



Agentic Retrieval-Augmented Generation AI Assistant for Enhancing the Student Experience

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Abstract

Finding accurate information about courses, fees, accommodation, and support services is often confusing and time-consuming for students. This is more so for the international students who are unfamiliar with the UK higher education system and cannot easily ask a friend or family member for guidance (Ecochard & Fotheringham, 2017). Important details are scattered across many different webpages, and students often must search repeatedly or contact staff directly for answers that should be simple to find. This project explored whether a conversational AI assistant could make it easier by allowing students to simply ask a question in their own words and receive a clear, accurate answer. This is drawn from official university information, with a web search used as a backup when something falls outside the existing material. This is building on growing evidence that conversational AI tools can offer students immediate and personalised support (Labadze et al., 2023).

The assistant was tested against a set of real student questions and was found to give accurate and relevant answers in the great majority of cases. For students, this kind of tool offers a faster, more approachable way to get the information they need, particularly at moments of stress such as applying, enrolling, or settling into a new country. For the university, it offers a way to reduce repetitive enquiries to staff while ensuring every student receives consistent and accurate information, regardless of when they ask or how confident they feel about navigating the system. As an international student who experienced these challenges directly, the co-author reflects on how student-led innovation of this kind reflects a genuine partnership between students and the institution (Healey et al., 2014). It also considers what role AI assistants might play in supporting, rather than replacing, the human guidance students already rely on.

Keywords

artificial intelligence, student experience, international students, students as partners, digital innovation

References

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