Assessment in the age of Generative AI: Turning challenge into quality enhancement

Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) is now a routine part of students' learning environments. Rather than viewing this as a threat to assessment integrity, the University of Malta (UM) is increasingly recognising GenAI as an opportunity to re-focus assessment on thinking, judgement, and academic ownership.

Across Faculties, Institutes, Centres and Schools, a growing number of academics are adapting assessment practices in ways that preserve academic standards while fostering deeper learning. The following principles, drawn from emerging good practice at UM, were presented by Professor Matthew Montebello (Head of the Department of Artificial Intelligence, Faculty of ICT) during the workshop *Exploring Generative AI for Teaching & Assessment*. They offer a quality-oriented approach to assessment design in a GenAI-rich context:

1. ***Design assessments that reward ideas, not answers***: Assessments that prioritise interpretation, comparison, justification, reflection, and application are inherently more robust than those seeking a single "correct" response.
2. ***Encourage synthesis across sources rather than reliance on one output***: Assessment tasks that require students to integrate multiple perspectives reduce the likelihood of copy-and-paste practices.
3. ***Treat GenAI as a learning partner, not a substitute***: Well-designed assessments make space for GenAI use while ensuring that the student remains clearly responsible for framing questions and shaping outputs.
4. ***Embed transparency into assessment instructions***: Inviting students to explain if and how GenAI supported their work promotes integrity and accountability.
5. ***Assess the thinking behind the work***: Formats such as reflective commentaries, oral follow-ups, or annotated submissions reinforce authorship.

Assessment integrity is not achieved by excluding new technologies, but by designing assessments that make thinking visible and learning meaningful. Looking ahead, formative assessment plays a particularly important role in this transition. Formative tasks that explicitly encourage responsible GenAI use, guided by the principles outlined above, allow students to experiment, reflect, and develop sound academic judgement in low-stakes contexts.

When combined with a gradual move towards oral and dialogic assessment formats, this approach strengthens authorship, supports academic integrity, and provides richer insight into students' understanding. Together, formative GenAI-aware assessment and oral assessment offer a sustainable and pedagogically robust path forward in a rapidly evolving assessment landscape.

Through this Quality Mailshot Initiative, the QAC aims to disseminate best practices at UM that align with both national and European standards for quality in higher education. If you have an example of good QA practice which you would like us to share, please get in touch with us at **qac@um.edu.mt**