findings from focus groups with LSE students

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Summary

Digitalisation and the rise of generative artificial intelligence (AI) challenge traditional approaches to assessment in higher education (HE) (e.g. Bieger, 2023; Lancaster, 2023; Overono & Ditta, 2023). While the new technologies offer many opportunities, they also raise concerns over reliability, fairness, and purpose of assessment. In responding to these changes, it is essential and valuable to consider student views – ultimately, student response to assessment policy changes will define its success. The Eden Centre initiated a research project to elicit student norms, perceptions, and views surrounding academic integrity and assessment in the context of the AI generative tools and digitalisation in order to inform emerging LSE policy and activities across LSE regarding generative AI, assessment and academic integrity.

The research involved conducting 3 focus groups with LSE students representing diverse disciplines and backgrounds, moderated by a postgraduate student. 2 postgraduate (online and on-campus) and an undergraduate (online) group were conducted, collectively involving 21 student participants.

Key recommendations:

1. **Revise current LSE policy that prohibits the use of generative AI and establish clear parameters for its ethical and positive integration into assessment practice. Combine it with wider review of academic integrity rules and guidelines** to address challenges that generative AI use in assessment raise to conventional academic integrity notions and fill the gaps in rules. **Raise awareness about the rules, potentially by mandatory training for all students.**
2. **Embrace the ethical use of generative AI tools in education and assessment**, allowing them as aids for tasks while maintaining a focus on cultivating skills that AI cannot replace, such as critical thinking, and providing AI usage skills development. **Similarly, rethink collaboration and other sources of help in learning and completing assessments** as potentially useful tools whose skilful usage may be a good asset to students.
3. **Reflect meaningful real-life scenarios geared to student interests in assessment conditions.**
4. **Create assessments that disincentivise cheating and enhance academic integrity by design.** Give tasks whose completion quality would be hard to manipulate by cheating due to needed unique input; reduce possibilities to gain competitive advantage by cheating.
5. **Strengthen student preparation for assessment** by providing clear criteria and standards, particularly for international students. Enhance formative assessment and feedback processes to support and develop self-regulation.
6. **Diversify course assessment** by introducing multiple assessments of different type spread out throughout the course.
7. **Engage and incorporate student perspectives** in the design of assessment policy, acknowledging that student co-design defines the success of policy change.

The students generally agreed on the concept of academic integrity concerning the submission of their own work and proper referencing. However, there was confusion regarding the specific standards for maintaining academic integrity as a process that goes into producing the final assessment piece. Most students agreed that using various tools and sources, including generative AI, to assist in assignment production was ethically sound while fully outsourcing assignment production or a significant portion of it was not.

It was commonly acknowledged that adhering to the School's code of conduct and following guidelines of specific courses was a logical requirement for upholding academic integrity. However, the students did not necessarily feel a strong personal or social obligation to strictly follow these rules.

Among the drivers of misconduct, the research identified student disagreement with the rules, commonly when they were felt to restrain learning and contradict conditions typical for the "real world" or comparable work situations. Furthermore, opportunities to cheat that are known or believed to be widely taken up were reported to incentivise cheating. The use of generative AI tools was a frequently reported type of misconduct for these reasons. Generally, standardised assessment tasks with little room for individual or critical thinking were seen to facilitate all cheating practices. Sometimes, lack of guidance and awareness of the rules could result in misconduct. The students also saw implicit assessment requirements as pushing students, particularly those unfamiliar with the British educational system, into cheating. Time pressure, stress, lack of motivation and poor or unbalanced learning were generally believed to be the root causes of outsourcing one's work, in combination with trust in the source. Some postgraduate students argued that weighty assessments intensified all these factors.

There was a shared perception that students widely use accessible generative AI tools like ChatGPT for learning and assessment. In general, the students saw generative AI as a tool to increase productivity and improve performance both in their academic work and future workplace. It was commonly argued that the effectiveness of generative AI use depended on well-developed prompting skills as well as the specificity and complexity of the task. Regardless of student department or course regulation regarding use of generative AI, the students did not see the generative AI use as a violation of academic integrity as long as it was employed as a tool rather than replacement of own work and thinking. Embracing generative AI, or at least accepting and adapting to it in higher education, was a shared vision. The students unequivocally critiqued the LSE's current prohibition of generative AI use as unrealistic, counter-productive, and harmful for the university competitiveness. To boost both academic performance and graduate employability, the

students wanted to see a double focus on developing skills for critical and effective use of generative AI and competencies that generative AI cannot replace, such as critical thinking. There was a shared desire to allow and even encourage the use of generative AI in assessments while assessing competencies which remain relevant even when generative AI tools are accessible for task completion, such as reasoning which the generative AI cannot provide or demonstrating a candidate's skill in using generative AI.

Given the strong student position on generative AI embracement and integration into teaching and assessment, the School may benefit from renouncing the default prohibition of generative AI use and more sophisticated regulation of its ethical and integral use in assessment. This exercise may require reviewing, and awareness raising about, academic integrity rules and guidelines more broadly, as the focus groups revealed confusion over usage of various sources and tools in assessment production process, further complicated by the emergence of generative AI. The students advocated for assessment rules and design that mirror "real life", especially work situations, which would also facilitate their learning.

The findings show that the key to academic misconduct prevention lies in assessment design. The students universally believed that opportunities to cheat without being caught are always exploited by some, leaving those who abide by the regulations at a disadvantage and consequently incentivised to follow suit. Accordingly, they called for assessments where completion quality would be hard to manipulate by cheating, such as individualised questions and topics. Similarly, they advocated assessment design that curbs competition-driven misconduct. There was a strong sense that unenforceable (poorly preventable and scarcely detectable) and inadequately justified (seen as purposeless, detached from real world scenarios and restraining learning) rules should be scrapped. Instead, such practices could be embraced as part of assessments, either by refocussing on competencies that remain relevant when these tools and resources are available, or even assessing the very skill in using them. In cases where these solutions are inapplicable, strong checks in place to ensure that everyone plays by the same rules and cheating is effectively detected were favoured. Opinions varied on institutional use of machine detection of AI-generated text or even plagiarism, but complete reliance on that without human checks and proper scientific evidence of their effectiveness was universally seen as untrustworthy. Postgraduate students strongly believed that assessment diversification – introducing more diverse types of assessments, in particular presentations and assessment of class participation, as well as equally spreading out assessments with less weight towards the final grade throughout the course – would remove some root causes of cheating (lack of motivation, poor engagement with the course material, stress) and reduce effectiveness of cheating.

Finally, improving student preparation for assessment was seen as crucial to counter cheating that arises out of panic and legitimate concerns unaddressed by the university. Besides structuring course assessments in a way that stimulates balanced learning throughout the course that assessment diversification could achieve, the students raised the need for explicating assessment criteria and standards, particularly relevant for international and postgraduate requalifying students who are not familiar with conventional assessment in the British educational system (e.g. essay writing) and/or particular discipline norms and requirements. Ensuring sound formative assessment design and the usefulness of formative feedback, which includes harmonisation of formative and summative assessment marking, was another common suggestion.

Table of Contents

Summary	1
Table of Contents	6
Introduction	7
The research	7
Methodology	8
Ethics and reflexivity	9
Limitations	9
Findings	11
1. Understandings of academic integrity: confusion over process further complicated by the rise of generative AI	11
1.1. Academic integrity in terms of a final product	11
1.2. Academic integrity as a process	12
2. Drivers of academic misconduct	17
2.1. Disagreement with the rules that restrain learning and seem artificial	17
2.2. Opportunities to cheat and competition logic	18
2.3. Lack of clear rules or awareness about them	19
2.4. Implicit assessment criteria and conventions	20
2.5. Trusting the source or means of cheating	21
2.6. Time pressure and desperation	22
2.7. Low motivation, poor or unbalanced learning and weighty assessments	23
3. Views on generative AI: "It's here to stay - might as well just start using it better"	24
3.1. Usage and usefulness.....	24
3.2. Generative AI and academic integrity.....	25
3.3. Suggestions for university policy.....	28
4. Policy suggestions to prevent misconduct: integrity by design	34
4.1. Review, clarify and raise awareness about academic integrity rules	34
4.2. Mirror conditions in comparable work situations	36
4.3. Design assessments "immune" to cheating	37
4.4. Curb competition	38
4.5. Lift unenforceable, inadequately justified bans – and embrace it	39
4.6. Use detection and in-person exams where necessary	40
4.7. Prepare students better	41
4.8. Diversify course assessment	41
References	45
Appendix 1. Research participants	47
Appendix 2. Focus group topic guide	48
Appendix 3. Stimulus material	50

Introduction

Digitalisation and the rise of generative artificial intelligence (AI) challenge traditional approaches to assessment in higher education (HE) (e.g. Bieger, 2023; Lancaster, 2023; Overono & Ditta, 2023). While the new technological tools offer many opportunities, they also raise concerns over reliability, fairness, and the purpose of assessment.

Although the pandemic has largely normalised **digital assessment**, including take-home exams, the wider possibilities for academic misconduct inherent in this mode of examination has put its continued usage into question. A survey of 900 UK students found that 1 in 6 cheated on their online exams in 2021-22 by talking to other students, using unauthorised means to find answers, and seeking help outside university (Williams, 2022a). In response, many have called for invigilated and proctored exams. Yet, the effectiveness of online proctoring that some institutions have adopted is questionable too (Williams, 2022b), not to mention concerns over violation of privacy.

Furthermore, the rise of accessible and capable **generative AI** tools, such as ChatGPT, and the increasing evidence of students using these tools for assessment purposes, has alarmed the HE institutions to potentially widespread and undetectable cheating by unauthorised generative AI use across a wide variety of written, uninvigilated assessments (Cotton et al., 2023; Fazackerley, 2023; Ross, 2023). The immediate panic over the implications of generative AI for academic integrity, and academia more broadly, has led many institutions, including LSE (2023), to prohibit any usage of these tools unless it is permitted by specific departments or courses (Fazackerley, 2023) and desperately search for AI-generated text detection tools (Williams, 2023). On the other hand, the inevitability of change is slowly being accepted, and academics are searching for ways to incorporate generative AI in their teaching while HE institutions grapple with regulatory questions (Ceres, 2023; Sarofian-Butin, 2023; Sharples & Pérez y Pérez, 2022; University of Cambridge Faculty of Education, n.d.).

The research

In reviewing assessment policy, it is essential and valuable to consider student understandings and views surrounding academic integrity, assessment and these new technologies – ultimately, student response to assessment policy changes will define its success. Thus, in response to recent developments, the Eden Centre initiated a project with 3-fold objective:

- to better understand students' perspectives to inform emerging LSE policy regarding AI in education;
- to identify strategies for engaging and supporting students in their educational journey at LSE, while concurrently reducing the likelihood of cheating and collusion in assessment scenarios;
- to support the development of resources and activities in central units and departments.

