UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN
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CENTRE FOR HIGHER EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT

Centre for Innovation
in Learning & Teaching

Engaging with GenAI in assessment:

Perceptions, Practices and Professional Development Needs at the University of Cape Town

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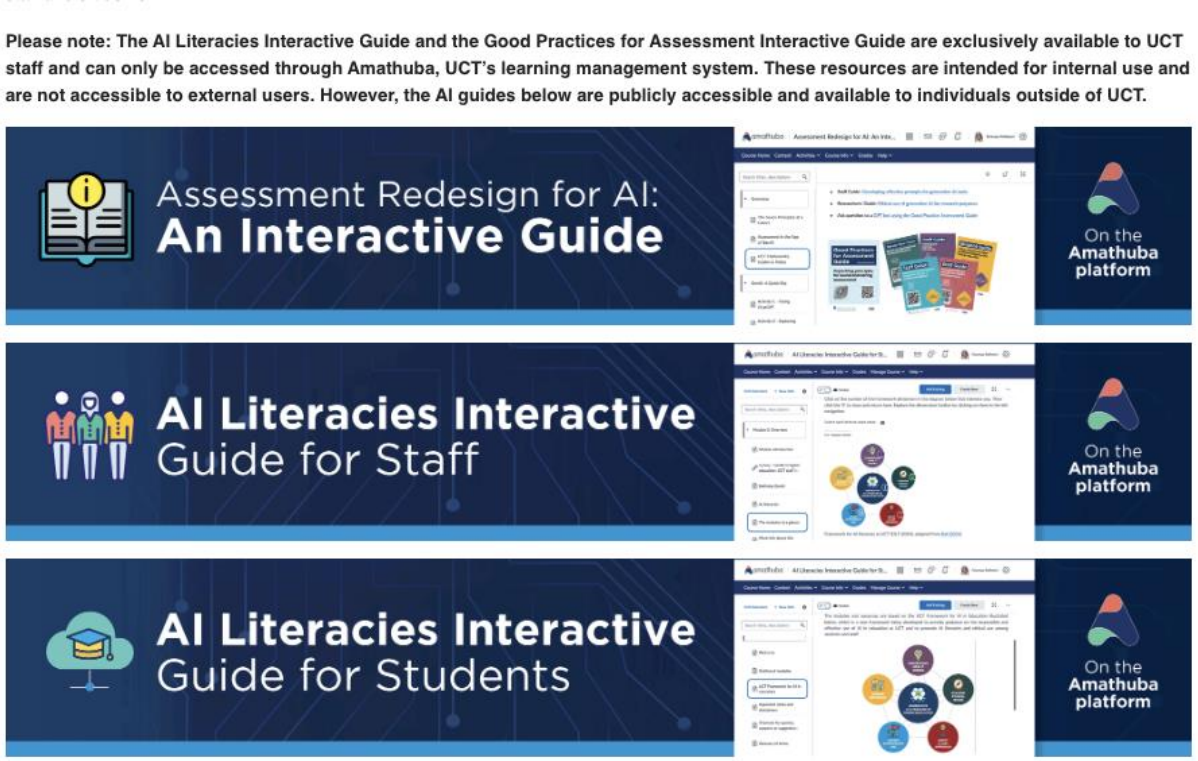
Generative AI and assessment practices

- The University of Cape Town (UCT) is a traditional research intensive university with strong sense of academic autonomy
- Diverse assessment practices appropriate to disciplines
- GenAI as an unsolicited incursion into higher education straight into hands of students and staff (Nov 2022)
- Rapid rise of GenAI tools is disrupting traditional assessment practices
- An **interloper** in assessment & learning - **immediate concern is assessment and learning opportunity losses**
- Growing pressure on **academic integrity policies** and **learning outcomes**

Responses to GenAI 2023-2024

- Staff development offered to support staff with AI literacies and AI assessment review
- Development of guidelines (good practices), consultations, workshops and assessment redesign through Assessment Studio over period 2023-2024
- **Unclear how staff engaging and coping beyond anecdotes**
- Need insights to guide further staff development



Study purpose and method

Purpose: Gauge UCT teaching staff engagement with GenAI in assessment to provide actionable insights to supporting staff professional development

Themes explored:

