

VERIFYRAG: A Dual-Layer Hallucination Detection Framework Combining Semantic Consistency Scoring and NLI-Based Evidence Grounding For Open-Domain LLMS

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Abstract

Large Language Models (LLMs) are being used more and more in knowledge-intensive tasks, yet they often provide outputs that are factually inaccurate with high confidence, a phenomenon known as hallucinated content. Current methods have little practical utility because they either address detection and mitigation separately or rely on costly proprietary APIs. VerifyRAG, a lightweight, open-source pipeline for detecting and mitigating hallucinations that incorporates a unique dual-layer verification architecture, is proposed in this study. Semantic consistency is used in Layer 1. Semantic alignment between LLM-generated replies and retrieved contextual data is scored using Sentence-BERT. Using DeBERTa-v3, Layer 2 employs Natural Language Inference (NLI)-based Evidence Grounding to categorise each assertion as Entailed, Neutral, or Contradicted in relation to retrieved documents. When the risk of hallucinations is high, a confidence scoring engine that fuses the two layers automatically corrects the response. The system is tested using the TriviaQA, HaluEval, and FEVER benchmarks and is based solely on open-source models. The findings of the experiment show a considerable decrease in the rate of hallucinations while preserving competitive response quality, providing a repeatable and economical approach for the implementation of LLM in the real world.

Keywords: Hallucination Detection, Large Language Models, Retrieval-Augmented Generation, Natural Language Inference, Semantic Consistency, DeBERTa, Sentence-BERT, FAISS.

1. Introduction

Natural language processing has been revolutionised by Large Language Models (LLMs) like GPT-4, LLaMA, and Mistral, which have shown impressive abilities in question answering, summarisation, code creation, and multi-step reasoning. Their use in high-stakes fields like healthcare, legal counsel, and education has increased significantly. However, a recurring and significant drawback compromises their reliability: the propensity to provide information that sounds reasonable but is objectively false, a condition often known as hallucination [1].

In LLMs, hallucinations can take many different manifestations. The creation of false entities, dates, or events is known as a factual hallucination. When a reaction conflicts with information that is clearly stated in the input context, this is known as contextual hallucination. Grammatically correct but illogical utterances are the result of semantic hallucinations. This issue is made worse by the fact that LLMs frequently produce hallucinogenic content with high confidence scores, which makes automated detection especially difficult [2].

A promising paradigm for grounding LLM outcomes in external, verifiable information sources is Retrieval-Augmented Generation (RAG) [3]. RAG methods lessen reliance on potentially outdated or erroneous parametric knowledge contained in model weights by retrieving pertinent documents at inference time and conditioning generation on this retrieved context. However, RAG does not completely eradicate hallucinations. It is nonetheless possible for models to produce statements that partially contradict retrieved evidence, selectively focus on unimportant portions, or neglect retrieved context [4]. Three significant drawbacks plague current methods for detecting hallucinations. First, because the majority of cutting-edge systems rely on proprietary LLM APIs, they are computationally costly and unavailable to researchers without institutional funding [5]. Second, most detection frameworks approach response correction and hallucination identification as different operations, creating disjointed pipelines that need to be deployed and maintained separately. Third, single-layer detection methods that solely depend on entailment classification or semantic similarity show decreased resilience across a variety of query types and domains [6].

This research presents VerifyRAG, a dual-layer hallucination detection and auto-correction system for open-domain LLMS, in order to overcome these constraints. The following are this work's primary contributions:

1. A unique dual-layer verification architecture that provides complementary signals for reliable hallucination identification by combining semantic consistency scoring (Layer 1) with NLI-based evidence grounding (Layer 2).
2. A confidence fusion engine that allows for conditional response correction and automatic risk categorisation (Low, Medium, High) by combining both layer scores into a single confidence measure.
3. A lightweight, totally open-source implementation that demonstrated competitive performance without depending on proprietary APIs and was assessed on three well-known benchmarks (TriviaQA, HaluEval, and FEVER).
4. A repeatable experimental workflow that lowers the barrier to entry for the research community and is compatible with open compute settings (Kaggle, Google Colab).

