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Australian Framework for Artificial Intelligence in Higher Education

Jason M. Lodge, The University of Queensland
Matt Bower, Macquarie University
Kalervo Gulson, The University of Sydney
Michael Henderson, Monash University
Christine Slade, The University of Queensland
Erica Southgate, University of Newcastle

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Acknowledgement of Country

The Australian Centre for Student Equity and Success acknowledges Indigenous peoples across Australia as the Traditional Owners of the lands on which the nation's campuses are situated. With a history spanning more than 60,000 years as the original educators, Indigenous peoples hold a unique place in our nation. We recognise the importance of their knowledge and culture, and reflect the principles of participation, equity, and cultural respect in our work. We pay our respects to Elders past, present, and future, and consider it an honour to learn from our Indigenous colleagues, partners, and friends.

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Statement of purpose

Since 2022, artificial intelligence (AI) has challenged academic integrity, assessment, and pedagogy (Jin *et al.*, 2025) in higher education, aligned with a fundamental shift in human-machine interaction.

The *Australian Framework for Artificial Intelligence in Higher Education* (henceforth, the Framework) provides guidance for the implementation of AI in the Australian higher education sector. AI technologies, including predictive algorithms and large language

models (LLMs), can create new, synthetic content (generative AI) and can execute tasks autonomously (automated decision-making systems—sometimes referred to as “agentic AI” or “AI agents”).

The implementation of these technologies requires principles and practices that support human flourishing, honour diverse knowledge systems, promote equity, and support ethical innovation.

Any use of AI requires ongoing, critical discussion within institutions and across the sector regarding the environmental, moral, ethical, and intellectual property implications of these technologies. Despite the apparent opportunities that AI may bring to higher education, concerns persist about various aspects of the development, governance, and use of AI. A case can and has been made that AI (particularly generative AI) has no place in education (for example, see Bender, 2025), and there may be some validity to this argument. These technologies were not developed for educational purposes and, in many ways, conflict with the values and purpose of higher education. The appropriateness of these technologies for learning, teaching, research, or administration must remain a primary and ongoing topic of utmost concern.

The Framework was developed to address the transformative potential and challenges of AI, aligning with the values and standards of Australian higher education.

The Framework has a central focus on equity to align with the *Australian Universities Accord Final Report* recommendations (Department of Education, 2024) and to avoid amplifying existing digital divides and social inequities (Birhane *et al.*, 2022). It specifically supports students from equity-bearing groups as initially identified in the report, *A Fair Chance for All* (National Board of Employment, Education and Training, 1990). These groups are currently recognised as:

- > people from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds
- > Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- > women in non-transitional areas of study
- > people from non-English speaking backgrounds
- > people with disabilities
- > people from rural and isolated areas.

This understanding of equity is grounded in Fraser's (2009) concept of social justice, which includes:

- > **Redistribution:** The fair sharing of resources and opportunities.
- > **Recognition:** Respecting non-dominant cultural ways of knowing, doing, and being.
- > **Representation:** The right for diverse perspectives to participate in decision-making (see also Southgate, 2020).

The Framework also affirms Indigenous peoples' right to maintain, control, protect, and develop their cultural heritage and knowledge, including its representation in AI systems and the associated practices of data sovereignty.

This Framework builds on the [Australian Framework for Generative AI in Schools](#) but recognises the unique context of higher education. It is also recognised that the current and future development and use of AI is, and will be, broader than generative AI and automated decision-making systems (hence why we have opted for the generic term "artificial intelligence").

The Framework aligns directly to key policy documents:

- > The [Australian Universities Accord Final Report](#) (Department of Education, 2024).
- > The [Study Buddy or Influencer](#) report (Parliament of Australia, 2024) highlighted the need for frameworks addressing academic and research integrity, equitable access, staff training, data privacy, and consistent standards.

Notably, the Framework does not substantially address academic integrity and the need for assessment reform, instead directing readers to [Assessment Reform for the Age of Artificial Intelligence](#) (Lodge *et al.*, 2023a) and [Enacting Assessment Reform in a Time of Artificial Intelligence](#) (Lodge *et al.*, 2025), published by the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA).

