

Academic Integrity: AI glasses and Wearables



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AI-enabled smart glasses integrate cameras, microphones, speakers, and on-board AI assistants into frames visually indistinguishable from standard prescription eyewear. They effectively allow the user hands-free access to both the internet and AI-assisted technologies. These devices are currently available commercially and range in cost from €100 to over €1,000.

AI wearables are other physical devices that the user wears on their body and that use AI to capture, process, or respond to information in real time. These include pins, pendants, smart rings, jewellery, earbuds, and wristbands. There are a variety of other AI-enabled devices also available including pens and calculators.

Why should educational organisations be concerned?

AI-enabled devices, such as glasses and wearables, can be used by candidates in exam settings to gain unfair advantage, especially in time-bound invigilated exams. The following list includes examples of how these devices could be employed by candidates during an exam, to breach academic integrity.

1. The user could use whispered prompts to quietly interact with the glasses to ask for specific help and guidance. Responses by the glasses are given through bone conduction, which is virtually inaudible to anyone but the user.
2. The user could play a series of pre-loaded podcasts or audio summaries, which can be controlled by tapping the arm of the glasses.
3. The user could take a video or series of photographs of the exam paper making it available to others outside the exam hall who could then provide unauthorised assistance to the user with completing the exam. For example, the user could be in a phone conversation with another person during the exam who could in turn relay key information back to them relating to the exam.
4. The user could live stream the exam contents privately or publicly over social media. This may facilitate academic misconduct similar to activities detailed in example (3) above.
5. With advanced models, the candidate could scan the contents of an exam paper and the device could provide exam solutions without the need to interact with another person.

All these instances require the candidate's mobile phone to be within Bluetooth range of them (10 – 30m). They also rely on the device having phone-based Wi-Fi or network connectivity.

Should all glasses and wearables be banned in all instances?

The banning of AI glasses and wearables in public places is currently a matter of considerable debate. It is acknowledged that AI glasses and wearables can be employed as assistive technologies for learners with specific learning requirements. They can act as effective visual aids, personalised learning devices, translators, situational learning aids, and hands-free communication devices.

Possible actions for organisations

1. Ensure that exam guidelines for learners have statements that address the possession and/or use of AI smart glasses and other wearables.
2. Provide training for invigilators about the importance of checking for AI smart glasses and other wearables such as earpieces, pens and pendants.
3. Install posters and official notification around exam halls indicating organisation's rules on AI wearables and AI smart glasses.
4. Educate learners about the importance of academic integrity in general and the need to be responsible for their own work and to avoid any activity which may constitute academic misconduct.
5. Consider if relevant policy documents or guidelines need to be updated to specifically address AI glasses and wearables. This might include policies relating to Academic Integrity, Examinations & Assessments, Codes of Conduct, Bullying and Harassment, Lecture Recording, Information Technology, Disability Supports, etc.

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