The research involved conducting 3 focus groups with LSE students representing diverse disciplines and backgrounds, led by a post-graduate student, to illicit student norms, perceptions, and views surrounding academic integrity and assessment in the context of the AI generative tools and digitalisation.

This report presents the project's findings. After describing the methodology, the findings are articulated within 4 topics relevant for the project objectives: 1) understandings of academic integrity in the context of generative AI and digital assessments; 2) drivers of student misconduct; 3) views on generative AI use, academic integrity and incorporation in higher education; 4) policy suggestions to prevent academic misconduct and improve student experience.

Methodology

The Focus Group (FG) method was chosen as it lends itself to exploring shared and contested norms, understandings and views in a particular demographic or social group. Three FGs were conducted with LSE students from a range of disciplines and backgrounds: two groups comprising postgraduates (online and on campus) and one with undergraduates (online). In total, 21 students participated (see Appendix 1). Judging from observational data and student self-reports during the interaction, international and (to a lesser extent) female students predominated.

The participants were presented stimulus material – screenshots of public social media content on assessment and practices that might amount to academic misconduct, namely a meme on using ChatGPT in exams and an “essay mill” ad – which triggered discussions about the research topics (see Appendices 2 & 3).. A fellow LSE post-graduate student facilitated the discussions, and no members of LSE staff were present in the FGs, ensuring that the participants could speak freely (also see *Ethics*). The style of the facilitator was to create a natural conversation flow, intervening when necessary to direct the discussion towards the questions of academic integrity, support and assessment policy, ensure that agreement or

disagreement on points raised were fully expressed within the group, follow up for clarification, stimulate the discussion and feed in questions on relevant types of assessment or (mis)conduct.

The data was thematically analysed using NVivo software, generally in a positivist fashion. The report is predominantly descriptive, but some latent meanings identified through systematic analysis and comparison are included, always demonstrating how it is grounded in the data.

Ethics and reflexivity

To mitigate potential harm and boost willingness to actively participate in the FGs, full anonymity and confidentiality of participant information was assured. The participants were given “blanket amnesty” for reported individual cases of (potential) academic misconduct, i.e. the facilitator did not have to report such cases to the relevant bodies. The participants also consented to keeping information they hear from other students confidential.

The FGs were moderated, transcribed and analysed by a fellow student and the raw data was not shared with anyone else, of which the participants were made aware. The moderator assumed a role of a curious questioner/listener and reserved her opinions as well as knowledge on the topics discussed, which was simplified by her neutral stance on most of them. This is believed to have contributed to the participants’ confidence and comfort in sharing their views and experiences.

In the report, the students are referred to by pseudonyms and only their department (not study programmes) information is provided to protect their identity.

Limitations

Based on a small-scale qualitative research project, this report offers only a tentative identification of student perceptions, understanding patterns, shared vs. contested views but cannot quantify their significance or determine causal relationships between them.

Some perspectives or aspects may be missing as not all disciplines and demographic groups were represented to the same extent. International students and to a lesser extent women dominated the sample (although the latter fact was to some extent compensated by one male-dominated postgraduate group). As with many research projects, due to voluntary participation, some students were naturally excluded, for instance those who did not have the time, did not find generative AI and academic integrity – the two topics

highlighted in recruitment process – relevant or worth discussing, or did not feel comfortable sharing their views with other LSE students within the FGs. Participation rates and participant composition were also likely affected by the timing of the FGs: many students, particularly undergraduates, were no longer present on campus at the end of the academic year. Indeed, the second undergraduate FG scheduled on campus did not take place as nobody showed up. As a result, the findings may be slightly oversaturated with the perspectives of postgraduate, international students who have reflected on this topic, and wanting to share their views and able to make time for it. Throughout the report, it is made clear which aspects were particularly or exceptionally relevant to certain sociodemographic groups, where such data is available. However, many patterns were similar across all FGs and social characteristics, and there is little reason to believe that continued data collection following the same methodology at the time would have generated significantly different data.

In further research, it would be useful to conduct focus groups segmented by discipline. Such design might unearth important caveats to the patterns found in this project and generate more nuanced knowledge applicable to specific departments or courses.

Finally, given the novelty and fast evolution of generative AI, this research is timely, but its findings may need an update in the light of new developments.

Findings

1. Understandings of academic integrity: confusion over process further complicated by the rise of generative AI

1.1. Academic integrity in terms of a final product

Across the groups, the students understood academic integrity in terms of the **final product** submitted for assessment **being one's own work** and **proper referencing** of others' works that are direct inputs in the final submission. While this could seem synonymous with plagiarism, the normative centred by the students concerned certain work ethics – **putting honest work in one's assessment** – rather than the protection of authors' rights often associated with this term. Accordingly, passing the work produced by someone else or something else (generative AI) as one's own, either by copy-pasting or merely paraphrasing such work or parts of it, was perceived as strictly off limits.

[W]henever it's not yourself writing it, I think that's what makes it unethical – Fatima, UG, Sociology

The difference is going to rely on whether the product is yours or not. – Matias, PGT, International Development

I think it would be unethical to use ChatGPT to write your whole essay and then you claim it to be your work. – Lin, UG, Economic History

Initially, originality and authorship of a critical idea of the assessed piece were mentioned, but doubts were raised as to whether this was accurate or realistic. After some deliberation, the consensus reached was that despite being crucial for attaining good grades, originality of the central idea and critical voice of the author did not necessarily concern academic integrity, as long as others' ideas were properly acknowledged. Being the one who compiled different ideas into the piece was enough to preserve integrity.

So if you just reference all over your essay, that will be also fine in terms of academic integrity, as long as you reference what you use. But you may get low grades, or if you don't have your critical thinking reflected there, you may get low grades, even you can fail, but it's totally different things in terms of integrity or ethics or you're failing the course, I guess. So it's not like someone writing your essay or anything like this, in my opinion. So you can have an essay full of like 99% of other people's ideas and you may fail the course, but it's not something about ethics, in my opinion. - Dilara, PGT, Health Policy

I think a big part of academic misconduct is plagiarism. And I would define plagiarism as claiming work that you didn't put together to be yours. But you can use external sources of help you make your piece of work, but you can't just copy it from just, like, people. You have to be the one who compiled it. - Lin, UG, Economic History

One postgraduate group highlighted that integral process should rely on individual thinking and reflection.

*I would like to draw analogy to art. So how art is created. So when we look at an artist, it's not necessarily that the art is coming from within, right? **The art is a manifestation of whatever that artist comes across, how he processes it. So when a student, like at our level, when we are studying something and what are we gaining out of it and what is our own thoughts on that?** If we can reflect it correctly on a piece of paper or the computer screen, that is what I think is the true representation of academic integrity. And that is, I think, more or less the expectation from a student in terms of displaying academic integrity. - Mahika, PGT, Law*

1.2. Academic integrity as a process

However, further discussions revealed that there was little agreement or clarity over **standards for ethical and fair process** that goes into producing the assessed piece.

In considering what academic integrity means to them, two postgraduate students talked about **good academic practice** more broadly: following rigorous research process, not falsifying data, being ethical, and thinking of “what [practices] professors would be using” (Olivia, PGT, Sociology) to self-check one’s integrity. But this point did not trigger any discussion and other participants quickly brought up different aspects, potentially signifying agreement but also lack of relevance or reflection on it among the students.

Following the code of conduct established by the School and/or specific course was also mentioned in all focus groups as a common-sensical precondition for academic integrity. Nonetheless, it did not mean that all students felt personally or socially obliged to follow such rules (see section 2).

The students grappled with the questions on the **ethicality of using various forms of help** (consulting with peers, teachers and external experts, collaborating with peers, using others' ideas and work, generative AI tools).

1.2.1. Proportion of own work

The most straightforward litmus paper to judge whether reliance on sources and means external to the student's individual thinking and effort was ethical appeared to be the **proportion** of assessment content generated not by the assessed student.

I think if the majority of it was copy and pasted, or even if you just took Chat GPT's answer and changed the words around, I think that would still be considered plagiarism because it's not coming directly from you. And even if you change a lot of the words, I think that's still considered unethical. I think what isn't considered unethical is when the majority of the essay or bulk of everything comes from yourself. I think it's okay to get help, but when it's something else doing the majority of the work, I think that's where the issue lies – Fatima, UG, Sociology

***If the whole content and the actual paper that you're submitting was not made by you** - there, I think that it's a problem. – Francisco, PGT, Social Policy*

1.2.2. Getting help vs. outsourcing

After in-depth discussions, most participants settled on the distinction between **using various tools and sources to aid** assessment production **versus outsourcing** the whole assessment production or a considerable part of it. The ethical usage of generative AI was defined following the same logic (see 3.2.)

[...] imagine, like, there's a group of us online, and we're all doing the same exam paper. And then we say, okay, you do question one, you do question two, and I do question three, and we just share the answers and upload the same ones - I would consider that to be academic misconduct. [...] but if, for example, we just discuss, like, yeah, are we using this ratio for this answer? Do we round this one? Do we use this article to answer this question? Then **I think that's okay as long as you're not completely just uploading all the same work and splitting up the work to get the exam done.** – Jamila, UG, Accounting and Finance

Whether ChatGPT is bad or not, it **depends on how you use it.** If you're going to paste whole paragraphs, then I think that's definitely unethical. If you're just using it to understand key terms or just get better knowledge on your subject, then I think it's fine. And not just ChatGPT. **I think what makes any assessment unethical is if you get someone that's not yourself [who] does it.** Like even on LinkedIn, Twitter and everywhere, there's always people saying that they can write your essay and stuff. – Fatima, UG, Sociology

I guess it depends on the purposes. [...] if you're just improving like style or just having summarized some information so you can read it faster or use it [generative AI] as a tool - **not as the content creator, but as a tool that can help you,** for you to create and build up your essay. – Francisco, PGT, Social Policy

1.2.3. Unfair advantage

To discern ethical and integral practices from those that are not, many drew on **unfair advantage** understood as using resources that others do not have the same access to.

I think it's also just like **doing something which you know would benefit you and maybe harm others in the process.** – Sarah, UG, Management

Yeah, I think.... for me it's an issue of equity. So, if you discuss your idea with your professor and they say, oh, have you read this and this reading - everyone in the school has access to office hours, so you can all kind of be on the same footing with that, and then you would just reference those papers but you don't need to say, oh, my professor sent me this paper. But if it's something that not everyone has access to, so an essay... person that you pay to write your essay, or maybe not everyone knows how to use chat GPT or you're not allowed to use it, then that's different. So, **I don't think there's like a... a proportion that you can say, okay, someone sent me three articles and that's fine, but if they sent me ten, that would be a problem, if you see what I mean. It's about the different platforms that everyone has access to.** - Olivia, PGT, Sociology

Yet what constitutes unfair advantage was hard to define and varied. **Consultations with experts outside the School** is a case in point. While to one postgraduate, consulting with external experts for assessment purposes was undoubtedly unfair and thus wrong, the undergraduate group shared a strong view that it was good academic practice showing one's initiative and seeking diverse perspectives and comprehensive knowledge, which should be encouraged.

