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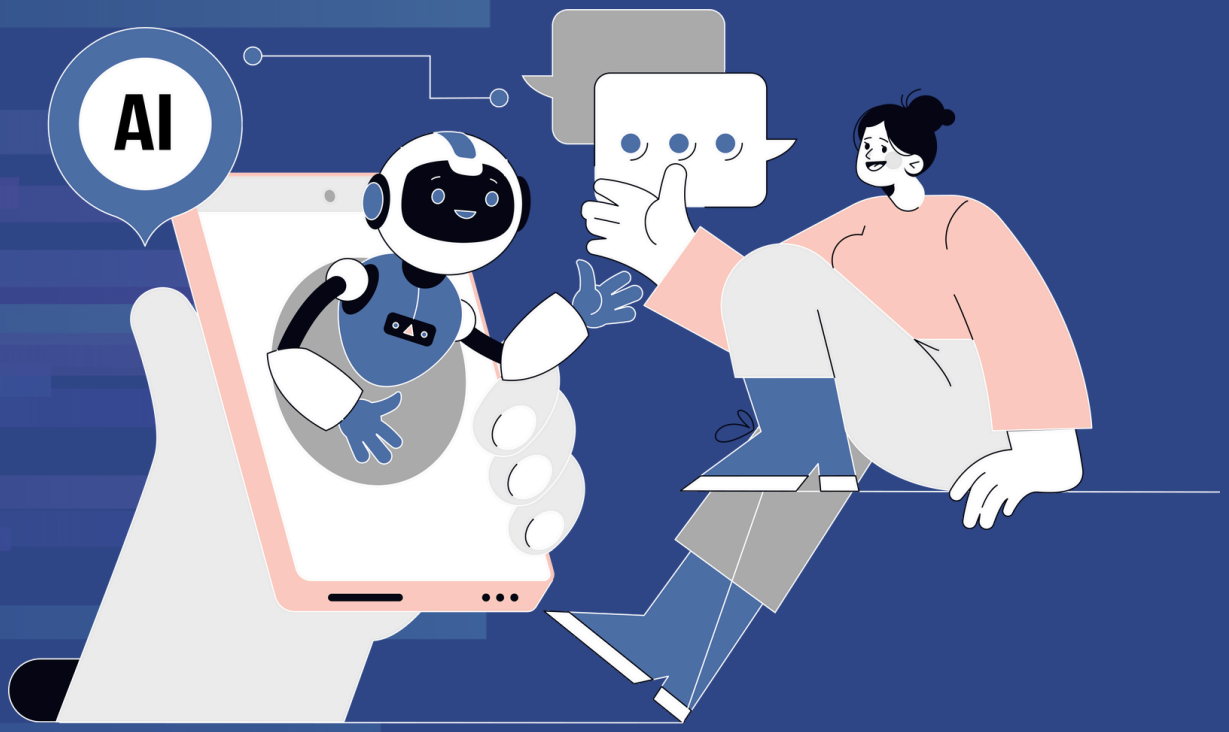

POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS USING AI IN THEIR LEARNING

FEATURED STORIES VOL.2

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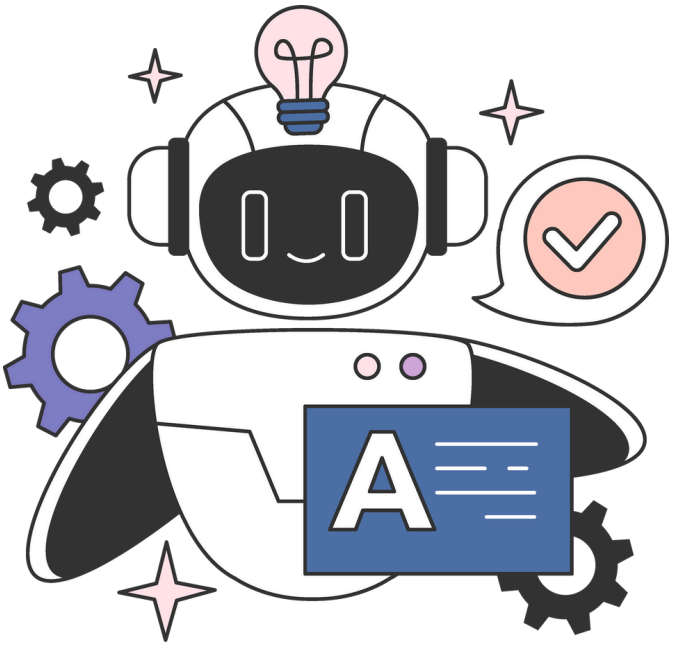
XU YANG
FACULTY OF SCIENCE

A SMARTER WAY TO LEARN: XU YANG FOUND SUPPORT IN DIGITAL TOOLS

TECHNOLOGY THAT HELPED SHAPE A POSTGRADUATE JOURNEY



“It’s like having a helpful mentor who’s always available, pointing me in the right direction, offering suggestions, and helping me think things through.”

It began with a course on dissertations. The instructor walked the class through exploring potential topics with smart research tools, for instance, suggesting literature based on keywords or identifying gaps in existing academic conversations. Xu Yang gave it a try.

It turned out to be more helpful than expected. What started as a way to brainstorm thesis ideas quickly became part of Xu Yang’s work flows, tackling everything from writing outlines to debugging code. The tools offered structure without being rigid, and flexibility without being vague. It didn’t do the thinking, but made the thinking easier to begin with.

From Dissertation Drafts to Python Scripts

Outside of class, Xu Yang explored further. A few different platforms entered his routine: a university-provided writing assistant, a pair-programming tool that helped with Python logic, and even Siri or Duolingo, depending on the day's needs. The goal was always the same: make studying smoother, not lazier.

"I don't use these tools the same way every time," Xu Yang shared. "Sometimes it's for rewriting a paragraph. Sometimes it's for checking why my code isn't running. Other times, it's just to spark new ideas."

That flexibility made the tools more like partners than products. And Xu Yang appreciated the way they were adaptable, not just to the task at hand, but to the way learning actually happens in real life: in bits and loops, not straight lines.

The Real Benefit

It's easy to say these tools save time, and they do. But for Xu Yang, the deeper benefit is clarity. The ability to test a hypothesis, reframe a question, or recheck an argument makes the thinking process more precise. It's no longer about covering more ground. It's about knowing which ground matters.

"Sometimes it helps me notice a weak spot in my logic," Xu Yang said. "Sometimes, it just gives me enough momentum to keep going."

And that matters. Momentum can be everything, especially when writing research papers or solving technical problems.

Drawbacks?

Xu Yang has also seen where things can go wrong. The tools sometimes give convincing answers but are shaky under scrutiny. At first, this caused some frustration, but it also taught a habit of cross-checking. Course textbooks, academic databases, and peer discussions became reliable ways to double-check claims and refine arguments.

There's also the issue of becoming too dependent. If the tool always offers a first draft or quick fix, it's tempting to let go of the deeper thinking. Xu Yang deals with this by deliberately combining traditional techniques, such as handwriting outlines, with digital support only when necessary.

