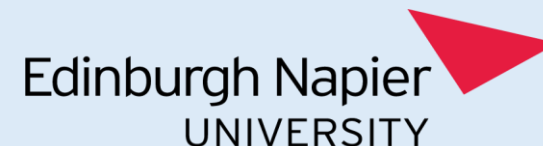


Staff and student perspectives on GenAI in Scottish Higher Education

Rosemarie McIlwhan, Louise Drumm and Sara Preston on behalf of

Scottish AI in Tertiary Education Network (ScAITEN)

Access the report at <https://go.hw.ac.uk/ScAITENGenAIReport>



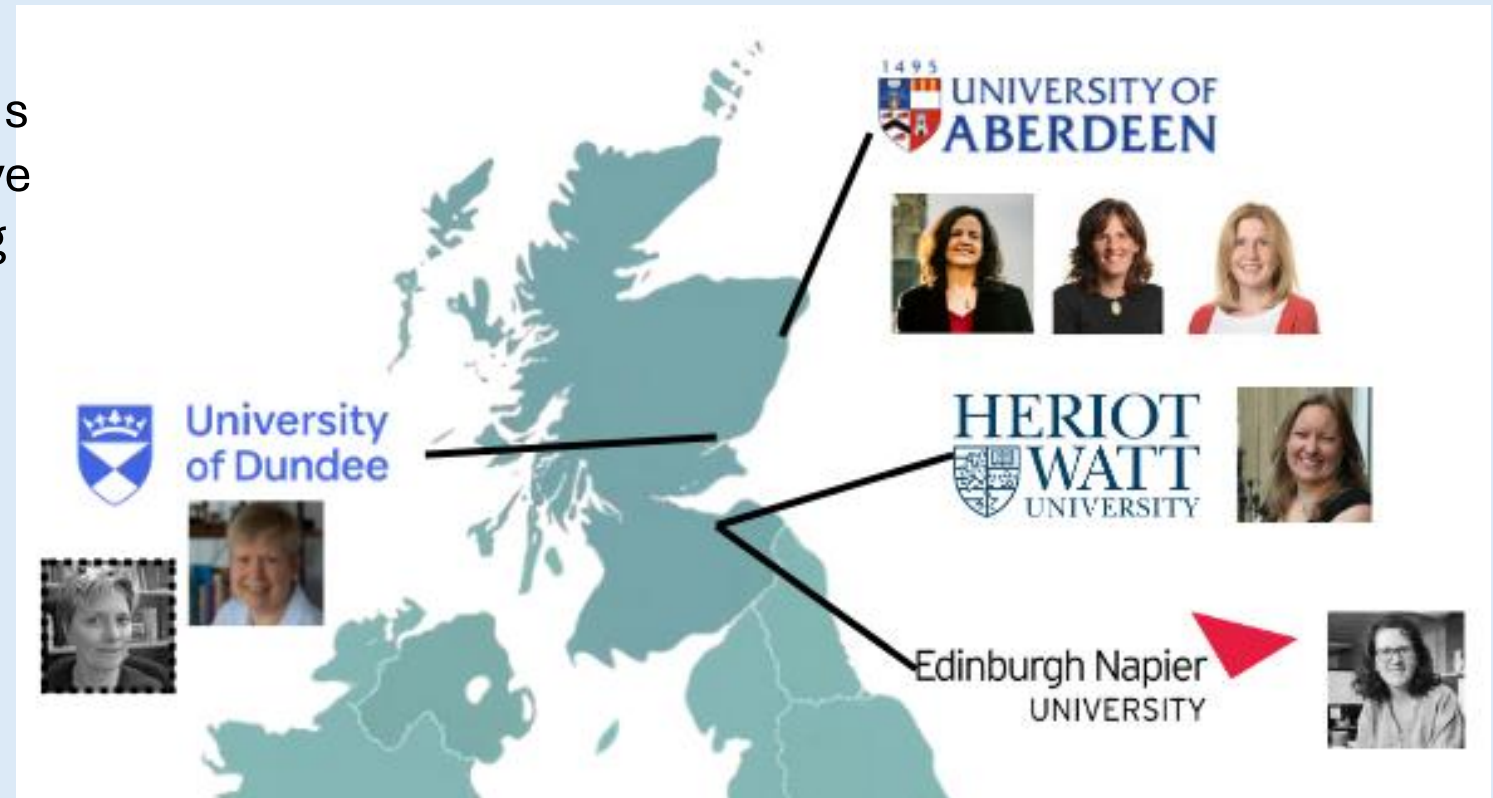
Context

Scottish AI in Tertiary Education Network (ScAITEN) – collaboration of FE and HE AI leads in learning and teaching

Two research reports:

- **“AHE 2024 Baseline survey”** - Towards inclusive intelligence: a comprehensive examination of GenAI attitudes among HE stakeholders 2023-2024
- **“ScAITEN 2025 survey”** - GenAI in Scottish Higher Education: Attitudes and Perceptions of Students and Staff (2024-26)

