FORCE Ai

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Research Report on Artificial Intelligence Integration at Higher Education Institutions:

Mapping Needs and Perspectives

Fachhochschule des Mittelstands

UNIVERSITY OF TWENTE.

RISEBA UNIVERSITY

ANADOLU ÜNİVERSİTESİ

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Contents

Executive Summary

This report synthesises findings from quantitative and qualitative research conducted under the ERASMUS+ FORCE AI project, aiming to evaluate artificial intelligence (AI) integration within Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and define the competencies and roles required for practical AI management. Within the context of the project, the term 'AI' is being used in a generalised form, as particular applications might represent different technical realms (specialised AI solutions, general LLMs, generative AI tools, etc.), and respondents are not always experts to provide exact context.

Quantitative survey data from 387 respondents across 13 countries, combined with qualitative research data from the four major countries (Germany, the Netherlands, Turkey, and Latvia) form **research data to reveal the widespread adoption of AI in learning, teaching, and content development, highlighting key benefits such as personalised learning and administrative efficiency, and emphasize the need of centralised AI Governance**. Quantitative data in combination with qualitative insights from focus groups **further define necessary AI Manager for Higher Education (AIM4HE) competencies and governance structures, indicating broad support for a distributed, cross-departmental approach with a centralised oversight.**

Key findings regarding AI integration in higher education are:

- AI is already widely used for teaching (49%) and content development (41%).
- Students are leading AI adoption – 78% use AI independently.
- Most staff view AI's impact as positive, with minimal negative sentiment (<7%), although the data varies across countries (e.g., the Netherlands has a higher negative evaluation compared to other widely represented countries).
- Ethical concerns (79%), staff skill gaps (72%), and privacy risks (71%) dominate.
- Staff expertise is both the top adoption driver and barrier.

There are crucial skills required for HEIs to succeed in AI integration for the audiences of Students and Educators (faculty, management, and support staff at HEIs). It indicates a broad alignment across all skill groups required, while suggesting a higher importance of ethical awareness on the Educator side:

- The most **critical skills for Students** are:
    - critical evaluation (84%),
    - ethical awareness (77%),
    - AI literacy (49%);
- The most **critical skills for Educators** are:
    - responsible AI use (77%),
    - pedagogical adaptation (76%),
    - technical application (61%).

Concerning the AI Governance, **there is an apparent demand for the AIM role in HEIs**:

- 71% of HEIs without dedicated AIM believe the role is needed,
- 76% believe it would improve their HEI experience,
- such top responsibilities for AIM are anticipated:
    - training (86%),

- ethical oversight (80%),
- data security (79%),
- AI strategy (77%).

There are **different approaches to AI governance at HEIs** that are preferred depending on the profile of the HEI, though both **share a need to have a centralised AI governance function (e.g. AIM role) for effective functioning:**

- 40% prefer AI responsibility shared across departments,
- 26% favour a single dedicated manager

with the remainder split across multiple other options (e.g. departments of HEI such as IT, Academic or Science Department).

The research recommends the **following strategic action points for HEIs:**

1. **Support growing momentum:** Formalise AI use through policies and training.
2. **Clarify responsibility:** Appoint or define leadership roles for AI oversight.
3. **Build skills:** Invest in AI literacy, ethics, and critical thinking for all.
4. **Bridge the knowledge gap:** Improve communication and visibility around AI activities and governance.

Maximising the educational value of AI can be achieved by the following efforts applied to the four significant areas below:

1. **Personalisation and Learning Quality:**
   1.1. AI is most effective for personalisation when integrated through intentional pedagogical design and when students are equipped with analytical skills.
   1.2. Administrative or compliance-focused uses of AI diminish perceptions of personalisation and learning enhancement.

2. **Ethics and Trust:**
   2.1. Ethical concerns are highest among critically engaged educators and students with high expectations, but these concerns diminish with confident, practical use and transparent policies.
   2.2. Awareness without empowerment can reduce trust; training and responsible role-modelling are key.

3. **Staff and Student Competence:**
   3.1. Institutional ambiguity, financial constraints, and pedagogical ambition amplify perceived expertise gaps.
   3.2. Practical engagement with AI reduces concerns about skill loss, tutor replacement, and administrative disconnection.

4. **Institutional Factors and Infrastructure:**
   4.1. Strong IT compatibility, staff training, and structured frameworks enhance AI's perceived effectiveness across administration, support services, and learning.

4.2. Budget issues divide institutions into proactive implementers and those waiting for investment, with the former reporting more benefits.

Addressing AI risks and unlocking engagement should focus on the two major areas:

1. **Creative and Collaborative Use:**
   1.1. Creativity and student engagement with AI thrive when tools are intuitive, collaborative, and experienced as responsive.
   1.2. Overly administrative or theoretical use can suppress expression, engagement, and peer interaction.

2. **Risk Perception and Regulation:**
   2.1. Overregulation, lack of transparency, and abstract theoretical training increase concerns about privacy, fairness, and misuse.
   2.2. Balanced, applied use - particularly when aligned with ethical and academic goals - mitigates fears around data and misconduct.

Educators and Students have notable differences in their belief systems that should be considered when designing a practical AI Governance framework and introducing AIM responsibility in the HEIs. The key takeaways from the research, which outline the belief systems of Students and Educators, are detailed below.

The following aspects characterise **Educators' belief system**:

- **Human-centred vs. technical approaches:**
  Some prioritise adaptability, collaboration, and stakeholder engagement, while others value formal structures, technical expertise, and control. This reflects a tension between relational and procedural models of change.
- **Diverging expectations of AI leadership:**
  Preferences vary between socially skilled, integrative leaders and highly technical, rule-oriented managers, indicating contrasting beliefs about how digital transformation should be led.
- **Scepticism is tied to low exposure and resources:**
  Resistance to AI often stems from limited training and digital infrastructure, not just attitude, highlighting a readiness gap that affects belief systems.
- **Belief in AI reflects perceived institutional capability:**
  Confidence in AI is linked to how capable individuals perceive their institutions to be in managing change; doubt grows where systems seem unprepared.
- **Transformation as opportunity vs. threat:**
  For some, transformation is a chance to evolve education through tailored, quality-driven AI practices. For others, it is a destabilising force, requiring careful navigation or even resistance.

The following aspects characterise **Students' belief system**:

- **Trust in AI's supportive potential, despite limited experience:**
  Several groups trust AI to improve personalised learning and student support, despite limited hands-on experience. Their optimism is shaped by indirect exposure.

- **Educators are seen as key to meaningful AI integration:**
  Across groups, educators are seen as crucial for the successful use of AI, either through integration into student-centred learning or critical assessment of AI's impact.
- **Beliefs diverge around ethics vs. effectiveness:**
  Two contrasting belief systems emerge: Caution-driven values prioritise data privacy and ethical considerations, reflecting a risk-aware, values-based perspective. Competency-driven values: focus on the practical and responsible use of AI, highlighting a desire for technical competence and critical thinking, especially in identifying hallucinations or AI-generated errors.
- **Scepticism often arises from second-hand narratives:**
  Some groups with little to no hands-on experience with AI are highly critical. Their scepticism appears to be shaped less by first-hand use and more by narratives or perceived risks, such as a lack of personalisation or concerns about AI's impact on academic integrity.

Assuming that the considerations above are taken into account, there is merit in moving forward with further work on defining the AIM role, outlining a job description, developing a competency framework, and designing a methodology for training and upskilling candidates for such a role in HEIs internationally. This work would support HEIs in exploring how an AIM role could contribute to AI strategy, integration, and the engagement and development of staff and students to achieve benefits for all stakeholders.

More detailed research findings are available in the following chapters, which provide in-depth analysis and findings from the research. Due to the extensive nature of the data obtained, detailed analysis and extra information are available in the appendices, while the report consolidates key conclusions.

Introduction to the Project

The project **Fostering Opportunities, Resources, and Capabilities in AI for Effective Management of Higher Education Institutions (FORCE AI)** is an initiative funded by the Erasmus+ programme and implemented by a consortium comprising partners from Germany (Fachhochschule des Mittelstands), Türkiye (Anadolu University), Latvia (RISEBA University), and the Netherlands (University of Twente).

The overarching aim of the project is to explore and leverage the potential of artificial intelligence (AI) within the higher education sector, spanning organisational administration, management processes, and student support services. To this end, the project develops tools, resources, and training formats intended to support higher education institutions in managing AI-driven digital transformation. Specifically, the project pursues three objectives: first, to identify the core competences and responsibilities required for effective AI management in higher education institutions; second, to conceptualise a new professional role — AI Manager for Higher Education — and define a corresponding competence profile; and third, to design and pilot a tailored online training programme that prepares participants to assume this role. Further information on the project is available at www.force-ai.eu.

The present research report constitutes an integral component of the project.

Research Methodology

The research employed a mixed-methods approach combining:

Quantitative Survey

The survey employed the computer-assisted self-interviewing (CASI) method.
The questionnaire underwent Ethical Board approval from the work package leader (RISEBA) and was followed by the required approvals from other Project partners.
It was administered in multiple languages (English, German, Dutch, Turkish, and Latvian) with parallel synchronous data collection using the questionnaire (Appendix 1), programmed for LimeSurvey.
The quantitative survey employed a convenience sampling approach targeting respondents affiliated with HEIs. To extend the reach beyond the representation of project partners, participants were recruited through institutional mailing lists, social media, professional networks, and direct invitations from project partners. The selection criteria included respondents being students, teaching staff, administrative staff, or other personnel actively involved in HEIs.
A full informed consent to the research at the start of the survey, screening out the potential respondents who do not provide one. The data collection was conducted in accordance with the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulation (Regulation (EU) 2016/679) and the ICC/ESOMAR International Code on Market and Social Research.
The fieldwork was conducted from February 16 to March 31, 2025. Following a scrutiny of data cleaning, 387 valid completed questionnaires (participants who have completed the questionnaire till the last

section “AI Management Responsibility and Profile”) were obtained from respondents representing HEIs in 13 countries, i.e. n=387, depending on the question.
Data analysis was performed using IBM SPSS 27 software and MS Office tools. Data are not weighted. Statistical significance tables are available in the appendix and include summary data, full data set is provided in appendix as well.

Qualitative Focus Groups

Four focus groups were conducted separately in each of the four participating countries (a total of four groups with 44 participants, constituted by a mix of educators and students), capturing deeper insights into institutional contexts and attitudes.
The Nominal Group Technique method was deployed to conduct online sessions, held in the respective national language or English, depending on the composition of the specific local groups.
The focus groups were conducted from April 9 to June 25, 2025, following the methodology and a partially structured interview outline (Appendix 2), allowing the moderators to select and utilise technical tools (such as communication and co-working platforms) of their choice.
Focus groups were recorded for transcription (video recordings are not shared and retained after project completion to comply with data protection regulations). The results were captured in a predefined format to ensure proper alignment of insights across countries.