Never a Shortcut

Xu Yang is realistic about what these platforms can do. They won't replace lectures or deep reading, but they can make both more manageable. With enough critical awareness and some healthy boundaries, they can become part of a more extensive learning system.

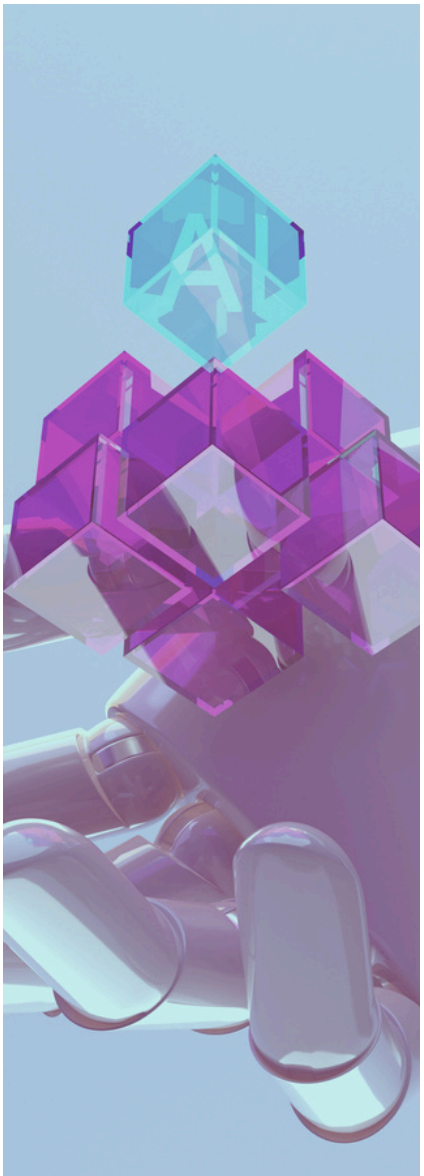
> *"The real work is still mine to do. What's different now is I don't get stuck as often, and that lets me focus more on solving problems."*

02

HUANG YANSHEN
SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION

FROM PIXEL TO PROMPT: YANSHEN EXPERIMENTS WITH INTELLIGENT TOOLS TO SPARK CREATIVITY

TECH IS ABOUT PLAYING, TESTING, AND DESIGNING WITH INTENTION



> *It doesn't replace my ideas. It pushes them further than I could on my own.*

Yanshen didn't learn about machine learning through a textbook or a theory-heavy lecture. The learning happened while building something, visually, interactively, and sometimes unexpectedly.

In a course on media art and digital production, Yanshen was introduced to a different kind of classroom. It wasn't about abstract definitions or distant applications. Instead, students were asked to experiment: generate visual assets with prompt-based tools, stitch those elements into a story or game, and then write the HTML to make it all come to life.

It was part code, part creativity, and part exploration – and it left an impression. "The goal wasn't just to learn how the tools work," Yanshen explained. "It was to figure out how to make them do something original."

Like a Playground

Outside class, Yanshen kept testing ideas using a variety of creative platforms, such as 即梦AI, Stable Diffusion, Flux, 可灵AI, 豆包, all focused on generating visuals and audio for digital projects. Text-based tools also became useful when writing in-game scripts or building narrative branches.

“I’m not just using these tools to finish something faster,” Yanshen said. “I use them to explore. Sometimes, it gives me an idea I didn’t expect, and I chase it.”

It wasn’t about automation. It was about imagination. If a tool suggested a surprising colour scheme, layout, or dialogue twist, Yanshen would take that as a prompt, not a solution, and build from there.

Thinking Through Making

Yanshen described how learning felt more responsive after integrating these platforms. When faced with a challenge, like analysing a large set of gameplay feedback or refining user interaction, data tools helped filter the noise. But the real benefit was not just about speed or output. It was about insight.

For example, while writing a complex scene for a game prototype, Yanshen used a story generation tool, not for the finished product, but to discover a plot thread that felt more layered. “It didn’t give me a script,” Yanshen said. “But it nudged me toward something better.”

The process was iterative: generate, review, discard, rewrite. This rhythm helped sharpen not just technical skills but also creative instincts.

A Learning Partner

Of course, it wasn’t all smooth. The tools made mistakes. Some information was outdated or flat-out wrong. Sometimes, the output felt generic or lacked cultural nuances. Yanshen learned to work around this by switching tools, verifying with multiple sources, or checking against known references.

More concerning was the risk of over-reliance. “If I just accept what it gives me, I stop thinking for myself,” Yanshen noted. To avoid that, every suggestion was treated as a draft, not an answer.

That mindset turned the tool into a collaborator, never the lead.

03

WANG JIAHUI
FACULTY OF SCIENCE

JIAHUI USES TECH TO LEARN SMARTER

DIGITAL TOOLS HELPED STUDENTS LEARN WITH CLARITY AND CONFIDENCE

> *Having a tool that helps me spot mistakes and get unstuck quickly means I can focus more on what matters, understanding the bigger picture.*

Jiahui didn't expect a tool introduced in a business-tech course to shape study habits across multiple subjects, but that's exactly what happened. It started in IT Project Skills, a class that covered everything from research to presentation, and along the way, introduced a tool that could check code in real-time.

There was something powerful in seeing feedback immediately: the line of code that broke the loop, the parameter that wasn't defined, the structure that just didn't fit. Instead of guessing what went wrong, Jiahui could move directly to fix it, and that shift turned debugging into something almost satisfying.

What stood out wasn't just the accuracy. It was the space it created. "I wasn't spending half an hour figuring out a bracket mistake," Jiahui reflected. "I could actually focus on improving the project."

Outside the Classroom, the Habit Stuck

After that, Jiahui began using the same tool for other tasks, such as summarising reading materials, decoding dense terminology, or reviewing draft reports. The tool didn't do the work, but it helped make sense of it faster.

The time saved wasn't just used to move on. It was used to go deeper. With basic issues sorted out quickly, more energy was left to refine writing, restructure presentations, or rethink the logic behind a report.

"It helped me take a second look at my work without waiting until the last minute," Jiahui said.

Less Guessing, More Learning

Jiahui now thinks differently when approaching new material. Instead of jumping in blindly, there's a process: get a quick overview, test for gaps in understanding, and decide what needs deeper focus. This isn't automation; it's intentionality.

The tool plays a quiet but consistent role in this system. It identifies what needs fixing, but it doesn't offer finished answers. That's left to Jiahui, and that's the point.

It's Okay to Not Be Perfect

The information isn't always reliable. Jiahui has seen answers that looked polished but were wrong, outdated, or were missing context. The fix? Cross-checking with sources, academic readings, and past notes.

There's also the risk of overusing it to the point where personal problem-solving fades. Jiahui is aware of that temptation, so the tool stays in the background as a helper, not a replacement.

"When I'm stuck, it gives me direction," Jiahui explained. "But I still want to solve the problem myself."

A Quiet Change in Study Style

For Jiahui, this isn't about adopting a new technology. It's about discovering a rhythm of learning that feels more deliberate and less frustrating. The tool helps with the rough edges, but the refinement, understanding, and insight still come from within.