I don't think it's ethical because **at LSE we have lots of people from different economic backgrounds**, some of them maybe have family members who are professors. So **using that resource to have like a private conversation that's not within the school system doesn't feel fair** to me. – Olivia, PGT, Sociology

I think it's alright to ask for help. I think, in fact, it should be encouraged. It's not unethical in any way because... it's sort of like reading articles and doing the essential readings. **You're just seeking out knowledge from another person.** But at the end of the day, you will be writing your own essay. You're just seeking out more knowledge. – Fatima, UG, Sociology

I guess it [academic misconduct] will be like when it's like any action that gives you an unfair advantage over other students. So it has to be like an unfair advantage, not just any odd advantage. Because, for example, like how we discussed, **if you're speaking to others, well, that's just a good advantage that you have. That's your own initiative.** But unfair would be, for example, getting someone externally to write your paper for you. So I guess if it gives you an unfair advantage over someone else, then I guess I would consider that as academic misconduct. – Jamila, UG, Accounting and Finance

Importantly, some students did not feel everyone received equal access to the resources LSE should guarantee, like academic mentoring and supervision quality. In these cases, seeking advice outside the School seemed completely justifiable from fairness perspective:

I feel like this would be the same as going to office hours and asking if you're maybe like academic mentor or teachers could help and see how to structure the essay or just start with it. Because I remember some of my friends who do like, an essay-based subject said that **some teachers care and would help you structure your essays, but some teachers won't.** So I feel like **that's just basically the same thing as going to your teacher and asking how to get help**, like how to structure essay, how to write. So as long as they're not writing it for you and you're still putting an effort, I don't think that's weird or bad necessarily. – Min, UG, Economics

Other times, the students assumed that if they had access to some kind of help inside the School, then it was basically permitted to get the same kind of help outside it.

I think someone reading over your essay is okay in terms of edits. Even with LSE Life, I think they read your essay and they can give you suggestions on what you could change. But I think someone making a whole draft for you, I think that would be unethical. But for someone to suggest minor edits here and there, I think that is allowed. And in fact, **that's what LSE Life do for you anyway.** – Fatima, UG, Sociology

Most postgraduate students occupied a middle ground. In trying to balance out fairness and value in seeking knowledge by all accessible means, they distinguished between types of assessment (timed vs. untimed, shorter vs. longer window take-home exams), circumstances, depth and specificity of discussion

or advice. Some thought it was ethical under conditions of proper referencing but did not know **how they could “reference a person”** (John, PGT, Mathematics; Parvati, PGT, Geography and Environment).

*[B]efore you start writing your exam, if you consult that person, okay, I was going through this topic and what do you think about this? That's understandable. But **after you have your question in hand, I don't know how morally and ethically correct this is to consult a person who's already an expert** in that particular subject. Because [...] you go to this person and you ask very specific suggestions. – Mahika, PGT, Law*

*I think it's about the equity concern here because not everyone will have access to the networks that we have. But I don't know how we can differentiate that... because **a lot of ideas come across when we talk among our peers or professors**. And it might be similar in that instance. **I don't know how to draw the line there. So maybe if you're specifically speaking, someone discuss your essay versus if the topic naturally comes [up]** and you know, the thoughts, you think about it later and start writing about it later. – Dhriti, PGT, Geography and Environment*

Nonetheless, the necessity to avoid or prohibit banking on unfair advantage was not universally shared. One postgraduate group saw it as undesirable for knowledge production purposes, artificial and/or simply impossible to enforce.

Matias:

*I'm not sure because [...] **That's how life works**. We don't all have... **There are people with privileges and people that just don't have those privileges**. [...] **We always have some access and some specific knowledge**. And again, if we were writing about... I don't know about a case study from India, people from India are going to have a better understanding of the context, and they're going to have better access to resources than we do, or than I do. So I think...*

Francisco:

*I think it's kind of natural, right? That this kind of thing is going to happen. And **I don't think we should stop people from using additional material just because of that, like, oh, "We should all be in the same level. So you shouldn't use a resource that is in your home language because otherwise it would be unfair"**. Like, people should use it...*

Matias:

***How can you control that? That's the issue**. It's like, first, if it's right or wrong. But if it's wrong, how could you control people? If I have this knowledge, what, I wipe it out from my head? I cannot. It's like, it's part of me. It's hard.*

Importantly, this view was partly conditional on an assumption that the **grades are not adjusted on a curve**, i.e. even if someone does extremely well due to the advantages they rely on, others would not be disadvantaged by it and could still get the same grade provided that they meet essential criteria.

*But also because as I understand, the assessments here at LSE are not like [...] a gauss bell [...]. Everyone had an individual assessment. **So if you did well, another person could do well without having the same resources** or the same access to those resources. So I don't know, like... [...] it's not guaranteed that because you talk to a professor that you're going to do better. Because I think that doesn't really matter. It won't affect other students I think. – Matias, PGT, International Development*

2. Drivers of academic misconduct

2.1. Disagreement with the rules that restrain learning and seem artificial

The participants reported disrespecting the rules that they perceived as **unjustified**. Commonly, these were the rules that were seen as **restraining learning and knowledge production** that assessments should instead incentivise.

Something is misconduct based on how the institution defines it. Right? Sov So I think LSE needs to kind of back off from that and they need to stop assuming that students are always in the wrong. – Akira, UG, Economics

*[...] if I'm a student and I know someone who is a professor at other university or has a knowledge in some topic, why shouldn't I talk to this person and then discuss some ideas to write my essay? I don't see any problem in this. Actually... **I tend to see this kind of contact as positive. Like I will discuss a topic with an expert, and I will have an external opinion...** – Francisco, PGT, Social Policy*

Another source of disagreement with the rules that made students feel ethically uncompromised to circumvent or disregard them was their perceived artificiality, **contradicting “common sense”** and **conditions typical for “the real world”**, especially comparable work situations, including in academia. Sometimes, the students violated such rules unknowingly, because their common sense did not question the ethicality of the practice (see 2.3).

*[...] **in the real world you're not going to do everything on your own.** You will be asking help from lots of different people and lots of different departments. So I think it's just what in reality happens, you do need to ask for help sometimes and communicate. – Jamila, UG*

*[...] because **in real life you would do it. It's like, if you're writing a paper or something or you have a job, you would talk to people** and say, "oh, what do you think about this? I'm planning to do this, this is my approach" ... and you will consult [agreement in the background] – Matias, PGT, International Development*

2.2. Opportunities to cheat and competition logic

Mismatch between official rules and means to enforce them was automatically associated with the rise in cheating, or at least suspicion of it. For instance, **talking or colluding with other students** and to a lesser extent **recruiting outside help** was believed to be more common in **take-home exams**, particularly with longer time windows for completion, than in traditional invigilated exams. Similarly, using **unauthorised poorly detectable sources** (publicly unavailable sources, generative AI)¹ was believed to be widespread compared to well-detectable ways of cheating (such as plagiarising academic articles). Sometimes cheating was known or believed to be so widespread and **normalised** that the participants were not calling it out as such, despite being aware of the official prohibition. This was particularly true to officially prohibited practices that the students themselves did not see as a violation of academic integrity (see 2.1., 3.1., 3.2). As a general rule, **standardised assessment tasks with little room for individual or critical thinking** were seen to facilitate all cheating practices.

I think if LSE is to implement these [take-home] exams, they should consider that the students will be communicating with each other just because if they don't want the students to communicate, then just make the exam in person. – Anna, UG, Psychology

I know for most digital assessments, I think they say that you shouldn't use resources outside the classroom or something along those lines, but I feel like a lot of people do regardless – John, PGT, Mathematics

I think a lot of it can go unnoticed if it's.... [an unproctored long time window online exam] As someone had said, there is a possibility of discussions, but some students can honestly push it to different levels with those loopholes, which maybe we wouldn't have thought of. It doesn't just [?] discussions at times, it's also having another person sit and take it with you, which is very unethical to other students who maybe cannot do that. – Lakshmi, PGT, Public Policy

Especially when there are no rules regarding AI, apart from just a one liner that "Please refrain from using AI generative tools in your assessments". It's very easy to... "defeat" LSE, at this point of time. By the usage of chat GPT and hundreds of other online tools that are available there to counter, like to go around the plagiarism [checks], to improve your answers, to... just, basically produce a lot of work which might not be your own but produce it in such a way that the traditional software can't catch. – Aarush, PGT, Public Policy

Perceivably or factually widespread violation of the rules, in combination with little likelihood of being caught, was experienced as a situation that almost forces one to cheat in order to preserve the level playing

¹ The students had different views as to whether AI-generated inputs could be detected, but they agreed the tools for it were much less developed compared to those for academic plagiarism and that the capacity or marker ability to detect depended on how much the student edited and adjusted AI-generated text, and whether the generative AI tool was used to generate final text in the first place. See section 3, esp. 3.2., for more on generative AI detection.

field: if other students benefit from unauthorised help, I should to, otherwise I am left behind. This could be conceptually associated with **competitive logic** permeating LSE students' thinking about assessments. **Grading on a curve**, when students knew that this practice was used by their department, accelerated the competitiveness-driven cheating, as it was assumed (or inferred from past experience) that at LSE it would result in generally lowered grades.

Yeah, if I'm not talking to other people and other people are talking, I lose. To win, I have to talk to other people. The marker is not going to know who talked to who. Right? So you will lose if you don't talk. So honestly, at that point, if they don't really want us to talk, do an in-person exam or else otherwise you can assume that everyone else is talking. So [...] you'll lose the game if you don't talk to other people. So even if you don't want to, you're kind of forced to, for the sake of that grade. For that mark, that's how I feel. - Akira, UG, Economics

So when it comes to these take home assessments and I've had a pretty bitter experience in the first year and the second year when assessments were being curved, marks were being adjusted. You will lose out if you don't cheat with everyone else. So it's all about survival. So at that point, I think ethics are kind of out of the way, to be honest. " - Akira, UG, Economics

2.3. Lack of clear rules or awareness about them

Often, the students were **not aware of the relevant rules or guidelines of academic conduct**. Phrases like "I don't know", "I have never thought about it", "I have never come across such guidelines" were common across all levels and programmes of study.

Aarush:

That's what I am taking from this focus group. I don't think I... have ever read guidance about academic misconduct or integrity. I don't even know what it all covers. [chuckles]

Francisco:

Yeah!

[many chuckle in agreement]

Lack of shared awareness of the standards or confusion between different course and department-specific guidelines opened the door for loose interpretations of academic integrity as well as significantly different views and practices. The students recognised they were regularly engaged in practices such talking to others or using various sources without knowing or reflecting whether they were ethical or not.