Integrated Analysis

Combining both data sources, ambiguity in role definitions from quantitative surveys was clarified by qualitative discussions, highlighting the nuanced understanding of AI governance required across diverse institutional environments. Competency gaps identified in surveys were validated qualitatively, underscoring the necessity of targeted professional development.

Data for project purposes is consolidated in a dataset comprising questionnaires as Word/PDF files, raw LimeSurvey structure and data files, SPSS data files, cleaned and structured Excel tables, HTML/Excel heatmap tables, and PowerPoint/PDF presentations with the analysis.

The Report focuses on the main findings and conclusions; its format is limited to include the visually complex data. Therefore, please refer to the appendices for more detailed data tables, regression analysis, and other insights.

The availability of the research data for further analysis is ensured in line with the best practice principles of Open Science, with the combined dataset made available from the work package leader's Dataverse repository upon request.

Quantitative Research Findings

Respondent profiles

Respondent profiles from the full sample (n=387; all respondents who completed the **full** questionnaire) indicate a balanced representation across roles (Fig. 1) and institutions, with notable participation from privately held HEIs (Fig. 2):

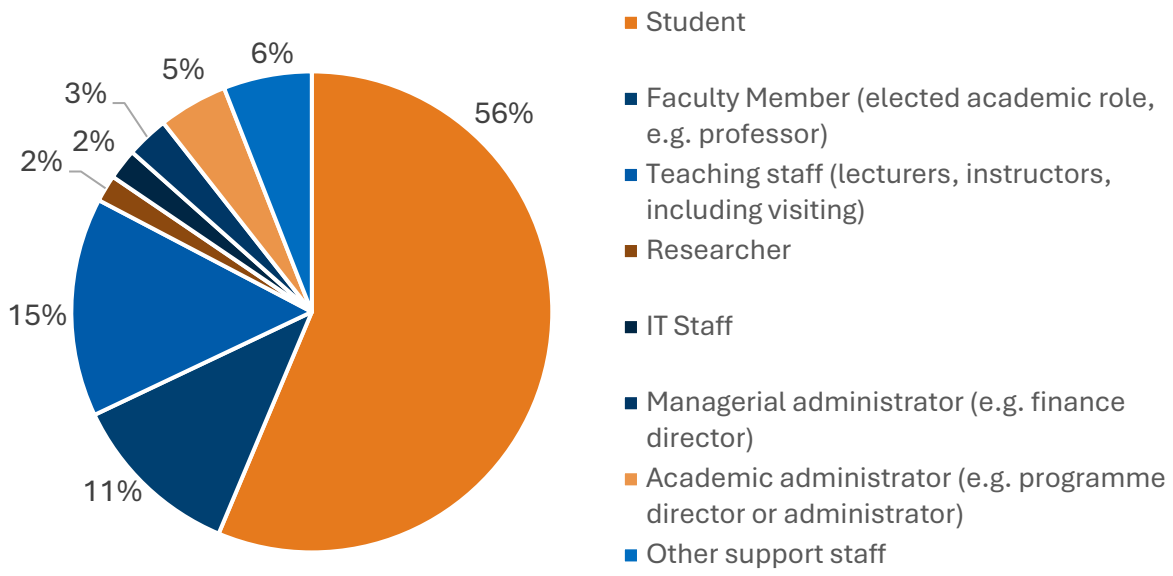

Fig. 1. The composition of the sample by roles (n=387)

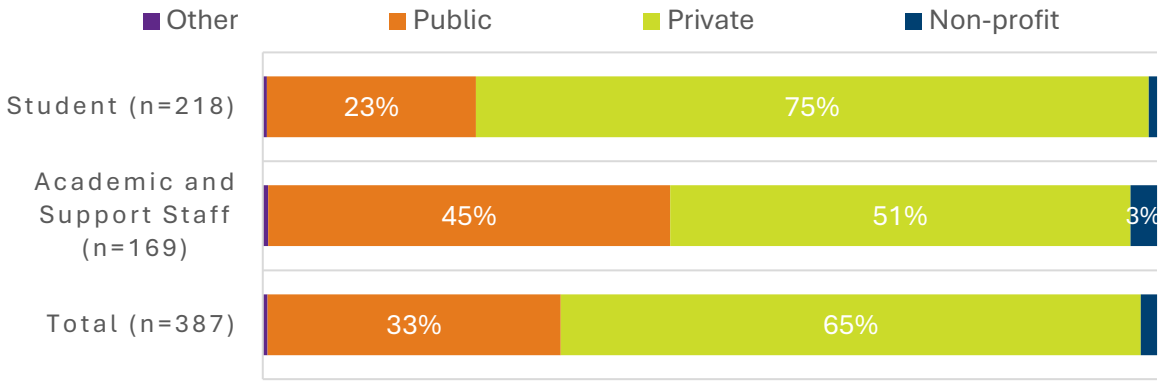

Fig. 2. The composition of the sample by roles and type of HEIs (n=387)

The country composition is predominantly composed of the four partner countries, where others include other European and the largest Asian countries (Fig. 3).

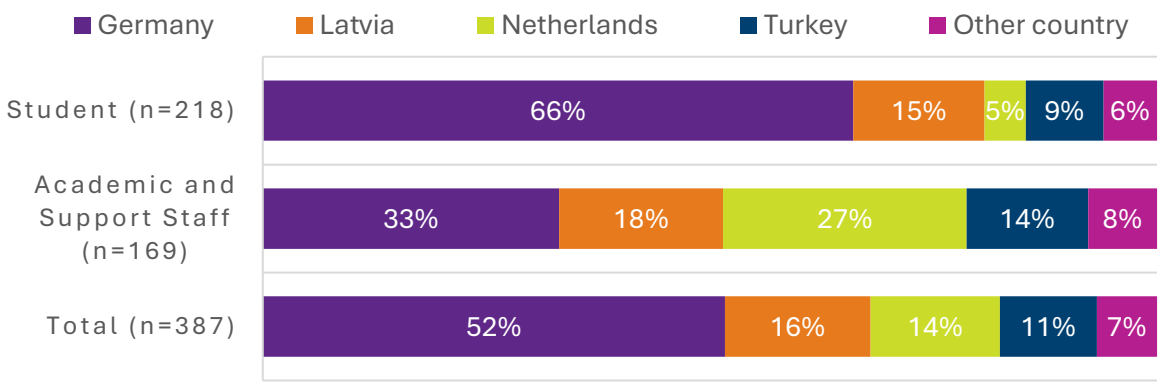

Fig. 3. The geographic composition of the sample (n=387)

The profile of the HEIs covers different sizes in the number of students enrolled (Fig. 4) with most of the HEIs falling into the bracket of 1,000-10,000 students.

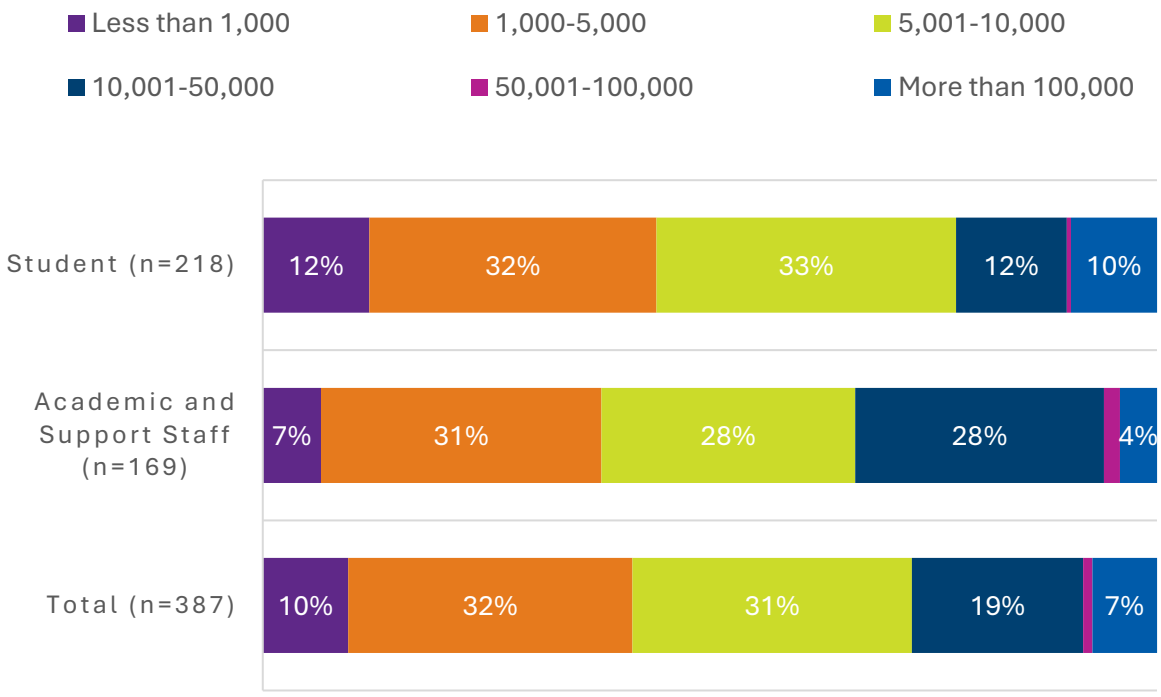

Fig. 4. The composition by the size of HEI (n=387)

From the perspective of the specialisation, there is a well-balanced mix of respondents from HEIs offering diverse education; however, social sciences and ITC dominate in the mix, followed by health sciences and engineering (Fig. 5).