1. Whether/how have assessment designs changed in response to AI
2. How concerned were staff about assessment integrity
3. Whether staff were using AI tools for their own assessment practices
4. How confident were staff in using assessment tools.
5. How staff saw the impact of AI in the future (positive and negative)

Method: brief survey to all teaching staff in Sept-Oct 2024

Survey Questions

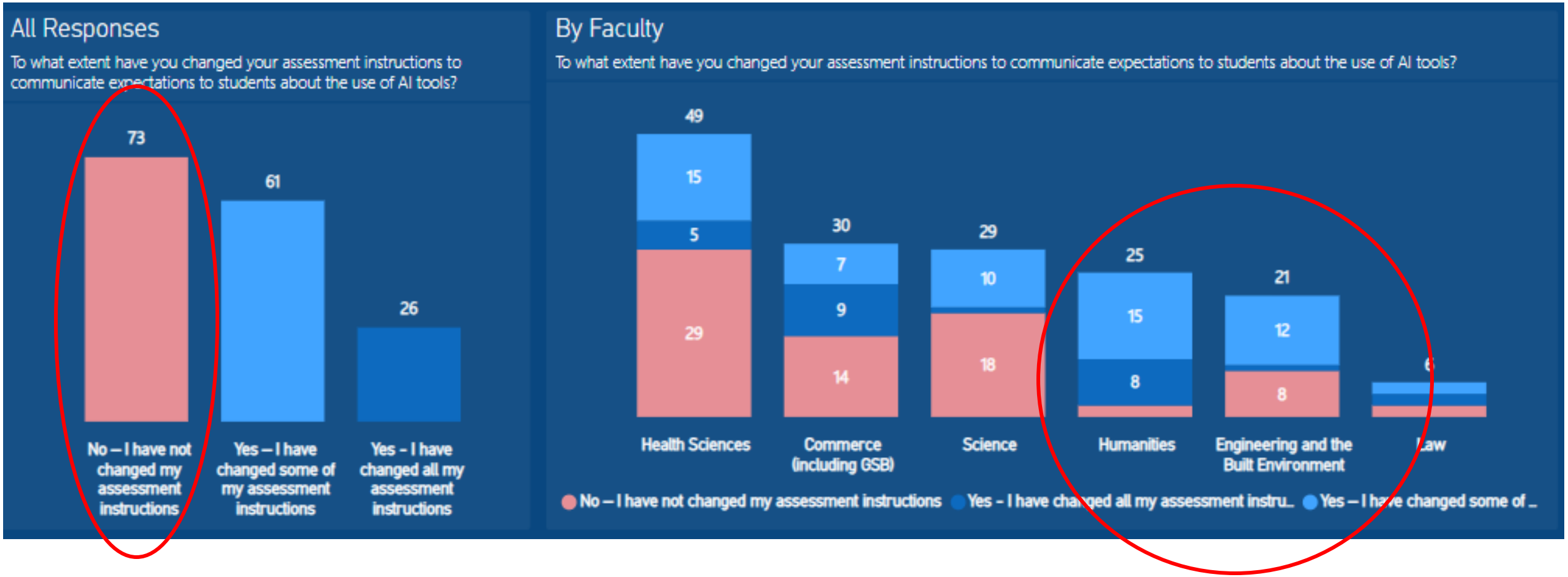
- To what extent have you **changed your assessment instructions** to communicate expectations to students about the use of AI tools?
- Are you **using any AI tools** for assessing students' work?
- How **concerned** are you that students' use of **AI is undermining** the intended learning outcomes for your course or programme and therefore the **assessment's integrity?**
- In what **other ways do you think AI could impact** your assessment practices, whether positively or negatively?
- How **confident** do you feel in your ability **to effectively use AI tools** in your assessment practices?
- Which of the following **AI applications** would you be **interested in** learning more about?