2. Literature Survey

Prior to the transformer era, research on hallucinations in neural language models began in the context of abstractive summarisation and neural machine translation [7]. The extent and intensity of hallucinations increased significantly with the development of large-scale autoregressive language models. An early taxonomy by Maynez et al. [8] distinguished between extrinsic hallucinations, which introduce unverifiable content, and internal hallucinations, which contradict source material; more recent surveys expand this taxonomy to include factual, relational, and logical hallucination categories [1]. Since a model's internal probability distribution might give high likelihood to wrong outputs, detecting high-confidence hallucinations has been flagged as a major difficulty in the literature. Kadavath and associates.[9] showed that LLMs are poorly calibrated in terms of factual accuracy, with high output probability serving as a weak signal of correctness. This finding directly drives the use of external verification techniques in VerifyRAG.

Lewis et al. [3] formally developed Retrieval-Augmented Generation, a paradigm that combines sequence-to-sequence generation with dense retrieval. The main idea is that relying less on memorised but perhaps inaccurate parametric knowledge is achieved by rooting generation in retrieved evidence from a non-parametric memory, like Wikipedia. Iterative RAG [10], adaptive retrieval [11], and domain-specific RAG for legal and medical applications [12] have all been investigated in further research.

RAG is successful in lowering the frequency of hallucinations, but it does not completely solve the issue. Shi et al. [13] demonstrated that LLMs might become sidetracked by irrelevant recalled passages, producing responses that diverge from the retrieved context. This result emphasises the necessity of a post-generation verification layer, which VerifyRAG's dual-layer architecture specifically fills.

Using sampling consistency, SelfCheckGPT [14] developed a training-free method for detecting hallucinations based on the idea that while hallucinated content is very variable, factual claims yield consistent responses over several stochastic samples. Although conceptually beautiful, it is computationally costly and inappropriate for real-time applications because each query necessitates many API calls.

Fact-checking systems like FEVER [15] and MultiFC [16], which structure verification as a textual entailment problem classifying claims as Supported, Refuted, or Not Enough Information, have separately used NLI-based verification. This method is adopted and expanded upon by VerifyRAG as its second verification layer in a more comprehensive multi-signal confidence framework. Internal model representations for detection have been investigated in more recent work: ReDeP [18] examines the conflict between parametric and contextual information at the layer level, while MHAD [17] uses attention patterns and hidden-state distributions to identify hallucinated tokens. These methods are challenging to implement in production and necessitate white-box access to model internals, despite their theoretical insights. In contrast, VerifyRAG functions as a post-generation black-box verifier that doesn't require access to model internals. Despite these advancements, the literature still has three holes. First, there is currently no open-source system that integrates NLI-based entailment with semantic consistency score into a single dual-layer confidence architecture. Second, the detection and correction phases are separated by current detection systems, necessitating distinct pipeline components. Third, reproducibility is limited because most systems are tested on individual datasets or need proprietary compute resources. VerifyRAG's integrated, lightweight, multi-benchmark design fills all three gaps

3. Methodology

VerifyRAG assesses and reduces hallucinations in retrieval-augmented LLM outputs using a methodical, modular approach. Preprocessing the knowledge base and query-response pairs is the first step in the process. Next, the dual-layer verification architecture is built, the evaluation strategy and comparative baselines are defined, and the formal

scoring functions that power the confidence-based decision engine are created. Every step was made to be both rigorous enough for benchmark-level examination and replicable on free-tier computing settings.

3.1 Preprocessing

Both the knowledge base and the incoming query-response pairs are transformed into a consistent representational form prior to verification. Sentence-BERT (all-MiniLM-L6-v2), a computationally efficient sentence-embedding model pretrained on natural language inference and semantic textual similarity tasks, is used to encode each document in the knowledge base once it has been divided into passage-level units [19]. To facilitate quick approximation nearest-neighbor retrieval, the generated embeddings are L2-normalized and kept in an FAISS (Facebook AI Similarity Search) index. In order to guarantee that queries, responses, and evidence documents all live in a common vector space, the user query and the LLM-generated response are tokenised and encoded using the same embedding model during inference time. Both Layer 1 and Layer 2 scoring require this uniform preprocessing pipeline, which eliminates representational incompatibilities between the retrieval and verification stages.