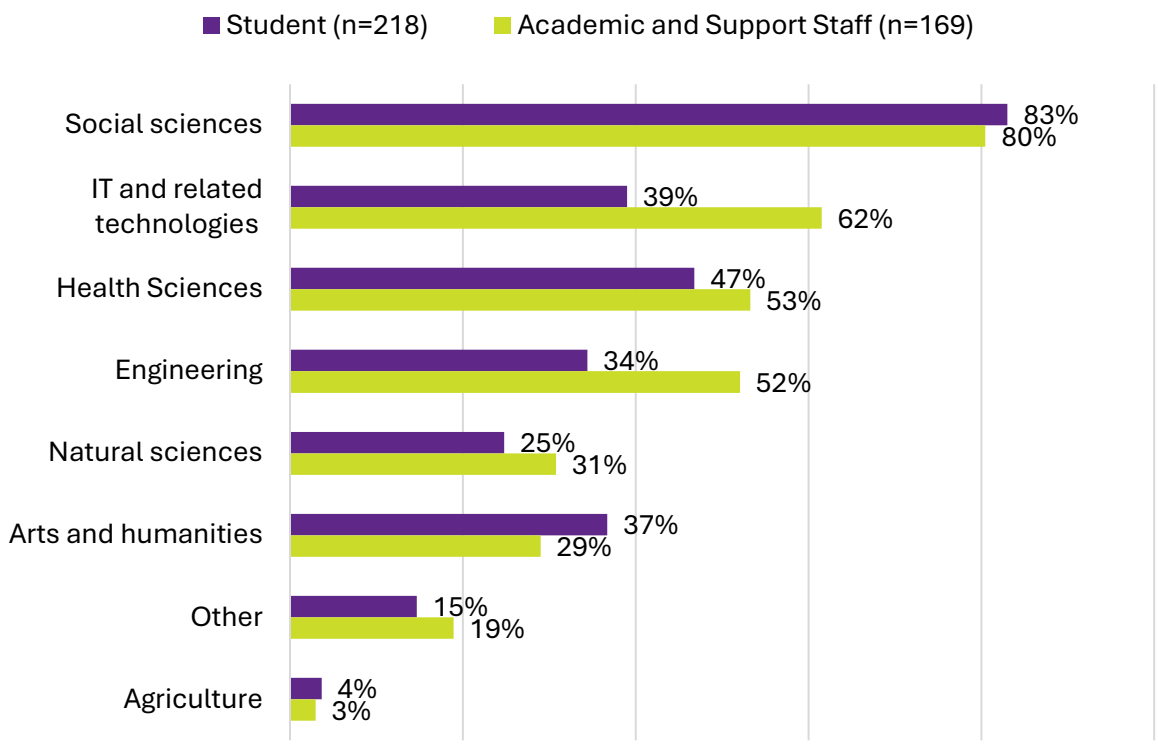

Fig. 5. The composition by the specialisation of HEI (n=387)

Integration of AI in Education Processes

This section is based on the responses of educators (n = 172). This sample also includes individuals who did not complete the full questionnaire, in contrast to the sample of 169 educators shown in Figures 1–4, who completed the entire questionnaire.

As shown in Fig. 6, AI is primarily used for teaching and learning processes (49%) and developing course content (41%). Administrative uses remain limited, indicating a need for increased institutional awareness and support for infrastructure. It is observed that administrative and managerial areas such as HR processes (69%), financial management (76%), quality management (71%), and alumni engagement (73%) are marked mainly as "Don't know / Not applicable", suggesting limited awareness or adoption.

Overall, a high share of “Don’t know” responses across categories highlights significant uncertainty or lack of visibility regarding AI deployment in institutional operations. It might be related to the novelty of the field, blurred understanding of what AI stands for and the variety of interpretations of what either technical solution deployed at the HEI represents – is it AI or not. The latter is particularly complex to define for the respondents who are not deeply engaged in the particular function (e.g. researchers and teaching faculty might not be aware of the technologies deployed by the finance or marketing function). Therefore, the data should be used with caution, as it often represents perceptions based on limited knowledge.

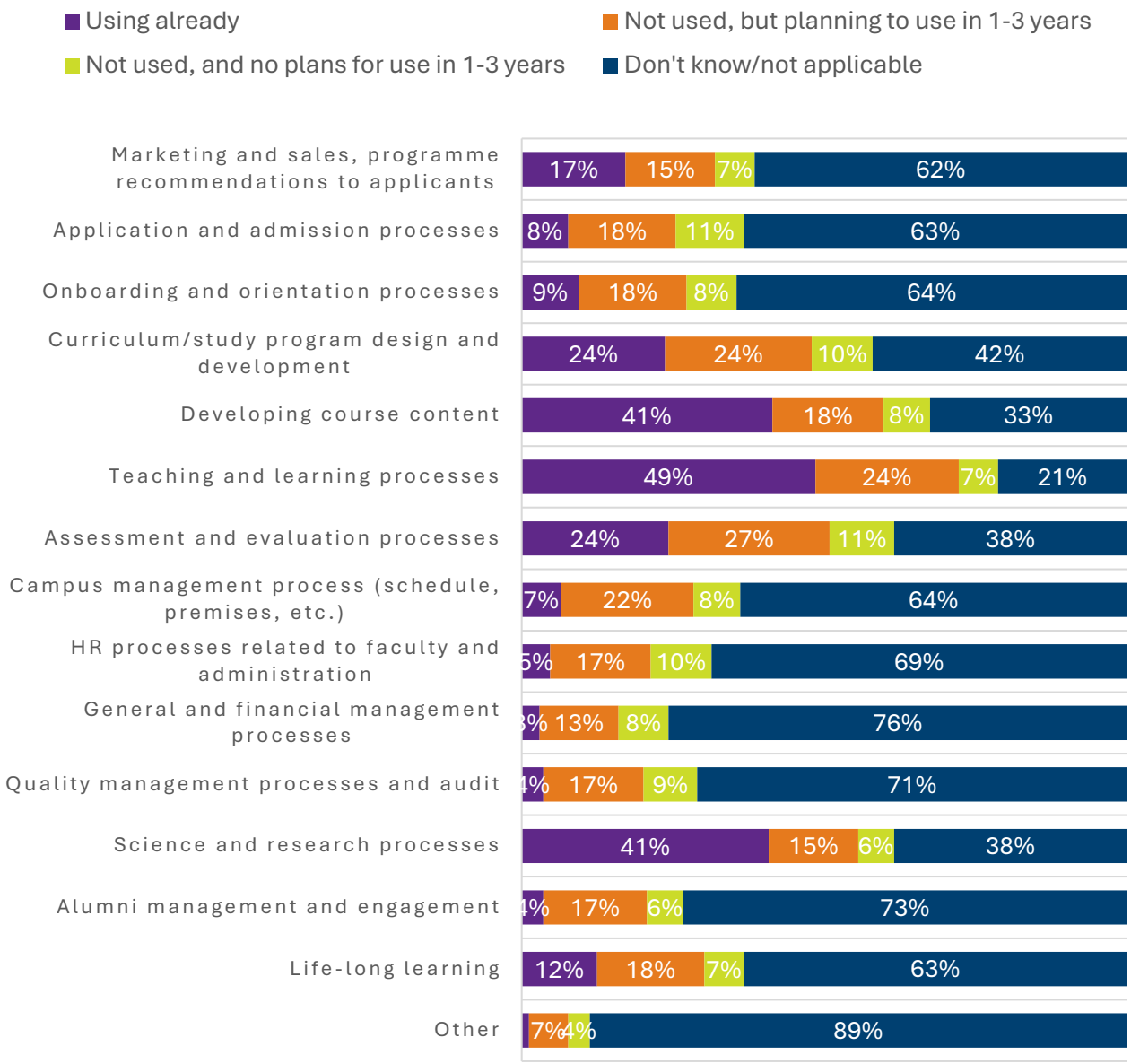

Fig. 6. Current deployment of AI in different areas by HEIs (n=172)

Overall, the evaluation of the AI's impact in areas where it has been used in HEIs by Educators (n=172) is very positive (Fig. 7). However, the number of respondents in some of these areas is considerably low. Still, across most functional areas, AI is perceived to have a substantial positive impact, especially in quality and alumni management (83%), campus management (82%), life-long learning (81%), and developing course content (77%). Negative assessments are very low overall, with most areas showing fewer than 7% negative responses, indicating broad support or at least neutrality toward the effects of AI.

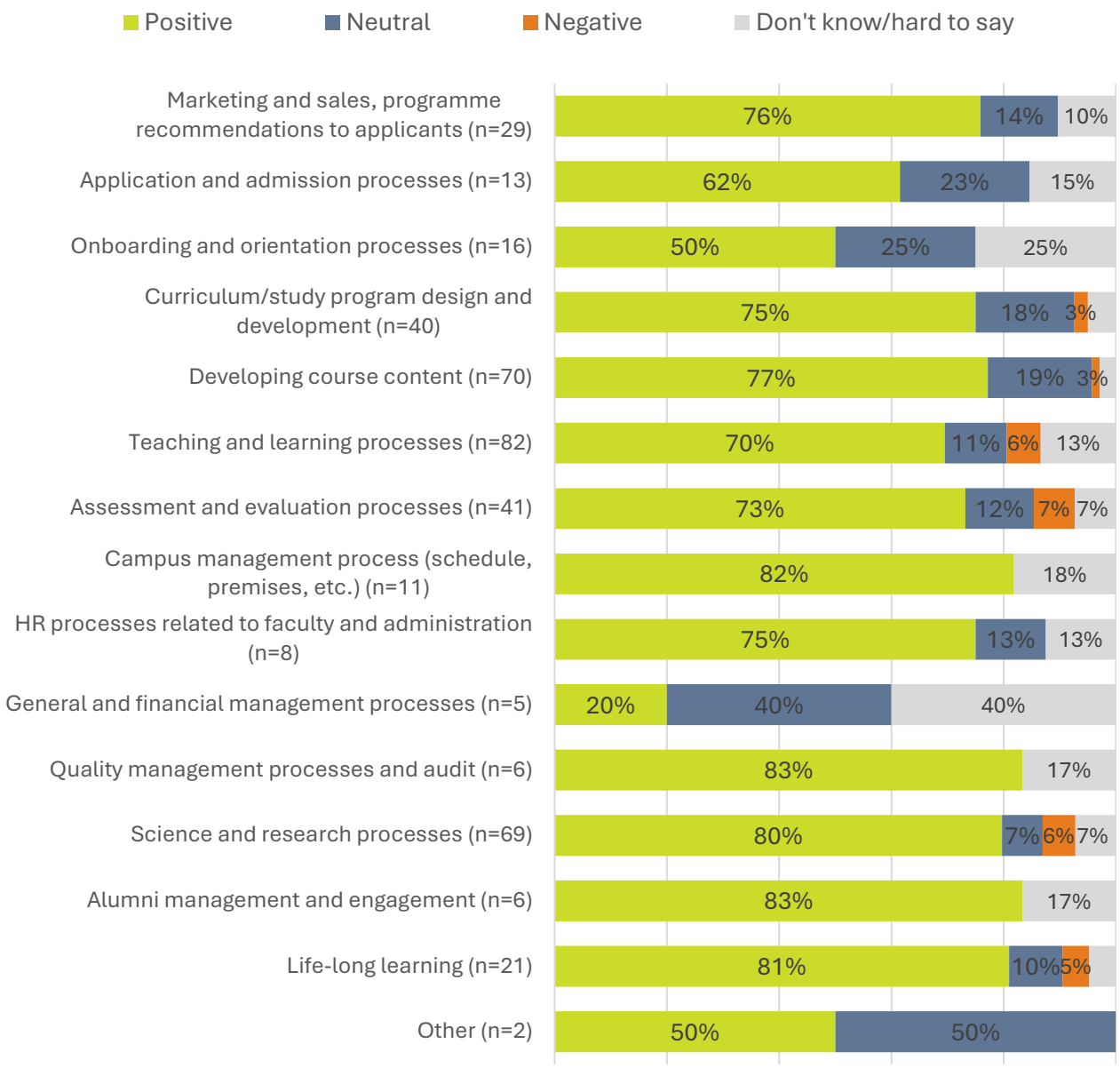

Fig. 7. Evaluation of the overall AI impact on the areas of deployment (n=172)

From the perspective of Educators, the most influential factors in adopting new AI solutions (Fig. 8) are staff expertise and the availability of relevant competencies (53%), followed by cost (41%) and compatibility with existing IT infrastructure (33%).

