



---

REVIEW

## GenAI in higher education: learning, relearning and unlearning

Illingworth, S., & Forsyth, R. (2026). *GenAI in higher education: Redefining teaching and learning*. Bloomsbury Academic. ISBN 9781350535787

Hannele Diehl 

Lund University, Sweden

**KEYWORDS:** GenAI literacy, higher education, learning development, learner agency.

Since the emergence of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) in everyday life, higher education (HE) has been re-evaluating its practices to optimise the use of GenAI tools without compromising academic integrity, undermining human-centred values, or increasing environmental impact. From a learning development perspective, these developments raise important questions about how students engage with knowledge, develop agency, and navigate academic conventions. With their monograph, *GenAI in Higher Education: Redefining Teaching and Learning*, Sam Illingworth and Rachel Forsyth aspire to ‘shape how GenAI tools can catalyse discovery, increase access and enrich learning without undermining the human relationships that must remain at the core of the higher education experience’ (p. 2). Given the extensive scope of the topic, a detailed treatment is not feasible within the confines of this review. Rather, this review foregrounds the book’s relevance to educators, with particular attention being paid to its implications for learning development practice in HE.

The book’s cover effectively depicts the general bewilderment surrounding GenAI. A clear background to GenAI and the role of technology in HE is provided in Chapter 1, before the authors introduce and critically outline GenAI tools in an accessible manner in Chapter 2. Subsequent chapters offer a multi-perspectival exploration of GenAI in HE, including their ethical and social implications (Chapter 3), their pedagogical applications (Chapter 4), their

integration into assessment and feedback practices (Chapter 5), their enhancement of the overall student experience (Chapter 6), and, finally, their future role in HE (Chapter 7), alongside helpful suggestions for designing educational applications using AI. All chapters open with clear learning outcomes (LOs) and end with reflective exercises, richly annotated recommendations for further reading, and extensive summaries. Other strengths include the authors' focus on the progressive design of inclusive, academically authentic exercises that lend themselves well as additions to professional development portfolios.

Illingworth's expertise in interdisciplinary studies and creative pedagogies, and Forsyth's in curriculum design, digital learning, and assessment, complement one another well. This benefits the book's readership, including educators, administrators, policymakers, and educational technologists. The book has particular relevance for learning developers working at the intersection of these roles. Regardless of their initial level of knowledge, readers are guided towards the following overarching LOs (pp. 2–3, 115–116):

1. Integrate theoretical and practical GenAI applications.
2. Anticipate and prepare for future GenAI needs in HE.
3. Critically assess ethical and practical implications of GenAI.

The LOs realistically reflect the multifaceted nature of learning in contemporary HE and the development of learner agency. From a learning development perspective, this layered approach is particularly valuable as it sheds light on what GenAI literacy in educational contexts may involve, even though the concept itself is not explicitly mentioned in the book. However, apart from building on such important literacies as information (p. 50), digital (p. 50), assessment (p. 73), and climate (p. 49) literacy, GenAI literacy can be assumed to involve higher-order thinking behaviour of Bloom et al.'s (1956) taxonomy owing to the uses of such verbs as 'integrate', 'anticipate', 'prepare', and 'assess' in the LOs above. This assumption would agree with Kennedy, Hyland and Ryan's (2006) extended interpretation of Bloom et al. (1956), in which verbs of this kind are taken to apply to the successive higher-order stages of synthesis (for example, 'integrate' and 'prepare') and evaluation (for example, 'assess'), even though no verbs are exclusive to any one level. The assumption would, furthermore, be comparable to research, for instance, by Ng et al. (2021), which sees similarities between conceptualisations of AI literacy and the cognitive domain in Bloom's taxonomy.



Pedagogically, Illingworth and Forsyth's work is anchored in the 'four foundational principles' (p. 1) presented below:

1. Student centredness: ensuring that students can engage with valued forms of knowledge, quality, standards, and expertise.
2. Trust: fostering an open and trusting learning environment where students feel comfortable taking risks and expressing themselves authentically.
3. Relevance: making learning relevant and meaningful by connecting taught concepts to students' lives and interests and to the wider social context.
4. Agency: giving learners and educators autonomy and voice in shaping their HE journeys.

These cornerstones, around which the authors would like the HE sector to be built, are timeless in that they 'are designed to remain valid regardless of which technologies come and go' (p. 3). In representing aspects associated with human intelligence, they are not readily replicated by GenAI.