Who responded: faculty and course level demographics

Faculty	Count
Commerce (including GSB)	30
Engineering and the Built Environment	21
Health Sciences	49
Humanities	25
Law	6
Science	29
Total	**160**

What course level do you teach on? (Select all that apply)	Count
Postgraduate research degrees	13
Postgraduate research degrees & Postgraduate taught courses	24
Postgraduate research degrees & Postgraduate taught courses & Undergraduate courses	59
Postgraduate research degrees & Undergraduate courses	17
Postgraduate taught courses	9
Postgraduate taught courses & Undergraduate courses	10
Undergraduate courses	27
Total	**159**

*To what extent have you **changed your assessment instructions** to communicate expectations to students about the use of AI tools?*



Findings: changes in assessment design

Key finding is that nearly **half of staff (46%) had not changed their assessment designs**

Reasons given ranged from:

- **Assessment already AI-proof**: assessments already invigilated (could restrict AI in current designs)
- **Lack of clarity**: Did not know how to change / did not have time / in denial
- **Discipline constraints**: perception that change was not possible
- Planned to **change in the future**

Findings: changes in assessment deisgn

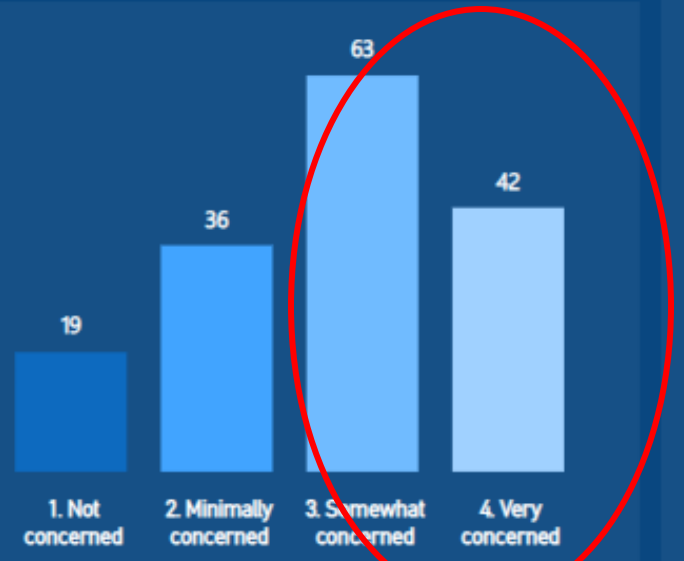
Some staff had made changes with **31% stating minimal changes while only 16% changed all their assessments**. Types of changes included:

- **Requirement for declarations or amended assessment instructions**: students to declare use/ acknowledge not used / instructions indicated whether AI could be used
- **Ethics and integrity workshops** as part of assessment orientation
- **Redesigning assessments:** include more process work such as in-class drafting or tests; including more orals and vivas; re-weighting of assessments

*How **concerned** are you that students' use of **AI is undermining** the intended learning outcomes for your course or programme and therefore the **assessment's integrity?***

All Responses

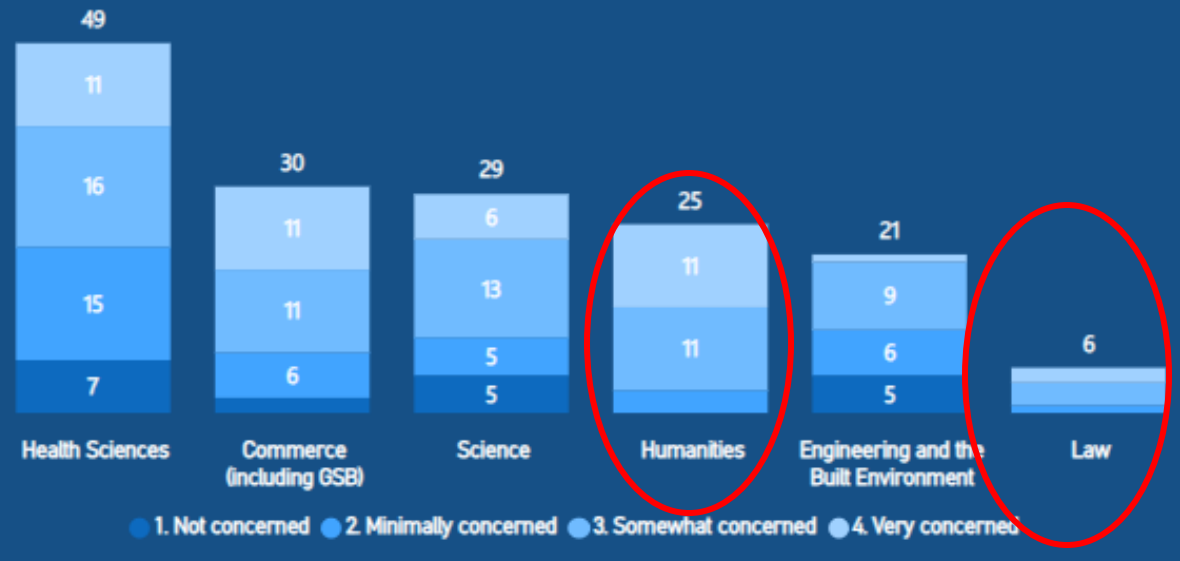
How concerned are you that students' use of AI is undermining the intended learning outcomes for your course or programme and therefore the assessment's integrity?