Most of the other factors are scattered across the domain, encompassing constraints such as current needs of HEIs, ethical considerations, privacy and safety concerns, and unknown value added, with no particular predominance of these factors. Figure 8a illustrates the primary benefits and Figure 8b the key challenges of AI adoption as perceived by educators associated with AI adoption at HEIs.

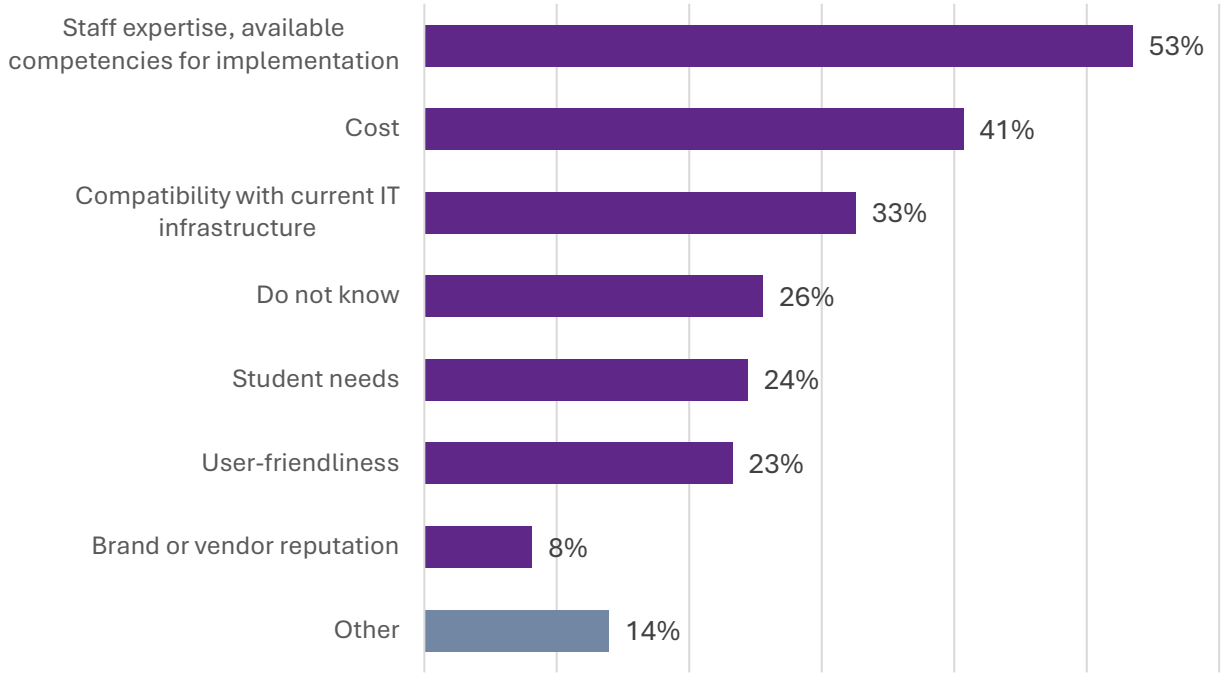

Fig. 8. Factors influencing the adoption of AI (n=172)

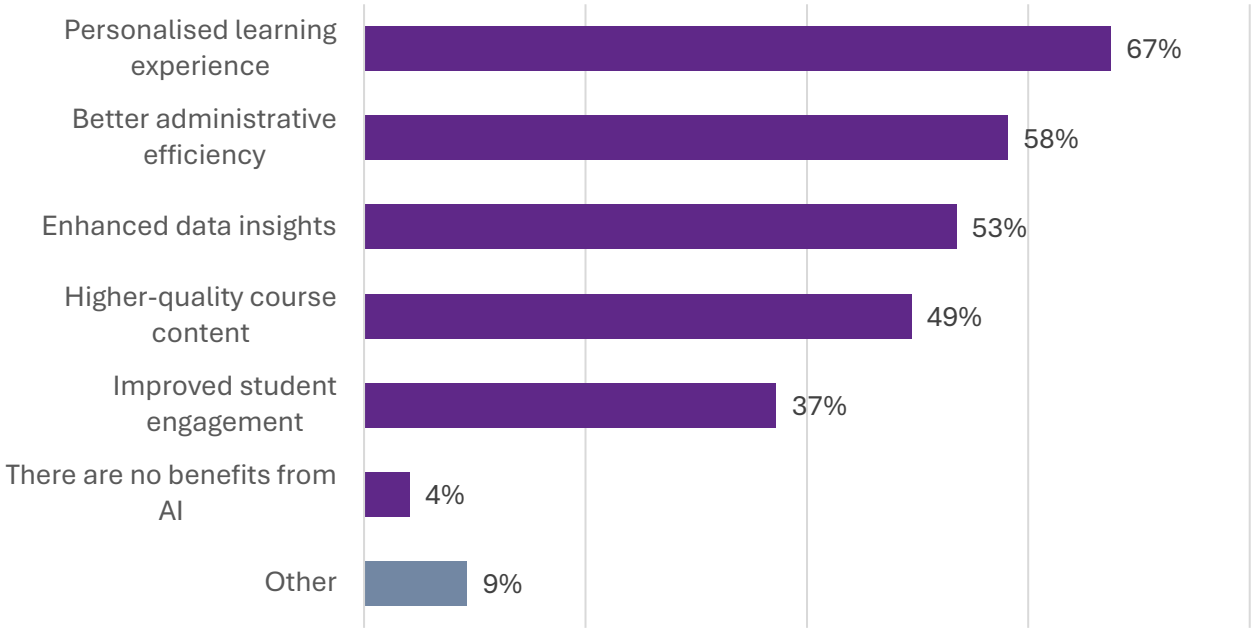

Fig. 8a. Perceived benefits associated with AI adoption (n=172)

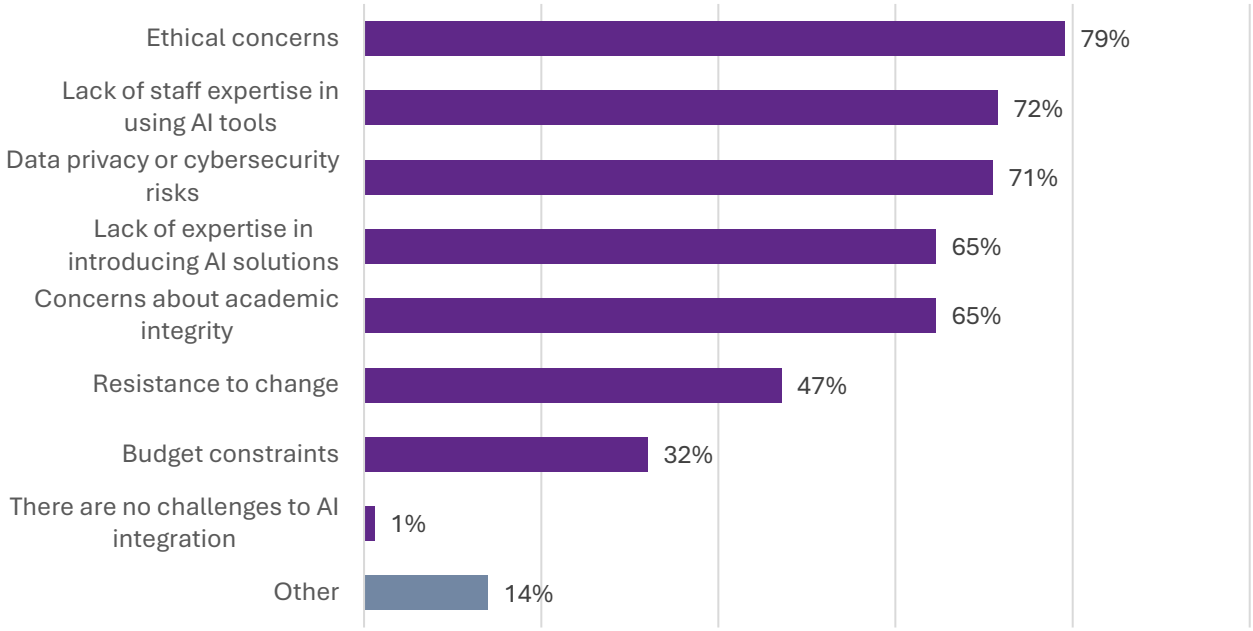

Fig. 8b. Perceived challenges associated with AI adoption (n=172)

Summary

From an adoption and impact perspective, **the highest adoption levels among the evaluated areas are already achieved in teaching (49%) and course content development (41%)**. Weak or unknown use is particularly notable in administrative processes (>70% "Don't know" responses). In comparison, a **substantial perceived impact is notable in quality and alumni management (83%), campus management (82%), life-long learning (81%), and developing course content (77%).**

When the **benefits of AI adoption** are considered, the top benefits from the Educators' perspective **are in personalised learning (67%) and administrative efficiency (58%).** Only 4% of respondents see no benefit – the **optimism is strong**.

Among the **top challenges, ethical considerations (79%), staff skills (72%), privacy (71%), and uncertainty about adoption decisions (26%)** are the most significant. The latter gap suggests a need for centralised AI Governance. Only 1% of respondents believe that there are no risks, highlighting a **strong awareness of potential risks and capability gaps**.

The major influencers of the adoption decisions are staff expertise (53%) and cost (41%). Since staff skills are also among the top challenges, it can be assumed that **staff skills and competencies are the most critical factors in determining the success of AI integration.**

Use of AI by Students

Students are primary drivers of AI adoption: 78% report having already used AI tools during their academic journey. As for the remainder, only 12% have not used AI and do not expect to use it soon, while 10% anticipate future use, indicating a **growing awareness and expectation of AI in education**.

