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# MOTION: BIRKBECK AI POLICY IS DISADVANTAGING STUDENTS

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PROPOSER: PARMIDA KAFI KERAMATI, CHAIR OF STUDENT COUNCIL

SECONDER: DAISY KAOTHE JEANRENAUD, WOMEN'S OFFICER

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SUBMISSION: TUESDAY 13<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2023

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## COUNCIL BELIEVES

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1. Council agrees and understands the need to restrict the use of content generating AI tools like ChatGPT for assessments, however, not all the mentioned software in the AI Policy can be grouped in with the likes of ChatGPT. Some software's have multiple uses and different functions depending on the user's experience (whether paid or free). There is also the matter of whether spell checking and grammar correction can rightly lead to an academic offense. Features like spell checks are embedded in document software's (including Microsoft's Word and Apple's Pages) and are only likely to become more complex in their capabilities to keep up with competition. It may soon prove to be unavoidable if one wishes to type up their assignments digitally. **More clarity is needed.** The policy is too all encompassing with a lack of understanding for the subtleties of the software's. Considering how serious an academic offense is, details like this cannot be overlooked.
2. **International students are at a disadvantage if they cannot use google translate.** English may not be their first language and we must bear this in mind. At its core, Google translate is not content generation, nor is it a transcription or interpretation. It is a translation tool. It translates that which already exists. The ideas and words were already formed. It is the obvious and natural progression from physical dictionaries to an online resource bank. Technology evolves and trying to stop the flow of natural progression will be sure to create a set of ill-prepared students when faced with the workplace. It may also lead to Birkbeck becoming a less favourable institute of learning for international students when such staple technologies are restricted.
3. **Disabled students are entitled to use some of the software's** mentioned in the AI Policy. This university level policy is contradicting a government level grant that allows our disabled students access to writing tools like Grammarly and DRAGON. Prohibiting disabled students from using these tools is also violation of the Equality Act 2010. This needs to be addressed and the students need to know what is and isn't allowed.
4. **There are discrepancies on a departmental level** concerning the information students are given regarding the AI policy and the access they have to the Turnitin gauge, which informs students to what percentage their work will be flagged for plagiarism.

## COUNCIL FURTHER BELIEVES

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1. **This issue should be addressed now** as opposed to the next academic year. It is exam season and this policy is causing undue stress to students during a time where exams are already generating stress, and in some cases, anxiety.
2. **The formation of the policy should have involved feedback and input from students and lecturers.** This policy is addressing new and evolving technologies, which is why involvement from those it effects would have created a more ideal and applicable policy that would not disadvantage so many students. There was also a lack of communication between policymakers and lecturers since they do not feel equipped to mark with the Turnitin AI tool.
3. **The release of Birkbeck's AI policy was not accompanied by a push to make students and lecturers aware** of its existence – not to the degree a significant policy like this should be afforded. Furthermore, subsequent changes in the policy (created through updates) are met with the same, quiet, lack of announcement. This likens the policy to that of retroactive law, which it certainly is not. Students must be made aware of what the published AI policy was at the time of their exams which took place earlier in the year. Many are being brought up on academic offence charges they were not even aware existed.

## COUNCIL RESOLVES

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1. Rewrite sections of the AI Policy to provide more clarity and make room for distinctions and exceptions, to address the major points made in this motion.
2. Allow translation tools to be used in take-home assessments (excluding language assessments).
3. Allow disabled students to use the software's that their DSA entitles them to use to avoid being in direct conflict with SFE – the very body that pays for the majority of students tuitions.
4. All Birkbeck staff should be informed of the universities AI policy and implement them in such a way that there are no inconsistencies between departments. This is to ensure fair and equal treatment of the entire student cohort.
5. Create and make publicly available all versions of the policy and when they were effective.
6. All students should be made aware effective immediately.
7. AI reports and similarity reports should be given to students automatically once accused of plagiarism so students can see where in their assignments they are being accused of plagiarism. You cannot accuse someone of plagiarism with the AI tool and then proceed to not tell them where they have plagiarised.