Concerned about AI use?	#	%
1. Not concerned	19	12%
2. Minimally concerned	36	23%
3. Somewhat concerned	63	39%
4. Very concerned	42	26%
Total	160	100%

By Faculty

How concerned are you that students' use of AI is undermining the intended learning outcomes for your course or programme and therefore the assessment's integrity?



Concerned about AI use? / What faculty do you teach in?	1. Not concerned #	1. Not concerned %	2. Minimally concerned #	2. Minimally concerned %	3. Somewhat concerned #	3. Somewhat concerned %	4. Very concerned #	4. Very concerned %
Health Sciences	7	4%	15	9%	16	10%	11	7%
Commerce (including GSB)	2	1%	6	4%	11	7%	11	7%
Science	5	3%	5	3%	13	8%	6	4%
Humanities			3	2%	11	7%	11	7%
Engineering and the Built Environment	5	3%	6	4%	9	6%	1	1%
Law			1	1%	3	2%	2	1%

Findings: concerns about assessment integrity

Two thirds (65%) of the participants expressed being either **very or somewhat concerned about their assessment's integrity**. Reasons included:

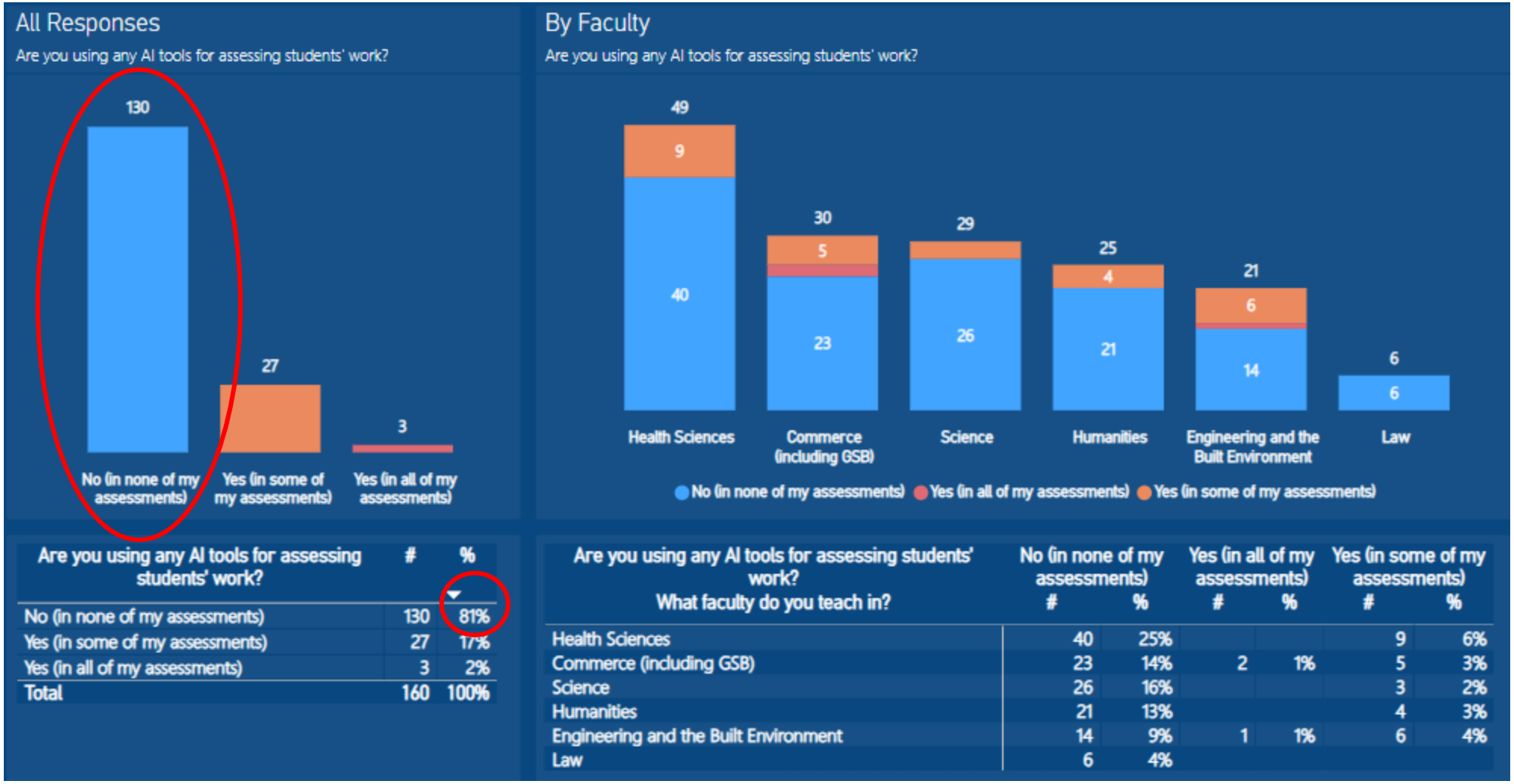
- **Loss of skills**: AI use to undermine learning
- **Validity of assessments**: whether assessments now reflect students' actual competence
- **Low morale**: wasting time marking AI generated work; marking work that appeared homogenous
- **Efficacy of AI detectors**: varied views as to effectiveness.
- **Lack of institutional guidance and support**: for redesigning assessments and for firmer institutional guidelines on parameters of AI use
- **Students needing AI training**: students' lack of knowledge of AI tools.