Almost all students who have used AI (n=168), report using it directly in their study process (91%) with other applications falling way behind (Fig. 9). Institutional use of AI - for teaching (21%), admissions (14%), and student support (14%) - is much less commonly experienced which indicates that **AI adoption is currently student-driven, with schools lagging.** The dominant use in the process of learning is not detailed by the quantitative survey, whereas in focus groups, students admitted that generative AI is their primary area of use for a variety of purposes, including searching for answers, consolidating and writing up texts.

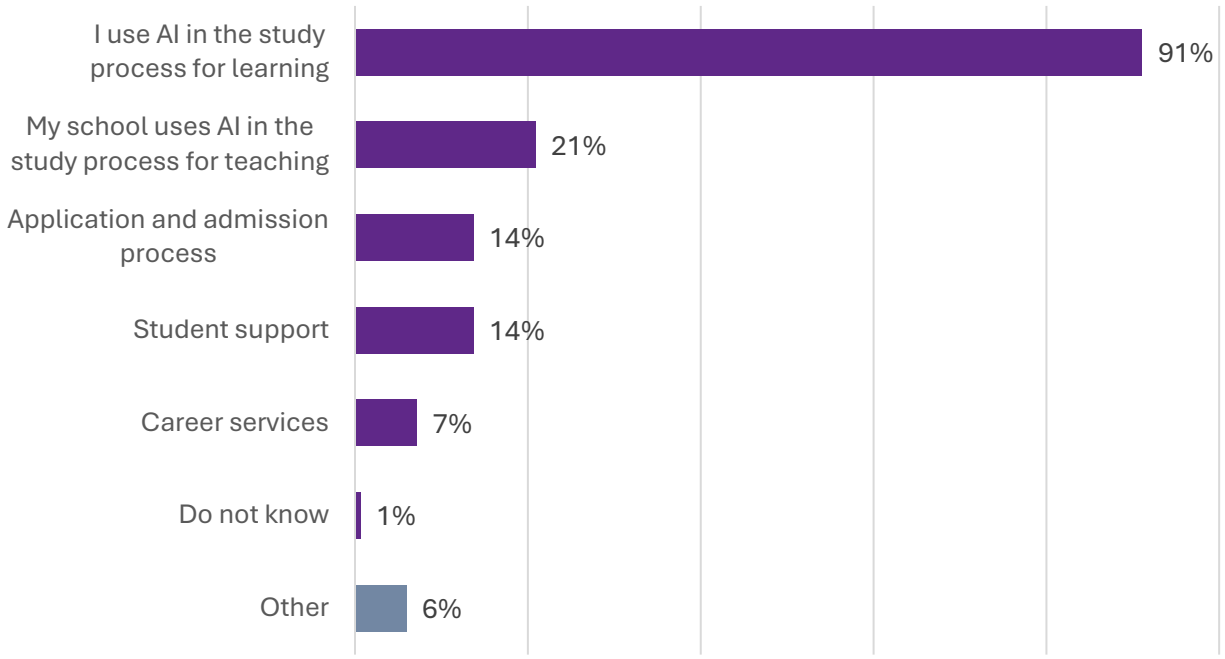

Fig. 9. Areas of AI use by Students (n=168: only students who already use AI)

When both respondent groups (n=387) are asked to assess the benefits of AI for students (Fig. 10), the **most widely recognised benefit of AI for students is an enhanced or more straightforward learning process (69%), followed by a personalised learning experience (61%)**.

Many also see AI as supporting creative expression (46%) and improving the quality of support services (45%). Only 4% believe AI offers no benefit, reinforcing the **substantial perceived value of AI in improving student learning and experience**.

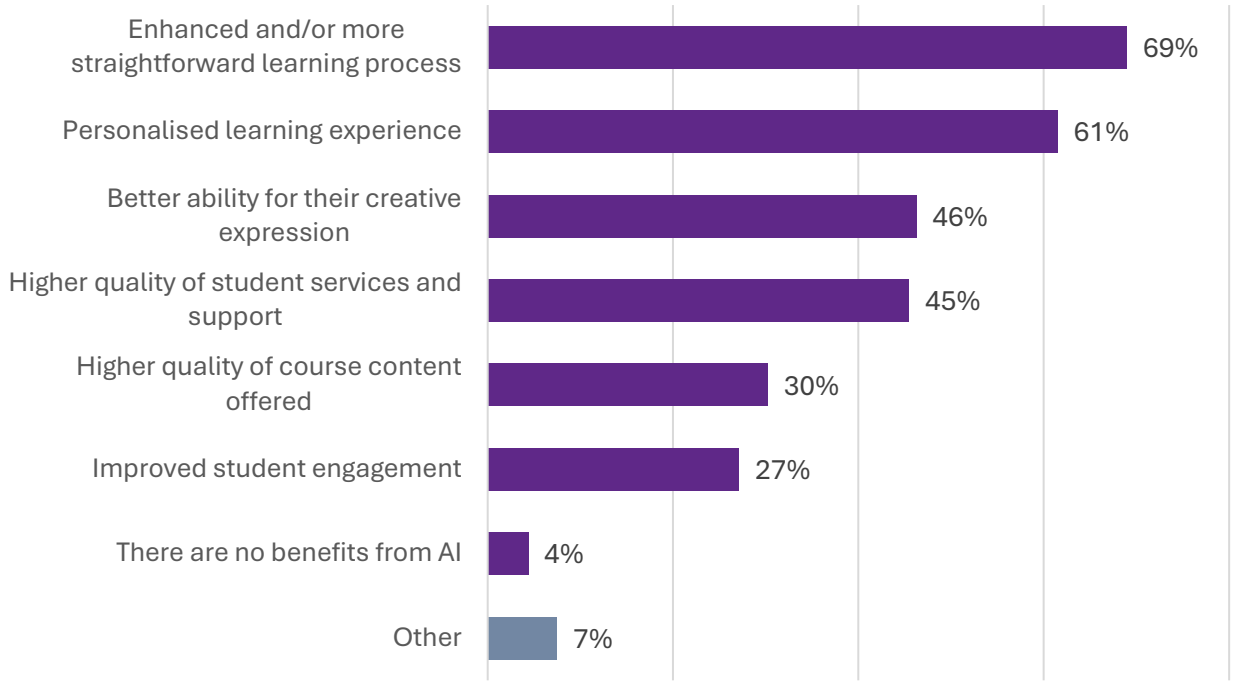

Fig.10. Perceived benefits of AI for Students (n=387)

When comparing the perceived benefits of both audiences (n=387), the shared top benefit is a **streamlined learning process** (Fig. 11).

A divergence in views on personalisation is observed: Educators are more likely to value AI for providing a personalised learning experience (69%) compared to students (56%), suggesting **that staff may see AI's adaptive capabilities as a stronger instructional tool than students currently perceive**.

Content quality perception gap is observed in views on AI improving the quality of course content, with 40% of staff perceiving this as a benefit versus only 22% of students. This **could reflect a disconnect between how AI-generated content is designed and how learners experience it.**

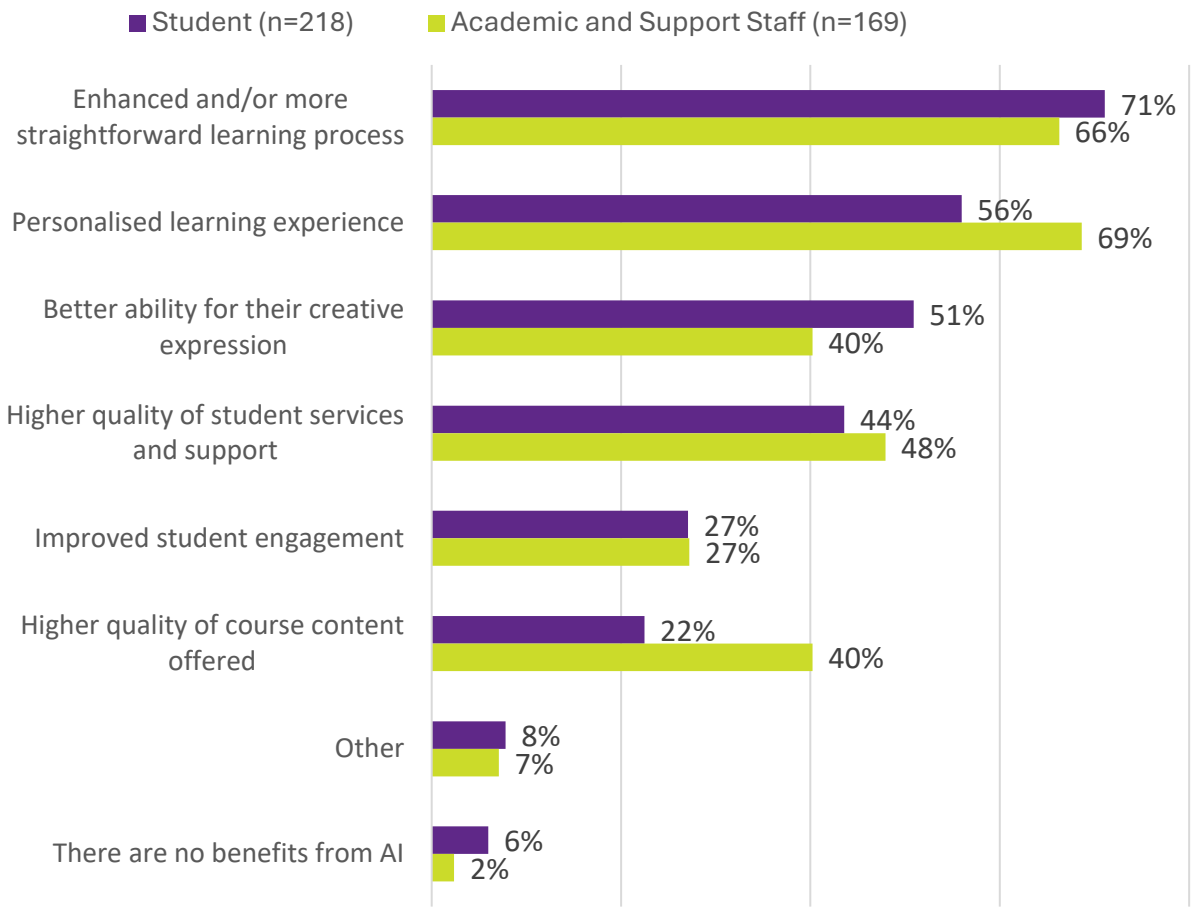

Fig. 11. Perceived benefits of AI use for Students (n=387)

Risks identified (Fig. 12, all respondents n=387) include reduced skill development (76%), academic integrity concerns (63%) and privacy concerns (57%). Additional concerns include inequality for students with lower AI skills (43%) and reduced personal contact or engagement (40%), indicating potential negative impacts on inclusiveness and human interaction. Only 3 % note that there are no risks.

