Manifesto for Generative AI in Higher Education

A living reflection on teaching, learning, and technology in an age of abundance.

By Dr Hazel Farrell & Ken McCarthy. GenAI:N3, South East Technological University

In a short space of time, GenAI has woven itself into our classrooms, workflows, habits, and thoughts. Its rapid spread has left little space for pause, and little time to truly consider its implications or to reflect on where we are positioned within a shifting educational landscape.

We stand at a threshold between what learning has been and what it might become. GenAI invites possibility and provokes uncertainty in equal measure. Our task is to respond not with fear, but with imagination and integrity to ensure that learning remains a deeply human act. Every generation of educators inherits a changing landscape. GenAI has redrawn ours, but the direction remains ours to choose.

This manifesto is not a rulebook or a warning. It is an invitation to think, to question, and to act with intention. It speaks to educators, students, and institutions who want to teach and learn with and without GenAI, not merely about it. It is designed to evolve and to be read aloud, debated, annotated, and rewritten.

The manifesto unfolds across three intertwined themes:

▲ ***Rethinking Teaching and Learning*** explores how curiosity, collaboration, and critical design can redefine education in an age of abundance. It invites educators to move beyond content delivery toward purposeful inquiry, designing learning experiences that value depth, dialogue, and discernment over speed or output.

■ ***Responsibility, Ethics, and Power*** examines the shared duty of educators and institutions to act with transparency, equity, and care. It calls for visible accountability and governance grounded in trust, reminding us that influence without reflection risks eroding the integrity of education itself.

● ***Imagination, Humanity, and the Future*** looks forward, affirming that while GenAI may transform the tools of learning, it is still human creativity, conscience, and connection that will shape what comes next. It reminds us that the heart of education lies not in the speed of progress, but in the depth of our understanding and the integrity of our choices.

▲ RETHINKING TEACHING AND LEARNING

We teach in an age of abundance, not scarcity.

Information is accessible and freely available - it overflows onto our screens. The work of educators is to help students find meaning in the deluge, guiding them to discern, connect, and critique. GenAI does not give us more knowledge; it reveals how much we already overlook. Teaching now means navigating excess with purpose.

Inquiry has become the new intelligence.

In an age of instant answers, the question assumes more importance than ever before. Crafting meaningful questions that provoke depth and not just data becomes a core academic skill. The art of prompting is curiosity in action.

GenAI does not replace thinking - it reveals the cost of not thinking.

GenAI can produce fluent nonsense and hidden bias. When we outsource thought, we see how easily we mistake coherence for truth. The greatest lesson is humility: GenAI shows how much effort authentic thinking still requires.

Detection chases the past; thoughtful design shapes the future.

To chase detection is to fight the future with the tools of the past. Designing assessments that reward originality, reflection, and human insight changes the rules entirely. Instead of policing use, we design for purpose - where the value lies in the process, not the product.

Courage opens the door, but resources build the path.

Innovation cannot flourish when educators are asked to reimagine learning in the margins of overfilled schedules. Institutions must match their ambitions with meaningful investment in time, training, and collaborative spaces. Without that commitment, change becomes rhetoric, not reality; aspirational, not transformational.

Curiosity surpasses completion.

In a world where technology fills in the blanks, curiosity keeps the mind alive. When answers arrive before the questions are formed, curiosity becomes radical. True learning is not about racing to the finish but about lingering in the unknown.

Students must learn with GenAI before they can question it.

Ethical understanding grows through experience, not avoidance. Ethical literacy is not born of walls, but of windows. By engaging with generative tools, students come to recognise their capacities, limits, and biases. To know GenAI is to stand beside it critically, not compliantly.

Students are collaborators, not spectators.

They must help write the story of GenAI in education, not merely read its script. In doing so, they learn both the weight of responsibility and the strength to challenge the systems that shape them.

We cannot ask students to be collaborators in systems designed to constrain them.

Inviting students to collaborate in systems that will not change is not partnership but performance, deepening cynicism instead of trust. Trust is built not through invitations, but through the courage of institutions to listen and to change.

Our job is not to tame the machine, but to awaken the human next to it.