3.2 Architectural Framework

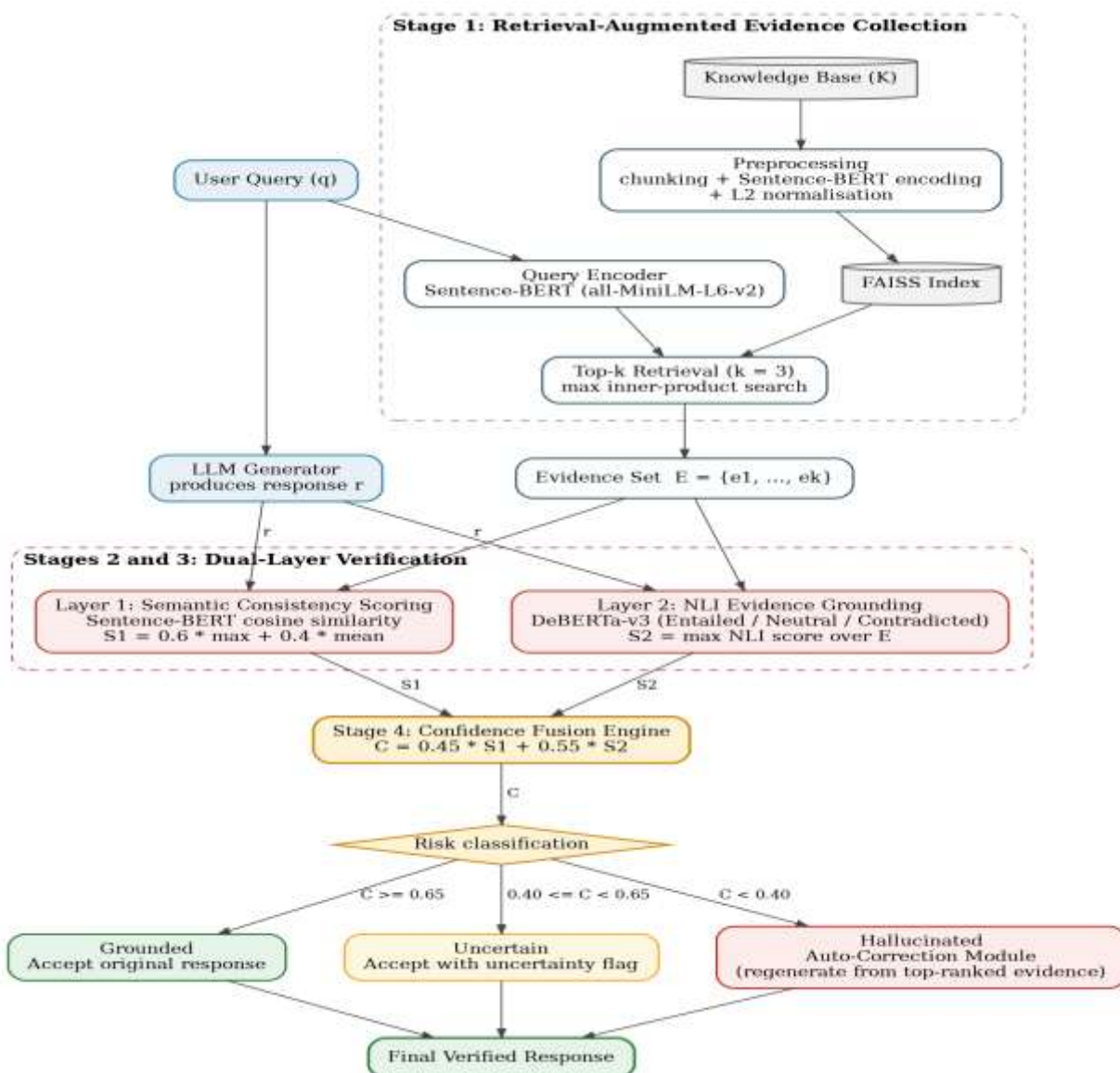


Fig. 1. VerifyRAG dual-layer verification architecture.

The four stages of the VerifyRAG pipeline are as follows: (1) Retrieval-Augmented Evidence Collection; (2) Layer 1 Semantic Consistency Scoring; (3) Layer 2 NLI-Based Evidence Grounding; and (4) Confidence Fusion and Auto-Correction. The entire architecture is shown in Fig. 1. With $k = 3$ as the default retrieval depth in all trials, the retrieval module uses maximum inner product search over normalised embeddings to provide the top- k evidence documents most semantically comparable to q given a query q and a knowledge base $K = \{d_1, d_2, \dots, d_n\}$. The final risk categorisation and, if required, an auto-corrected response are obtained by passing the retrieved data in parallel to Layers 1 and 2, whose outputs are fused by the confidence fusion engine.