> *I use it to catch mistakes, though t he best part is the space it gives m e to think things through.*

04

CHEN ZISHAN
FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCE

THINKING CRITICALLY IN A DIGITAL AGE: ZISHAN'S BALANCED TAKE ON LEARNING WITH TECHNOLOGY

LEARNING IS A JUDGMENT CALL

> *I've learned that it's not just about what a tool can do, but about when, why, and how I choose to use it.*

In some fields, digital tools are everywhere, such as rewriting assignments, summarising readings, and offering feedback in real-time. But in Zishan's course on the humanities and social sciences, things are different. Here, the nature of the work demands nuance, interpretation, and time. Not everything should be automated, and not everything can be.

The instructors made a conscious choice: no direct integration of innovative platforms into course delivery. Zishan understood the logic. If the course material started to resemble what generative systems could produce, it would only invite shortcuts and possibly replacements for what should be profoundly human work.

That doesn't mean Zishan ignores the tools. It just means knowing where they belong and where they don't.

Testing the Edges

Outside of class, Zishan occasionally explores what these tools can offer. Platforms like DeepSeek or Kimi get used – sometimes for writing prep, sometimes to see what unfamiliar perspectives might surface. There's even a bit of playful testing: metaphysical questions, curious prompts, and even fortune-telling features.

Some results are entertaining. Others are frustrating. But a few stand out, especially when Zishan is stuck in the brainstorming stage. "It doesn't always give me answers," Zishan shared, "but sometimes it helps me find the right question."

That, in itself, is useful.

Thinking With, Not Through

When Zishan does use digital tools in the study, it's not for speed. It's for structure. If the information is scattered, they help organise it. If a process feels unclear, they offer steps, though not always accurate ones. That's why every response is treated as a draft, not a fact.

Efficiency isn't the goal. Clarity is.

Clarity comes with a choice: whether to continue, discard, or reshape the suggestion. That small but constant act of judgment is what Zishan values most and protects most.

Gains and Losses

Over time, Zishan has noticed a few shifts. Research tasks get done faster, technical language is easier to interpret, and digital fluency has improved. But something else has faded a little - memorisation. And creative sparks don't feel as strong when suggestions are too easy to grab.

There's also the concern of over-dependence. "It's easy to let the tool think for you," Zishan admitted. "But if that happens too often, you forget how to wrestle with an idea."

So now, Zishan moves carefully between the two worlds: old-school and digital, manual and supported.

Be Critical

Zishan isn't anti-technology. There's real potential in these tools, but also real risks. That's why boundaries matter. Privacy settings are double-checked. Answers are fact-checked. And intuition always has the final say.

> *Even with powerful tools, I prefer to stay in control by choosing when to lean on them and when to step back.*

05

LIANG YINGJIAN
FACULTY OF SCIENCE

YINGJIAN USES TECH TO FIND A SMOOTHER PATH TO LEARNING

A SHIFT FROM ANXIETY TO A MORE EMPOWERED LEARNING PROCESS

> *When I get stuck, I don't wait anymore. I ask questions, find direction, and keep moving. That's made learning feel lighter and more rewarding.*

In the *Data Analysis and Programming* course, the most useful lesson didn't come from a slide deck or a formula sheet; it came from the quiet moments when things didn't work. An error in the code, a query that wouldn't run, or a dataset refused to cooperate. That's when Yingjian began leaning on a different kind of support.

The course required students to use an innovative tool to identify bugs, suggest fixes, and recommend data sources. In the past, Yingjian searched forums or websites and hoped to find something close enough. Now, the tool could pinpoint exactly what was missing, saving time, effort, and frustration.

"It doesn't just answer the question," Yingjian shared. "It tells me where to start looking."

Studying Smarter

Outside of coursework, Yingjian found more uses for these platforms than expected. A few months ago, when planning a trip to Xi'an, the tool wasn't just a study assistant; it became a travel companion. Yingjian asked it to generate a detailed itinerary, compare flight times, suggest food options, and recommend when to book a return flight.

In everyday learning, it also became a way to digest overwhelming chapters. "I don't copy," Yingjian clarified. "I paste the paragraph and ask for a breakdown in simpler words so I can understand it independently."

This habit became a rhythm: ask, review, rewrite, repeat. Even when shopping online, Yingjian used the tool to run calculations on discounts and promotions, saving money and time spent second-guessing.

More Than Just Speed

There's something empowering about knowing you don't have to wait until the night before an exam to solve a difficult question. In the past, Yingjian would often save challenging problems for later, then run out of time. Now, there's a way to deal with problems when they happen, reducing stress and improving understanding in real-time.

"I've become more willing to face the hard parts," Yingjian said. "Because now I know I have a way to approach them, step by step."

The effect isn't just academic. It's emotional. The pressure lifts, and the process becomes a little more enjoyable.

Limitations

Not everything runs smoothly. When multiple questions are submitted, the system sometimes mixes them up, pulling a detail from one and applying it incorrectly to another. Yingjian noticed this quickly and started labelling questions more clearly. Still, the occasional error slips through.

There's also a more profound concern: losing the ability to judge what's right. "Sometimes I feel like I believe the answer too fast," Yingjian admitted. "And that's dangerous."

The fix? Pause, compare, verify. Use the tool, but don't let it think on your behalf.

A Reality Check and a Wake-Up Call

Yingjian sees the rise of smart systems as both exciting and sobering. They improve efficiency and simplify many tasks, but they also replace roles, especially in industries that rely on routine work. At the same time, new roles are emerging: analysts, developers, strategists.

The message is clear: don't compete with the tools. Learn how to work with them. Stay adaptable. Stay curious.

> *"What I'm really learning isn't just the material. It's how to stay relevant in a world that's changing fast."*

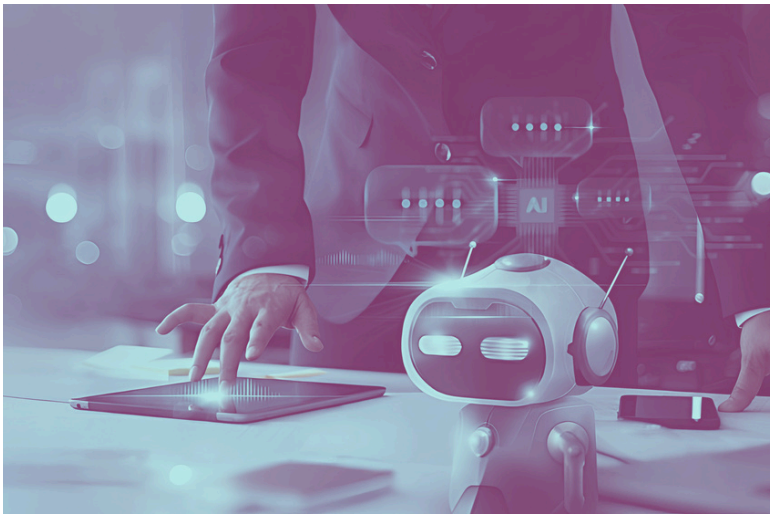
06

XU ZHICHEN
SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

NO SHORTCUTS, JUST SHARPER THINKING: HOW ZHICHEN USES TECHNOLOGY TO TACKLE COMPLEXITY

A BALANCE BETWEEN BUSINESS FUNDAMENTALS AND TECHNOLOGY-ENHANCED RESEARCH

> *It's not just about faster answers. It's about becoming someone who knows how to ask better questions.*



Most of Zhichen's business courses focus on case analysis, financial logic, and strategic frameworks. There's no shortage of references to automation, analytics, or digital disruption. However, in practice, most instructors stay rooted in the traditional way of teaching. They bring up the trends, yes, but prefer students to grasp the theory before jumping into tools.

