Just Say Anything! What Students Wish Their Teachers Did About GenAI

V. Loft

Abstract—The rapid rise of generative AI (GenAI) technologies, such as ChatGPT, has become a regular part of students' lives. This paper explores what engineering students at Lunds Tekniska Högskola (LTH) want their teachers to say or do about GenAI. The data were gathered from two sources: surveys conducted during the student union's, Teknologkåren vid Lunds Tekniska Högskola (TLTH), Speak Up Days (SUD) in 2023 and 2024, and a series of student workshops held in the spring of 2024. The results show a clear gap between students' use of GenAI and how often it is acknowledged by teachers. Most students use GenAI but feel unsure about how to use it in their courses and what the guidelines are. Students report that most teachers never mention GenAI in any capacity and if they do, the focus is on plagiarism and cheating. What students want their teachers to say or do varies, but students agree that GenAI needs to be discussed in the classroom. The main takeaway is simple: students say that any conversation about GenAI is better than silence.

Index Terms— Generative AI, Student Perspectives

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Why GenAI?

SINCE the release of ChatGPT, GenAI has been at the forefront of discussions in higher education. Students' usage of the tools seems to only increase [1]–[4]. While the debate on good practices with implementation in higher education remains [5], students and teachers are mostly left to fend for themselves. We conducted a project to understand engineering students at Lunds Tekniska Högskola (LTH) views on how their teachers should discuss GenAI in the classroom.

B. Students at LTH

At LTH, there are approximately 10,000 students. Teknologkåren at Lunds Tekniska Högskola (TLTH) serves as their student union, and it advocates for all students at the faculty. One of TLTH's activities is the Speak Up Days (SUD), a week where students' opinions on matters are gathered via survey. Students' answers form the basis of opinion that TLTH advocates on behalf of students.

II. METHOD

We used different data for this manuscript: surveys and notes from workshops. We will describe both in the following sections.

A. Speak Up Days

Students studying engineering at Lund University were invited to participate in a survey through campus meeting points, the Students' Unions social media channels, and its newsletter. During the 2023 survey, SUD HT23, we received 479 responses. During the 2024 survey, SUD HT24, we received 750 responses. The two surveys focus on different facets of students' experiences in relation to GenAI, and the questions posed in the two surveys therefore differ. SUD HT23 we asked quantitative questions without free text responses. During SUD HT24, we had two free text questions, Q1 and Q2, where students had the opportunity to write freely about their experiences and what they wish teachers would do to help them understand GenAI can be used in their courses, see Figure 1. Both questions provided valuable insights: Q1 responses highlighted whether and how GenAI had been addressed in teaching, while Q2 responses captured students' suggestions and expectations. Because the responses to Q2 varied significantly, they were selected for thematic consensus coding.

Q1: Think about how teachers have addressed GenAI in your classes in ways that made you feel safe/secure. Please give us all positive examples you can think of!

Q2: What would you like every teacher to say or do for you to understand how GenAI can be used in their course?

Fig 1. The two questions asked during SUD HT24, Q1 (left) and Q2 (right).

B. Workshops

Students were invited to participate in workshops to ascertain their views of risks and possibilities of using GenAI in their education and how it could shape their future professional life. The workshops were held for three evening sessions in the spring of 2024. A total of 18 students participated and most programs at LTH were represented.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results from the surveys are discussed in the following sections with support of notes from workshops.

A. SUD HT23

We asked students several questions regarding GenAI. To the question "Have you voluntarily used GenAI as a tool to understand concepts in your courses?", 60% of students answered that they have used GenAI for understanding

V. Loft is a student employee at Centre for Engineering Education, Faculty of Engineering, Lund University.

concepts. On the other hand, when we asked students "Have you been encouraged by teachers to use GenAI?", only 30% of students reported that teachers had encouraged them to use GenAI. If students were asked the same question again, we would expect the percentages to be higher.

B. SUD HT24

The answers to Q1 confirmed previous data. Most answers report that teachers have not addressed GenAI, with one student phrasing it "They haven't addressed GenAI. The only times teachers talked about AI tools it wasn't in a positive tone". Where it has been addressed, teachers have explained the drawbacks of GenAI, as mentioned by a different student "They have made it clear that generated responses can't be

involved", hinting that teachers might be disregarding the importance of discussion with students.

Teachers' focus, according to students, are often on the aspect of cheating and plagiarism. Teachers frame this in different ways and offer different guidelines to students. For the most part, it is either not letting students use GenAI in any way or letting students use it to some extent but then demanding students to explain how they have used GenAI. As one student mentioned, "My teachers have only warned me of cheating and plagiarism with GenAI but have never discussed the positive aspects except that it could be used for studying".

