

Oxford UCU Branch Motion

Passed at Branch Extraordinary General Meeting on 28th July 2026

Motion entitled “Costs and Risks of LLM Subscriptions (July 2026)”

This Branch Notes that: - - - -

The University has made significant investments in Generative AI tools, rolled out to all members of the institution, including Open AI’s ChatGPT, Google Gemini, and Notebook LM.

The costs of these tools have not been made clear to the Union, and while estimates suggest up to £1 million per year for each, there has been no clarity on this matter.

The potential workload implications and additional costs incurred to mitigate concerns of admissions cheating, plagiarism, and changes to procedures in admissions, teaching, learning, and assessment are also unclear.

Whilst the University’s web pages note that user interactions with university subscriptions to these tools will not be used to train models, it is not entirely clear how the data from these models will be processed, whether there will be data aggregation in any form, and whether the tech companies that own these models will in any way benefit from user data.

Given Open AI’s ongoing defence contract with the US Department of War, and fluctuating US government policy on data privacy regarding AI tools, it is also unclear to what extent data from educational subscriptions will be kept secure from these risks, and to what extent risk assessments have been conducted regarding reputational damage to the University for its association with a product that is currently used by the US Department of War.

This Branch Believes that: - - -

The University should disclose the total costs of new Generative AI subscriptions to the Union, particularly given widespread concerns within the University on (1) significant cuts to Professional services (2) changes in financial outlays for strategic investment.

The democratic processes of the university were not used to their full extent in the decisions made to adopt Large Language Models across the board. This includes discussions with teaching staff within the Union and the Conference of Colleges, as well as within departments and divisions. There is already evidence that this has

resulted in increased workloads for teaching staff, proctors, and examiners due to this lack of consultation and sufficient time to adopt modified teaching and examining practices. It is unclear how the financial outlay is justified given the sudden increase in workload, and concerns that due process may have been undermined. It is also unclear what additional financial outlay will be required as concerns mount about admissions and examining processes.

The University should make clear the specific terms of how any data processed within university LLM subscriptions will be handled. This should include details of (1) who will have access to any data entered into university subscriptions of LLMs, and whether this data will be aggregated by the service provider companies, even if not used to train models (2) what risk assessments have been made to ensure that there will be data sovereignty regarding risks of data sharing with US defence and immigration enforcement services; as well as the withdrawal of LLM services with the fluctuating character of US law on these matters (3) what risk assessments have been made regarding the potential for surveillance overreach within the university. -

The University should make clear how its partnership with Open AI for the ChatGPT subscription is in keeping with the report of the EIRRS on university investment in armaments, which states (p.10): “the desirability to strive for consistency of investment decisions with other areas of University business where its reputation might be harmed, notably in accepting new research funding or donations, and welcomed the crossmembership between EIRRS and the Committee to Review Donations and Research Funding (CRDRF)”. Given Open AI’s agreement for use by the US Department of War, which continues to raise concerns of having opened the door to mass AI-led surveillance in the US despite the organisation’s promises to adhere to privacy legislation, it is unclear if the University’s investment in this tool is appropriately risk-assessed. Given also an emerging mass movement to QuitGPT that is growing in popularity among young people, it is also unclear if the reputational risks of this subscription have been adequately assessed.

This Branch Resolves: - - - -

To make a representation to the University to disclose its current annual spending on all LLM subscriptions to the Union

To make a representation to the University to convene a cross-divisional working group to assess the impact of University-wide LLM provision on admissions,

teaching, learning, and examination. This working group should include representation from Colleges, where much of the undergraduate teaching is undertaken, and also assess the workload implications and costs of this rapid rollout to teaching and administrative staff within the collegiate University.

To make a representation to the University to disclose the specific terms of data handling and processing of materials input into LLMs to which the university has purchased subscriptions. This should include the concerns above, i.e., (1) whether data will be aggregated in any form even if not used to train models (2) data sovereignty in terms of both disclosures to a foreign state's security apparatus, and the relationship between our data sovereignty and fluctuating US law (3) what risk assessments have been undertaken to ensure that there will be no surveillance overreach within the university, in keeping with the assurances made in the 2024 discussion with Congregation on Statute XI

To make a representation to the University to assess if its Open AI subscription accords with the commitment made in the recent review of investments in armaments by the EIRRS to ensure that all University business should be brought in line with careful consideration on how the appearance of a close relationship with private sector companies who are involved in armaments and surveillance impacts the University's reputation.