

Future Facing Learning & AI in Higher Education Conference 2026

Research talks

Responsible AI and digital ethics in higher education

This theme interrogates the ethical, social, and policy dimensions of AI's integration into education. The papers in this track critically examine how fairness, transparency, and accountability can be embedded in AI systems, ensuring that technological innovation aligns with institutional values and societal expectations. Topics range from bias mitigation and equity in AI-driven decision-making, to regulatory frameworks, gender and inclusion, and the historical context of techno-panics. By surfacing both the opportunities and risks of AI adoption, these contributions provide actionable insights for leaders, policymakers, and educators seeking to build trust and legitimacy in AI-enabled learning environments. The impact of this theme lies in its ability to shape responsible AI strategies that safeguard student rights, promote diversity, and future-proof educational institutions.

Rethinking assessment in the age of AI

As generative AI transforms what students can produce, this theme explores how assessment practices must evolve to maintain academic integrity and meaningful learning. The selected papers address the challenges and opportunities of authentic assessment, the limitations of AI-detection tools, and the ethical dilemmas posed by new forms of plagiarism and authorship. They offer evidence-based approaches to redesigning assessment for skills and understanding, rather than rote outputs, and highlight the importance of transparency and fairness in grading. The value of this theme is in equipping educators and institutions with practical frameworks and critical perspectives to ensure that assessment remains robust, credible, and fit for the AI age, ultimately supporting both student development and institutional reputation.

AI-enhanced pedagogy

This theme showcases innovative approaches to teaching and learning that harness the power of AI. The papers explore how educators can co-design learning experiences with AI, from prompt-led curriculum design and compassionate, data-informed pedagogy, to critical and creative uses of generative tools. Contributions highlight both the practicalities and the pedagogical shifts required for effective AI integration, including staff adoption, student co-creation, and the transformation of traditional teaching roles. The impact of this theme is its demonstration of how AI can enhance, rather than replace, human expertise,

empowering educators to create more engaging, inclusive, and adaptive learning environments that respond to the needs of diverse learners.

Student Engagement, Inclusion & Well-Being with Intelligent Tools

Focusing on the student experience, this theme explores how AI and intelligent systems can foster engagement, inclusion, and well-being. The papers examine the use of gamification, immersive technologies, personalised support, and adaptive learning to motivate and empower all learners, including those with additional support needs or behavioural challenges. Ethical considerations around affect-aware systems and the creation of trust in AI-mediated learning are also foregrounded. The value of this theme lies in its commitment to widening participation, supporting diverse pathways, and ensuring that AI-driven innovation enhances, not undermines, student agency, belonging, and holistic development.

Skills, Literacy & Preparing Graduates for AI-Shaped Work

This theme addresses the urgent need to equip graduates with the skills, literacies, and professional competencies required in an AI-rich world. Papers span disciplines from law and business to creative arts and computer science, highlighting practical toolchains, employability, and the changing nature of professional judgement. The focus is on authentic, hands-on learning, whether through simulations, game-based approaches, or multidisciplinary challenges, that prepares students for the realities of AI-enabled workplaces. The impact of this theme is in bridging the gap between academic learning and industry expectations, ensuring that graduates are not only AI-literate but also adaptable, ethical, and ready to thrive in rapidly evolving fields.

Data, Analytics & AI Systems for Learning at Scale

This theme delves into the technical and analytical foundations underpinning AI in education. The papers explore predictive analytics, fairness-aware models, learning analytics, and the infrastructure required to responsibly scale AI across institutions. Emphasis is placed on transparency, interpretability, and the use of data to inform both individual learning journeys and institutional strategy. By surfacing evidence-based approaches and highlighting the importance of reproducibility and model governance, this theme provides a roadmap for leveraging AI to enhance educational quality, equity, and impact at scale.

Panels

Panel 1: Reimagining the Purpose and Promise of Universities in a Changing World

By 2040, graduates will enter a world shaped by rapid technological advancement and geopolitical volatility, new forms of work, and fluid social identities. By 2040, universities will face a profound question: What is our purpose in preparing graduates for a world reshaped by AI, sector volatility, shifting work futures, and new social imaginaries? Universities remain one of society's few intentional spaces dedicated to cultivating human identity, meaning, ethics, creativity, and wellbeing. This perspective reframes the conversation around the university's deeper purpose: to act as a guardian of humanity. This session positions the "2040 graduate" not just as an outcome, but as a lens through which to re-examine the fundamental role of universities in society. This panel invites employers, futurists, curriculum designers, student leaders, and wellbeing specialists to rethink the university's role: How do we prepare graduates for a future that is unpredictable and profoundly different from today?

Themes explored:

- Preparing Future-Ready Graduates
- Protecting and Developing What Is Uniquely Human
- Shaping Lifelong Pathways and Social Futures

Panel 2: AI for All? Rethinking Equity, Inclusion and Digital Resilience in the Age of Generative AI

Generative AI is transforming higher education, changing what students can create, how learning is assessed, and who succeeds. While AI offers new opportunities for creativity and access, it also risks deepening inequalities for those with limited digital access or from marginalized backgrounds. This panel brings together experts to discuss how universities can ensure AI supports equity, inclusion, and integrity, and how to build digital resilience for all, looking beyond simple adoption to the deeper transformations required for equitable futures.

Themes explored:

- Rethinking Pedagogy and Assessment
- Equity, Ethics, and Inclusion
- Building Digital Resilience
- Diminished creativity?

Professional Development Digital Training

AI Educator Masterclasses and Practical Clinics

These masterclasses and clinics are designed for educators, academic staff, and professionals seeking to advance their digital skills and confidently integrate AI into their practice. Each session offers hands-on, practical training focused on real-world application, whether in teaching, administration, curriculum design, or library services. Participants will gain actionable expertise in assessment innovation, critical thinking, workflow automation, and digital transformation, equipping them to lead and inspire in an AI-enhanced educational landscape. Expect a collaborative environment where you can experiment with new tools, share best practice, and leave with strategies ready for immediate use in your own context.

AI in Action Sessions

AI in Action Sessions are dynamic, hands-on workshops designed to immerse participants in the practical, creative, and critical dimensions of artificial intelligence in education. These sessions foster an open environment for exploration, experimentation, and collaborative learning, where delegates can engage with innovative tools, frameworks, and strategies. Whether you are new to AI or looking to deepen your expertise, these workshops offer opportunities to share ideas, tackle real-world challenges, and develop actionable skills for immediate application in your teaching, research, or professional practice. Expect lively discussions, interactive activities, and a spirit of curiosity as we collectively shape the future of AI in education.