Zhichen respects that approach. It provides structure and clarity. But outside of class, there's a different rhythm. Assignments are faster-paced, and the questions are more open-ended. And that's when technology starts to step in, not as a shortcut but as a quiet extra hand.

Quiet Support

When working on a thesis project, Zhichen began using DeepSeek to help find useful material. Not because it was trendy but because it was practical. Instead of scrolling through endless pages of journals and business databases, Zhichen could search with more precision and filter with more control.

It wasn't a one-click solution. But it turned overwhelming tasks into something more manageable.

Sometimes, it was about finding the proper case study. Other times, it was about spotting gaps in an argument or identifying trends in a research report. The tool helped speed things up, but more importantly, it kept the thinking focused.

Picking Up the Pace Without Losing the Point

Over time, Zhichen noticed a change in the way assignments were approached. It became easier to sense which parts needed deeper work and which could be skimmed. Financial forecasting tools and data processors provided structure, making demanding tasks less chaotic.

Zhichen didn't just finish tasks faster. There was more headspace left, actually, to think.

Instead of spending hours organising information, Zhichen could spend that time writing stronger arguments, asking better questions, and adjusting the logic of a business proposal. The tool did not take over. It cleared a path.

Second Opinion

Initially, Zhichen didn't feel at ease to use these tools. At times, the tool connected ideas that didn't belong together. Once, two separate questions led to one blended, inaccurate answer. Zhichen caught it, but it was a reminder that blind trust was risky.

The solution was simple: Pause, verify with journals or books, ask a classmate, and/or reframe the question.

Also, Zhichen habitually reviewed the original sources behind anything that seemed too convenient. This habit grew into a mental checklist: don't just accept, but understand.

Shift in Attitude

Before starting the program, Xu Zhichen hadn't paid much attention to these technologies. Now, they're part of the study routine, just not in a dominant way.

What they offer is a possibility. They fill gaps, offer structure, and suggest connections. But they don't make choices. Zhichen still wants to do that alone.

> *There's a difference between getting help and giving up your process. I use the tools for the first and avoid the second.*

07

CHEN KAIXIN
FACULTY OF SCIENCE

LEARNING INDEPENDENTLY: HOW KAIXIN NAVIGATES CHALLENGES WITH CLARITY AND CURIOSITY

USING TECHNOLOGY INDEPENDENTLY AND MAKING STUDY FEEL MORE MANAGEABLE

"Sometimes, it helps me catch up. Other times, it helps me start at all."

Teachers rarely use generative tools during lectures in most of Kaixin's courses, particularly outside of data analytics and other compulsory subjects. That decision seems intentional. The focus stays on the core material, with instructors choosing not to bring in automation during class time.

So students, including Kaixin, turn to it on their own.

Sometimes, that means using it to fill in the gaps a fast-moving lecture leaves. Other times, it's about checking understanding before tackling an assignment. In Kaixin's case, this outside-of-class usage became a habit, especially when the course content felt unclear.

One Prompt at a Time

When stuck on a paragraph or confused by a chapter, Kaixin copies the section into a tool and asks for an explanation. Not a shortcut. Just a different way of seeing it. The response acts like a nudge toward understanding, saving time spent flipping through different sources.

Beyond study, Kaixin has even used these tools to help with everyday decisions. Travel plans, simple recommendations, quick summaries—they've become a background assistant.

> *The hardest part was getting started. Now, I have something to build on, even if I don't fully trust it.*

Learning to Learn

Using digital tools has helped Kaixin develop something rarely taught directly in class: the ability to study alone, with focus and pace. In the past, difficult questions would pile up, saved for revision week or left unanswered altogether. But with an always-available tool, help feels within reach.

The outcome isn't perfect fluency. But it's progress.

Kaixin finds it easier to move forward when stuck instead of postponing problems until they grow too large. That shift has made studying less stressful, especially near exams. It has also built the confidence to dig deeper into topics instead of skimming over them.

Creativity, Caution, and Catching Mistakes

Some tools offer more than answers. They spark ideas.

In one instance, a design-related platform provided basic layout suggestions. Kaixin didn't use them directly, but they helped trigger other directions that might not have surfaced. In that way, even mistakes or odd suggestions become part of the creative process.

But Kaixin is careful. Not everything generated is right. Occasionally, when working on a writing task, the system will confuse two separate questions or drift away from the point. That's when it becomes clear that these tools are starting points, not substitutes.

A Personal Stance

Kaixin doesn't see the use of digital support tools as something revolutionary. It's practical. It helps, but only when used with a bit of scepticism.

"It's like having a second set of eyes. Not someone to do the thinking for me, but someone to challenge it."

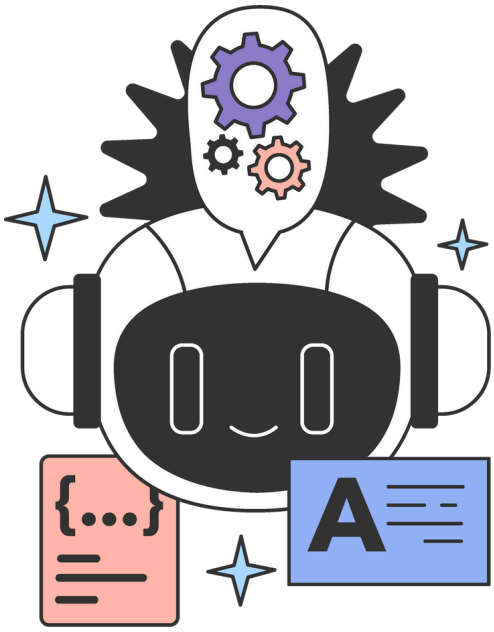
In that way, the tool becomes part of the learning process, not the centre of it.

08

WANG YUZHE
SCHOOL OF CHINESE MEDICINE

LITTLE BY LITTLE: HOW YUZHE HAS MADE A HABIT OUT OF USING NEW TOOLS

LEARNING WITHOUT TECHNOLOGIES IS IMPOSSIBLE



"At first, I didn't think it was for me. Now I can't imagine doing most of my work without it."

When Yuzhe first heard about new digital tools that could help with research or writing, it all felt far-fetched. Using digital tools was barely part of the conversation during the four years of Yuzhe's previous work and study. It wasn't until arriving in a new learning environment that something shifted. The pace was quicker. The tasks required more structure. And the pressure to stay on top of everything was constant.

So Yuzhe tried something new. A recommendation from classmates led to experimenting with different platforms, first for simple things like reorganising notes and later for much more.

Finding Use in the Unexpected

These days, Yuzhe turns to one platform or another almost daily. DeepSeek has become especially useful, not just for academic writing but even in personal areas like health. When uncertain about a condition or symptom, Yuzhe looks up how others describe it, the diagnosis pathways, and what recent studies might say.