Distinct imperatives for higher education

While the *Australian Framework for Generative AI in Schools* provides valuable guidance for K-12 education, the higher education sector has distinctive responsibilities and activities that necessitate its own dedicated Framework:

- > **Advanced scholarly engagement:** AI impacts the creation, critique, and validation of advanced disciplinary knowledge.
- > **Research integration:** AI can and is being used across the entire research lifecycle, with a need to maintain research integrity (see also [TEQSA](#) for specific guidance).
- > **Professional practice formation:** Higher education must emphasise developing students' AI-enhanced professional judgement for their future careers, moving beyond simple technical skills.
- > **Student agency and autonomy:** Guidance must be provided with respect for student autonomy, allowing them to make informed choices about using AI in their learning and practice (or not).



Alignment with Australian Higher Education Standards Framework and United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

This Framework has been developed with specific attention to the requirements of the [Higher Education Standards Framework \(Threshold Standards\) 2021](#) and [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#). Throughout the document, explicit connections are made to relevant domains and sections of the Standards, particularly:



Domain 1:
Student Participation
and Attainment



Domain 5:
Institutional Quality
Assurance



Domain 6:
Governance and
Accountability



Domain 2:
Learning Environment



Domain 7:
Representation,
Information
and Information
Management



Domain 3:
Teaching

By grounding its recommendations in the Threshold Standards, the Framework ensures that institutions implementing its principles will simultaneously strengthen their compliance with existing regulatory requirements while innovating in AI integration, where appropriate.



Domain 4:
Research and
Research Training

This Framework also considers its alignment with the United Nations SDGs to ensure its contributions to a globally conscious and sustainable future.

Core principles

The Framework is structured around seven core principles that guide the implementation of AI in Australian higher education. These principles are specifically adapted to address the unique considerations of the higher education sector while maintaining alignment with the approach established in the Schools Framework.

Principle 1: Human-centred education

Higher education in the age of AI must remain fundamentally human-centred, recognising that the primary value of higher education lies in human connection, critical dialogue, and the development of wisdom and expert professional judgement. As Bearman *et al.* (2024) argue, human evaluative judgement remains essential even as AI tools become increasingly sophisticated. Institutions should consider:

- > prioritising and respecting human relationships and interactions in all educational contexts towards the building of wisdom and expert professional judgement
- > using AI to enhance learning rather than seek to replace human teaching and mentoring
- > developing models of AI integration that support rather than diminish human agency
- > designing assessment practices that value uniquely human capabilities (while recognising that doing so does not necessarily make assessment tasks secure or valid)
- > ensuring that AI systems serve educational and social values.

This principle aligns with Domain 3.1 of the Higher Education Standards Framework regarding learning outcomes and assessment, particularly emphasising holistic student development.

This principle aligns with SDG 4 (Quality Education) by prioritising human connection, dialogue, and expert judgement as the foundation of learning.

Principle 2: Inclusive implementation

Institutions must implement AI in ways that benefit all students. The aim should be to enhance educational equity rather than reinforce or exacerbate existing inequities, while conducting regular intersectional impact assessments across multiple dimensions of student diversity. Drawing on critical intersectionality scholarship (Crenshaw, 2017), bias research (Birhane *et al.*, 2022), and the findings of Southgate (2020), institutions should consider:

- > ensuring equal access to AI tools and resources regardless of background or circumstances, recognising that many students will opt to “bring their own” AI tools or “agents”
- > developing differentiated digital and information literacy programs addressing varied entry points and prior experiences
- > providing meaningful alternatives for students who cannot, choose not, or conscientiously object to using specific AI tools
- > assessing how AI affects students across intersecting identities
- > recognising and mitigating biases embedded in AI systems, particularly those affecting marginalised groups
- > addressing linguistic and cultural barriers to effective AI use
- > leveraging AI as assistive technologies in consultation with students who have additional learning needs
- > conducting meaningful consultation with affected student and staff populations and their representative bodies using participatory design approaches that centre lived experience. Care must be taken to ensure that this consultation does not result in undue burden and/or workload on individuals in these populations.