However, there are some shared concerns and differences when comparing Students and Educators (Fig. 13). The **top shared concern is the potential loss of skills due to overreliance on AI**. **Educators express significantly higher concern than students about the alienation of students with lower AI skills (50% vs. 39%) and the lack of a personal approach in studies (38% vs. 33%)**, suggesting that staff are more attuned to inequalities and individualised learning needs. Students express a slightly higher risk of being accused of breaching academic integrity (64% vs. 62%), but are less concerned about privacy (54% vs. 61%) and a lack of individual approach (33% vs. 38%).

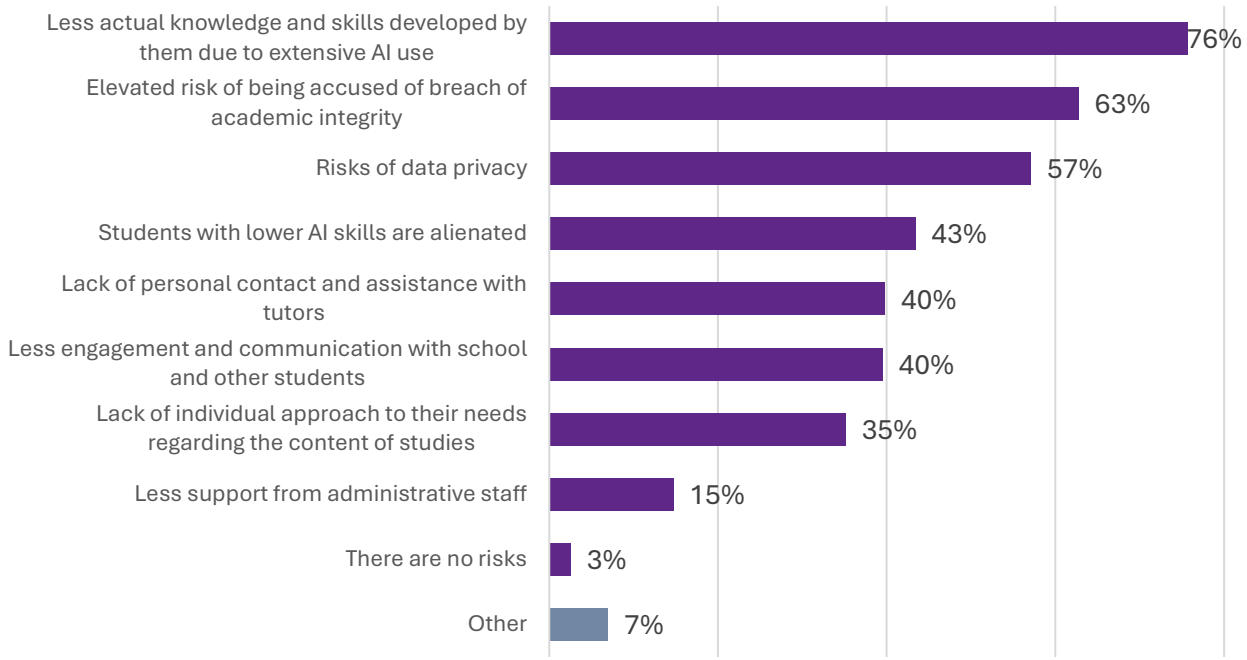

Fig. 12. Perceived risks of AI use for Students (n=387)

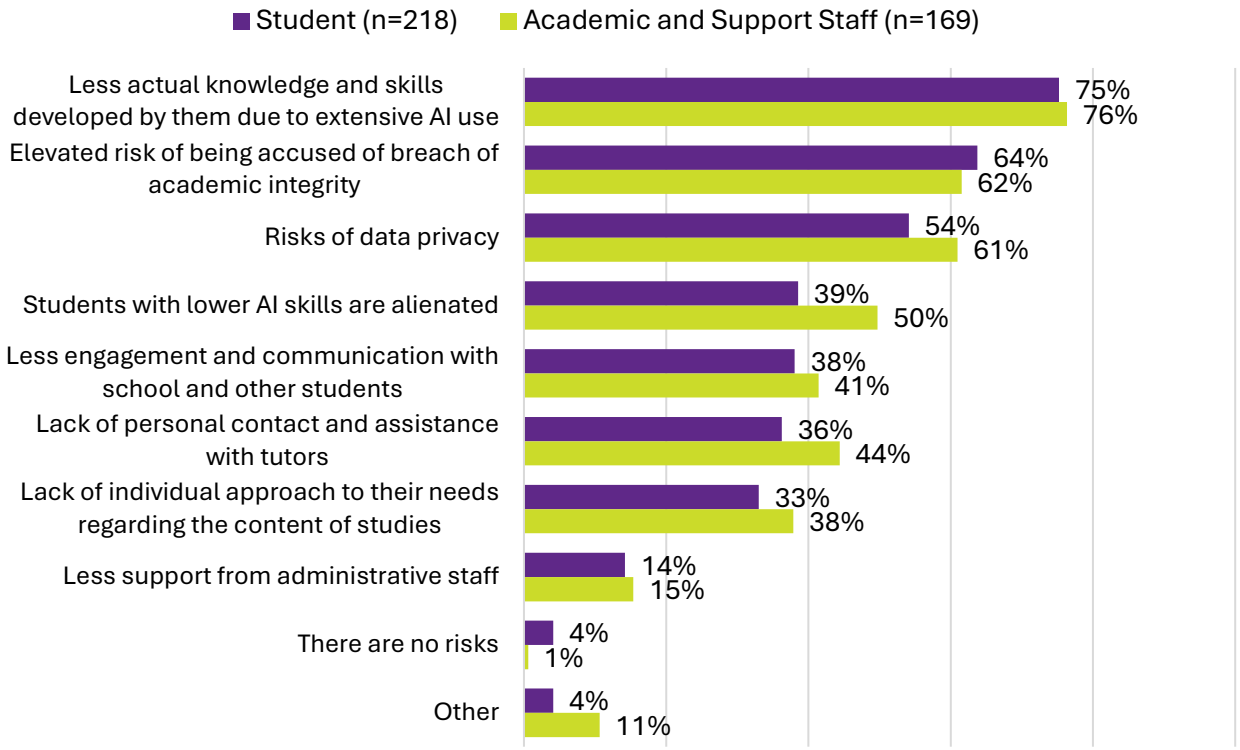

Fig. 13. Perceived risks of AI use for Students in comparison (n=387)

Guidance and support on the formal use of AI currently represent a significant gap in HEIs. Just over half of respondents (53%) report that their HEIs provide a framework of rules or guidelines for using AI in academic contexts (Fig. 14). Only 35% report the existence of formal policies, and 41% indicate the availability of training. A significant share is unsure whether such support exists, particularly regarding policies (48%).

This indicates a lack of clarity and institutional communication, even in cases where some guidance may be in place.

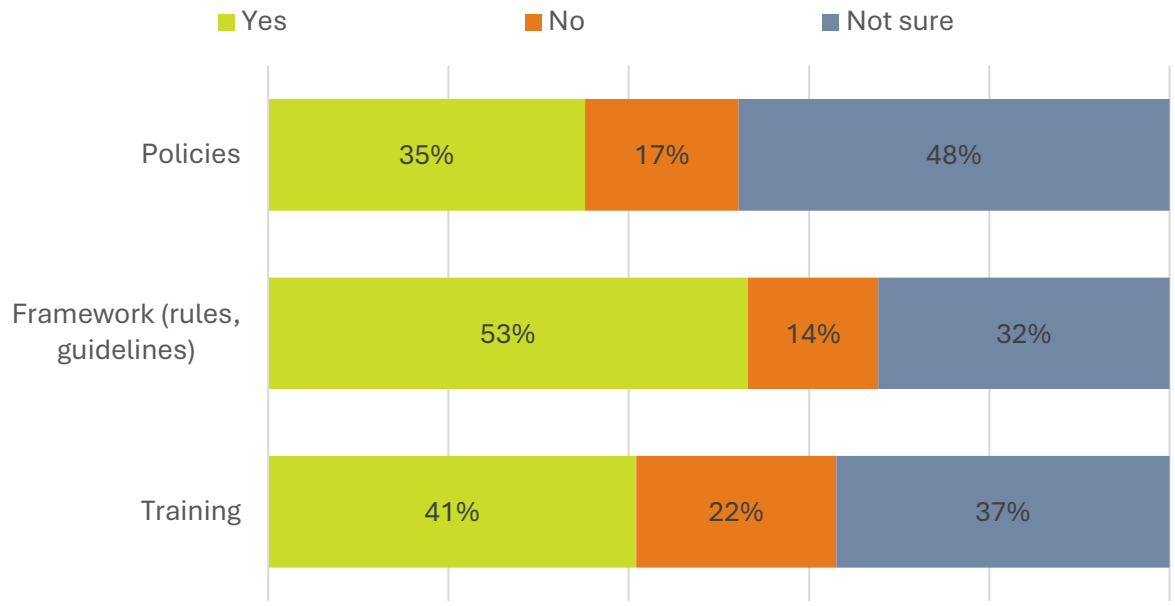

Fig. 14. Awareness of the formal AI at HEIs (n=387)

Regarding the overall attitudes towards AI in HEIs (Fig. 15), **there is strong consensus that AI will become more accepted in teaching and learning**, with 90% agreeing (41% strongly).

Respondents also believe that AI can improve personalisation (74%), student support (71%), and administrative efficiency (67%).