The process has become quicker and less draining for planning presentations, reports, or survey outlines. What once took multiple hours of staring at a blank page begins with a sketch, which is easier to revise than invent from scratch.

It's not magic. But it works.

Lightening the Load

Before these tools, writing a report or building a document often meant copying formats, checking examples, and trying to remember what worked last time. Yuzhe found this process slow and repetitive. Now, the basics can be handled more efficiently, allowing for actual thinking. That mental shift matters.

Yuzhe also appreciates how these tools introduce ideas that might not come up during brainstorming. When stuck, the platform might offer a strange suggestion or frame the problem differently. Even when those ideas aren't used, they can open a door.

"It's not about replacing my thinking. It just makes it easier to start thinking at all."

A Tool That Helps

Of course, it's not perfect. Sometimes the answers are wrong or too vague to trust. When that happens, Yuzhe has learned to check across different platforms, dig into more sources, and cross-verify with real literature.

Understanding the construction of these systems was one crucial lesson. Users must know what can be lacking as they are only as good as the data they draw from. Yuzhe has tended to doubt everything, particularly when it seems too easy.

No Longer Optional

Yuzhe sees the role of these tools as somewhere in between necessary and imperfect. They help, but only if handled with care. They're fast, but that speed can create overconfidence if left unchecked.

So the choice isn't whether to use them. It's how.

> *"We may not be able to get back to the way we were, and I think that's why moving forward with carefulness feels even more important."*

09

HAO YIDAN
FACULTY OF SCIENCE

SHAPED BY DATA, DRIVEN BY CURIOSITY: HOW YIDAN RETHINKS LEARNING

WHEN FEEDBACK IS INSTANT, PROGRESS BECOMES INEVITABLE

> *When I'm learning at my own pace, with clear direction and quick support, it's easier to focus on improving, not just catching up.*

There was initially some uncertainty when Yidan enrolled in *Advanced Data Analysis and Machine Learning*. The course content was dense and full of statistical logic, algorithms, and unfamiliar terms. But instead of just layering theory onto more theory, the instructor took a different route.

Each student received not just the same materials but a unique path forward. That difference came from the course's built-in learning tools, which tracked individual progress and offered suggestions. Yidan didn't need to keep up with others. The challenge was to keep moving in a direction that made sense.

When the Support Feels Personal

One thing that stood out to Yidan was how the course didn't wait until a student got stuck. Systems were already in place to notice gaps and suggest exercises to close them. Feedback was quick. If something didn't make sense, there was an answer. Not later. Now.

That sense of immediacy made learning less frustrating. There was still hard work involved, but fewer hours were wasted on the wrong parts of the puzzle. And because the support felt relevant, Yidan started building confidence, not just knowledge.

Relearning How to Learn

Yidan started to think differently about learning in general and the subject in particular. Yidan now asks more targeted questions, seeks out several explanations before coming to a conclusion, and breaks things down more systematically rather than depending solely on recollection or instinct.

It took time for such a change to occur. However, with repeated use, it became a habit. Guesswork gave way to more thoughtful reasoning. Finding patterns in the data became simpler. Furthermore, the advantage extended beyond a single course.

"I didn't just get better at solving problems. I got better at understanding why they existed in the first place."

Staying Cautious

There were bumps along the way. It wasn't easy to navigate all the systems early on or trust their suggestions. At times, the recommended material felt too easy or too hard. Yidan started experimenting – tweaking settings, giving feedback, and adjusting pace. Slowly, the system began to respond better.

And not everything could be taken at face value. When something didn't align with what had been taught, Yidan learned to pause, verify, and look again. Sometimes, with a book. Sometimes, with a classmate. That process of checking, not just accepting, became a skill in itself.

The Right Kind of Assistance

For Yidan, the promise of using technology in learning isn't about automation or ease. It's about precision, being able to identify what's needed, and having the right tool at the right time.

This kind of help doesn't erase effort. It channels it. And for Yidan, that has made all the difference.

> *It's not a replacement for teaching. It's a reminder that learning is never one-size-fits-all.*

NATALIE
FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCE

LEARNING IN LAYERS: NATALIE'S DISCOVERY JOURNEY IN HER STUDY

DIGITAL TOOLS CHANGE THE *HOW* AND RESHAPE THE *WHY* OF LEARNING

Before class, there's a short online module. Nothing fancy; maybe a few videos, a quiz, a reading. But then something shifts.

During the live sessions, Natalie's teacher pulls up a game, maybe Kahoot, or something more immersive, like an AR trail. It's not for show. The class gets quiet, then noisy, then quiet again. Laughter mixes with questions. Students compete, and they collaborate. And when it's over, they're asked to write.

But not just about what they learned. They're asked to reflect on what they *don't* understand.

Later that evening, each student gets personalised feedback. Not from the teacher directly but informed by a system the teacher has trained and supervised. Natalie sees it as one of the many ways education is starting to blend presence with processing power.

> *I study differently now, not just because I want to do better, it is because I want to understand how this new technology works around me.*

Beyond Google, Beyond the Surface Level

Outside the classroom, Natalie casts a wider net.

There are tools for summarising, scanning PDFs, answering hard-to-phrase questions, and even cleaning up writing for professional emails. On some days, these tools are just convenient. On others, they're essential. Natalie uses various platforms to simplify the process, whether clarifying a tricky research concept, revising a draft paragraph, or finding the right tone in a message to a supervisor.

But her usage isn't passive. Natalie follows up with books or journal articles if a tool offers a fact without a source. If one tool says one thing and another says something different, that's a signal to investigate.

Studying the Tools While Studying with Them

Natalie didn't expect learning how to use the technology would *become* part of the learning itself.

New tools prompt new questions. She's now attending workshops not just to improve her research skills but also to understand where the tools come from, how they work, and where their boundaries are.

There's something empowering about using the software and becoming fluent in its design. Natalie doesn't see it as an extra burden but as part of staying relevant in a fast-changing world.

> *"The tools are helpful, and it's my job to decide what's worth believing."*

Where Confidence Begins to Show

One of the most astonishing outcomes is Natalie's confidence in her verbal communication. Even a straightforward task, such as sending a WhatsApp message to a professor, feels more considerate. There is no excessive scrutiny of grammar or hesitation regarding word choice. This approach facilitates the expression of ideas and instils a sense of assurance and tranquillity in Natalie.

Room for Doubt, Space for Growth

Natalie is the first to admit that the tools aren't flawless.

Sometimes, they're vague, disagree with themselves, or even make errors in translation that a beginner would catch. But rather than stepping away in frustration, Natalie leans in. She compares. She filters. She checks. And through that process, she learns more than just the content.

"AI doesn't give me all the answers. But it does help me ask better questions."

That, in the end, is what matters most.

11

WANG SHUTING
FACULTY OF SCIENCE

WHEN LEARNING GETS A DIGITAL ASSISTANT: A NEW LEARNING APPROACH FOR SHUTING

TECH-INFUSED INSTRUCTION PROVIDES ROOM FOR DEEPER UNDERSTANDING

It started in one of Shuting's advanced programming classes, the kind where a single error in the code can cost an hour. The teacher didn't just go through syntax and algorithms. Instead, the class was shaped into a space for trying out new tools that could support students, especially when things got tough.