The answers to Q2 were more varied, with students raising different aspects of what they want their teachers to convey
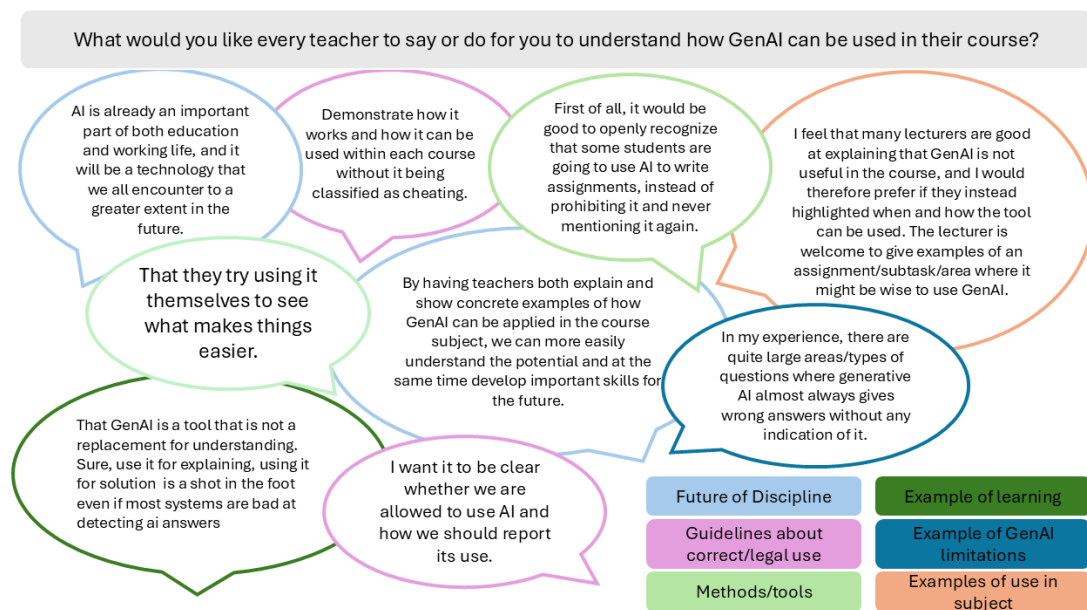

Fig 2. Representative examples of student answers for the 6 most frequent codes. The outlines of the speech bubbles represent the given or one of the given codes for the student's answer.

trusted but you can use it to get suggestions". The same student answers to Q2: "They should be clear to help us understand the purpose of [GenAI] and also explain the risks

about GenAI within their course, see Figure 2.

The clearest result the consensus coding yielded was that students want their teacher to mention anything regarding
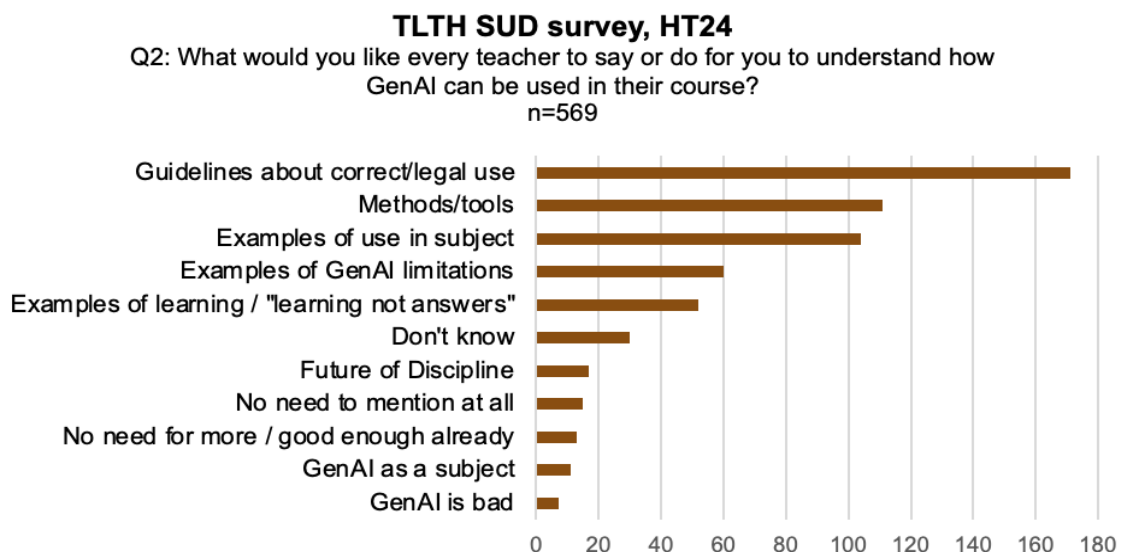

Fig 3. Consensus coding results of the student data to Q2.

GenAI. What students want teachers to mention differs. The thematic coding yielded eleven codes, see Figure 3. In short, most themes pertain to teachers' guidelines for GenAI, how students could use GenAI as a tool within the discipline or the limitations of GenAI within the discipline.

C. Students need support

An overwhelming majority of students report wanting their teachers to discuss GenAI in any capacity. Furthermore, students report that guidelines about correct use in courses are the most pressing concern. This is reflected in students' answers, with one student saying, "I want it to be clear how we can use GenAI and how we should disclose the use". Students are balancing the responsibility for their own learning but also the risk of not learning skills expected of them in their future professional life by not using GenAI. Students often feel left alone maneuvering course rules if the teacher is not clear with correct use. In addition, students' experience with guidelines on GenAI differ depending on course. In students' answers, this confusion is present "Some courses have encouraged it. Otherwise, difficult to determine [where] the boundaries of cheating are".

IV. CONCLUSIONS

Teachers must start talking about GenAI with students, as the current situation puts students in a difficult position. On the one hand, they are expected to gain familiarity with the tool to meet future industry demands. On the other hand, they are mostly left to their own to figure out how, or if, they are allowed to use GenAI in courses. The lack of clear guidelines from both teachers and the university leaves students without the support they need. Many students are eager to use GenAI responsibly and do not want to risk unintentional cheating, which makes it especially important for teachers to define and discuss correct use with students. The variation in what students want teachers to discuss in the classroom is large, and thus it can be concluded that any discussion about GenAI would benefit students.

V. ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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