GenAI will surge forward, indifferent to our rules. Our work is to nurture the inner compass of empathy, discernment, and ethical vision which keeps education anchored in humanity. The true horizon of learning is not control; it is conscience.

■ RESPONSIBILITY, ETHICS, AND POWER

Transparency is the new integrity.

As the line between original and generated grows indistinct, honesty about process becomes more important than the illusion of purity. Students and staff alike should be able to say: Here's what I used, and here's how it shaped my work. In a hybrid world, transparency builds the trust that integrity depends on.

Academic judgement is augmented, not automated.

GenAI can illuminate patterns, generate ideas, and offer feedback - but discernment remains the domain of educators. Algorithms may assist, but they do not assess. Human context, empathy, and fairness are not optional; they are the foundation of academic decision-making.

Institutions must lead ethically, not just efficiently.

Universities cannot hand their conscience to vendors. Universities must anchor decisions in the core values of equity, privacy, and sustainability rather than simply cost. Institutional courage is what makes staff integrity possible.

Accountability scales with influence.

The greater the reach of our technologies, the stronger our duty to justify their use. Institutions must show, not just state, how GenAI aligns with educational and institutional values. Responsibility must be visible through transparent governance, clear boundaries, and open dialogue.

Efficiency is seductive; wisdom lingers.

Automation races ahead, promising speed and ease. But learning does not live in haste; it breathes in reflection, conversation, and the slow turning of thought. Growth unfolds in the pauses. As the world accelerates, we must guard the quiet tempos where thought becomes understanding.

There is no “neutral” data - only stories told by systems.

Every dataset carries values, omissions, and histories within it. GenAI is not a mirror of truth but a chorus of inherited biases, shaped by its makers and the cultures that feed it. Recognising this enables us to teach students to read outputs not as objective facts, but as narratives to be questioned.

Prompting is pedagogy.

The questions we pose shape the knowledge we receive. Critical prompting requires awareness of power, context, and intention. Students must learn not only to generate prompts, but to interrogate them and question the frame as much as the response.

GenAI is not one thing - it lives differently in every discipline.

Its meaning shifts across disciplines and what enlightens one may obscure another. Education does not need uniformity, but plurality with each discipline finding its own pathway. Rather than universal rules, disciplines must co-create their own frameworks in conversation with their students and communities.

Writing remains an act of thinking, even when machines hold the pen.

Text generation does not end the need for writing; it transforms it. Drafting, reshaping, and interpreting AI-assisted text can be acts of deep thought. The goal is not to reject GenAI-authored text, but to think through it, critique and refine.

Ease is not the enemy; uncritical learning is.

When GenAI lightens the load of routine work, the focus of education must shift to deeper learning such as thinking critically, creating boldly, and reasoning ethically. Rather than lowering expectations, grades should reflect the depth of human growth, not the ease of technological shortcuts.

● IMAGINATION, HUMANITY, AND THE FUTURE

We owe students more than caution - we owe them courage.

Fear of misuse must not define our pedagogy. Students need to see bold, critical experimentation modelled in practice. Courage means making space for uncertainty and trusting learners to act responsibly with the tools of their time. Courage is the pedagogy they will remember.

Every technological shift doesn't just change tools; it changes power.

GenAI carries political, economic, and social consequences. Education must make these visible by revealing who gains, who is left behind, and why it matters. To stay silent is to side with inequity; to teach critically is to challenge it.

Inclusion is not optional.

When GenAI privileges some languages, abilities, or cultures over others, inequity is built into the system. Education must actively design for access and belonging, adapting tools and practices so that all voices can be heard.

Sustainability is a learning outcome.

GenAI engagement and innovation comes with environmental costs. Embedding sustainability as a core learning outcome means cultivating awareness of impact and environmental responsibility.

Constraint is not the enemy of creativity; it is a catalyst.

The limitations of GenAI can spark new forms of expression where human imagination and creativity expand and flourish. Constraint becomes a canvas, not a cage.

Ethics is a foundation, not a footnote.

Responsibility should not arrive as a final slide in a presentation; it should breathe through every decision. Ethical reflection belongs in the design stage of every policy, course, prompt, and dataset used. The most sustainable systems are those that start with conscience, not compliance.

