Call for Papers – Special Issue

The Impact of Artificial Intelligence (AI) on Academics and Student Wellbeing in Higher Education

Guest Editors

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Introduction

Artificial intelligence (AI) is rapidly reshaping higher education, raising urgent questions about its impact on the wellbeing of both academics and students (Bobula 2024; Holmes et al., 2021). As universities integrate AI tools into teaching, learning, and administration, it is imperative to consider the implications for mental health, workload, and the overall academic experience. Studies on the impact of AI on workers wellbeing have highlighted the importance of understanding the substitutability and complementarity perception of the technology and the knock-on effect on wellbeing (Jin et al, 2024; Nazareno & Schiff, 2021). Although initial research in exploring the effects of AI on student and academic well-being in higher education is emerging (Klimova & Pikhart, 2025; Kundu & Bej, 2025; Selwyn, 2019), many questions remain. This special issue focuses on how AI adoption intertwines with the personal and professional flourishing of educators and learners.

Academic wellbeing encompasses psychological, emotional, and social health, within educational settings, including students, faculty and staff (Deiner et al., 2018; Oades et al., 2011; Stallman, 2010). In the context of AI, these facets take on new dimensions. On one hand, AI-enabled personalised learning can reduce student stress by allowing self-paced progress and targeted support (Luckin et al., 2016). AI-based virtual assistants and chatbots are also expanding access to academic and mental health support, potentially strengthening students' support networks (Oghenekaro & Okoro, 2024). On the other hand, excessive reliance on AI may erode the human interactions vital to wellbeing. Research suggests that students who overly depend on AI may experience isolation and anxiety, thereby compromising social interpersonal skills (Klimova & Pikhart, 2025). In summary, while AI has the potential to enhance engagement and learning, it may also unintentionally disrupt the social foundations critical to students' wellbeing (Holmes et al., 2019).

For academics, the infusion of AI into academia presents a similar mix of opportunities and challenges. On one hand, AI tools promise to streamline tasks such as grading and advising, potentially alleviating workload and reducing burnout (Bobula, 2018). Empirical evidence suggests that when effectively integrated, AI can increase job satisfaction and reduce stress by automating routine duties (Luckin et al., 2016). On the other hand, many educators experience "technostress" – anxiety and fatigue associated with adapting to new technologies –

particularly when institutional support is inadequate (Bondanini et al. 2020). Moreover, uncertainty about evolving roles as educators—shifting from traditional teaching to a more facilitative, mentorship-focused position—raises concerns about professional identity and job security (Holmes et al., 2019). Additionally, ethical and policy issues surrounding AI, such as data privacy and potential job displacement, add further complexity to faculty experiences (Santoni de Sio, 2024).

Towards a Holistic Understanding

The interplay of AI and wellbeing in higher education spans a range of pressing questions. This special issue invites contributions that examine these issues from diverse angles, recognizing that impacts may differ across institutional contexts. We welcome studies on topics including (but not limited to):

- **Policy and Context:** Frameworks for ethical AI use, including data privacy and equity, and how these factors influence wellbeing.
- **Faculty Workload and Stress:** The effects of AI tools on faculty workload, stress, and burnout.
- **Faculty Skills and Identity:** How AI adoption is reshaping faculty skills, professional identity, and career progression.
- **Student Mental Health:** The psychological impact of AI-driven learning on student mental health.
- **Student Engagement and Performance:** AI's influence on student engagement, motivation, and academic performance.
- **Social Connection and Belonging:** The role of AI in fostering or disrupting collaborative learning environments and social connectedness.
- **AI literacy and Agency:** The tensions arising from the expectation that academic staff must be AI-literate, integrate AI literacy into student learning, and simultaneously uphold their subject-specific expertise.

Theoretical frameworks

Some suggested theories that may be useful in exploring the topic include, but not limited to:

- Transactional Theory of Stress
- Flourishing theory
- Cognitive-behavioural theory
- The Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology
- Technology Acceptance Model
- Social Cognitive Theory
- Activity Theory
- Person-in-Environment Theory
- Conservation of Resources Theory
- Self Determination Theory
- Principal Agent Theory

- Capability Theory
- Institutional Theory

List of topic areas

Some possible topic areas could include, but are not limited to:
- Policy implications for AI and wellbeing.
- How AI tools affect faculty workload and stress levels.
- The impact of AI on faculty skills, career progression, and professional identity.
- The influence of AI on the boundaries between work and personal life for faculty.
- AI as a tool for improving or disrupting work-life balance.
- The psychological impact of AI on faculty.
- The effects of AI-driven learning on student mental health.
- How AI tools influence student engagement, motivation, and academic performance.
- AI's role in fostering or disrupting collaborative learning environments.
- Cross-disciplinary and cultural perspectives on AI.

Submission Requirements

To make a submission of an abstract, use the ITED online portal and ensure the Section selected represents the title of this Special Issue: https://open-publishing.org/journals/index.php/ited/about/submissions

Each submission must include:

- A blinded abstract uploaded as 'Article Text' that comprises no more than 250 words, and clearly articulates the research problem, proposed theoretical framework, proposed method, and significance of the work to ITED aims and scope.
- All author names and affiliations in the online portal, but not in the abstract file.
- A list of keywords in the online system, not in the abstract file.

Submitted articles must not have been previously published, nor should they be under consideration for publication anywhere else, while under review for this journal.

Key deadlines

Closing date for abstract submission: 30 June 2025
Results for the abstract: 30 July 2025
Opening date for manuscripts submissions: 30 July 2025
Closing date for manuscripts submission: 30 January 2026

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