Researchers at University of Aberdeen, Dundee, Heriot-Watt University and Edinburgh Napier University)



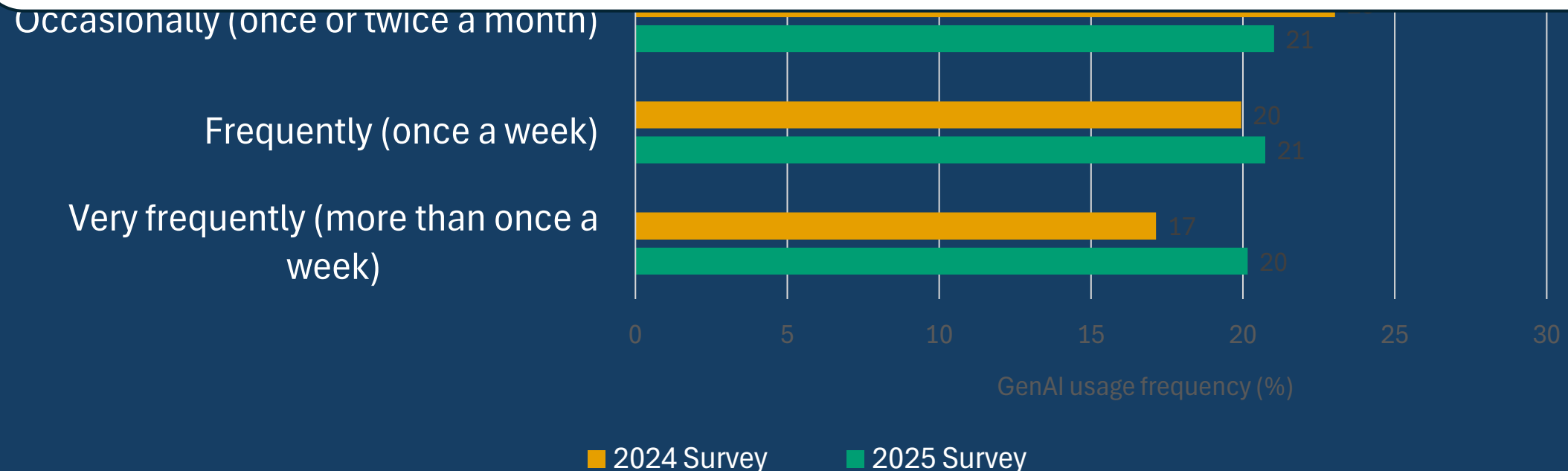
Headline messages

- A substantial proportion of students and staff report that they **do not knowingly use GenAI tools** in their studies and professional practice respectively.
- Students and academic staff feel that their **institutions are not providing sufficient support**, and that **uncertainty persists regarding what is acceptable use of GenAI**.
- Findings suggest a **continuing stigma around GenAI use in HE**, with some avoiding disclosure until there is greater clarity on what is acceptable.
- **Reasonable familiarity with institutional policies** and/or guidance; however, many still perceived these resources as not particularly useful. Qualitative responses suggested that a **lack of trust in institutional policy processes**, among other factors, contributed to this perception.

GenAI Use Comparison between 2024 and 2025

Key takeaway 1:

There has been **very little change in GenAI usage frequency** compared to the AHE 2024 baseline survey. This contrasts with Freeman (2025) & Stephenson and Armstrong (2026) which showed increasing use of GenAI by students.