Findings: concerns about assessment integrity

A third of participants were only **minimally or not concerned at all about this**. The reasons they gave included:

- **Assessments already precluded AI**: integrity already assured
- **Encouraging/don't mind use**: AI use better prepares students for work, need to adapt to use tools
- **AI is just another technology**: it cannot be avoided.
- Assessment needs to change anyway: more evaluation and critique and a focus on application
- **AI not widely used by students for cheating**: used as a brainstorming tool instead of for answers

*Are you **using any AI tools** for assessing students' work?*



Are you using any AI tools for assessing students' work?	#	%
No (in none of my assessments)	130	81%
Yes (in some of my assessments)	27	17%
Yes (in all of my assessments)	3	2%
Total	160	100%

Are you using any AI tools for assessing students' work? What faculty do you teach in?	No (in none of my assessments) #	No (in none of my assessments) %	Yes (in all of my assessments) #	Yes (in all of my assessments) %	Yes (in some of my assessments) #	Yes (in some of my assessments) %
Health Sciences	40	25%			9	6%
Commerce (including GSB)	23	14%	2	1%	5	3%
Science	26	16%			3	2%
Humanities	21	13%			4	3%
Engineering and the Built Environment	14	9%	1	1%	6	4%
Law	6	4%				

Use of AI tools for assessing students' work

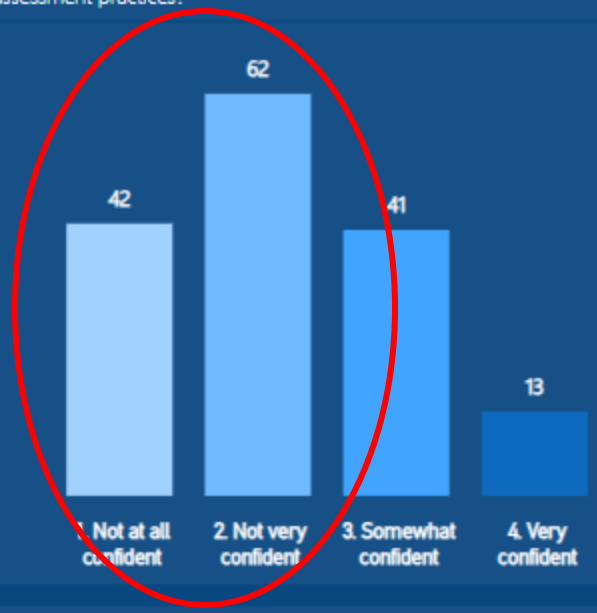
A few examples of use of AI tools (19% of participants):