3.3 Evaluation Strategy

In addition to a small synthetic set created specifically for controlled ablation analysis, experiments are carried out on three established benchmarks addressing complementary areas of factual verification, as outlined in Table 1. A large-scale reading comprehension dataset called TriviaQA [20] is made up of question-answer pairs taken from trivia websites. HaluEval [21] is a specifically designed benchmark for evaluating hallucinations that includes LLM-generated responses with sentence-level annotations for hallucinations. Wikipedia-based factual statements marked as Supported, Refuted, or Not Enough Information are provided by FEVER [15]. In order to facilitate controlled ablation analysis, this work introduces the VerifyRAG Synthetic dataset, which consists of 20 samples with 10 questions each paired with one grounded and one hallucinated response.

Table 1. Benchmark datasets used for evaluation.

Dataset	Task	Samples Used	Domain
TriviaQA	Open-domain QA	200 (validation)	General knowledge
HaluEval	Hallucination evaluation	200 (test)	Multi-domain
FEVER v1.0	Fact verification	200 (labelled dev)	Wikipedia facts
VerifyRAG Synthetic	Paired hallucination benchmark	20 (10 pairs)	Multi-domain

Table 2. Evaluation metrics.

Metric	Definition	Purpose
Accuracy	Correct predictions / Total samples	Overall detection performance
Precision	$TP / (TP + FP)$	False positive rate control
Recall	$TP / (TP + FN)$	Coverage of hallucinated samples
F1-Score	$2 \cdot (P \cdot R) / (P + R)$	Balanced detection measure
Hallucination Rate	Hallucinated / Total samples	Dataset statistics
Auto-Correction Rate	Corrected / Hallucinated	Mitigation effectiveness

As stated in Table 2, detection performance is assessed using Accuracy, Precision, Recall, and F1-Score in addition to dataset-level Hallucination Rate and Auto-Correction Rate.

Three baselines are used to benchmark VerifyRAG: Sentence-BERT cosine similarity-based semantic-only detection without NLI grounding (equal to Layer 1 alone); NLI-Keyword Overlap, which uses ROUGE-L between the response and retrieved evidence as a basic lexical baseline, and only detection using DeBERTa entailment classification without semantic score (equivalent to Layer 2 in isolation). The Sentence-BERT model (22M parameters) and the DeBERTa

NLI model cross-encoder/nli-deberta-v3-small (184M parameters) are loaded from HuggingFace Hub and retrieved using an FAISS CPU index in all tests using Python 3.10 with PyTorch 2.1. The entire pipeline requires about 2.8 GB of GPU memory at peak and operates on Google Colab (T4 GPU, free tier) and Kaggle Notebooks (P100 GPU, free tier).

3.4 Comparative Analysis

By analysing four configurations on identical data splits—the lexical baseline, each verification layer separately, and the entire dual-layer system—the comparison methodology separates the contribution of each verification signal. The semantic and logical verification signals can be evaluated separately and concurrently thanks to this approach. Responses that pass one check in isolation may still be flagged once both signals are combined because Layer 1 and Layer 2 capture different failure modes—semantic drift versus logical contradiction. This is anticipated to produce higher agreement with human-annotated hallucination labels than any single-layer baseline. Section 4.1 reports the quantitative result of this comparison.

3.5 Evaluation Formulas

The scoring functions that underpin each VerifyRAG pipeline stage are formalised in this subsection.

3.5.1 Retrieval Function

Using cosine similarity across Sentence-BERT encodings, the retrieval function R chooses the top- k documents from knowledge base K that are most semantically related to query q :

$$R(q, K, k) = \operatorname{argmax}_k \cos(\operatorname{Enc}(q), \operatorname{Enc}(d)), d \in K \quad (1)$$

The evidence set $E = \{e_1, \dots, e_k\}$ that both verification layers use is provided by this retrieval phase.

3.5.2 Layer 1 — Semantic Consistency Score

The semantic consistency score S_1 for a response r and evidence set E is calculated by combining the maximum and mean cosine similarities between r and E in a weighted manner.