"The tools didn't just fix my code, they changed how I think about learning itself."

One of those tools was a coding assistant. As students worked on assignments, it scanned the code, pointed out errors, and suggested ways to fix them. There was also a chatbot designed specifically for the course. When Shuting had a question late at night, answers came right away instead of waiting until class. The answers are clear, concise, and just enough to get unstuck and keep going.

That made a difference. Not just because it was faster or easier, but because it helped the learning feel more focused. The tools adjusted to where each student was. If someone needed extra time to grasp a concept, they weren't rushed. If they were ready to go further, the platform pushed them a little more. For Shuting, that meant moving forward with fewer hesitations, and building confidence bit by bit with each solved problem.

Tools Outside the Classroom

The same assistant that fixed syntax errors during class came in handy beyond it. For project work, GitHub Copilot offered not just corrections but ideas; new ways to structure a solution or refactor code.

The chatbot wasn't just a FAQ bot when the assignment instructions felt vague, or the deadline was looming. It could break down requirements, clarify expectations, or explain unfamiliar terms. It worked more like a study partner than a machine, and Shuting used it to make sure time was spent thinking through the problem, not hunting for instructions.

GitHub Copilot

Learning Faster and Smarter

With each new assignment, the tools helped streamline the technical side, but something else happened: how Shuting approached problems began to shift.

Instead of getting stuck on trial-and-error loops, there was room to analyse, plan, and reflect. The debugging process became more structured. In group work, collaboration got smoother. The extra time and focus freed up by the tools provided space for more effective discussion, better decision-making and stronger problem-solving.

Perfecting the Imperfect

Shuting admits the tech isn't perfect. Sometimes, the suggestions miss the mark, or explanations need a second opinion. That's when it's time to slow down, dig into a textbook, or compare notes with peers.

There's always a risk of becoming too reliant. It's easy to skip the thinking part when the answers come quickly. However, Shuting is mindful of this and balances support from the tools with an effort to stay engaged, make thoughtful choices and informed decisions.

A Helping Hand

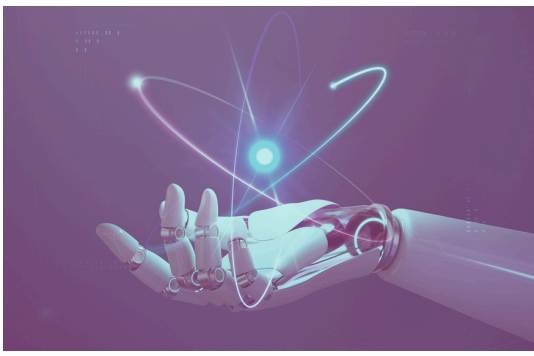
Shuting sees all this technology as having great potential when used wisely. The key isn't letting the tools do the thinking, but using them to go further than what's possible alone.

"It's like having someone to talk to who never sleeps — but I still need to be the one driving the learning."

For Shuting, learning in the digital age means staying curious, staying critical, and remembering that technology is most powerful when it helps people grow and become better, and not just go faster and get substituted.

RYAN
FACULTY OF SCIENCE

RYAN'S EUREKA MOMENT: WHEN A LEARNING PLATFORM KNOWS YOUR GAPS BEFORE YOU DO



LEARNING SYSTEM IDENTIFIES PATTERNS FOR BETTER LEARNING

It was a class on big data, and at first, it seemed heavy on theory, with long readings, dense slides, and lots of numbers. But then something changed. The teacher had set up a system. A system that paid attention to how students were doing, not just what they submitted.

For Ryan, that meant the course started responding to him. When he fell behind in one topic, extra readings quietly appeared. When the class was buzzing about something in the forum, new resources matched the conversation.

Even outside of class, the help kept coming. During a group project, Ryan got stuck trying to fix a chunk of code. Usually, that would mean hours lost due to trial and error. This time, a built-in assistant caught the mistake before it spiralled. It explained what went wrong, gave a nudge in the right direction, and saved the group a lot of time.

It was the kind of support you don't realise you need until it's there.

> *"It knew where I was struggling before I even figured it out myself."*

From Code to Concept Maps

When the course ended for the day, the learning didn't. Ryan stayed back or kept working later, trying to apply what was covered. Some days, that meant opening up Jupyter Notebooks and messing around with bits of code until something clicked. The process wasn't smooth. Sometimes, it took hours to get one thing to work. But slowly, it started to make more sense.

He used a few tools to help when things got stuck. Python libraries like Pandas or TensorFlow weren't longer names from a lecture. They were part of how he started to test what he thought he knew. And when he wasn't sure, he'd look things up. Not just Googling but asking questions in forums or searching examples that looked close to what he was building.

For writing and explaining ideas clearly, Ryan sometimes used tools like Grammarly to clean things up or get suggestions. If he hit a wall with code, he'd pull up Copilot or a similar plugin and get the solution with a second set of eyes, even if it was from a machine.

A Shift in How to Learn

What changed most for Ryan wasn't just having more tools but a new approach to learning. Feedback didn't wait until after submission; it came during the process. Questions were no longer roadblocks but prompts away from a possible answer. Such on-demand support made navigating challenging material easier without feeling stuck or left behind.

Working with data used to feel kind of abstract to Ryan. Just rows, columns, and numbers that didn't mean much on their own. But things started to take shape once he started using tools like Tableau. Instead of trying to make sense of spreadsheets, he could see what the data was doing—where things were trending, where patterns were forming. It wasn't just more visual; it helped him understand what was happening behind the scenes. And the more he worked with it, the more confident he felt. There was progress, and he could see it taking form.

Learning to Think Differently

The changes weren't just about technical skills as Ryan got deeper into the coursework. Sure, he got better at reading messy datasets and troubleshooting code that didn't run as it was supposed to. But what stood out was how his thinking started to shift.

When a tool suggested a fix or a solution, he didn't just go with it. Sometimes, it helped. Sometimes it didn't. And either way, it made him stop and think, "Why this? Does it actually solve the problem? Should I try something else?"

That habit, that process of questioning and adjusting, was just as important as the technical work. It's where most of the actual learning happened.

The Frustration That Comes First

Of course, it wasn't always smooth. Plenty of times, the tools gave answers that looked fine on the surface but turned out to be off. Or the explanation didn't quite match the problem. Ryan learned quickly that these tools weren't perfect—and that taking them at face value didn't always work out.

He started double-checking, reading tutorials, and comparing with trusted sources. This slowed things down, but it made the results feel more solid.

Learning to use something like TensorFlow didn't come easily either. The first few tries felt like wandering around in the dark and watching a video, trying a sample, getting stuck, then repeating the cycle. But eventually, it clicked. And once it did, things that used to take hours started taking minutes.

Value in Digging Deeper

Now that he's on the other side of that learning curve, Ryan sees the tools differently. They don't fix everything. They're not meant to. But they make challenging tasks more doable and give you space to focus on the most important parts.

He doesn't rely on them blindly, but they've helped him get more curious, not less. They've encouraged him to dig deeper, not just move faster.