Yeah... No, I don't know. Because people talk about the questions. It's like, "oh, what question are you doing? What are you reading? I'm reading this." That's usual. But then, I don't know if it's not allowed now. - Matias, PGT, International Development

For me, one of the things with digital assessment in general, I think first, that they have all these mixed things, like, oh, you should just engage with the material from the course. You have to use them, and then if you don't use external sources, it's like, oh, you should do your own research as well. So it's always, like, the easiest way is to do both because you never know. - Francisco, PGT, Social Policy

Some questionable practices, such as buying or using exam preparation materials produced by other students, were seen as fully acceptable in both postgraduate groups:

I'm not sure if you need to really read every article by yourself. You just go on with summaries. It's like being a group of students and splitting the readings and then sharing summaries with each other. I'm not sure if it's against academic integrity because, I mean, it's just, I mean, a division of labour in that sense, in my opinion. So academic integrity in that case [is] just writing your own ideas in your own words, without using, copying pasting anything from anywhere else, I guess. - Dilara, PGT, Health Policy

I remember that when I was doing my undergrad, one of the students used to summarize the info for every test and he will sell those summaries and people will use them to study. And it was like I don't think to what extent that is wrong because what you're doing is learning from his summary. You didn't go through the whole text but you're still learning like the basic knowledge that you need in order to pass the exam, for example. And it's like when you go to the test, you're actually answering the questions with your knowledge. It's going to be built by you and by your experiences and other things that are going to shape your perspectives and it's going to shape the final product. So I guess that to some extent what you're using is, I don't know, the summary of a text or maybe like notes that people can sell, like notes from other text or whatever.... - Matias, PGT, International Development

2.4. Implicit assessment criteria and conventions

Across the FGs, the students shared unease regarding **implicit assessment criteria and expectations**, particularly for the types considered conventional in the British educational system (e.g., essays) but nonetheless unknown and strange to international and requalifying postgraduate students. This was reported or believed to push some students towards unethical practices out of panic and legitimate concerns unaddressed by the university.

[W]e've not really had... an understanding of what distinction essays really look like, especially because I come from India and this is my first time abroad, and I've really never had an exposure to things like this. I struggled. I really struggled with it. So, yes, I did resort to it [ChatGPT] at one point just to generate ideas and analyse. How does the introduction look like? What does the conclusion paragraph look like? What does it really do? How should I structure it? What does the structure really mean? Because I genuinely did not have any idea of things like that. [...] since I've never been able to experience British education before [...] [and] because I come from a very technical background and hadn't done this before. – Saanvi, PGT, Management

[...] especially in the first semester, there was a lot of stress and panic from people, maybe who hadn't been within the British university system before, of what each mark level means for your essay. So you can understand the content, you can have a good argument, but not having an example of what a pass, merit or distinction essay looks like gave a lot of stress in my year group, and that may have caused some people to try and use these more extreme routes. So I only had one module where they gave us an example of what a distinction essay looked like, and that was for the dissertation. – Olivia, PGT, Sociology

Some students also identified that **formative assessments** were not always helpful or indeed unhelpful in understanding the criteria and one's performance, as they felt grading was not harmonised with the respective summative assessments.

I think a general feeling that me and my colleagues had was that usually like, the formatives were not that useful. And so, like, we usually had essays, take-home exams, and it was like the formatives were graded in this way, and then you go to the actual summative, and you have a similar question, and you're having a similar thing, and you will get a total different thing. Like, if you got a Distinction, then you will get, I don't know, another thing. Maybe it depends because usually it's not the same person grading, or I don't know, other stuff. But at the end, it was like [chuckles] on the first term, were all like, doing our formatives, and then the second it's like, oh, this is not really useful. So we stopped doing it. – Matias, PGT, International Development

2.5. Trusting the source or means of cheating

In the LSE context, the students believed that those resorting to misconduct had to trust it will deliver good grades. Hence, highly dismissive reaction to "essay mills" and similar services stemmed not only from clear feeling that it was unethical (see 1.1.) but also untrustworthy.

I think something about the messages seems suspicious, like the way it's written and the fact that they say they offer so many different things. There's just something about it just seems off. And whenever they're post[ed] in different group chats, like, the admins of the group chat usually delete the messages within like five to ten minutes of it. So I just think that further reinforces that it's not a legit message – Fatima, UG, Sociology

I think their motivation is that they find whatever organization they're choosing trustworthy. – Anna, UG, Psychology

2.6. Time pressure and desperation

The students generally believed that **time pressure and stress** due to **numerous assessments taking place in the short period of time** was the main reason why LSE student would resort to outsourcing one's work or cheating generally.

I think towards the end of terms sometimes you get a lot of deadlines coming up at the same time. And some students might be desperate enough to use these external sources of help ["essay mills"], but I don't think anyone would want to use them... because it doesn't look like trustworthy. – Lin, UG, Economic History

So I think if the student has some issues, perhaps time restrictions or perhaps they don't feel confident enough in the subject, combined with the trust that they put into an external source, I think that would be essentially their motivation to use these means. – Anna, UG, Psychology

This should not be conflated with **strong time restrictions in take-home exams**, as there was high variation in opinion how the latter affects proneness to cheating. While some believed short-window take-home exams triggered panic and pushed students into cheating, the majority argued the opposite: it left no room for "organising" cheating.

For me, the best option was when... [...] they will release the questions and you have, like, one week to solve them, and they will tell you it is expected for you to use only two days, like making this exam, so you have a better idea of what you're going to do and you have, I don't know, a whole week to figure out when you're going to do it. But **the 48 hours, I think is more tricky and probably will put pressure on people to end up cheating.** Yeah, that makes sense – Matias, PGT, International Development

I think **it would be foolish to... cheat under the influence of pressure because that just leads to making more mistakes in that cheating bit.** So if you are smart - and I'm presuming we all are [shared laughter] - if you're smart and you're trying to cheat, you would like to fix all the loopholes that may exist to prevent you from getting caught, let's say. So if I were to have a guess, I would think that longer time frames lead to people attempting these things much more than the shorter ones. And that's why if take homes can't be done away with because of whatever reasons, maybe because students feel comfortable with that or like if they are here to stay in that format, I would rather have them in a shorter time window, a one day, two-day window rather than the longer one. – Aarush, PGT, Public Policy

I don't think the average student would... Employ too much academic misconduct, especially given the online exams are timed. I think it's the same time as in person exam, plus you get an extra hour for troubleshooting. So in those time constraints, **I personally found that in my online exams in first year, I didn't even have time to talk to other people or try to cheat. I was too busy trying to finish the paper.** So I think that LSE could, you know, just calm down their stance on in person exams, if proper guidelines are given. – Sarah, UG, Management

I did find it very funny when I went in to write my first summer exam, I was literally sitting, like our shoulders were brushing and we were sitting that close and yet you really did not have the time to even look up from your screen. So I mean, **one would think that situation was right for you to just copy answers from one another, but you did not have time to do anything, like you did not even have time to keep track of what you were writing.** – Anika, PGT, Health Policy

2.7. Low motivation, poor or unbalanced learning and weighty assessments

Among the root causes for cheating, the students also mentioned low **motivation** to study and lack of **confidence** in the subject or specific task. Ultimately, if someone felt extremely incapable or unwilling to complete an assessment on their own, they would find ways to cheat.

You could say that somebody may use ChatGPT to write all of their essays, but then even without ChatGPT, the same person could have done it with like other... like, Google or get somebody to write it for them. It's always possible – Min, UG, Economics

One postgraduate group shared a strong view that the predominant **course assessment design** at LSE, particularly taught master's level, where a single assessment, such as a take-home exam or essay, determined the final course grade, was a strong factor intensifying these risks. **Weighty assessments** were

reported to be "nerve wracking" (John, PGT, Mathematics), since a one-off performance became so significant, consequently pushing to use any means to guarantee good performance. Moreover, the students felt that requiring only one assessment at the end of term or even academic year while structuring the whole course around completely voluntary participation both disincentivised and constrained balanced learning, putting some students into an impossible position to do well in an assessment when it came. Since desperation was widely believed to cause deliberate misconduct, especially for complete outsourcing of an assessment production, the FG participants saw it as a strong push towards misconduct. Lack of engagement with the course material throughout the course was also argued to lower motivation to do the assessment themselves.

I know a lot of people in my class that never participated and never did any readings. And then they just studied two days before the exam and that's it. Or they did the essay in like two days, using AI probably – Francisco, PGT, Social Policy

I think only having the exam at the end of the year also kind of helps people not get involved in the course in the middle because you're not as concerned with the grades at the moment. [...] [And then] it's just kind of nerve-racking, like having your entire grade in 1-2-hour exam. – John, PGT, Mathematics

The worst part about my course was because we didn't have our exams in January. So for the first semester as well as for the second semester, all our exams were concentrated in the summer period, the summer term. And none of us, I know for a fact that none of my batchmates studied in the first semester, apart from just talking a little bit in the seminars, because we didn't have exams. Everybody were traveling across Europe! [laughs] So that is the sad flight and summertime everybody was going crazy because even if you studied during November, December, you might have forgotten whatever you studies, so, yeah, that was a very sad flight to see. – Mahika, PGT, Law

Grading students on the basis of sole assessment was also argued to increase effectiveness of cheating due to the high weighting of one grade attained by undetected unfair means.

*[W]here I come from, we don't have this system of evaluation, like **assessment that you just hand in a paper that anyone could have done and that's it.*** – Francisco, PGT, Social Policy

3. Views on generative AI: "It's here to stay – might as well just start using it better"

3.1. Usage and usefulness

Across the FGs, there was a shared perception that students **widely use** accessible generative AI tools like ChatGPT for learning and assessment. The participants reported that they or their peers used it for

assessment outlines, generating ideas, information search, concept explanations, checking their knowledge, summarising and extracting needed information from articles or other texts, editing, technical tasks.

The opinion on **generative AI usefulness and potential to replace human work** varied without a clear association with discipline or level of study, even if individual students made distinctions on the basis of qualitative versus quantitative dichotomy. However, everybody agreed generative AI was useful to an extent and probably will become more capable with further development. It was commonly argued that the extent to which AI could aid assessment completion depended on well-developed **prompting skills** as well as the specificity and **complexity** of the task. In general, the students believed that generative AI can enhance productivity and performance both within academia and other industries if one knows how to use it. The fact that it was linked to better employability was an important motivation to master it (see 3.3.1).