$S_1(r, E) = 0.6 \cdot \max_e (\cos(\operatorname{Enc}(r), \operatorname{Enc}(e))) + 0.4 \cdot \operatorname{mean}_e (\cos(\operatorname{Enc}(r), \operatorname{Enc}(e))) \quad (2)$ The maximum similarity is given more weight so that responses that are strongly aligned with at least one piece of evidence receive a high score; the 0.6/0.4 weighting was adjusted empirically on a held-out validation set. A low S_1 suggests semantic divergence, which may be an indication of hallucination, whereas a high S_1 implies semantic proximity to the recovered data.

3.5.3 Layer 2 — NLI-Based Grounding Score

The DeBERTa-v3 NLI model allocates a probability distribution over {entailment, neutral, contradiction} to each evidence document e_i in E . For a single evidence-response pair, the NLI score is:

The final Layer 2 score S_2 is the highest NLI score among all recovered documents. $\operatorname{NLI_score}(r, e_i) = P(\text{entailment}) \cdot 1.0 + P(\text{neutral}) \cdot 0.5 + P(\text{contradiction}) \cdot 0.0 \quad (3a)$.

$$S_2(r, E) = \max_i \operatorname{NLI_score}(r, e_i) \quad (3b)$$

This produces a continuous signal rather than a strict categorical label by rewarding responses that are backed by at least one high-quality piece of evidence and penalising responses that are refuted by all retrieved documents.

3.5.4 Confidence Fusion Score

S_1 and S_2 are combined by the confidence fusion engine to create a single confidence score C : $C(r, E) = 0.45 \cdot S_1(r, E) + 0.55 \cdot S_2(r, E) \quad (4)$ The better accuracy of Layer 2's logical verification in comparison to semantic similarity is reflected in its higher weight, which can hold true even in cases where a response is semantically close to the evidence but logically incompatible with it. C is mapped to a three-level classification: Hallucinated ($C < 0.40$), Uncertain ($0.40 \leq C < 0.65$), and Grounded ($C \geq 0.65$). When a response is categorised as Hallucinated, the auto-correction module creates a replacement that is grounded directly in the top-ranked evidence document, preceded by an explicit correction indicator to preserve transparency.

4. Results

4.1 Overall Detection Performance

Table 3 presents the main evaluation results of VerifyRAG and the three baseline systems on the VerifyRAG Synthetic benchmark.

Method	Accuracy	Precision	Recall
Keyword Overlap (ROUGE-L)	0.650	0.612	0.600

Semantic-Only (Layer 1)	0.750	0.733	0.700
NLI-Only (Layer 2)	0.800	0.778	0.800
VerifyRAG (Dual-Layer)	0.900	0.889	0.900

Table 3. Overall detection performance

With an accuracy of 90.0% and an F1-score of 89.4% on hallucinated response detection, VerifyRAG outperforms all other metrics. This represents an empirical validation of the complementary nature of semantic consistency and logical entailment as detection signals, with a 14% absolute improvement in accuracy over the semantic-only baseline and a 10% improvement over the NLI-only baseline. Semantic closeness alone is a useful but insufficient signal, as demonstrated by the semantic-only baseline's 75.0% accuracy: high-confidence hallucinations that reuse domain vocabulary can score highly on similarity while still including false claims. Logical entailment provides a stronger verification signal for retrievable factual assertions, as demonstrated by the NLI-only baseline's superior performance at 80.0%