- Question/item generation
- Auto-marking platforms (Gradescope)
- Feedback drafting & grammar checks
- Early pilots in coding courses

*How **confident** do you feel in your ability to **effectively use AI tools** in your assessment practices?*

All Responses

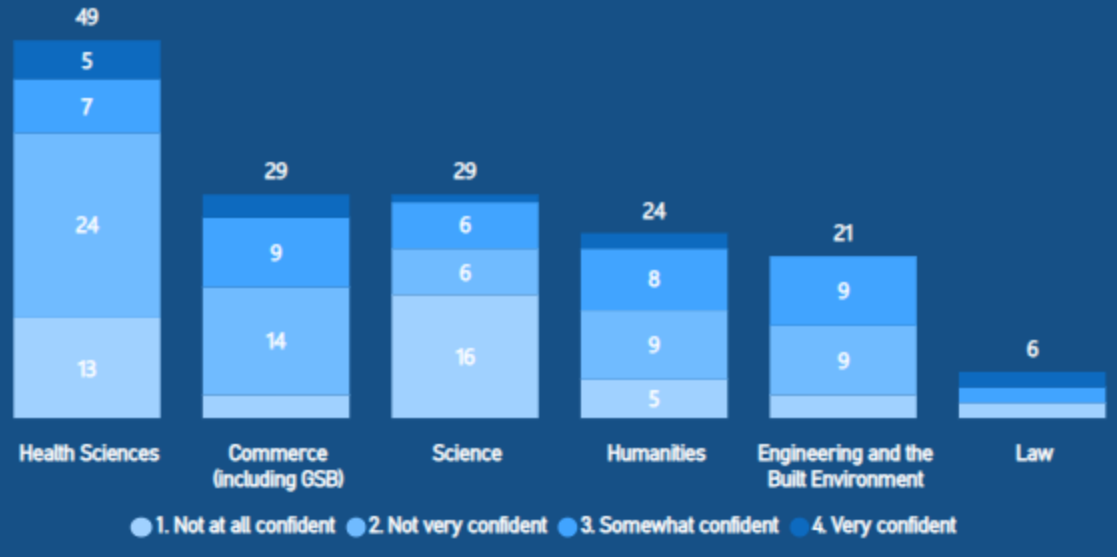
How confident do you feel in your ability to effectively use AI tools in your assessment practices?



Confidence	#	%
1. Not at all confident	42	27%
2. Not very confident	62	39%
3. Somewhat confident	41	26%
4. Very confident	13	8%
Total	158	100%

By Faculty

How confident do you feel in your ability to effectively use AI tools in your assessment practices?



Confidence	1. Not at all confident		2. Not very confident		3. Somewhat confident		4. Very confident	
What faculty do you teach in?	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Health Sciences	13	8%	24	15%	7	4%	5	3%
Commerce (including GSB)	3	2%	14	9%	9	6%	3	2%
Science	16	10%	6	4%	6	4%	1	1%
Humanities	5	3%	9	6%	8	5%	2	1%
Engineering and the Built Environment	3	2%	9	6%	9	6%		
Law	2	1%			2	1%	2	1%