*I feel like with ChatGPT, you get out what you put in. So you need to type what you want, like what you want to define. You need to take lecture notes and put it in. **I don't think ChatGPT does all the work for you because you need to know what the right prompts are to get what you want.** – Fatima, UG, Sociology*

*I think ChatGPT doesn't really fare well with more advanced topics. So the nicher it gets, the more it struggles. And that's by construction of the LLM models that underpin the technology. So that's sort of an expected outcome. So **I think there is a relationship** between the difficulty and the specialization of the take home assessment module versus how useful ChatGPT can be used. – Akira, UG, Economics*

*I think using AI would be beneficial in kind of enhancing or **improving your productivity** and doing tasks that maybe like, I don't know, maybe ChatGPT can't do this, but some other AIs can, like cleaning data or extracting data and stuff like that. Stuff that you, **technical stuff that you don't really need your brain to do. You just use a lot of time in doing that and it's just like, a waste of time.** So, yeah, I think using AI in that sense is actually beneficial. – Parvati, PGT, Geography and Environment*

*When we'll go out into real world to look for a job, **it might actually be an asset to the fact that you can write chat GPT prompts, because a lot of job descriptions that you see nowadays require you to be able to write ChatGPT prompts.** Like AI prompts. – Anika, PGT, Health Policy*

3.2. Generative AI and academic integrity

The use of ChatGPT or other generative AI tools was a **highly frequent example of misconduct** reported in the FGs, and illustrative of many reasons for violation of code of conduct (see section 2). While most of the students knew that LSE prohibits it, the widely shared sentiment that using ChatGPT to facilitate certain stages of producing an assessment does not amount to academic misconduct and common knowledge that

many students were doing it meant that there was no stigma attached to such practice. Furthermore, the sense that it may increase one's productivity, save time and improve performance meant that the students felt they would be at a disadvantage if they naively followed the rules. For obvious reasons, this did not apply to oral and in-person assessments. Finally, many students expected not to get caught as they were generally sceptical of the technological and other capacities to detect AI use *if* its inputs are integrated into assessment preparation process instead of straightforwardly submitted and claimed as own work.

*[...] of course, **the academic code of conduct discourages ChatGPT at the moment, at LSE. But the truth is everyone is using it. So if you don't use it, you lose.** It's the typical game theory problem.* – Akira, UG, Economics

It's LSE regulation that says it's unethical. It's not me saying that it's unethical.** [...] the usage of ChatGPT as a resource, right, as a tool for you to, in your own words, undertake the assessments, I think that is ethical. **I think that should be allowed. In fact, I think that should be encouraged. – Akira, UG, Economics

*[T]here are a couple of friends that I have who use it [ChatGPT] to summarize [articles] and get the gist of it. Because **at the end of it you need to analyse and extract the best that you can. And that's something, it facilitates it. The AI certainly helps us do that.** [...] **[Generative AI] helps us get ahead of our game,** but it will never overtake... it would not lead to misconduct.* – Saanvi, PGT, Management

Despite School-wide default prohibition of generative AI usage in assessments, and regardless of student department or course regulation of the generative AI usage, the students **did not see it as a violation of academic integrity** as long as generative AI is employed as **a tool rather than replaces** own work and thinking. In this sense, the students applied the same logic to judging the ethicality of generative AI use as to other sources or tools (see 1.2.2.).

I feel like ChatGPT has many different uses, and depending on the kind of use, that's how we determine its ethicality.

Like, for example, I was doing this module information systems. We had to do a report on artificial intelligence and making our own kind of software system, and it had a lot of complex terms. So I feel like ChatGPT, for me, I find it very useful in simplifying complex terms, because even if you use Google, it's not as useful because Google is going to give you all these long stuffy academic articles. And then I feel like ChatGPT kind of gives you the more direct answers rather than you unnecessarily having to go through like 40 page studies to find the answer you're looking for. So I feel like ChatGPT can be really helpful to students without having those plagiarism implications, because not everyone uses ChatGPT to plagiarize. – Sarah, UG, Management

I think it would be unethical to use ChatGPT to write your whole essay and then you claim it to be your work. But **I don't think it's unethical to use it for essay plans**, because ChatGPT is good at summarising that information. And your points for essays might have come from lectures anyway, so you're not.... Exactly copying ChatGPT's work. It's just like common knowledge that's already out there. But ChatGPT is good at summarizing that information – Lin, UG, Economic History

So if you're asking it [ChatGPT] to like summarize an article that you've already read and engaged with, but you just want to check that you've got it right, I don't see how that's different to googling a review of an article that an academic has written or like a blog or something that summarizes articles. But if you're using it to write your entire paper, then that's very different. – Olivia, PGT, Sociology

So when calculators came to be used for commerce studies, one can argue that does it amount to academic misconduct? It's as basic as that, right. **Can you use calculator in like, say, accountancy stuff? Yes, you can. Even in exam settings, you can. Because if a machine can do it, why do you need to do it yourself?** So I think it's in that same genre. The question that yeah, because it's nascent, very new, and people have just started using it, doesn't mean that it has to amount to academic misconduct if somebody can make our work easier. Because even if we are academically pursuing some courses, why are we doing it? Because we want to thrive in the real world. And if that is the place, so for example, when I go read like 50-page PDF, I would definitely use it - then why not for academic purposes? Might as well be thorough with the tool. Like Microsoft Office or like calculator - how to use a scientific calculator for that matter. So I don't really think that it amounts to academic misconduct. But then there should definitely be a threshold beyond which it will, **if you're using it in a smart manner just to read and research better as a tool to facilitate your research - in that case, I don't think it is academic misconduct.** But then again, there has to be a threshold which needs to be fixed. – Mahika, PGT, Law

However, this line was acknowledged to be blurry. It was sometimes noticeable in the discussions that the rise of generative AI **challenges understanding of ethics and integrity**. For instance, the students could not agree what is (or even if there is) a difference between **building one's assessment upon a draft provided by another person vs. generative AI**. Consider the following excerpt from a discussion on the difference between using generative AI and purchasing "essay mill" services:

Francisco:

This [purchasing "essay mill" services] is totally wrong for me, because this is the difference. We were discussing that in the first case scenario, [...] the ChatGPT or AI wouldn't give you the content, they would give you the structure and the language. In this case, [there] is another person doing your work for you – it is totally unethical.

Matias:

Yeah.

Aarush:

For me, ChatGPT does exactly the same thing. If, again, you use it correctly, or as you said, as it advances to that level, that it can... like somebody asked: "Critically analyse this paper as Elon Musk would do." And it did. So how is it different from ChatGPT? Because the person who's doing this is also not necessarily a master's student at the LSE. They just maybe, I'm presuming, from developing countries, trying to earn a quick buck. So they have that basic standard level of knowledge which AI also possesses, kind of, and they're using that to do some part of your work [...]

Matias:

I think that there's a difference in the sense that we were talking about how... to what extent is ethical or can be acceptable to use Chat GPT or any other AI generating AI, AI generative tools, as how... Like here you have the final product. What you're going to submit is this thing that another person did. And if you are using it as a tool, it's just to improve what you're doing. And I think that's the difference to some extent here, it's like you're not doing anything, you're just paying for it. So I guess that even when you're using Chat GPT, you're engaging with the tools in order to have a final product that have your signature at the end. But here you're not doing anything and you're going to be assessed by the work that another person did. I don't know. I feel like it's still different.

Aarush:

But why can't you use it as also a first kind of draft? [Mahika starts chuckling] It's just because you're paying for it and not ChatGPT that you are employing that you're thinking that this would be the final product.

One conclusion drawn from this discussion was that buying and using exam preparation material or similar services may also be in line with academic integrity.

3.3. Suggestions for university policy

3.3.1. Embrace

The students **unequivocally critiqued the defensive, conservative stance** towards generative AI that they have seen LSE and other universities taking. The students view this as unrealistic, counter-productive and harmful for university competitiveness. Bitterness of some accounts signified strong discontent with this black and white policy that, by default, prohibits any use of generative AI.

It's quite, in my opinion, **quite pathetic that the University thinks that the usage of ChatGPT is misconduct**. I think the labelling of ChatGPT as something unethical is **reflective of the laziness of academics**, their unwillingness to adapt methods of assessment, or the essay question that incorporates the usage of ChatGPT. I think it's actually **quite counterproductive** to say the usage of Chat GPT is unethical. [...] it's very important **for LSE's competitiveness**, really, to think about incorporating generative AI into their courses. [...] **or else the LSE degree will be very outdated because all other universities are pushing ahead**. – Akira, UG, Economics

I feel from LSE and also from most of the universities they're being defensive regarding this, like threatening the students, saying like, oh, if you use it, you're going to have a zero... But at the same time **they are useful tools for academic writing. You can make them work for you and improve your work as an academic**. – Francisco, PGT, Social Policy

[...] at the moment, I don't feel that LSE has a policy about ChatGPT apart from "Just don't use it at all", which I think is **unrealistic because I see people in the library using it**. I know people do use it. – Olivia, PGT, Sociology

The **embracement of generative AI** or at least accepting and adapting to it in HE was a universally shared vision, for enhancing both academic performance and graduate employability.

[We] need to understand at this point that AI is not going away. It's here to stay. It is the future. So **rather than going against it, let's just use it for our benefit so that we make better decisions, we understand and get ahead of the game rather than neglect it and say that oh, it does not exist, shut our eyes to it.** I don't think that's the way to go at it. – Saanvi, PGT, Management

I think with respect to especially like Chat GPT and the AI thing, I mean, it's going to be here and it's only going to get better [...] So I **think LSE should figure out how they want to accept the situation and get the best out of it because it's going to be there.** And I honestly think it's just a productivity tool. And the essence, like the best of the essays that people write at LSE are something where you bring up a new point of argument, which at least so far AI, ChatGPT cannot do. Maybe later it might be able to. So maybe emphasize on that and see where to take forward. [...] **And the fact that it's going to be a great asset in your employability... Maybe hone it in a way that is actually helpful for the students and not just shun it all out saying, oh, we don't want any of it [...]** – Anika, PGT, Health Policy

[...] **it is here to stay - might as well just start using it better. For better academic essays instead of just saying "Don't do it".** Because that's what a lot of the regulations that I had towards the end of my term said that AI generated answers will be... I don't know, they're taken care of in Turnitin and et cetera. I don't know if they honestly are. I don't know if there's the way that LSE is actually catching onto it, but enable us to use it better then. – Lakshmi, PGT, Public Policy

I think our education system needs to evolve with technology. So, like, **some of the companies that I've interned with in the past or right now, they're actively using AI in their operations. So it would be... I think it's important for students to learn how to make the most of AI** while also, I guess, being able to critically analyse or, like, problem solve by themselves. – Parvati, PGT, Geography and Environment

3.3.2. Authorise or incorporate

In the students' view, while complete outsourcing of one's work to generative AI should remain prohibited, using it as a tool should not only be authorised but also encouraged and supported by training. Most students agreed that **the line** between authorised, appropriate use of generative AI as a tool vs. misappropriation of generative AI (when it replaces student work completely) **should be defined** by the School or broader community in more precise terms.

