# AI is reshaping higher education, but its promise depends on balance and access



Artificial intelligence is transforming higher education, reshaping how students learn, interact and prepare for future careers. “It’s almost impossible to find a sector of higher education that is not affected by AI,” said Dr Charlie Simpson, Senior Lecturer in Sport and Exercise Science at Oxford Brookes University.

A recent global survey found that 44% of UK students are excited about AI’s potential, though many remain anxious about its impact on future employment. Concerns about job displacement are common, reflecting a broader unease about how automation could shape the workplace.

Yet some students see AI as a powerful ally. Sunjaya Phillips, a Marketing Communications Management student at Oxford Brookes, said AI helped her work more efficiently and boosted her confidence. “Sometimes you might get stuck on ideas all day—but with AI prompting ideas, it could be done in 30 minutes,” she said.

Educators warn, however, that over-reliance on AI risks undermining genuine learning. “If it’s just to take shortcuts or let AI do the work for you, then students cannot acquire the necessary knowledge, skills and behaviours,” said Professor Keiichi Nakata of Henley Business School. The consensus among academics is that AI should be used to complement, not replace, core learning processes.

Tools like Khan Academy’s Khanmigo show the potential for AI to deliver personalised education. But some experts, including Forbes contributor Ryan Craig, caution that AI is not yet ready to replace human tutoring, which remains vital to effective learning.

Another pressing concern is inequality. Without careful implementation, AI could deepen divides between well-resourced and under-resourced institutions. Access to infrastructure and tools must be addressed to prevent marginalising students already at a disadvantage.

Universities are being urged to rethink their teaching strategies, not just to keep pace with technology, but to ensure students develop critical thinking and ethical awareness alongside digital fluency. Dr Simpson believes graduates could emerge better prepared than ever—if institutions raise their standards in step with AI’s evolution.

Phillips offered a hopeful perspective: “People need to change their perception of AI and learn how to use it well, rather than seeing it as something that will replace your position.” This mindset reframes AI not as a threat, but as a tool for academic growth and career readiness.

As AI continues to shape the educational experience, the path forward lies in balance—embracing innovation while ensuring equal access and maintaining the human values at the heart of learning.

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.thenewslens.com/article/254043> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/ryancraig/2024/06/28/ai-will-shrink-the-university/> - This article discusses the transformative potential of AI in education, highlighting tools like Khan Academy's Khanmigo and the White House's executive order to support AI-enabled educational tools. It also presents scepticism from experts like Satya Nitta, who believes AI is not yet suitable for tutoring, and Jennifer Carolan, who argues that human interaction is essential for effective learning. The piece concludes that while AI offers opportunities, it may also exacerbate educational inequalities.
3. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/ronschmelzer/2024/05/28/how-ai-is-shaping-the-future-of-education/> - This article explores how AI is revolutionising education by enabling hyperpersonalised learning experiences. It references Sal Khan's vision of AI providing lifelong learning opportunities and discusses the challenges educational institutions face in integrating AI, including the need to rethink teaching methods and the importance of soft skills. The piece also highlights the potential for AI to accelerate fundamental changes in education.
4. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/gilpress/2024/02/14/is-ai-going-to-transform-higher-education-and-how/> - This article examines the impact of AI on higher education, noting varied responses from academic institutions. It mentions Touro University's efforts to realise AI's benefits and discusses potential risks, including disinformation and labour market changes. The piece emphasises the need for updated pedagogical strategies and the importance of teaching students how to use AI responsibly in their professions.
5. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/alisongriffin/2024/04/09/can-higher-ed-institutions-prevent-a-long-term-ai-digital-divide/> - This article addresses the challenges higher education institutions face in integrating AI, particularly concerning resource disparities among colleges and universities. It highlights the risk of a digital divide and discusses the need for infrastructure and data governance investments to ensure equitable access to AI technologies, especially for institutions like HBCUs and MSIs.
6. <https://www.insidehighered.com/opinion/views/2025/03/12/ai-tools-deepening-divides-graduate-outcomes-opinion> - This opinion piece argues that AI tools are deepening existing divides in graduate outcomes rather than levelling the playing field. It discusses how AI may exacerbate inequalities and the importance of teaching students to use AI responsibly and critically to improve career readiness.
7. <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/depth/five-ways-ai-has-already-changed-higher-education> - This article outlines five ways AI has already impacted higher education, including guiding literature searches, quality scanning of papers, and the development of AI tools for fact-checking and citation analysis. It also discusses challenges like AI's tendency to 'hallucinate' information and the need for accurate AI-generated references.