These assessments and implementations must acknowledge the complex interplay of privilege and disadvantage, directly addressing Domain 2.2 of the Higher Education Standards Framework regarding diversity and equity to ensure equivalent opportunities and outcomes for all students.

This principle strongly supports SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) and SDG 5 (Gender Equality) by ensuring that AI is implemented equitably to benefit all students and mitigate biases affecting marginalised groups.

Principle 3: Ethical decision-making through fairness, accountability, transparency, and contestability

AI systems implemented in higher education must operate according to the principles of Fairness, Accountability, Transparency, and Ethics (FATE; see Memarian & Doleck, 2023, for a review), recognising that AI and the data on which AI systems are built are not neutral but value-laden. Institutions should consider:

- **Fairness:** Ensuring students understand how their data are used, provide meaningful consent and opt-out options, and regularly assess for biases that may disadvantage equity groups.
- **Accountability:** Establishing clear governance processes, protocols for addressing algorithmic harm, and human oversight of AI decision-making that affects student outcomes.
- **Transparency:** Clearly communicating how AI systems are used, their capabilities and limitations, and how decisions affecting students are made.
- **Ethical implementation:** Ensuring AI systems do not perpetuate discrimination, maintain academic and research integrity, and support rather than undermine educational equity.
- **Contestability:** In addition to the core FATE principles, it is also crucial to provide clear and accessible pathways for students and staff to appeal AI-influenced decisions, ensuring a timely and meaningful human review of contested outcomes.

This principle aligns with Domain 7.3 of the Higher Education Standards Framework regarding secure and responsible information management and supports institutional requirements for risk management (Domain 6) and academic integrity (Domains 5.2 and 1.4).

This principle aligns with SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) by promoting transparent communication, data justice, and clear accountability for AI systems used in education.

Principle 4: Indigenous knowledges

Drawing on the work of Kukutai and Taylor (2016) and the “CARE Principles for Indigenous Data Governance” (Collective Benefit, Authority to Control, Responsibility, and Ethics) (Carroll *et al.*, 2020), the Framework affirms Indigenous peoples’ right to maintain control over their cultural heritage and knowledges, including how these are represented in AI systems. It is acknowledged here that there is an inherent tension between Indigenous epistemologies and ways of knowing and AI systems that have been developed and trained within a Western context. Institutions should consider:

- respecting Indigenous data sovereignty by ensuring communities maintain governance over Indigenous knowledges
- adopting a two-way learning model that positions Indigenous and Western knowledge systems as complementary rather than hierarchical (Yunkaporta, 2019)
- ensuring meaningful participation of First Nations scholars and community members in AI governance structures
- recognising place-based knowledge in AI implementations
- valuing narrative and relational approaches to AI ethics alongside analytical frameworks.

These approaches acknowledge that AI systems trained predominantly on Western knowledge traditions present epistemological challenges that must be addressed through inclusive governance.

This principle aligns with Domain 6.2 of the Higher Education Standards Framework and Australia's commitments to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

This principle supports SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) by affirming Indigenous peoples' right to maintain control over their cultural heritage and knowledge within AI systems.

Principle 5: Ethical development and deployment

The development, procurement, and deployment of AI in higher education must adhere to robust ethical standards. Building on [established principles](#) of digital ethics, institutions should consider:

- › establishing AI ethics committees with diverse membership, including student representatives
- › developing ethical guidelines for AI use in teaching, research, and administration
- › conducting ethical impact assessments prior to significant AI implementations
- › ensuring meaningful consent for AI applications using student or staff data
- › addressing potential harms before they occur through proactive ethical review
- › monitoring the environmental sustainability and climate impacts of AI use.

This principle supports Domain 6.2 of the Higher Education Standards Framework regarding corporate and academic governance, emphasising the need for ethical oversight of institutional operations.

This principle aligns with SDG 13 (Climate Action) by encouraging institutions to monitor the environmental sustainability and climate impacts of their AI use.