While largely positive, 41% agree that AI may raise ethical/privacy concerns, leading to more restrictions, which shows that support is paired with caution. **Nevertheless, 76% favour deploying more AI solutions in universities.**

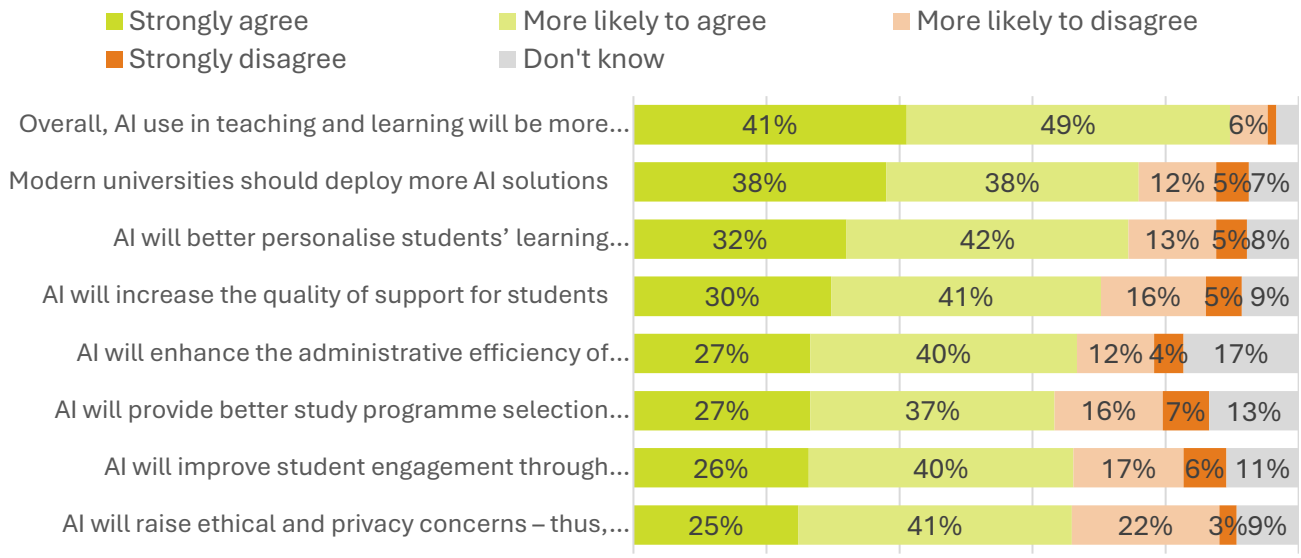

Fig. 15. Overall attitudes towards AI at HEIs (n=387)

Summary

From a student's use of AI perspective, a high adoption rate (78%) in the academic journey is notable, with 91% of Students using AI in their academic journey, which suggests that **AI adoption is currently student-driven at HEIs.**

The top benefits of AI in students' journey are associated with easier learning (69%), personalisation (61%), and creative expression (46%). There is **strong support for AI use among both Educators and Students, with 90% believing AI will be more widely accepted in teaching and learning, and 76% supporting the broader deployment of AI.**

Shared perceived risks include a fear of reduced skill development due to the overuse of AI (76%), concerns about academic integrity (63%), and privacy (57%). Some concerns are related to an inclusive study environment, e.g., **the concern that students with lower AI skills may be left behind (43%).**

AI Governance is once again suggested as a critical gap – today, only 35% report having clear policies known in their HEIs, while 48% are unsure if they exist. 41% foresee **ethical concerns and potential restrictions as a risk in future**.

Importance of Skills

Essential skills for effective AI use were universally recognised as critical, with ethical awareness (Educators: 77%, Students: 77%) and critical evaluation skills (Students: 84%) ranking highly (Fig. 16 for Students and Fig. 17 for Educators).

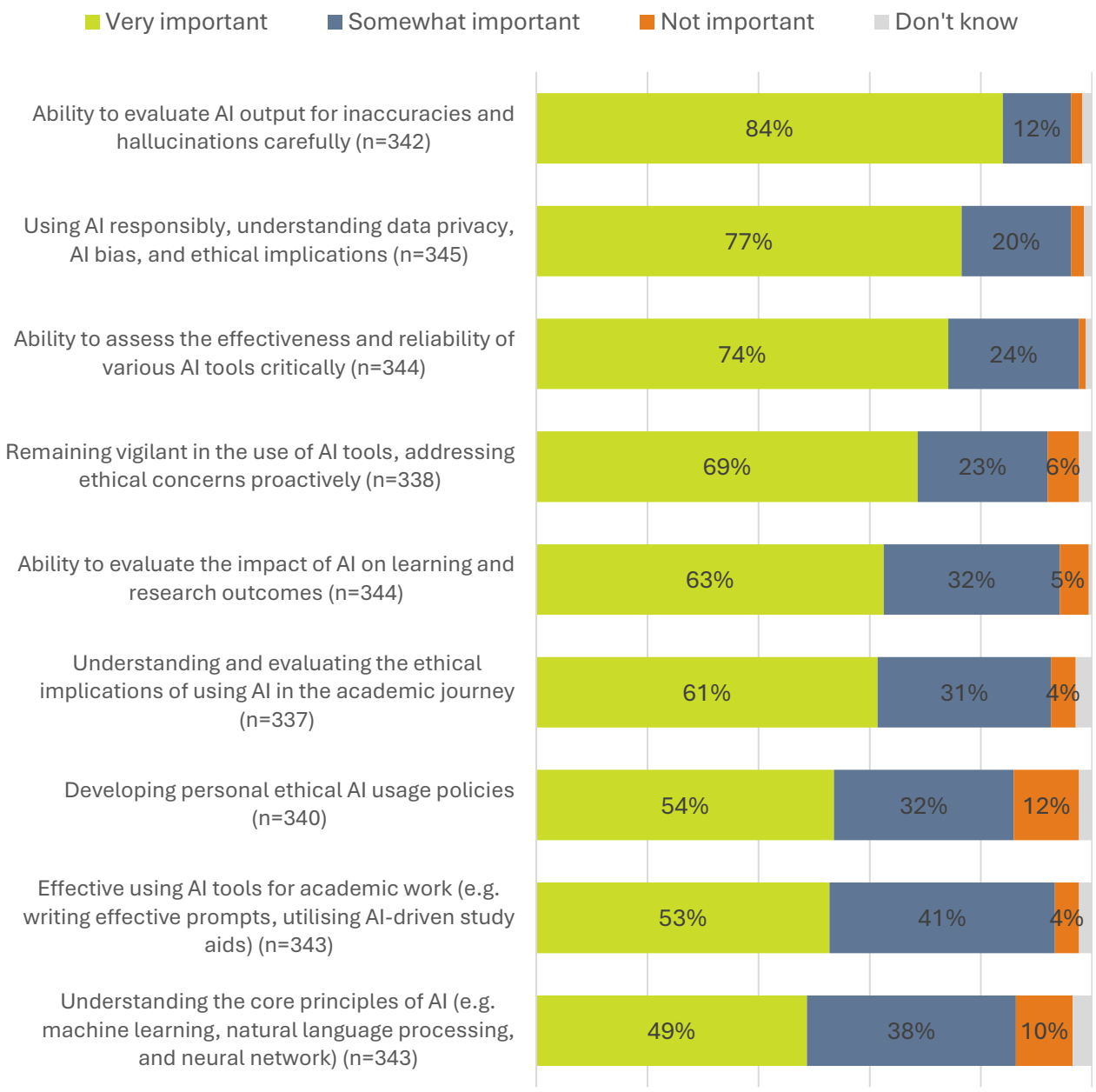

Fig. 16. Essential AI skills for Students (All who answered)

Fig. 16a. Essential AI skills for Educators (All who answered)

A consolidated view (Fig. 17) provides a summary of the Top 3 skills groups for Students and Educators, listing the respective most essential skills in each group. Across all skill areas, the share of individuals who consider a skill "not important" is very low, **indicating broad agreement on the relevance of these competencies.**

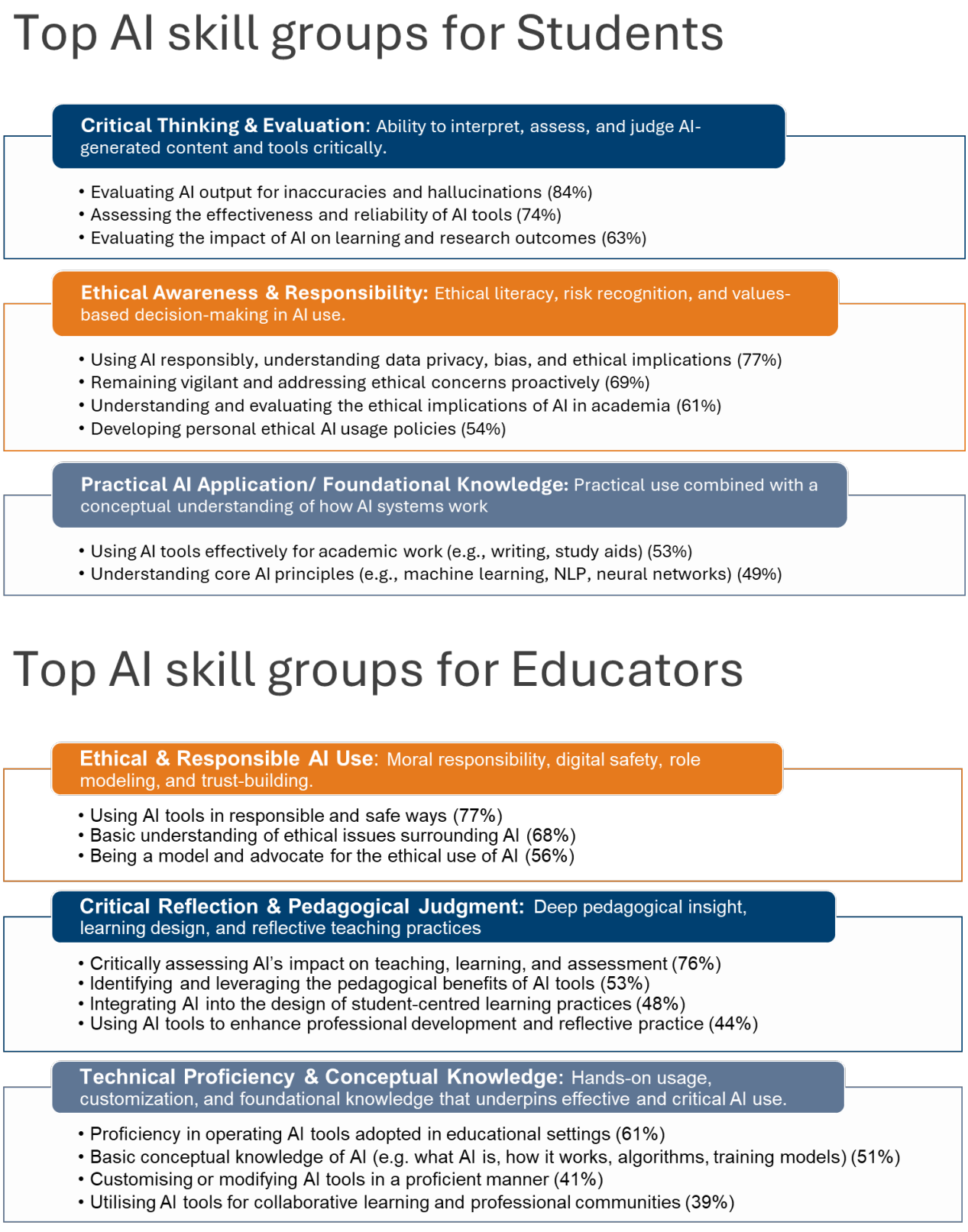

Fig. 17. Top 3 AI skills groups for Students and Educators (n=387)

Summary

There is a **strong agreement across all the respondent groups regarding the most critical skills required** for students and educators for successful AI integration in HEIs, **with three clearly pronounced** skill **groups, ranked below**:

1. **Ethical Awareness and Responsibility** (top priority for educators, second for students): Ethics is the backbone of AI literacy in education:
    - For students, emphasis is placed on understanding AI bias, data privacy, and making responsible decisions in academic contexts.
    - Educators are expected to go further – acting as ethical role models, ensuring safe AI use, and advocating responsible practices institution-wide.