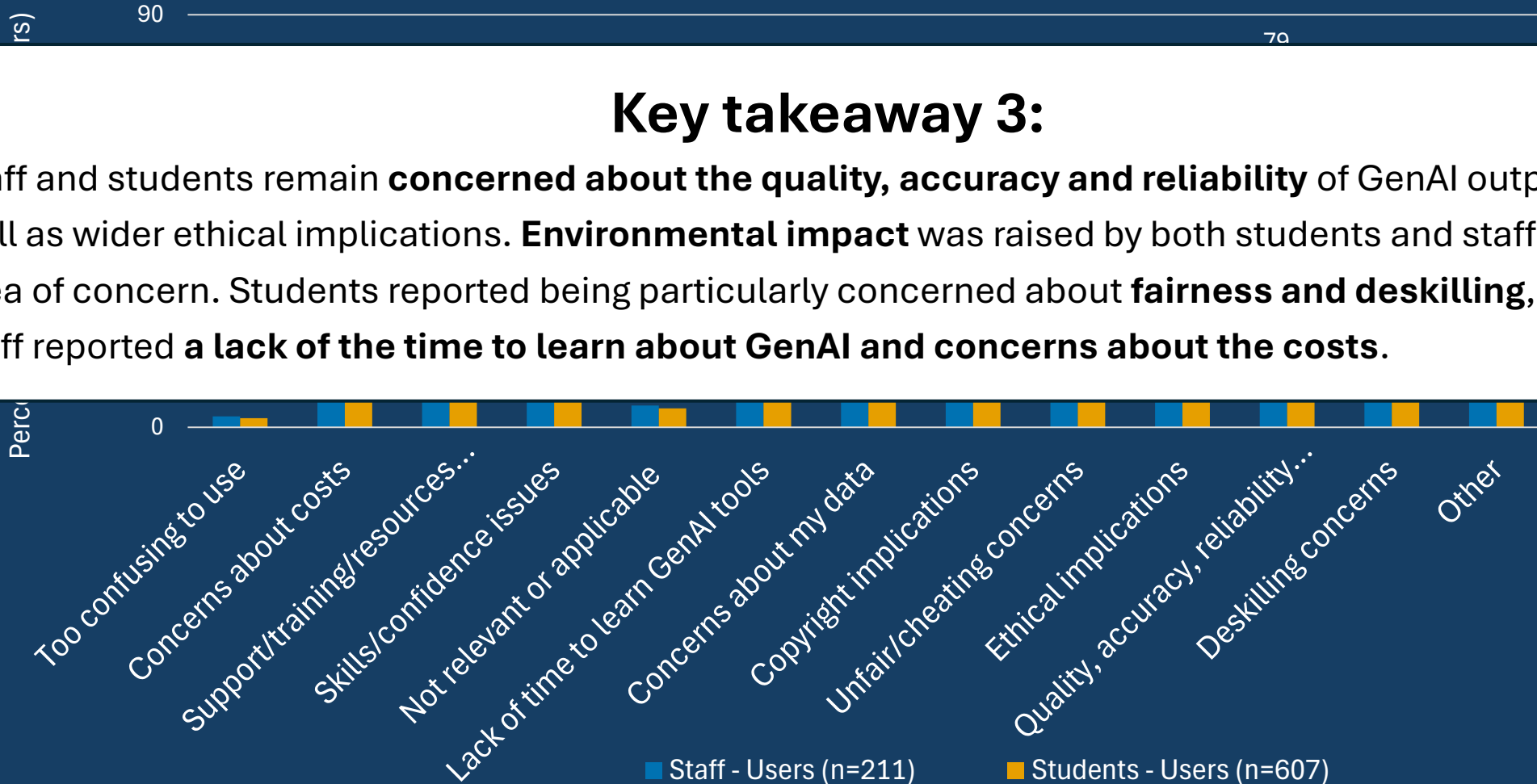
Association of positive / negative words with the use of GenAI in HE

	Rarely/never	Occasionally	Frequently
Efficient	17	53	77
Personalised	2	12	24
Cheating	64	26	23
Biased	41	22	14
Unfair	44	15	9
Formulaic	30	28	18
Unethical	73	23	14
Divisive	36	27	18

Key takeaway 2:

Increasing polarisation in attitudes toward GenAI, with individuals tending to fall into either strongly supportive or strongly resistant positions, rather than occupying the middle ground. This divide appears to be shaped by a combination of personal values, disciplinary norms, and institutional factors.

Concerns About Using GenAI Tools (Users, 2025)



Key takeaway 3:

Staff and students remain **concerned about the quality, accuracy and reliability** of GenAI outputs, as well as wider ethical implications. **Environmental impact** was raised by both students and staff as an area of concern. Students reported being particularly concerned about **fairness and deskilling**, whereas staff reported **a lack of the time to learn about GenAI and concerns about the costs**.

Task acceptance

Acceptable for staff to use

Acceptable for students to use

Key takeaway 4:

Key things accepted for staff by all: Summarising long docs, Generation of ideas

Key things accepted for students by all: Summarising long docs, Enhancing student created text, As a study buddy

- Generation of ideas (51%, 39%),
- Generation of quizzes (41%, 2025)

Professional Services:

- Generation of ideas (73%, 55%),
- Summarising long docs (72%, 53%),
- Generation of learning materials (67% 2024)
- Critical friend (45% 2025)

- As a study buddy (66%, 49%)
- Generation of text not for assessment (57%, 49%)
- Summarising long docs (53%, 47%)

Professional Services:

- As a study buddy (82%, 56%)
- Enhancing student created text (76%, 56%)
- Summarising long docs (71%, 54%)

What does this mean for practice?

1. Does this data resonate with your own experiences?
2. How are you facilitating open conversations about GenAI and creating spaces for exploration?
3. How are you ensuring awareness of and compliance with institutional policy frameworks and guidance, and with institutionally supported AI technologies? (and keeping them up-to-date)
4. Do staff (and students) have protected time and dedicated support to engage, experiment and adapt their practices in response to GenAI.
5. Have you developed discipline-specific guidance, case studies and examples of use?

Further resources

- [Scottish AI in Tertiary Education Network](#)
- Advance HE Collaborative Development Fund [Project webpages](#)
- [Advance HE Project Report](#)
- [Resource cards](#) to facilitate institutional conversations on GenAI in Education
- [GenAI in Education research datasets](#)

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