*I think first thing that LSE at a macro level needs to do is... bring all these academicians from different fields, from machine learning fields, from traditional fields like law and finance together at the same table **and try to standardise things**. Because right now everybody is saying something basically on their own whims and fancies. **Those rules can't be the same, of course, [...] but some broad level of standardisation**, I feel, would do the students as well as the LSE staff good. Because **then you can build upon those and you can reach those standards where we say, okay, casqfx 83 to 85 is the only scientific calculator that is allowed and nothing else**. – Aarush, PGT, Public Policy*

*I think that needs to be contemplated on because it's not like of course, for every good thing there is always a threshold beyond which the good thing becomes bad. Right? So that is, I think now that it is so much in our lives. I think the scholars and the legislators, they need to contemplate on where to draw the line and to what extent. But we can't turn a blind eye to the fact that it exists. **We have to acknowledge that it exists and for good reasons, but to what limit - I think that is more the job of the legislators and the policymakers** who can think more about this. I, personally, I don't have any idea of it as of now, maybe I'll think about it. [laughs] – Mahika, PGT, Law*

However, some undergraduates disagreed arguing that it is impossible to draw such a line given the fast development of the generative AI and the focus should instead be on **integrating generative AI in teaching and learning**.

I think for assessments to move forward, for LSE to move forward, the focus should be instead, how do we incorporate ChatGPT into our modules, into our teaching? Instead of saying, okay, what are the boundaries of how we apply ChatGPT? I think that's sort of completely misguided. – Akira, UG, Economics

[...] LSE should be embracing ChatGPT and moving forward with it. I think that it would be very good to [do], instead of focusing on the barriers, on where is the limit, because the limit or the line, it will be very vague and it will be hard to determine what is actually ethical – Anna, UG, Psychology

3.3.3. Provide training in critical and effective use of generative AI

To reach these goals, the students wanted to have **critical and effective use of generative AI skills** developed through **special training** as well as AI **integration within subject courses**, all of which then should also be reflected in the assessments.

LSE should also put a focus on developing critical thought in the students. So **for the students to actually think very critically about ChatGPT and what will be of use and what will not be of use. Because the truth is, if you enter some prompt into ChatGPT for it to write the whole essay, the essay won't be good.** I mean, it will make sense, but it won't be good enough for LSE, I feel. And so you need other inputs into that. So then if students were to develop these critical thinking skills, they could make better use of ChatGPT that would hopefully be rather ethical. – Anna, UG, Psychology

I think from LSE's perspective, instead of saying that we shouldn't use it, I think they can push it a little further and actually **help in... students actually making good use of it. Instead of putting the most basic prompt as you can and submit an essay that gives you like a 45 or a 50, but actually make use of it.** [...] But I think that, like someone said, it either has to be uniform where all students are being either encouraged or discouraged, but also encouraged in what way to use it instead of just using the prompt blatantly or not even knowing how to use chat GPT altogether. – Lakshmi, PGT, Public Policy

I think it's just like using most Microsoft 360, Microsoft Office tools, like a Word or an Excel or a PowerPoint. These are all skills, and we use them so far in our assignments. Right? Our assignments might involve us doing slides or something. I mean, I'm not very sure on how they would do it, but I think like, training, **digital skills training would be one way to teach it.** – Anika, PGT, Health Policy

Some students shared examples of early attempts by their course conveners to support students in navigating generative AI, which give some clue as to what their expectations for the future direction are. The practices that were deemed helpful by the students included **discussing or showing strengths and limitations of generative AI** in the context of a particular course, outlining **concrete ways** how to benefit from generative AI as well as what to be careful about, and **clearly defined (mis)conduct** regarding generative AI use. Even experimental or basic attempts at integrating generative AI in the courses were praised by the students who contrasted it to reportedly predominantly conservative approaches to generative AI – prohibition of any use, deterrence from it by threatening, or absolute silence on this topical and relevant issue – which they were disappointed about and even slightly mocked.

I think one of our professors said you can use AI to generate ideas. That's where you can use it. "I'm not sure what topic you want to write on" - he was like, you just discuss, find out more about the topic, but don't use it to write the entire essay. The critical aspect should come from you, but other than like... if you want it's more like what you do on Google, if you go on Google and search about a particular topic that you're allowed to do. So use Chat GPT like you're using Google. He said so because you wouldn't copy paste anything what's there in Google as your assignment. Similarly, don't copy paste anything that's there in Chat GPT as your own work, but rather use it as a tool to engage in your thought process. I think that's what he had said, and that was quite helpful distinction. - Dhriti, PGT, Geography and Environment

Some of my courses, I was told, especially at the beginning of the first term, one of the professors said they knew if you use it, but of course they don't [sarcastic chuckle, shared laughter in a group]. [...] But I had another class, actually it was more practical course, where they were actually like, okay, yeah, [...] You don't have to pretend that it doesn't exist. If it can improve your work, it's good for you to use, but try to go through because even when you're using it, sometimes it will give you false references or broken links and stuff. So it's like you cannot just use it. You have to try to use it in a... smart manner, or like a tool. They were like, yeah, try to take advantage of it, but don't rely fully on it because well, you can - I'm not sure if they said they can notice, but it like shows on your work. - Matias, PGT, International Development

[I]n one of the classes, I think, professor himself, like when the chat GPT was on the rise, he was like okay, he tried explaining a concept using chat GPT and he was like, okay, this is what chat GPT can do and this is what chat GPT cannot do. He showed us [that] if you don't understand the basics of anything, chat GPT would be a good place to start because it's accurate. But then he gave example how you asked him [it] to do more complex thing and it just said gave some random s***. I think that is a good example, [what] professor did, and it helped us, it gave us the freedom to see what are the limitations of chat GPT, but also the advantages and how we can leverage it to enhance our understanding of the matter. So, yeah. I think for us, they didn't say don't use chat GPT, it was like know how to use chat GPT in order for you to understand the material. So if there could be something technical which you didn't understand, we could just type, okay, try and explain this as if you're trying to explain it to a ten-year-old and you'll be able to grasp the concept from the beginning. And that was really helpful for us to understand very technical things which we wouldn't have in all the... fancy economic jargon, but Chat GPT, was able to simplify it for us. So in that way... yeah, they just gave us an example on how to use it and when not to use it. And that is quite helpful. - Dhriti, PGT, Geography and Environment

[...] for my philosophy module, I had the departmental tutor, I was lucky enough to be taught by her. The conversation becomes very different. She wants to know how we intend on using it, so there's an open dialogue between her and the rest of the class. And she also explained to us the limitations of chat GPT in answering philosophical prompts. So there was less like of a threatening tone, but more of a "I'm also learning, so help me out, but I'll also give you my view on chat GPT and how it can harm you". So it was kind of a discussion, whereas in some other modules, it's more of a threat as opposed to support, saying if you use chat GPT, Turnitin is going to pick it up and you're going to face academic misconduct. So the attitude is very different depending on the department and I think who is teaching. - Akira, UG, Economics

3.3.4. Focus on competencies that generative AI cannot replace

Simultaneously, teaching and assessment were seen as needing to refocus on **competencies that generative AI cannot replace** like critical thinking and complex, specific reasoning. Accordingly, there was a largely shared suggestion for allowed and even encouraged use of generative AI in assessments while evaluating competencies which remain relevant even under the accessibility of these tools (see more in sections 4.3-4.5).

We could always have a base idea from Chat GPT and your analysis, or your critical analysis of what you do with that data or with this context or this piece of text is what you're judged on. So Chat GPT really gives you - amm, I don't know, probably I'm bad at prompt, so maybe it's just me - it gives you a generalised answer. Sure, it's great because it hasn't popped up in your head, but it's still not critical enough to understand graphs or pictures or how does that analysis really work. [...] So instead of being, oh, you cannot use AI - sure, you can write "[The] basic idea generated from AI or basic idea derived [from chat GPT]". You have the basic idea. What is your input to it? What do you see from it? Is what we are truly assessed on. So, your 1,500 [words] could be your true analysis of just the data. [...] Chat GPT doesn't really do great analysis. It gives you, generates ideas. [...] But what do you do with these ideas? Where do you go with them? - Saanvi, PGT, Management

And also it doesn't necessarily have to be an essay for assessment purposes, right? Like for example, it can also be a problem question, like how you think about it and how would you solve this problem? Which is where I don't think AI would be as useful. It is completely human. And once you hit that niche area, AI is not really helpful. AI is only helpful when you're getting generic ideas on essays and stuff, but when it's like a difficult, complex, hypothetical situation, which is when you have to apply your own, you know, brain, and based on what you have read and that's the only way to go about it. For writing an essay, AI can be resorted to. But if we change the method by which we assess, I think that is really... yeah, that could help. - Mahika, PGT, Law

4. Policy suggestions to prevent misconduct: integrity by design

4.1. Review, clarify and raise awareness about academic integrity rules

The students unequivocally argued for more sophisticated approach to generative AI within HE, authorising its use in assessments *as a tool* in combination with training in its critical and effective usage. Most students agreed that **the line** between authorised, appropriate use of generative AI as a tool vs. misappropriation of generative AI (when it replaces student work completely) **should be defined** by the School or wider community in more precise terms. This exercise would likely require rethinking the foundations of academic integrity, since the emergence of generative AI as a non-human content creator challenges conventional conceptualisation of some academic integrity terms and notions, such as plagiarism. For example,

authorising the use of AI-generated drafts for assessment require rethinking whether and why using other people's work as a draft for own assessment is or is not ethical. Therefore, comprehensive review of academic integrity terms and rules is needed to ensure consistency.

Besides, the School may benefit from a wider **review of and awareness raising about academic integrity rules** and guidelines, as the FGs uncovered confusion and conflicting views over as well as widely differing practices such as consulting with peers and external experts or relying on material produced by other students.

The **clear guidelines** on integral academic practice were agreed to be crucial in preventing misconduct as well as supporting student learning but at the same time inadequately provided at LSE, particularly at the postgraduate level. Many postgraduate students thus supported introduction of **mandatory training in academic integrity** at the beginning of each year or term.

In my undergrad university, we had a mandatory quiz that we had to do every semester on academic integrity. So they'd ask us a bunch of questions and we'd have to answer them. At the end of the quiz, they would tell us which questions we got right and which ones we got wrong. So I think that was pretty helpful because it kind of forces you to engage with what academic integrity is and learn from what you do know and what you thought you knew but is actually wrong. So I think that could be really helpful. – Parvati, PGT, Geography and Environment

I didn't know what categorizes as plagiarism at the beginning because a lot of these sessions [at LSE], for example, on ethics and plagiarism and Turnitin are not mandatory for students. And I didn't attend it because it is optional. It isn't mandatory. So if there's something like Parvati suggested, if there's a mandatory, like a Q&A or "fill this form and you get voucher", something like that, it can be really helpful to know whether what you're doing – and at times it's unknowingly [...] – actually comes as plagiarism. – Lakshmi, PGT, Public Policy

Undergraduate students, potentially due to their longer presence and stronger involvement in the School, thought that the rules and guidelines should be set and constantly reviewed **in dialogue with the students**.

