FAQs about ChatGPT and Artificial Intelligence (AI) in HE

AI like ChatGPT is here to stay and is improving rapidly. However, we are aware that it poses some questions and challenges to HE and society in general. It is therefore important that we each endeavour to understand what it is and critically question what it can and cannot (yet) do.

Compiled by: DLTE & ChatGPT March 2023

1. What is ChatGPT?

ChatGPT is a large language model developed by OpenAI that uses deep learning algorithms to generate human-like responses to natural language prompts or questions. It has been trained on a vast amount of data from the internet, books, and other sources to provide relevant and accurate information. Its training data predates 2022, therefore it has no 'knowledge' of more recent events.

2. Does ChatGPT understand what it writes?

No, ChatGPT is not cognisant or sentient. It is a machine-learning model that has been designed to mimic human-like responses to natural language prompts. While it can produce responses that appear to be intelligent and can even simulate emotions, it does not have consciousness or self-awareness.

3. Does ChatGPT have access to the internet?

No, ChatGPT does not currently have direct access to the internet. It has been pre-trained on a large dataset of text data available on the internet, which includes information from a wide range of sources such as books, websites, and other publicly available documents.

4. Can ChatGPT cite sources and use references in its answers?

While ChatGPT (in its current state) can provide information based on the training data it has been exposed to and seems to provide references and cite sources, this information is often false and made up. This is called hallucinations. As an AI language model, ChatGPT doesn't have the ability to conduct research, cite correct, true, and relevant sources or produce accurate references. It is therefore very important to verify any information provided by ChatGPT and conduct additional research as needed to ensure accuracy and reliability.

5. Can texts written by ChatGPT be detected by Turnitin?

No, Turnitin can't currently determine whether an assignment has been written by AI software like ChatGPT, but they are working on a new version that might be able to do it to some extent. There is other software like GPTZero that can use algorithms to determine how probable it is that a text has been generated by AI. It is, however, important to note that this is not that accurate (some human-written texts are listed as AI-written, etc.), and it is also difficult to prove 'guilt'.

6. **If different users type in the same writing prompt (an essay question, for example), will they get the same answers?**

If a few users type in the same writing prompt to ChatGPT, it is possible that they will receive similar answers, but they are unlikely to receive the exact same response verbatim. This is because ChatGPT uses a probabilistic approach to generate responses, which means that it uses its training data to predict the most likely sequence of words that would follow a given prompt. In general, most individuals are likely to phrase prompts differently, which would also lead to varied responses. Further, it is also important to note that one will probably not receive a satisfactory answer if you paste an essay question and expect a complete, thought-through answer that a human would give – good prompts are needed to get to a more complex and nuanced answer.

Support details

Please contact:

→ The **CLT advisors** for guidance on meaningfully incorporating learning technologies in your TLA practices.
→ Your faculty's **CTL advisor** for rethinking TLA strategies to enhance student learning and uphold academic integrity.
→ Your **faculty librarian**.