Principle 6: Fostering adaptive skills for AI integration

Students' ability to monitor, adapt, and take responsibility for their own learning processes is the essential foundation for effective AI integration. Students with strong adaptive skills are more effective in incorporating AI within broader, increasingly complex networks of resources and social supports (Lodge *et al.*, 2023). Institutions should consider:

- › prioritising the development of adaptive learning skills, including goal-setting, monitoring progress, adapting strategies, and reflective practices, including in graduate attributes and generic skills
- › fostering digital, ethical, and information evaluation capabilities for assessing information quality and recognising bias, misinformation, and disinformation
- › creating supported opportunities for students and staff to develop contextual judgement about when and how to incorporate AI into disciplinary practices
- › encouraging peer collaboration and knowledge-sharing around effective and appropriate AI integration
- › providing a basic understanding of AI capabilities and limitations, emphasising persistent skills and capabilities over skills like "prompt engineering" that will have limited future utility
- › cultivating adaptive expertise that enables students to transfer learning strategies across evolving sociotechnological contexts
- › preparing students for a transformed world of work. This involves reviewing the curriculum and updating learning outcomes to reflect the changing needs of industries.

This strengths-based approach recognises that effective learning in technology-rich environments depends more on foundational capacities for self-directed learning and critical thinking than on specific technical knowledge. The rapid evolution of AI tools means that developing adaptive learning strategies will serve students better than a narrow focus on current technologies or skills such as “prompt engineering” that have limited future utility (as is often the case with initiatives focused on “AI literacy”).

This principle aligns with Domain 1.4 of the Higher Education Standards Framework regarding learning outcomes and assessment, particularly the emphasis on developing transferable critical thinking skills for lifelong learning.

This principle supports SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) by preparing students with the adaptive expertise and self-regulated and co-regulated learning skills needed for a transformed world of work.

Principle 7: Evidence-informed innovation

Implementation of AI in higher education should be guided by rigorous evidence while encouraging responsible innovation. Institutions should consider:

- basing AI implementation decisions on research evidence where available
- conducting and sharing evaluations of AI implementations
- engaging in iterative, evidence-informed improvement cycles
- balancing innovation with appropriate caution regarding unintended consequences
- contributing to the evidence base through research and scholarship
- developing robust methodologies for evaluating AI impacts on learning and teaching.

This principle supports Domain 5.3 of the Higher Education Standards Framework regarding monitoring, review, and improvement, emphasising the importance of evidence-informed quality enhancement.

This principle aligns with SDG 4 (Quality Education) by ensuring that the implementation of AI is guided by rigorous research and evaluation to improve learning and teaching outcomes.

Implementation guidance

The implementation of AI in Australian higher education requires thoughtful planning, inclusive governance, ethical and responsible use considerations, and robust quality assurance processes. It is acknowledged here that doing so has significant resourcing implications in a time of increasing budget pressures. This section provides guidance for institutions seeking to develop comprehensive approaches to AI integration aligned with the Higher Education Standards Framework.

Governance structures

If they have not done so already, institutions should consider establishing AI governance structures that include stakeholders from:

- > academic and professional staff representatives
- > active researchers in educational technology and higher education (it should not be regarded as sufficient or desirable to draw only on expertise in the technical aspects of AI)
- > student representatives with diverse backgrounds
- > First Nations leadership
- > accessibility specialists
- > ethics experts (integrity ethics, technology ethics, etc.)
- > industry partners, where relevant.

These structures should maintain regular dialogue with national bodies. Coordinated governance approaches are essential for ensuring that the implementation of AI serves strategic institutional goals while protecting the interests of students and staff.

This approach aligns with Domain 6.2 of the Higher Education Standards Framework, specifically regarding corporate and academic governance, and the requirement for effective oversight of institutional operations.

Policy development

Institutional policies for AI should be developed with a wide range of key stakeholders, and should address:

- > academic integrity considerations
- > assessment design principles
- > acceptable use guidelines
- > institutional governance arrangements related to data privacy and automated decision-making
- > transparency surrounding the use of AI in any administrative tasks and governance decisions
- > procurement standards (see below)
- > staff development requirements
- > student support mechanisms
- > research applications
- > review mechanisms.