Positive and negative futures of AI

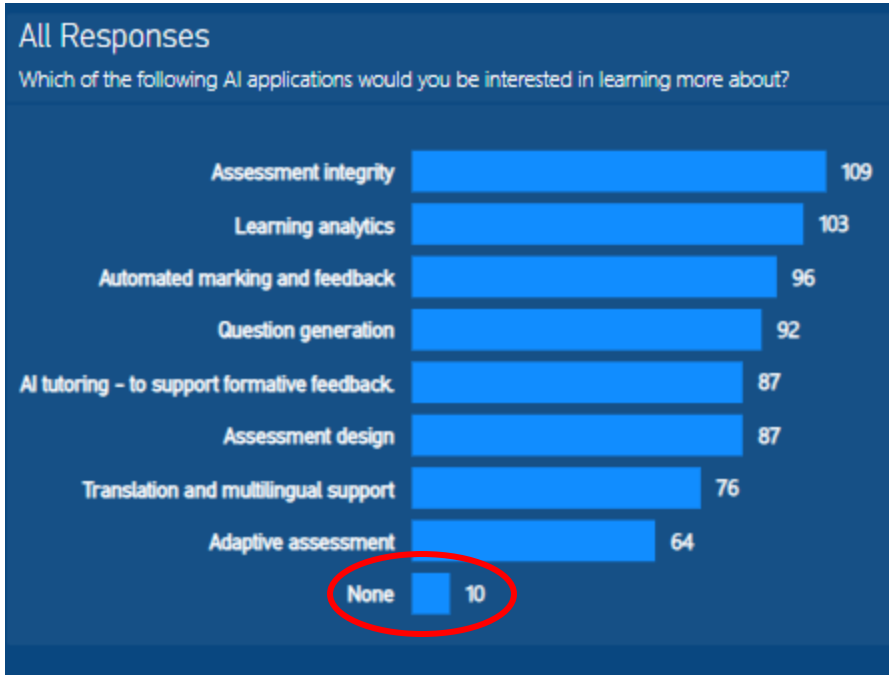
In what other ways do you think AI could impact your assessment practices, whether positively or negatively

Negative Futures – "Ongoing worries"

- Surface learning risk – students may shortcut critical thinking by outsourcing ideas to AI.
- Authorship ambiguity – harder to know what is genuinely student work, raising disputes and workload.
- Equity gap widens – students with better devices / paid AI subscriptions could gain advantage.
- Tool dependency – over-reliance may erode foundational writing and reasoning skills.
- Hidden bias & hallucination – faulty or biased outputs risk misleading both staff and students.
- Policy & policing burden – constant updates to rules, detection workflows and appeals add complexity.

- Positive Futures – "Upside Potential"
- Efficiency gains – faster marking and admin frees staff time.
- Richer, more personalised feedback – AI draft comments can be tailored and amplified by the lecturer.
- Inclusive support – language scaffolding and accessibility features help multilingual or neuro-diverse students.
- Creative assessment redesign – scenario-based, multimodal and adaptive tasks become feasible
- Early analytics & intervention – AI spotting patterns lets staff flag struggling students sooner.
- Professional-world alignment – practising ethical AI use in coursework mirrors workplace expectations.

*Which of the following **AI applications** would you be **interested in** learning more about?*



Summary of findings

- A large cluster of staff across faculties is **uncertain and seeking policy guidance and clarity**
- Smaller cluster of staff **ignoring or not engaging**, which has implications for assessment integrity
- **Disciplinary and Faculty differences emerging**: High response rate from Faculty of Health Sciences suggests engagement and appetite for experimentation; higher anxiety about academic integrity in Humanities and Law.
- **Curiosity and interest in innovative potential of AI in teaching and assessment** focused on tools for academic integrity, learning analytics and support for marking and feedback with medium interest in AI tutoring and AI-enabled question generation.

Implications for assessment support

Actionable insight	Progress and issues
Assessment and AI literacy professional development: along continuum of basic AI literacies to advanced assessment redesigns	Self-paced modules for basic AI and assessment literacy; workshops; Assessment Studio. *Take up? Developing discipline specific assessment redesigns*
Policy and governance: set up institutional level task team to shape emergent policy, monitor progress to provide more clarity and direction	AI in Education Framework; Assessment Framework Working Goup's mandate is being extended to support policy and practices *but faculty buy-in needed and to reach beyond early adopters*
Assessment re-designs: Invest in pilot courses to trial AI-responsive assessment designs targeting enthusiasts and early adopters	*Need to attract specific courses and contexts and need to incentivise for take-up*
Tools and infrastructure: develop use cases for assessment in areas of marking, grading; evaluate existing tools as well as consider licensing new ones	AI Teaching Innovation grants provided seed funding; seek additional funding. Work with group of interested staff to develop use cases for sharing lessons and practices
Student AI and assessment literacy: provide AI modules for ethics and responsible use	In progress with possibility of a mandatory course for students – *incentives for students to take seriously*

Thank you