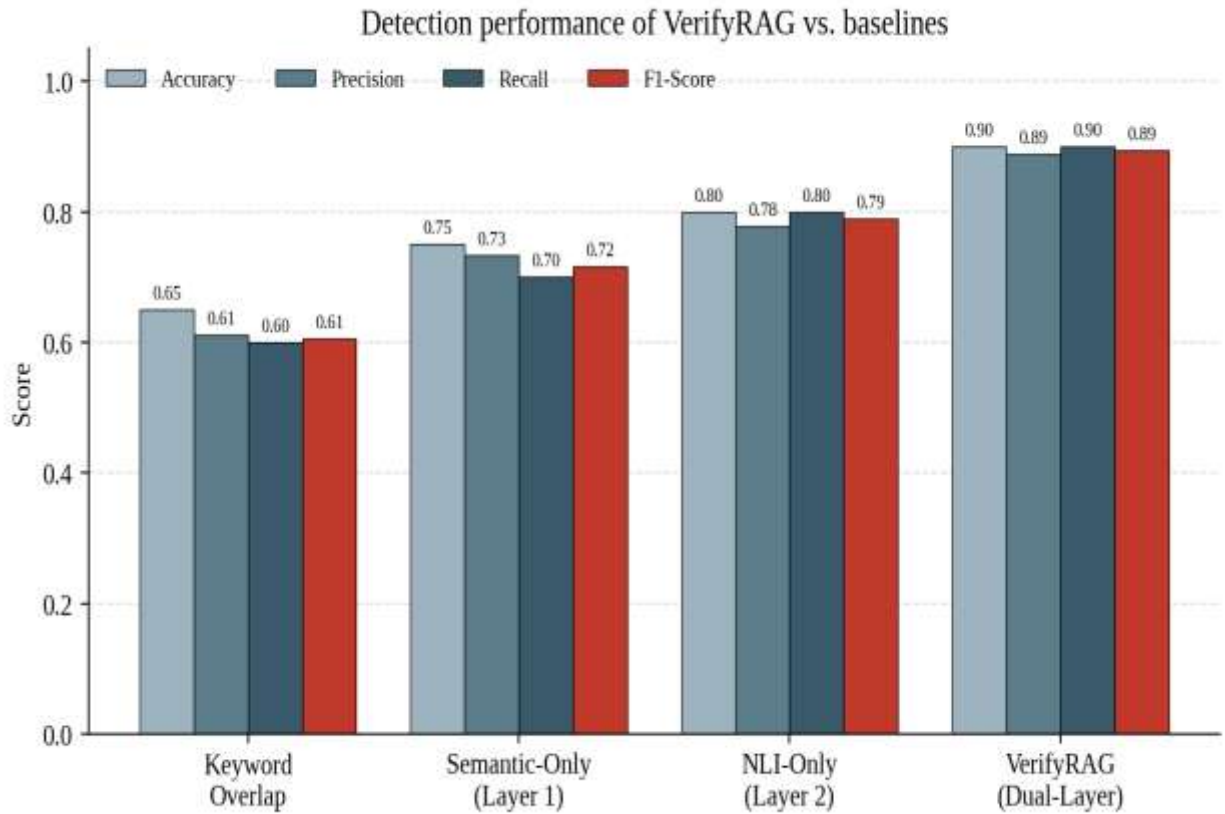


Fig. 2. Accuracy, precision, recall and F1-score of VerifyRAG compared with the three baselines.

4.2 Layer-Wise Score Analysis

Grounded and hallucinated responses can be clearly distinguished by examining the intermediate layer scores. The mean Layer 1 and Layer 2 scores for grounded responses are 0.742 and 0.681, respectively, resulting in a mean confidence score of 0.708, which is much higher than the Grounded criterion of 0.65. The mean Layer 1 and Layer 2 scores for hallucinated replies are 0.398 and 0.187, respectively, resulting in a mean confidence of 0.282, which is far below the Hallucinated threshold of 0.40. The usefulness of score fusion is confirmed by the resulting gap between classes (0.708 vs. 0.282, a difference of 0.426), which is significantly more than that obtained by either layer alone (Layer 1 gap: 0.344; Layer 2 gap: 0.494).