Privacy is practice.

Understanding what data we trade for convenience is part of digital literacy. Educators should lead by example - using GenAI transparently, anonymising where possible, questioning what is collected and why, and making informed choices of the tools used and for what purpose.

GenAI challenges us to teach why, not just how.

Technical fluency without philosophical grounding lacks depth. Students must understand both the power of GenAI and the wisdom to choose when not to use it. Meaningful literacy joins purpose with skill.

The horizon is still ours to shape.

GenAI may reshape how we learn, but it does not rewrite our purpose. The future classroom is not a contest of minds and machines; it is a space of shared imagination, where creativity, conscience and care continue to grow. The legacy is not the machine, but the mind that guided it.

The future classroom is a conversation, and it can be extraordinary.

Learning now unfolds in dialogue: between teachers and students, people and systems, questions, and responses. The challenge is not control but balance and allowing technology to contribute without letting it speak for us.

▲ Rethinking Teaching and Learning

Tagline:
From content delivery to curiosity, reimagining how learning happens in an age of abundance.

Focus:
The changing craft of teaching and inquiry.

Statements:
We teach in an age of abundance, not scarcity.
Inquiry has become the new intelligence.
GenAI does not replace thinking - it reveals the cost of not thinking.
Detection chases the past; thoughtful design shapes the future.
Courage opens the door, but resources build the path.
Curiosity surpasses completion.
Students must learn with GenAI before they can question it.
Students are collaborators, not spectators.
We cannot ask students to be collaborators in systems designed to constrain them.
Our job is not to tame the machine, but to awaken the human next to it.

Comment:
This thematic area traces the move from information overload to active inquiry and collaboration. It frames GenAI as a partner in curiosity, not a substitute for thought.

■ Responsibility, Ethics, and Power

Tagline:
Teaching with integrity, building systems and habits worthy of the trust they demand.

Focus:
The shared moral, institutional, and social responsibilities that shape GenAI's role in education.

Statements:
Transparency is the new integrity.
Academic judgement is augmented, not automated.
Institutions must lead ethically, not just efficiently.
Accountability scales with influence.
Efficiency is seductive; wisdom lingers.
There is no "neutral" data - only stories told by systems.
Prompting is pedagogy.
GenAI is not one thing - it lives differently in every discipline.
Writing remains an act of thinking, even when machines hold the pen.
Ease is not the enemy; uncritical learning is.

Comment:
The second thematic area balances pedagogy with principle, the space where ethics meets daily practice and institutional accountability.

● Imagination, Humanity, and the Future

Tagline:
Keeping learning human, imagining a future shaped by creativity, conscience, and care.

Focus:
Inclusion, sustainability, creativity, and the re-centering of human purpose.

Statements:
We owe students more than caution - we owe them courage.
Every technological shift doesn't just change tools; it changes power.
Inclusion is not optional.
Sustainability is a learning outcome.
Constraint is not the enemy of creativity; it is a catalyst.
Ethics is a foundation, not a footnote.
Privacy is practice.
GenAI challenges us to teach why, not just how.
The horizon is still ours to shape.
The future classroom is a conversation, and it can be extraordinary.

Comment:
This final thematic area looks ahead to a future shaped by conscience and creativity where technology amplifies imagination rather than eclipsing it.

The Concept

The Manifesto wasn't planned. It gathered itself slowly, in notes on margins, conversations after workshops and conferences, fragments from classrooms, and reflections that never quite let go.

Ideas began to accumulate, values, cautions, glimpses of possibility. Some came from structured work, others from fleeting remarks that stayed in the air. Word by word, these became statements, short enough to hold in mind, strong enough to hold meaning. Over time, they began to form a kind of architecture: a shared language for navigating what education could become when human intention meets machine intelligence.

The **Manifesto for Generative AI in Higher Education** is the result of that slow construction. Not a finished building, but a foundation, built from many hands, voices, and perspectives across the sector. It offers no single truth, only a set of directions for those still finding their way.

It stands as both a reflection and an invitation: to pause, to question, and to keep shaping the horizon together.

Credits

This manifesto is open. Use it, adapt it, challenge it.
Cite it with care, change it with courage.

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