Policies should explicitly reference equity considerations and Indigenous knowledge principles outlined in this Framework. The TEQSA assessment reform guidance (Lodge *et al.*, 2023a; 2025) provides a comprehensive foundation for academic integrity and assessment policies that should be incorporated into broader AI governance frameworks.

This policy development aligns with Domain 5.1 of the Higher Education Standards Framework regarding assurance of quality and Domain 7.2 regarding information management.

Procurement and development of AI technologies

Institutions should consider ensuring that procurement and development processes:

- › establish clear policies for vetting third-party AI tools
- › mandate assessment of data privacy, security, and ethical implications
- › embed “equity by design” principles in all in-house AI development
- › ensure that any AI tool or technology purporting to impact student learning demonstrably enhances learning processes and outcomes (not just “engagement” or self-reported preferences)
- › involve diverse student and staff groups in co-design of the procurement and development.

A proactive approach to procurement and development is crucial for managing the significant risks (such as lock-in arrangements and the possibility of foreign interference) associated with third-party platforms and ensuring institutional values are not compromised. By embedding principles like “equity by design” from the outset, institutions move beyond reactive compliance to proactively shaping a responsible and inclusive technological ecosystem that serves all students.

This approach aligns with the Higher Education Standards Framework, particularly the requirements for corporate and academic governance (HESF 6.2, 6.3) and the management of information (HESF 7.3).

Professional learning

Institutions should consider developing comprehensive professional learning programs that:

- › build staff capacity for understanding the ethical, moral, and environmental issues related to AI
- › provide pedagogical and technical dimensions
- › address discipline-specific considerations
- › focus on equity and inclusion in AI implementation
- › include Indigenous perspectives on technology
- › offer ongoing support rather than one-off training.

As the Parliamentary Inquiry into AI in Australian Education (Parliament of Australia, 2024) noted, staff capacity-building is a critical determinant of effective AI implementation. Professional learning should be designed to enhance rather than replace human expertise, with a focus on developing evaluative judgment rather than technical proficiency alone (Bearman *et al.*, 2024).

This approach aligns with Domain 3.2 of the Higher Education Standards Framework regarding staffing, particularly the requirement for continuing professional development of academic staff.

Pedagogical integration

AI integration in teaching and learning should consider:

- > alignment with graduate attributes and generic skill development (including whether these need to be altered)
- > supporting authentic assessment practices (noting that such practices are not, by proxy, secure or valid forms of assessment)
- > enhancing rather than replacing human connection
- > addressing discipline-specific needs and professional standards expectations
- > fostering critical digital, ethical, and information literacies
- > considering varied cultural perspectives on knowledge creation
- > transparency in the use of any AI technology in the content preparation and learning and teaching interactions, including online interactions, feedback, and assessment.

AI represents fundamentally different kinds of technology from previous educational tools, requiring pedagogical approaches that treat AI as a relational rather than transactional technology. Well-designed pedagogical integration should enhance student agency rather than diminish it.

Research applications

Research involving AI should consider:

- > maintaining research integrity standards
- > addressing authorship attribution clearly
- > considering the ethical implications of AI use
- > respecting data sovereignty principles
- > documenting AI contributions transparently
- > acknowledging limitations of AI-assisted methods.

AI creates significant issues for research integrity, including but not limited to the production of synthetic data and completely AI-generated academic papers. Research integrity issues fall under the remit of TEQSA, and further guidance is available on the [TEQSA website](#).

This section aligns with Domain 4.1 of the Higher Education Standards Framework regarding research, particularly the requirements for research integrity and ethical conduct.

Evaluation framework

Institutions should consider regularly evaluating their AI implementations against:

- > emerging scholarly research on the impact of AI on learning and teaching
- > student experience metrics
- > equity impact indicators
- > academic integrity measures
- > graduate outcome data
- > staff capability development
- > Indigenous engagement quality
- > research productivity and quality metrics.

As Selwyn (2024) argues, critical evaluation of AI implementation should look beyond technical performance to examine broader social and educational impacts. Evaluation frameworks should be designed to identify unintended consequences and emergent challenges. Auditing and evaluation of AI systems deployed by institutions should be an ongoing concern.