[...] it is about discussion with the students to understand what are incentives and how people might respond to a set of rules. – Akira, UG, Economics

I think what is deemed unfair needs to be a collective decision. Hence why a dialogue between the examiners and the students is very important – which currently doesn't exist. – Akira, UG, Economics

4.2. Mirror conditions in comparable work situations

While in-person exams and AI-generated text detection were seen as obvious solutions to prevent cheating as it is currently defined, these were often seen as not reasonable neither desirable given the world where collaboration, generative AI and various sources of information are not only accessible but also increasingly required to be mastered for good performance. In addition, memorising information or doing work that generative AI could do was seen as a waste of time that could be used for development of more relevant competencies. There was a widely shared preference for **assessments that mimic the conditions (increasingly) typical for “the real world”**, particularly typical graduate destination **jobs**, and enable the students gain relevant, competitive skills as well as see the meaning behind the rules. Typically, these wishes concerned authorising and incorporating generative AI use, discussion and some collaboration with peers into assessments, making assessment conditions and criteria free of the need to memorise.

I know other friends at different universities, you know, including Oxford, Cambridge, where they never taken an in person exam throughout their three years because they transition to a world where in person exam isn't a thing. So I just feel like LSE has always been very very old fashioned. We refuse to change. – Akira, UG, Economics

[in-person exams are] perhaps not the best way to measure somebody's competence... and especially in practical courses, but at least for the purposes of curbing the uses of AI for academic integrity purposes [it's good]. But then it just brings us to this very basic concern, like to what extent does essay writing actually contribute to how we work in a practical scenario? That is the biggest question. Like, how does this matter? [...] whatever you're writing in exam and whatever you are, like papers that you have read, how does it matter when you are applying maths or making a financial model or writing a legal memorandum? So... These are like real skills that you need, not essay writing. That master's level, to what extent does it actually help you grow is what the question that brings me to, if we get into the bottom of this question of academic integrity [...] what is the ultimate cause of having this academic integrity if it is not taking you or helping you anywhere in the practical field? That's a very big question in the whole education arena, I believe. Which, I mean, like he mentioned that in LSE, at master's level, of course, we didn't enjoy learning things by heart. It is not something which... because I don't even remember what I learned by heart [laughs, others chuckle in agreement]. So yeah, you forget it right after, you know, right after you're done with your exams, because of the names of the scholars... [others chuckle] – Mahika, PGT, Law

Academics usually don't know by heart all the texts that they have read. So assessing people by knowing the texts by heart, I think it's ... I mean, you just learn them for the test. [...] I feel like not even academics of, however smart they could be or whatever. If you read a lot, you're not going to remember the authors and theory of each author. It really depends on what's useful for your question and sometimes there are things that you're not used to read, and you just read them in order to answer the question – Matias, PGT, International Development

[G]enuinely speaking, at least, a legacy of BSc [in] Economics program, you actually don't really learn how to collaborate and work in a team environment. There's very little collaboration. There is little interpersonal skill development that supposedly universities are supposed to train us in the work, right? So that's actually one thing that really quite hit me hard when I did my summer internship [...] I realised I'm very good at doing tasks myself independently, under incredible pressure. But in a group environment, I realised [that] actually other people are doing way better than I'm doing. – Akira, UG, Economics

4.3. Design assessments "immune" to cheating

The key to academic misconduct prevention is assessment design. To counter widespread cheating enabled by opportunities to do so without much effort or risk of being caught as well as student competition, FG participants universally favoured **assessments whose completion quality would be hard to manipulate by cheating**, essentially meaning tasks and types of assessment that are based on rather unique individual

or human input, such as critical and analytical thinking, problem-solving, individual topic or case choice, specific data collection, etc.

*To kind of promote less cheating or create less incentives when it comes to online exams, I would say it's actually the lecturer's job to try and reformulate the question in a way that allows for an assessment of a person's ability. Even if they collaborate or even if they discuss the question, it really isn't the student's job. Right? I think it's the lecturer, it's the university's job to **engineer questions that can still assess abilities, even if there's discussion, even if there's collaboration.** – Akira, UG, Economics*

***It's all about having the same rulebook. That doesn't provide the incentive for people to deviate.** That's the key. So if you're the course convener [...] you need to design the assessment in a way and create a rule in a way that there are no incentives, so that incentives faced by everyone are the same. Right. I think that will constitute a fair game. – Akira, UG, Economics*

*In my Department, [...] the assessments are **very unique and individual** in such ways that it's difficult to strictly rely on just plagiarism to complete them. So we've had things such as case studies and policy proposals, we've done Ted Talk-style presentations, we've created online portfolios, and all of these things, they do encourage critical thinking. They do encourage students to prove what they have learned throughout the course. But this is done in such a way that because **everyone's assignment is going to be very individual and not just writing on the same topic. So it's difficult to collaborate with other students in a way that is cheating because you won't copy directly what somebody else is saying.** However, you can ask them for an opinion on the project or on the topic. And so I think it does go in line with LSE's guidelines. So where possible, redirecting assessments to be more... more individual, where possible, I think this would be a good idea to keep it ethical as well as actually having the students show their skills. – Anna, UG, Psychology*

*I think professors are aware about the possibilities of what students might do when it's a take-home exam and I think they make the questions much harder and **give questions that do not have one single answer and have multitude of different possibilities of how you can answer it and structure it that way.** I think that's how professors have at least navigated that in my course – Dhriti, PGT, Geography and Environment*

4.4. Curb competition

The students also advocated for **constraints on possibilities to gain competitive advantage by cheating**, e.g. using unauthorised sources, which could be achieved **by assessment design and criteria**, e.g. giving no extra points for demonstration of knowledge outside course materials.

[...] one thing that happened this year during one of my courses was, we were told that we're not going to get any extra marks for looking at external websites or any references. So our professor said, just use what we've been giving you, and that's enough to even get full marks, including all the readings that we've assigned you. Because he showed us examples of previous papers where they've used external sources or external graphs. And he said that student received no extra mark for it, and it didn't contribute towards it. So that means that the student literally relies on everything they've been taught. And **that's a bit less pressure than thinking, oh, students are going to go above and beyond and look further into different things or different scholars and readings. So, I think by just restraining it - I think [in] certain subjects it will work - just to the subject and just to the syllabus, that makes it a lot easier for us and also mean that we don't resort to misconduct and trying to search up different ways because we've got access to everything already.** – Jamila, UG, Accounting and Finance

Providing ethical alternatives to cheating, e.g. making exam open book, was also reported to counter competition driven misconduct:

So even though the fact that there was a chance to, you know, so called "discuss" the actual take home exam... but I don't think there was enough time to do that or... there was no need for it, I felt. So... Right. I see that there is a potential for things to be unethical there, but there was just not enough incentive to [chuckles] because it's just... everyone knew what they had to do. It was an open book exam. So **I would much rather check the videos and the slides from the lecture than discuss it with someone else.** – Anika, PGT, Health Policy

Furthermore, since the students mentioned grade adjustments on a curve as an accelerator of competition-driven misconduct, while abstinence from grade adjustment mitigated their concerns over fairness in assessment and grading, it would be sensible to consider **abstaining from grading on a curve** to curb cheating and increase fairness.

4.5. Lift unenforceable, inadequately justified bans – and embrace it

There was a strong sense in all FGs that ideally, **unenforceable and inadequately justified rules should be scrapped**. Instead, widely used, scarcely detectable or preventable practices that also align with student understandings of academic integrity and assessment purposes but are officially considered as cheating could be **embraced as part of assessments**, either by refocussing on competencies that remain relevant when using these resources or assessing the very skill in using them.

We could always have a base idea from Chat GPT and your analysis, or your critical analysis of what you do with that data or with this context or this piece of text is what you're judged on. So Chat GPT really gives you - amm, I don't know, probably I'm bad at prompt, so maybe it's just me - it gives you a generalised answer. Sure, it's great because it hasn't popped up in your head, but it's still not critical enough to understand graphs or pictures or how does that analysis really work. [...] So instead of being, oh, you cannot use AI - sure, you can write "[The] basic idea generated from AI or basic idea derived [from chat GPT]". You have the basic idea. What is your input to it? What do you see from it? Is what we are truly assessed on. So, your 1,500 [words] could be your true analysis of just the data. [...] Chat GPT doesn't really do great analysis. It gives you, generates ideas. [...] But what do you do with these ideas? Where do you go with them? - Saanvi, PGT, Management

I give a lot of praise to the Philosophy Department because that's my first glimpse into non-exam, non-in person, non-econ module. We had a situation where the class was designed as a debate and people would take sides and we would write formative essays depending on which side we agreed with. So that is a form of collaboration, right? Like, you have your debate in class, you create your own sort of group, and you discuss how you're going to tackle this question together. And each and every one of us come up with our own sort of formative essay. So that to me is a very very refreshing experience and it's something that I think LSE, the wider school, can really think about implementing. - Akira, UG, Economics

4.6. Use detection and in-person exams where necessary

In general, the students supported strong checks in place to ensure that everyone plays by the same rules and cheating is effectively detected, even though they preferred other ways of preventing it (see 4.3 and 4.4.) So **in-person exams** and **AI-generated text detection** were seen as the way forward in cases **where authorising or assuming use of sources and tools such as generative AI would be inapplicable** – for instance, it would incur unfair advantage only to some, or if the assessment purpose is to test factual knowledge or strictly independent, unaided reasoning or other capabilities.

I think in terms of take-home exams, I think quantitative questions or like mathematical questions are more of a concern than essays because I know that GPT can very easily solve math questions, but essays are more like... you need critical thinking and you need to be able to add your own input to it. And chat GPT gives very basic information. So maybe when you're thinking of take-home exams, there should be some sort.... Of way of, I don't know, ensuring that math questions are done by the student themselves and not by chat GPT. – Parvati, PGT

So I would argue that if collaboration with other students is seen by the LSE as unethical, then basically the LSE should not provide circumstances which would allow for this. So I would say that in person exams would be efficient in reaching their goals. – Anna, UG, Psychology

Opinions varied on institutional use of **machine detection of AI-generated text** or even plagiarism, but complete reliance on that without **human checks** and **scientifically proved effectiveness** of these tools was universally seen as untrustworthy.

4.7. Prepare students better

Better student preparation for assessments was seen as needed to counter cheating that arises out of fear and confusion. The students suggested provision of **example papers**; ensuring that formative assessments are useful by adequate **formative feedback** and **harmonisation of formative and summative marking**, and **familiarising all students with assessment standards** and requirements, even if and perhaps especially if they are perceived conventional, especially relevant for international and requalifying students.

4.8. Diversify course assessment

Drawing on their experiences in different educational systems, the postgraduate students argued that **diversification** of assessment would remove some root causes of cheating and reduce opportunities for as well as effectiveness of cheating.