And for Ryan, that's what makes them valuable.

13

HE CHUHAN
SCHOOL OF CREATIVE ARTS

BETWEEN DEADLINES AND TIMELINES: HOW CHUHAN ENHANCES HIS CREATIVE PROCESS

BRING AI INTO THE CREATIVE PROCESS, WITHOUT LETTING IT TAKE OVER

"It helps me finish faster. More importantly, it helps me think in new directions."

There wasn't a particular course where everything was built around AI. Not really. But Chuhan noticed a shift. In one media and film class, the teacher encouraged students to experiment with digital tools in their own ways, especially when working on projects or research. Instead of setting rules, the teacher shared examples, walked through a few workflows, and stepped back.

That openness was what made the difference.

Chuhan remembers seeing classmates try language processors to clean up their writing or use research tools that helped organise large sets of articles. It wasn't mandatory. But it was encouraged. What mattered was that students started thinking differently – not just about the tools but about how they could shape their own learning process.

When Research and Editing Got Less Frantic

For Chuhan, the benefits became clear during a film analysis project. Sorting through reviews, essays, and critical writing used to take hours. But with the right tools, that search got sharper. It didn't just save time; it made the reading more focused.

Practical work changed too. Editing software that once felt tedious or clunky now offered suggestions in real-time. Chuhan found it easier to test out new styles or effects. Some didn't work. Some were surprising. But the point wasn't to follow suggestions blindly. It was to try things faster so more time could go into refining the creative side.

Thinking Harder, Not Just Quicker

What started as a convenience turned into something more. The tools made it easier to test an idea, sure. But they also demanded better thinking. When information came quickly, it was easy to feel like everything was useful. Chuhan had to slow down, filter out the noise, and ask what really mattered.

The same thing happened with automated feedback on writing. Suggestions were often helpful but not always right. Accepting everything would have made the work feel bland or generic. Chuhan learned to push back, to rewrite, to listen selectively. It wasn't about rejecting the help. It was about keeping a clear voice through it.

Learning to Stay in Control

That balance wasn't always easy. At times, the tools felt too generic, especially when used for creative decisions. Some early experiments came out flat or too predictable. It was tempting to blame the software. But Chuhan realised that the real challenge was knowing when to let go of a suggestion and when to pursue it further.

There were other issues too. Some tools were hard to learn, and others raised concerns about data and privacy. When working with anything sensitive, Chuhan made a point of sticking with secure platforms and staying mindful about what was being shared.

And sometimes, the biggest challenge was to stay in charge.

"It's easy to let the tool do too much. That's when I know I need to step back and ask what I actually want to say."

Open Up Opportunities

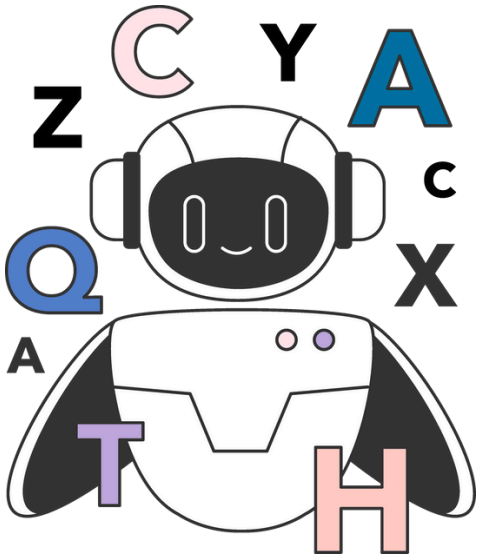
Despite the learning curve, the missteps, and the occasional frustration, Chuhan sees all of it as part of a bigger shift. These tools aren't going anywhere. They're getting better, faster, more integrated. But none of that matters if students don't learn how to think with them, not just through them.

For Chuhan, that means using the tools to open up possibilities, not to close them. This means more time to try new things, more room to think deeply, and, maybe most importantly, more space to be original.

14

ZHOU YUHAN
FACULTY OF SCIENCE

CODING WITH CURIOSITY: HOW TECH RESHAPES YUHAN'S LEARNING APPROACH



DIGITAL TOOLS SHAPE THE PACE, TONE, AND DEPTH OF LEARNING

> *Sometimes the feedback came faster than my own thoughts. That's what helped me keep moving.*

The data science class was online, but it didn't feel distant. Yuhan noticed that right away. The teacher didn't just drop slides and let everyone figure things out alone. Instead, tools were built into the course, making it easier to stay on track. If something wasn't clear, like how a piece of code worked or why an output looked wrong, help came right there while trying to solve the problem. It felt more like having someone alongside you, not just a system reacting in the background.

One of the key things the instructor introduced early on was a chat-based tool. Students could ask questions about a coding bug, a confusing concept, or a theory they couldn't quite wrap their heads around and get an answer back immediately. These are not generic answers either, but targeted help based on what the student has just been working on. That kind of speed made it easier to stay focused rather than lose momentum.

Yuhan didn't just start solving problems faster. There was a shift in how the problems were approached in the first place. Instead of jumping on the first solution that popped up, it became a habit to pause, try a few things, compare results, and ask whether the answer actually made sense. Some came from working with tools that offered suggestions, but not always the right ones. It taught Yuhan to stop trusting the first answer and think about why something worked or didn't. That mindset ended up being more valuable than any shortcut.

Tools That Fit Into the Process

Yuhan used other platforms outside of class to stay on top of work. Jupyter Notebooks became a daily space to experiment with code, tweak models, and see what worked. When the logic failed or an error message popped up, a quick search through a language assistant often provided enough push to figure things out.

For broader work, Yuhan used tools to help understand long papers or research results. Some summarised, some offered suggestions for the next steps, and a few even helped clean up writing or organise arguments more clearly. They weren't perfect, but they often helped bring a little order to the chaos of an open-ended project.

Thinking, Then Rethinking

What changed wasn't just the tools, but how Yuhan approached problems. Instead of jumping to solutions, the process began with comparison: looking at multiple options, testing small changes, and evaluating what made sense in context.

That habit didn't just come from the system but from the need to check it. Some answers looked polished but were wrong, especially with more complex questions. Yuhan learned not to trust anything too quickly. Real learning came from questioning and rewriting, not from copying and pasting.

The Things That Didn't Work

Of course, there were frustrating parts. Some tools made assumptions about the user's level and gave either oversimplified help or something too advanced. Other times, the information was vague or missing context. Yuhan found that the best way to deal with it wasn't to stop using the tools but to develop a habit of cross-checking. Forums, official docs, and peer feedback are all part of the process.

Learning how to use some of the more advanced systems also took time. Understanding what was happening beneath the surface, for example, why a model gave the results it did or how to improve it, required patience, extra tutorials, and often a lot of trial and error.

Why It Still Feels Like Progress

For Yuhan, digital tools haven't replaced traditional learning. They've filled in the gaps. They keep things moving, sharpen thinking, and make testing and adjusting ideas easier before they get too fixed. Yet, there are real concerns, especially around privacy, bias, and the temptation to rely too much on convenience.

But Yuhan's approach is grounded. Keep using the tools, but stay alert. Think with them, not through them. Ask more, assume less. And always be willing to pause, rethink, and ask again.