An area in which the responsible, ethical, and accurate use of GenAI is perhaps most pertinent is assessment (Chapter 5). It involves fulfilling the criteria (pp. 74–75) of validity (alignment between LOs and assessment practices), security (independent completion of submitted work), and fairness (equal opportunity to achieve outcomes), as well as aligning assessment tasks with LOs in innovative ways and delivering timely, personalised feedback (see Biggs, 2003; CAST, 2024). While Illingworth and Forsyth offer ample guidance on these aspects, a more structured framework for the staged integration of GenAI into assessment design would have enhanced the discussion. Such an approach is exemplified by Perkins et al. (2024), who scale assessment from no use (1), through partial use (2–4), to full use (5) of GenAI. A comparable approach is presented by Olsson (2026), who offers case-based specifications between 'permitted', 'problematic', and 'prohibited' uses of GenAI.

Another area that would benefit from further clarification concerns Illingworth and Forsyth's reasoning process for selecting which evidence and GenAI tools to include and which to exclude. Making this process explicit would enable readers to develop their own approaches to problem formulation and prompt engineering (including collaborative prompting: see, for example, Peachey & ChatGPT (2025)). Above all, it would support more informed decision-making.



In conclusion, and in line with Illingworth and Forsyth's suggestion, GenAI may well become 'a transformative catalyst' (p. 6) in HE if applied responsibly and with an understanding of the educational context at hand. Redefining teaching and learning would then, from a lifelong perspective, be to 'commit to a continuous cycle of learning, relearning and unlearning' (p. 118), never overlooking the 'non-negotiable skills' across disciplines (p. 48), nor neglecting human agency, oversight, and interpersonal engagement. For learning development practitioners, this book offers a valuable starting point for such a professional journey.

## Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Chad McDonald for his generosity of time and feedback. Any shortcomings are the author's own.

## Disclosure statement

The author did not use generative AI technologies in the creation of this manuscript.

## References

- Biggs, J. (2003). *Aligning teaching for constructing learning*. Advance HE (formerly Higher Education Academy). <https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/aligning-teaching-constructing-learning>
- Bloom, B. S., Engelhart, M. D., Furst, E. J., Hill, W. H., & Krathwohl, D. R. (1956). *Taxonomy of educational objectives. Handbook I: The cognitive domain*. Longmans.
- CAST. (2024). *CAST Universal Design for Learning*. Guidelines version 3.0. <https://udlguidelines.cast.org>
- Kennedy, D., Hyland, Á., & Ryan, N. (2006). Writing and using learning outcomes: A practical guide. In E. Froment, J. Kohler, L. Purser, & L. Wilson (Eds.), *The EUA Bologna Handbook. Making Bologna Work* (pp.1-30). Raabe Academic Publishers.
- Ng, D. T. K., Leung, J. K. L., Chu, S. K. W., & Qiao, M. S. (2021). Conceptualizing AI literacy: An exploratory review. *Computers and Education: Artificial Intelligence*, 2, Article 100041. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.caeai.2021.100041>
- Olsson, E. M. (2026). Embedding academic literacies in the age of generative AI. In N. Murray (Ed.), *Embedding academic literacies in university curricula: Perspectives and case studies* (pp. 111–130). Cambridge University Press.



Peachey, N., & ChatGPT. (2025). *The manual of AI-mediated autonomous teacher development*. PeacheyPublications.

Perkins, M., Furze, L., Roe, J., & MacVaugh, J. (2024). The Artificial Intelligence Assessment Scale (AIAS): A framework for ethical integration of generative AI in educational assessment. *Journal of University Teaching and Learning Practice*, 21(6), 49–66.

<https://doi.org/10.53761/q3azde36>

## Author details

Hannele Diehl is a doctoral student in English Linguistics at the Centre for Languages and Literature at Lund University in Sweden. Her research is grounded within the framework of usage-based cognitive-functional linguistics, and it relates to how the evaluative usage patterns of the near-synonymous expressions *quite*, *rather*, *pretty*, and *fairly* emerge in British English. Hannele also works as a language and study consultant in the Academic Support Centre at Lund University in Sweden. Her practice interests include English and Swedish for academic purposes, learning technologies, and inclusivity.

## ORCID

Hannele Diehl  <https://orcid.org/0009-0007-9555-2981>

