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AI policy at Örebro University

Policy document Örebro University

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Overarching objectives for AI in the university's activities

Artificial intelligence (AI) is a transformative technology with great potential to influence and advance research, education and administrative processes at Örebro University.

Örebro University's overarching objective is to use AI in a way that strengthens the quality, relevance and sustainability of its operations in the long term. Digital systems incorporating AI are intended to contribute to the development of education and research, as well as to efficient and appropriate support processes. At the same time, the use of AI must be grounded in values such as integrity, transparency, accountability, quality and academic freedom; this requires proactivity and flexibility to manage both internally and externally driven change. This, in turn, requires a high level of expertise, among both individual staff members and the university as a whole, which must be developed progressively.

The university must also contribute to the development of knowledge, methods and technical solutions in AI through research, education and collaboration, including skills development relating to AI in society. In this way, the university contributes to the responsible, knowledge-based use of AI throughout society.

The university has a particular responsibility to prepare students for the world of work and for participation in society in which AI forms an integral part. This entails actively ensuring the relevance of its courses and programmes, while all courses and programmes must progressively develop students' ability to understand, assess and use AI in a responsible and critical manner.

Technical choices and investments must be made with due regard for long-term flexibility. In light of rapid technological development, the university must be prepared to reassess solutions and ways of working as conditions change. The university must also take into account the negative consequences that the use of digital systems incorporating AI may have across various domains, ranging from the conditions for conducting education, research and activities in different sectors of society to the use of energy and limited natural resources.

Staff and students are encouraged to contribute to this development through the thoughtful and responsible use of digital systems incorporating AI. The university shall actively monitor national and international developments and participate in relevant knowledge-sharing forums.

Purpose and context of the policy

This policy serves as a normative framework for the use of AI at Örebro University, covering how such use is expressed across different areas of the university's activities and how it can be balanced against different values. The policy is technology-neutral and applies regardless of specific systems or suppliers. It sets out how AI can be used in a way that both promotes innovation and safeguards the confidence that individuals and society place in the university.

This means that the policy, together with forthcoming guidelines for the use of digital systems incorporating AI and associated support materials, must be interpreted in light of relevant legislation, including the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), legislation on public access to information and confidentiality, copyright law, principles of administrative law, and the Higher Education Ordinance. The policy must also be considered in the context of national and European AI initiatives, including Sweden's national AI strategy and the EU AI Act. It also takes account of current knowledge and research relating to AI and digitalisation.

The policy is complemented by the university's overarching vision and strategic objectives, as well as other governing documents through which AI from now on will be integrated into the university's long-term organisational development. It is also complemented by an action plan for AI transformation that coordinates development initiatives across education, research and administrative services.

Definitions and fundamental principles

AI refers to digital systems that emulate intelligent behaviour by analysing data, drawing conclusions and generating the basis for decisions or recommendations, with varying degrees of autonomy. AI encompasses everything from machine learning and neural networks to language models, image recognition, automated decision-support systems and autonomous agents. Like other digital systems, these are services rather than independent actors.

The policy is based on four dimensions of AI in relation to the university's activities: prerequisites, use, knowledge and change.

Prerequisites for AI refers to the infrastructure and collective expertise available at the university to support the appropriate use of AI.

Use of AI refers to staff and students' use of digital systems that incorporate AI within the context of the university's activities, including research, education and administrative services.

Knowledge of AI refers to the fundamental understanding and capacity for critical use that the university's staff and students should possess regarding AI and in their use of digital systems incorporating AI when acting within the university. Knowledge of AI also includes competencies that should form part of students' learning outcomes within their programmes, as well as knowledge developed through the university's research and collaboration.

Change as a consequence of AI refers to organisational development, efficiency gains and changes in practice, and the organisation that digital systems incorporating AI make possible. This includes both internally initiated changes and those that arise in response to developments in the wider world and its interaction with the university.

The university's use of AI must be guided by the following fundamental principles, which will be further detailed in guidelines for the use of digital systems incorporating AI at Örebro University.

- AI should be used to enhance quality and efficiency.

- AI should be used with respect for academic integrity.
- AI should be used with due regard for information security and data protection.
- AI should be used with human responsibility and judgment. AI does not replace professional responsibility.

The use of AI in Örebro University's activities

AI in education

Digital systems incorporating AI affect the university's education offering in several important ways. The availability of digital systems incorporating AI:

- Leads to changes in working practices across the labour market, meaning that different knowledge and skills must, to some extent, be developed through education.
- Changes society's needs and the conditions under which professions operate. This means that courses and programmes may need to be dimensioned differently, new courses and programmes may need to be developed, and some courses and programmes may need to be phased out.
- Creates new conditions for pedagogical practices, affecting both teachers' teaching and preparation and students' studies and learning. Course and programmes need to be structured and delivered differently.
- Has implications for the conditions under which examinations can be conducted in order to ensure equivalence and confidence in the knowledge and abilities being demonstrated.