This approach aligns with Domain 5.3 of the Higher Education Standards Framework regarding monitoring, review, and improvement, particularly the requirement for comprehensive reviews of institutional operations.

Cross-institutional collaboration

The Framework encourages Australian higher education institutions to collaborate rather than compete on AI governance, including:

- > collegiate discussion on institutional approaches
- > shared resource development
- > common evaluation frameworks
- > policy templates and exemplars
- > joint procurement standards
- > collaborative staff development
- > shared research infrastructure.

Collaboration is essential for addressing the challenges facing the sector, particularly given the resource constraints faced by many institutions. Collaborative approaches to curriculum and assessment design can

accelerate this learning process while ensuring consistency across the sector.

Support innovation

Institutions should consider establishing and supporting active experimentation, innovation, evaluation, and dissemination of best practices. This can be done through a variety of mechanisms, including the sustained support of communities of practice focused on AI implementation that:

- › span disciplinary boundaries
- › include academic and professional staff
- › provide space for experimentation and innovation
- › document emerging effective practices
- › share lessons learned across the sector
- › allow for robust discussion and critique, including with students from diverse disciplines and backgrounds
- › interrogate procurement policy and decision-making regarding AI systems and tools, especially in relation to data practices and evidence for efficiency, equity, and learning outcomes.

Isolated innovations rarely scale effectively without structured knowledge-sharing mechanisms. Communities of practice provide essential infrastructure for translating individual innovations into systemic change.

National resource repository

In the absence of a mechanism for sector-wide innovation, the sector should consider developing a shared national repository of:

- › open educational resources addressing AI capability development
- › case studies of effective AI implementation
- › assessment exemplars designed for the age of AI
- › research protocols for AI-assisted research
- › staff development materials
- › student support resources.

This approach builds on successful precedents such as the [TEQSA Academic Integrity Toolkit](#), providing institutions with high-quality resources that can be adapted to local contexts without duplicating effort across the sector.

Coordinated research agenda

In the absence of a national research centre devoted to AI in education, Australian higher education institutions should consider developing a coordinated research agenda on AI in education that addresses:

- › empirical studies of AI impacts on learning outcomes
- › longitudinal analysis of AI effects on graduate capabilities
- › comparative studies of different implementation approaches
- › investigation of equity implications across student cohorts
- › creation of Australian-specific AI applications for education
- › participatory research with groups and communities affected by the integration of AI in education.

As Southgate (2020) emphasises in her National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education Equity Fellowship report, evidence-informed approaches to technology integration are essential for ensuring that innovation enhances rather than undermines educational equity.

Future directions: Emerging areas for development

The Framework identifies several areas requiring further development as AI technologies evolve:

AI governance and institutional policy

The rapid and often fragmented adoption of AI tools across institutions presents significant governance challenges. Future work should focus on establishing clear, transparent, and agile governance frameworks. These frameworks must address key principles such as accountability, data privacy, ethical procurement, and the responsible use of AI by both staff and students, ensuring a cohesive and principled institutional approach.

AI and work-integrated learning

As AI transforms workplace practices across industries, work-integrated learning approaches must evolve to prepare students for AI-enhanced professional environments. Institutions should collaborate with industry partners to identify emerging AI proficiencies required in different fields and develop appropriate learning experiences. For an overview, see Dean *et al.*, (2025).

AI in academic integrity systems

While significant attention has been paid to the challenges AI poses to academic integrity, less focus has been given to how AI might strengthen academic integrity systems. Future development should explore how AI can support educational approaches to academic integrity, including early identification of students requiring additional support.

AI ethics in curriculum

As AI becomes increasingly embedded in professional practice across disciplines, ethics education must evolve to address emerging challenges. Future development should focus on how discipline-specific ethical frameworks can be adapted to address AI-specific concerns.

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Curtin University

Australian Centre for Student Equity and Success

Curtin University
GPO Box U1987
Perth WA 6845
Australia

Email: acses@curtin.edu.au
Tel: +61 8 9266 1743

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