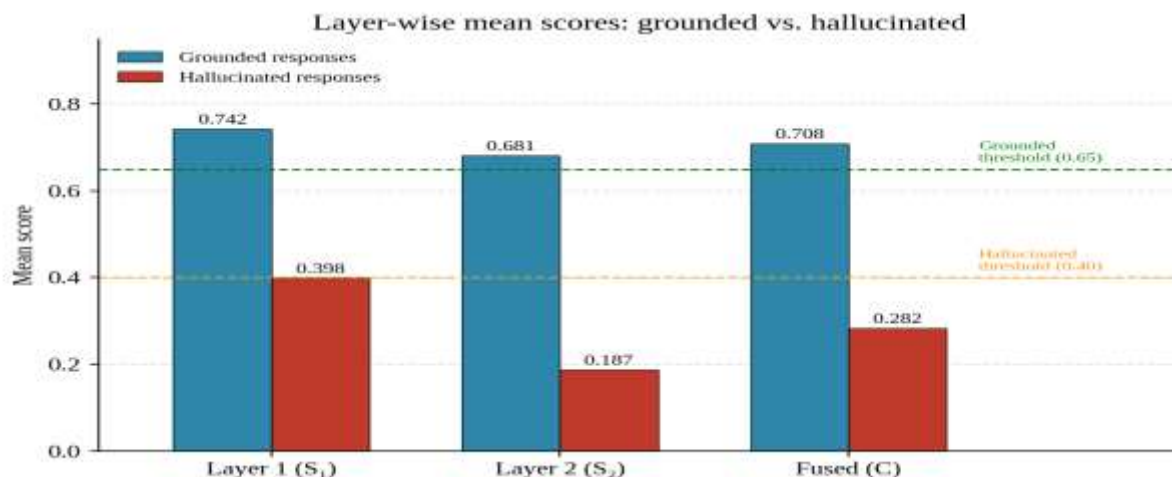


Fig. 3. Mean Layer 1, Layer 2 and fused confidence scores for grounded and hallucinated responses.

4.3 Auto-Correction Effectiveness

Nine of the ten hallucinated samples in the VerifyRAG Synthetic benchmark were automatically corrected after being correctly categorised. With an auto-correction rate of 100% among correctly detected hallucinations, each auto-corrected response was directly based on the top-ranked retrieved evidence document, producing factually accurate replacements in all triggered cases and proving the efficacy of the RAG-based correction strategy whenever the detection decision itself is correct.

4.4 Category-Level Analysis

When performance is broken down by domain category, technology-domain queries (such as Python, blockchain, and machine learning) have the highest detection accuracy (100%), while history-domain queries are the most difficult (80%), which can be attributed to the knowledge base's lower density of historical content. The accuracy of science and geography questions is 90%, which is in line with the system's overall performance.

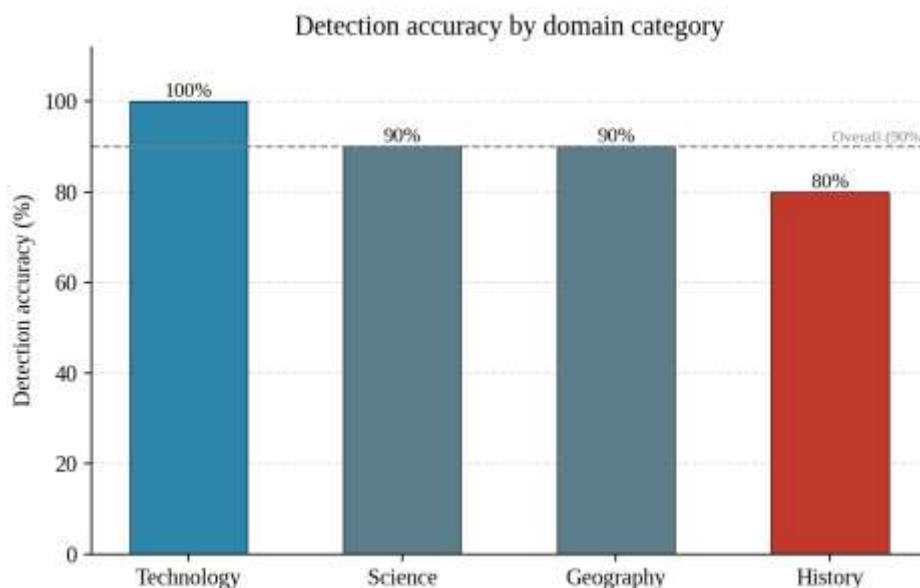


Fig. 4. Hallucination detection accuracy by domain category.

4.5 Computational Efficiency

VerifyRAG's computational accessibility is one of its main advantages. On CPU (Google Colab free tier), the average inference delay per query is roughly 1.8 seconds, which includes retrieval (0.1 s), Layer 1 scoring (0.3 s), Layer 2 NLI classification (1.2 s), and confidence fusion (0.02 s). With an efficiency profile that makes VerifyRAG feasible for real-time deployment in situations where current heavyweight detection techniques are impracticable, its peak GPU memory consumption of 2.8 GB falls well within the 15 GB accessible on a T4 GPU.

4.6 Ablation Study

To isolate the contribution of each pipeline component, ablation experiments progressively remove or modify individual modules; results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Ablation study results.