By creating new opportunities both within education and in working life, AI is reshaping and challenging what it means to be at the forefront of pedagogy. The risk that previously accepted assumptions may no longer hold true affects the quality of education and students' knowledge development. Digital systems incorporating AI can be used both to improve efficiency in the delivery of education and to enhance educational quality.

Within the scope of their responsibilities, teachers are responsible for how digital systems incorporating AI are used and regulated in courses and examinations. This responsibility is exercised in accordance with university-wide guidelines and those applicable within individual study programmes. Students are responsible for their own use of digital systems incorporating AI and for complying with applicable guidelines issued by teachers and the university. Intended learning outcomes relating to AI are specified in course syllabuses and programme syllabuses.

AI in research

The availability of digital systems incorporating AI is changing research practices and opening up new avenues for generating knowledge. Digital systems incorporating AI can be used in ways that strengthen the quality, efficiency and reproducibility of research, but they may also pose risks to these same values. Such systems have the potential to be used

for literature analysis, data collection, data processing, modelling, analysis and writing. The use of such tools places high demands on documentation, transparency, data integrity, copyright and ethics.

Ultimate responsibility for research and its results rests with the individual researcher. The use of digital systems incorporating AI takes place within the framework of this responsibility and is also shared with the academic community and the university's line organisation. When AI is applied within doctoral education, both the dimensions of AI in research and AI in education are relevant considerations for supervisors and doctoral students alike.

AI in professional services

Digital systems incorporating AI can contribute to greater efficiency and improved services within the university's administrative services, both centrally and locally. As in research and education, AI in administrative services entails fundamental changes to how work is carried out. Such a change needs to take place within the framework of applicable legislation and the university's core values, with the aim of strengthening the conditions for the university's core activities. At the same time, there are clear security risks, including in the handling of individual cases involving the exercise of public authority. The exercise of public authority occurs not only within administrative services but also, for example, in assessment and the validation of prior learning.

The development of new solutions should take place in collaboration and dialogue with the university's core activities and students. It is important to take into account applicable regulations, legislation, and principles of good public administration, and to ensure that the required level of transparency can be maintained. Developing processes supported by digital systems incorporating AI requires a different approach from using off-the-shelf AI services and places demands on data management, security and access to resources for development and management. In some cases, such development may take place in collaboration with research and external partners.

Considerations

This policy is relevant to all activities within the university, including collaboration with the wider community. The use of digital systems incorporating AI is based on a spirit of curious experimentation within the framework of applicable regulations and established lines of responsibility. Such use should be approached with both a constructive and a critical perspective, in which potential benefits are weighed against values that may be adversely affected. Particular caution must be exercised when using digital systems incorporating AI in connection with the exercise of public authority and in situations relating to the university's core missions of education and research.

Before and during the use of digital systems incorporating AI, and especially when implementing new solutions that make use of such systems, a range of factors should be considered together as part of an articulated overall perspective. Important considerations include, but are not limited to, ethics, lines of responsibility, security, applicable regulations and legislation, the relationship between purpose and effect, financial costs and climate-related impacts, equitable conditions for different staff and students,

available expertise, immediate as well as long-term effects or consequences, and current developments in the surrounding world.

Changes are likely to lead to shifting dynamics across different elements of the university's activities, and their consequences therefore need to be reviewed regularly and appropriate adjustments made. Monitoring developments in the surrounding world in the broadest sense – not only in relation to other higher education institutions, but also with regard to technological developments, legislation and wider societal change – is an important tool.

Division of responsibilities

Responsibility for the aspects of AI use addressed in this policy shall be understood within the framework of established lines of responsibility set out in the university's governing documents, including its rules of procedure. Heads of school, or equivalent, are responsible for ensuring that the guidelines are applied within their respective organisation. Managers are responsible for conducting risk assessments when introducing new AI applications, unless an equivalent assessment has already been carried out at a higher level or centrally within the university. Managers within the line organisation have a particular responsibility to identify ambiguities in lines of responsibility so that these can be clarified.

A more detailed allocation of responsibilities – including responsibilities at the individual level and the support available – will be set out in the university's forthcoming guidelines for the use of digital systems incorporating AI.

Implementation

To support the broad implementation of digital systems incorporating AI across the university, efforts are underway to coordinate activities and leverage shared expertise and initiatives. This is achieved through interaction between shared action plans and the development of shared infrastructure, while local initiatives are encouraged to address specific needs and benefits. The sharing of good practice and dialogue, both vertically and horizontally across the university, is important. The university should also actively participate in national and international collaborations relating to the development and use of AI.