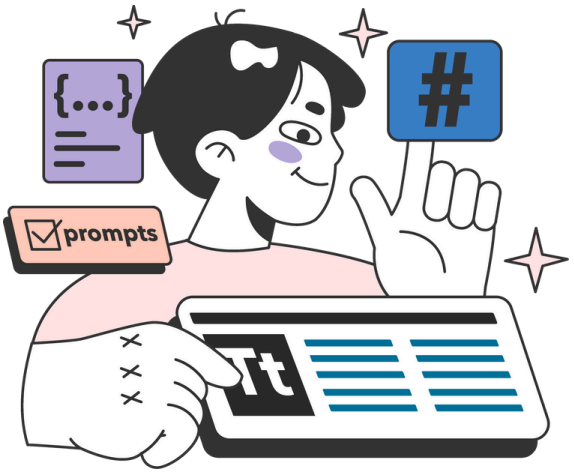
That's where the learning sticks.

> *These tools offered a quicker route at times, though I still had to do it on my own.*

TSUI CHIN-FUNG
FACULTY OF SCIENCE

NO SHORTCUTS IN NUMBERS: THE ROLE THAT TECH PLAYS IN CHIN-FUNG'S LEARNING

AI PLAYS A USEFUL ROLE IN A SUBJECT WHERE PRECISION LEAVES LITTLE ROOM FOR GUESSING



"While it doesn't replace effort, it often breaks things down in ways that were never explained in my textbook, as it was."

Most of Chin-fung's courses are centred on calculation, concepts, and code – subjects where the process matters just as much as a result. Solving a problem or writing code for statistical analysis is not about reaching the answer the fastest way. It's about understanding the steps, the logic, and the reason behind each decision.

In that kind of environment, AI hasn't much space to take over. Chin-fung doesn't remember any math course using it directly. The work simply requires too much precision and too much hands-on practice. "We need to know how to do it ourselves," Chin-fung explained. "AI doesn't really help if it just gives you the answer. You still won't know how to solve the next one."

A Tool, But Not a Tutor

Still, that doesn't mean AI had no place at all.

Outside of class, Chin-fung sometimes turns to HKBU's writing assistant. It's mostly for checking grammar, tidying up email drafts, or making sure an essay sounds clear and smooth. That extra bit of help can be a relief in a second language.

And when a math term in a homework question feels too vague or unfamiliar, the tool comes in handy. Chin-fung types in a question and asks for an explanation, something shorter, simpler, and easier to understand than what's in the textbook. Sometimes the answer still feels too technical. But breaking it down part by part makes it easier to work through.

New Habits in the Process

Even with only occasional use, the tools changed something. Chin-fung started getting better at how to ask questions. The habit of writing things more clearly, choosing the right words, and cutting unnecessary ones carried over into schoolwork and conversations with classmates.

Breaking complex problems into smaller steps became more natural, for example, one concept at a time, one sentence at a time. That pattern started to show up not just in writing but also in solving problems on paper.

> *"It's like having someone to ask, even if I know I'll have to reword the question a few times."*

Is the Answer Helpful?

There were frustrating moments too. When the system gave long, technical replies full of words that assumed a deeper understanding, Chin-fung felt more confused than before. The fix? Don't expect too much at once. Read it slowly. Break it apart. Piece together the parts that make sense, and ignore the rest for now.

It wasn't perfect. But the point wasn't perfection.

"I don't need it to be perfect. I just need it to help me move one step forward."

Small Impact, Still Valuable

Chin-fung wouldn't call it life-changing. The math still needs to be worked out by hand, and the code doesn't write itself. But every now and then, when something feels stuck, like an unfamiliar term or a sentence that doesn't sound right, it's nice to have something to turn to.

It hasn't taken away the challenge. And it's not supposed to. But in small ways, it's helped Chin-fung stay on track. A quick explanation. A grammar check. A nudge in the right direction.

Not everything has to be big to be useful.

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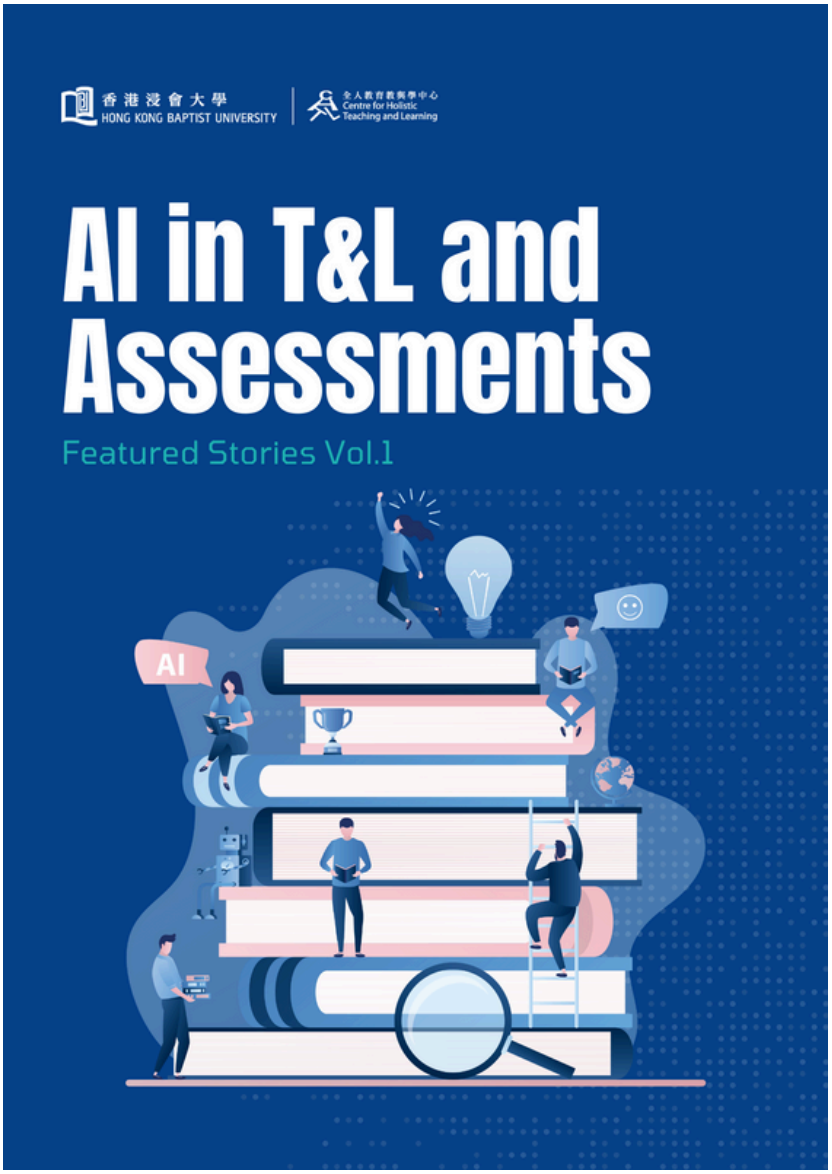
Check out AI in T&L and assessments:
Featured stories Vol.1



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