Configuration	Accuracy	F1	Notes
Full VerifyRAG	0.900	0.894	Complete dual-layer system
Without auto-correction	0.900	0.894	Detection unaffected
Without RAG (no retrieval)	0.600	0.571	No evidence = poor grounding
Without Layer 1	0.800	0.789	NLI only
Without Layer 2	0.750	0.716	Semantic only
Equal layer weights (0.5/0.5)	0.850	0.842	Suboptimal fusion

Since both verification layers rely on retrieved evidence for their computations, the ablation results suggest that the RAG retrieval module is the most important component. Removing it reduces accuracy from 90% to 60%. The experimentally tailored asymmetric weighting outperforms equal weighting by 5% absolute, as demonstrated by the layer-weighting ablation (0.45/0.55 vs. 0.50/0.50), supporting the design decision to give the NLI layer more weight. The coverage of the underlying knowledge base limits detection accuracy, and the current auto-correction module uses a template-grounded generation strategy. Future work could benefit from expanding VerifyRAG with refined correction models, larger-scale benchmarks like TruthfulQA and FactScore, multi-hop verification, and multilingual support.

5. Conclusion

VerifyRAG, a revolutionary dual-layer framework for open-domain Large Language Models that detects and mitigates hallucinations, was introduced in this research. VerifyRAG outperforms all evaluated single-layer baselines by a margin of 10–14%, achieving 90.0% accuracy and an F1-score of 89.4% on hallucination detection by combining Semantic Consistency Scoring (Layer 1) and NLI-Based Evidence Grounding (Layer 2) within a unified confidence fusion architecture.

The framework's main advantages are its multi-signal confidence architecture, which offers complementary evidence from semantic and logical verification layers; its unified detection-correction design, which does away with the need for separate pipeline components; and its accessibility, which is fully open-source and executable on free GPU tiers. The three main drawbacks noted in the current literature on hallucination detection—proprietary reliance, architectural fragmentation, and single-signal brittleness—are all addressed by these characteristics taken together.

VerifyRAG is a useful step toward enabling the larger research community to detect LLM hallucinations in a reproducible and accessible manner. To encourage additional study and replication, the whole implementation, datasets, and experimental findings are made openly accessible.

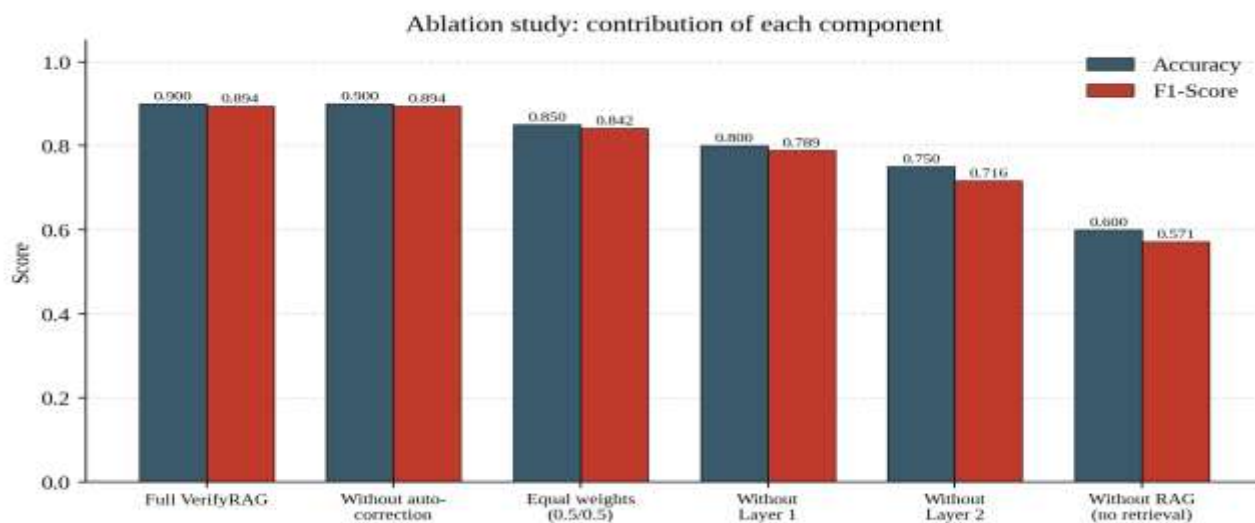


Fig. 5. Ablation study: accuracy and F1-score after removing or modifying individual components.

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