In particular, introduction of **oral assessments** along the written ones, for example, **presentations** on submitted papers or **thesis defence**, were advocated as a good way **to check** whether the student worked on the assessment themselves, countering abuse of generative AI as well as other means to outsource one's work. **Oral exams** were also suggested, albeit with doubt that it could be implemented given the amount of resources required for this type of examination.

[O]ne of the solutions to see if the person has actually written the essay or not would be, like, **just to ask**, maybe, you know, like, oral sort of things like, okay, what's your engagement? And just check, because **this could be a solution to a lot of other things, like essays written by others and things like that**. So this could be an overarching solution to the whole academic integrity thing. That just adds a lot of resources. But if you're looking for solutions, maybe yeah, **just having an oral examinations or a some sort of presentation on what you've written could be the solution**. – Dhriti, PGT, Geography and Environment

I know, unfortunately, universities are run like a business currently, so... and teachers aren't paid enough, like this year we've had loads of strikes, so adding an oral might not be financially viable. But [oral assessment] was going to be my suggestion as well, because **you can quickly unravel whether this thought process that's gone into designing an essay, what people's understanding actually is of the topic**. And you can't replace your own process of writing something. Even if you get an essay mill to write your paper, you're not going to have that level of insight. – Olivia, PGT, Sociology

[...] to have, I don't know, a presentation about the paper you submitted and **have questions or follow up questions on things that you said or they're written on the paper to check if you actually did it**. – Matias, PGT, International Development

Similarly, **spreading assessments across the course** were seen as good **checks for student progress**, allowing to better identify deviation from typical style of writing or level of performance and potential misconduct. **Class participation assessment** was seen as a simple way to do this.

[A]ssessing students' participation [in seminars] would be also a good way to be more holistic in this process. Because... then, like the student who actually read the text, he will engage in the discussions in the class and will ask questions and then the professor will be able to know if the students really learned the content of the articles instead of just writing one essay of 3,000 words in the end of the term. – Francisco

More importantly, diversifying and equally spreading assessments with less weight towards the final grade throughout course, and introducing assessment of seminar participation, were believed to deepen engagement, induce more balanced and productive learning, increase motivation, while simultaneously reducing pressure and desperation currently triggered by multiple weighty assessments falling at the end of term or year. Grading students upon performance in different assessments was seen as a triple win: reducing effectiveness of plagiarism, increasing academic performance, and fairness.

[T]o actually have the students engage in with the content and like... **[we should be] finding new ways of assessment. Not only doing essays but have a mixed matchup** with, I don't know presentations or... whatever, other kind of stuff. – Matias, PGT, International Development

[O]ne exam shouldn't determine the whole input that you have put in for one whole semester [others murmuring in agreement] and whatever you have added in the class and all of it. [...] It should be, like, throughout the semester [...] there should be certain little activities and there should be certain weight asserted to those activities that will contribute to your overall grade, and not be so focused on one particular method of assessment. Because somebody might not be very good at performing under such pressure scenarios, but then they might be very good at class participation and vice versa. So yeah, **there should be a bit of everything just so the students can put their best front forward**. Because like you said, nobody is dumb if they got accepted into LSE, but still, they can't perform their best because they have their own... challenges to combat. [...] **students will be more in touch with the courses, which is what will improve the quality**. Right. If we are so disconnected of what is happening in the class for like almost two months or the first semester, then even if we study in the summer term, like I said, I forgot what I studied right after the exam. – Mahika, PGT, Law

[P]eople need to spend more time inside of the classes, like at LSE, not at home. So, in person exams, assessment of participation, like things that are done in class. This is for me the best way to avoid plagiarism and this kind of stuff – Francisco, PGT, SocialPolicy

I think only having the exam at the end of the year also kind of helps people not get involved in the course in the middle because you're not as concerned with the grades at the moment. Like **if we had midterms, then you study more throughout the term or the course**. – John, PGT, Mathematics

Conclusion and recommendations

Drawing on the focus groups with LSE students from diverse backgrounds and disciplines conducted in June 2023, the key recommendations for LSE community regarding assessment in the age of digitalisation and generative AI are:

1. Revise current LSE policy that prohibits the use of generative AI and establish clear parameters for its ethical and positive integration into assessment practice. Combine it with wider review of academic integrity rules and guidelines to address challenges that generative AI use in assessment raise to conventional academic integrity notions and fill the gaps in rules. Raise awareness about the rules, potentially by mandatory training for all students.
2. Embrace the ethical use of generative AI tools in education and assessment, allowing them as aids for tasks while maintaining a focus on cultivating skills that AI cannot replace, such

as critical thinking. Similarly, rethink collaboration and other sources of help in learning and completing assessments as potentially useful tools whose skilful usage may be a good asset to students.

3. Reflect meaningful real-life scenarios geared to student interests in assessment conditions.
4. Create assessments that disincentivise cheating and enhance academic integrity by design. Give tasks whose completion quality would be hard to manipulate by cheating due to needed unique input; reduce possibilities to gain competitive advantage by cheating.
5. Strengthen student preparation for assessment by providing clear criteria and standards, particularly for international students. Enhance formative assessment and feedback processes to support and develop self-regulation.
6. Diversify course assessment by introducing multiple assessments of different type spread out throughout the course.
7. Engage and incorporate student perspectives in the design of assessment policy, acknowledging that student co-design defines the success of policy change.

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Appendix 1. Research participants

Level of study	Pseudonym	Programme	Sex
PGT	Dilara	Health Policy	Female
PGT	Rani	International Development	Female
PGT	Anika	Health Policy	Female
PGT	Saanvi	Management	Female
PGT	Olivia	Sociology	Female
PGT	Parvati	Geography and Environment	Female
PGT	Lakshmi	School of Public Policy	Female
PGT	Dhriti	Geography and Environment	Female
PGT	Aarush	School of Public Policy	Male
PGT	Mahika	Law School	Female
PGT	Francisco	Social Policy	Male
PGT	John	Mathematics	Male
PGT	Matias	International Development	Male
UG	Fatima	Sociology	Female
UG	Anna	Psychological and Behavioural Science	Female
UG	Min	Economics	Female
UG	Jamila	Accounting and Finance	Female
UG	Lin	Economic History	Female
UG	Sira	Economics	Female
UG	Akira	Economics	Male
UG	Sarah	Management	Female

Appendix 2. Focus group topic guide

I. Introduction, ethics, ground rules, ensurance of informed consent and agreement to keep information confidential ~10min

II. Academic integrity and AI ~20-30min

1. Imagine you are scrolling your IG feed. You see this [show Stimulus material 1]. What are your thoughts?
 - a. What practices or incidents does this meme remind you about?
 - b. Why do you think students engage in these practices?
 - c. Do you think that amounts to academic misconduct? Why/why not? When/when not?
 - d. If you were confused about academic integrity or misconduct regarding this, where would you go for support?
 - e. Do you think there is enough support in this area?
 - f. How effective do you think the educational environment at LSE is in supporting academic integrity during the rise of AI (culture, education, assessment design, detection)? How could it be improved?
 - f. How could the LSE's assessments be improved to support academic integrity in relation to the rise of the AI tools?

III. Bought external help ~5-10min

2. Now let's consider another piece from social media [Stimulus material 2]. What do you think about this message?
 - a. Do you think LSE students use these services?
 - b. Why do you think LSE students engage in these practices?
 - c. Do you think that amounts to academic misconduct? Why/why not? When/when not?
 - d. How effective do you think the educational environment at LSE is in preventing the usage of these services (culture, education, assessment design, detection)? How could it be improved?
 - e. How could the LSE's assessments be improved to support academic integrity in relation to these practices?

IV. Other forms of misconduct (other external help, collusion etc.) in the context of digital assessments ~20-30 min

3. What other practices related to producing digital assessments might amount to academic misconduct?

- a. What do you think about other, non-bought external help for assignments and assessments, like consulting with an expert (outside university) on the topic whom a student knows?
- b. What do you think about students collaborating on the production of their individual papers although the assessment is not intended as a group activity?
- c. Why do you think students engage in these practices?
- d. When do you think that amounts to academic misconduct? Why? When and why not?
- e. What guidance and support have you received in this area? Was it helpful?
- f. How effective do you think the educational environment at LSE is in supporting academic integrity? If you were confused about academic integrity or misconduct regarding this, where would you go for support?
- f. How could it be improved?
- g. How could the LSE's assessments be improved to support academic integrity?

V. Concluding thoughts ~15 min

7. Conclude – open discussion, further reflections, e.g.
 - a. Could you please each give me your own definition of academic integrity/misconduct - how you personally understand it or would like it to be defined?
 - b. During the last 10 minutes, I give the floor to you to convey your own opinion, your message regarding academic integrity and assessments to the LSE.

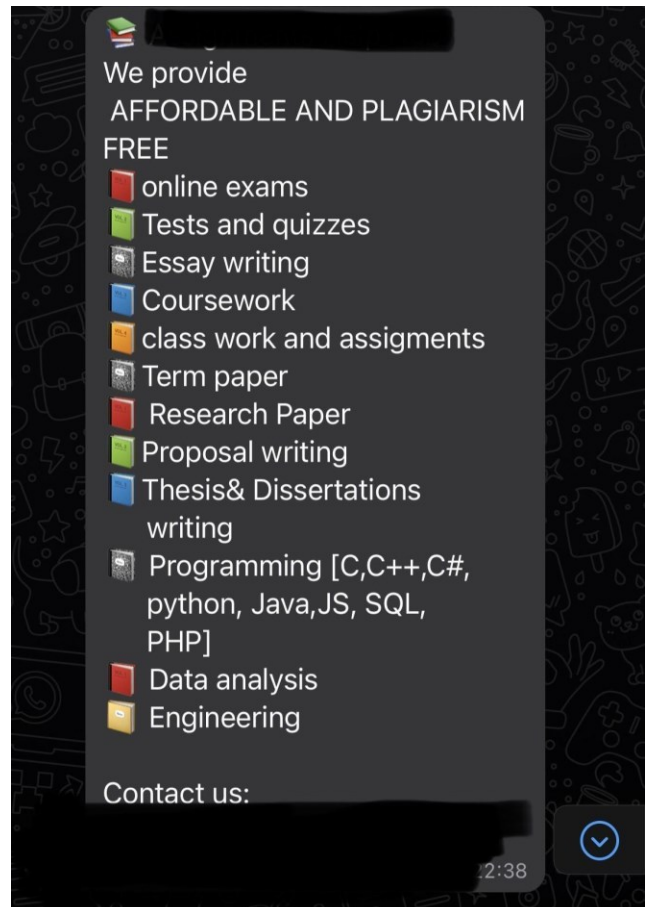
Appendix 3. Stimulus material

Stimulus 1:



Meme shared by a public Instagram page "memesoflse"

Stimulus 2:



"Essay mill" ad on one of the largest LSE student WhatsApp groups