2. **Critical Thinking and Judgment** (top priority for students, second for educators): Critical reflection is vital for meaningful and responsible AI use:
    - Students focus on evaluating AI outputs, understanding the impact on learning, and assessing tool reliability.
    - Educators require deep pedagogical insight – critically assessing AI's effect on teaching/learning, enhancing student-centred practices, and reflecting on their personal development.

3. **Technical Proficiency and Conceptual Knowledge** (ranked third by both groups): Technical skills support empowerment, but always within ethical and reflective frameworks:
    - Students are expected to apply AI tools in academic tasks and understand basic AI concepts.
    - Educators need operational fluency with AI tools, conceptual understanding, and the ability to adapt/customise tools for collaborative and instructional purposes.

AI Management at HEIs

Despite the relatively high adoption of AI in higher education, formal AI governance structures remain largely undeveloped.

Only 17% of respondents report that their institution currently has a designated role for AI management (Fig. 18). In comparison, 24% say there is no such role, and 59% are not sure, indicating a **significant lack of clarity and visibility**.

Among institutions that do not have a designated AIM role, a strong 71% believe such a role is needed, while only 6% disagree, and 23% are unsure.

These findings reveal a **clear gap between current AI governance practices and the perceived need for structured responsibility**, highlighting the urgency for higher education institutions to establish clear leadership, policy frameworks, and oversight for AI use.

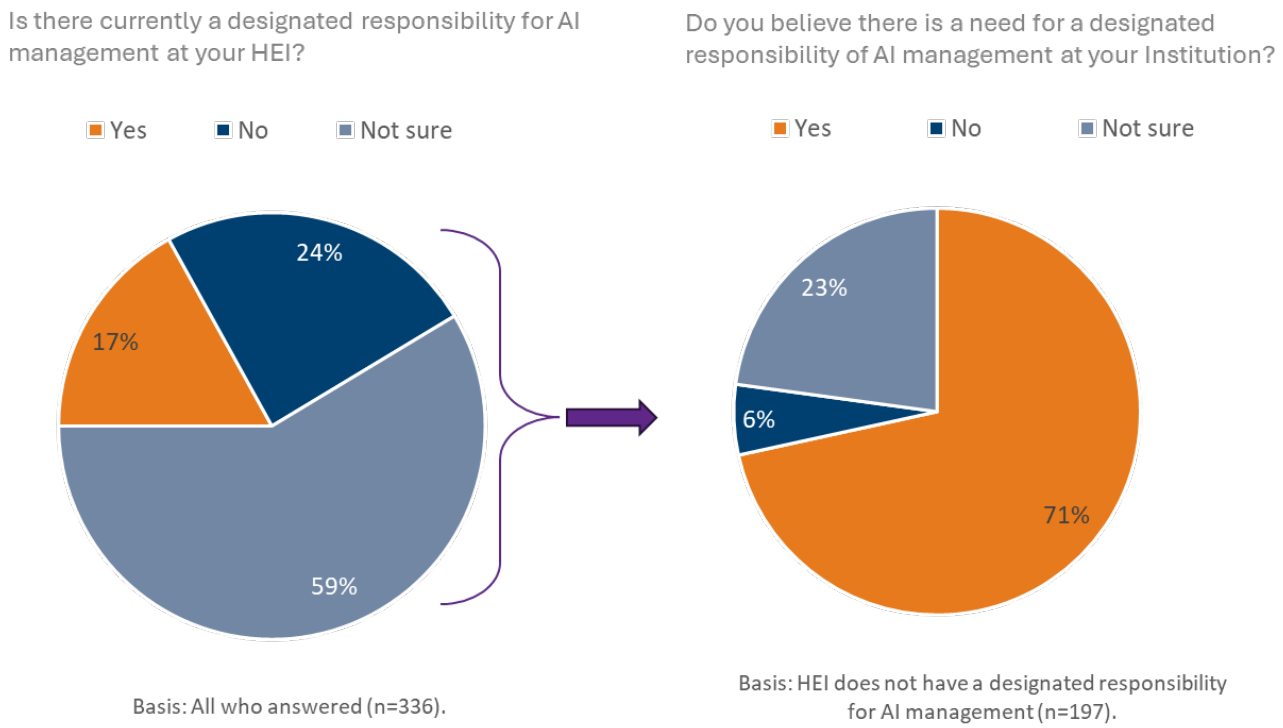

Fig. 18. AI Governance: existence and need for a designated AI Manager (All who answered)

Attempting to understand the **argumentation against a dedicated AIM role reveals** (Fig. 19, n=80 – respondents who think that a designated AIM role is not needed) **that the main reason** given for not having a designated AI manager **is the belief that AI integration is not necessary (15%)**, indicating scepticism about AI's role in some institutions.

Other objections include a lack of perceived need for the role (9%) and the view that "one person can't cover it all" (6%), suggesting concerns about the feasibility and scope of responsibility. The respondents in this domain predominantly represent HEIs where AI integration is low and/or have highly evaluated the perceived barrier of cost for AI integration.

A minor share of respondents (4%) prefer distributed responsibilities or guideline-based governance, reflecting a more decentralised or policy-driven approach rather than relying on individual roles. Indirectly, open-ended questions suggest a low awareness and lack of precaution associated with such a role, where cost considerations might serve as a valid argument. However, the majority did not respond to this open-ended question at all; thus, it might even be a minority opinion which should be treated with precaution.

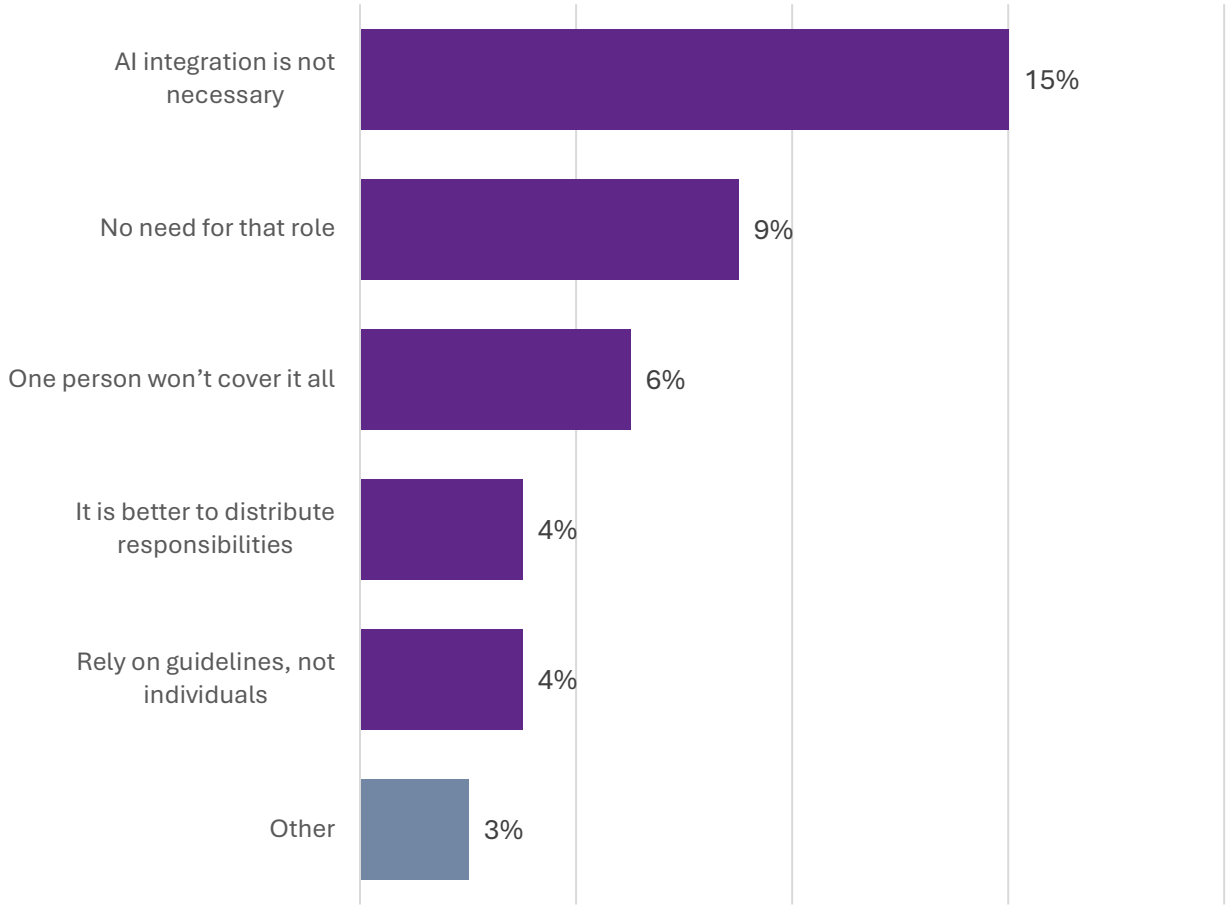

Fig. 19. Main reasons not to have a dedicated AIM (n=80, those who rejected the need for AIM)

For those who are in favour of AIM introduction (n = 256), **the top priority for AI management is well-pronounced: staff and student training**, cited by 86% of respondents (Fig. 20), thus **highlighting the critical need to build institutional AI competence**.

High importance is also placed on AI use oversight, ethics, and compliance (80%) and data privacy and security management (79%), signalling a strong concern for the responsible and secure use of AI, although somewhat relating the AIM role to technical/IT functionality.

Strategic-level tasks, such as AI strategy development (77%) and integration into IT infrastructure (65%), follow closely, while liaising with AI vendors (41%) is seen as a lower, yet still relevant, responsibility.

These findings suggest that **HEIs anticipate AI management to assume both educational and regulatory roles, supported by strategic and technical functions**.

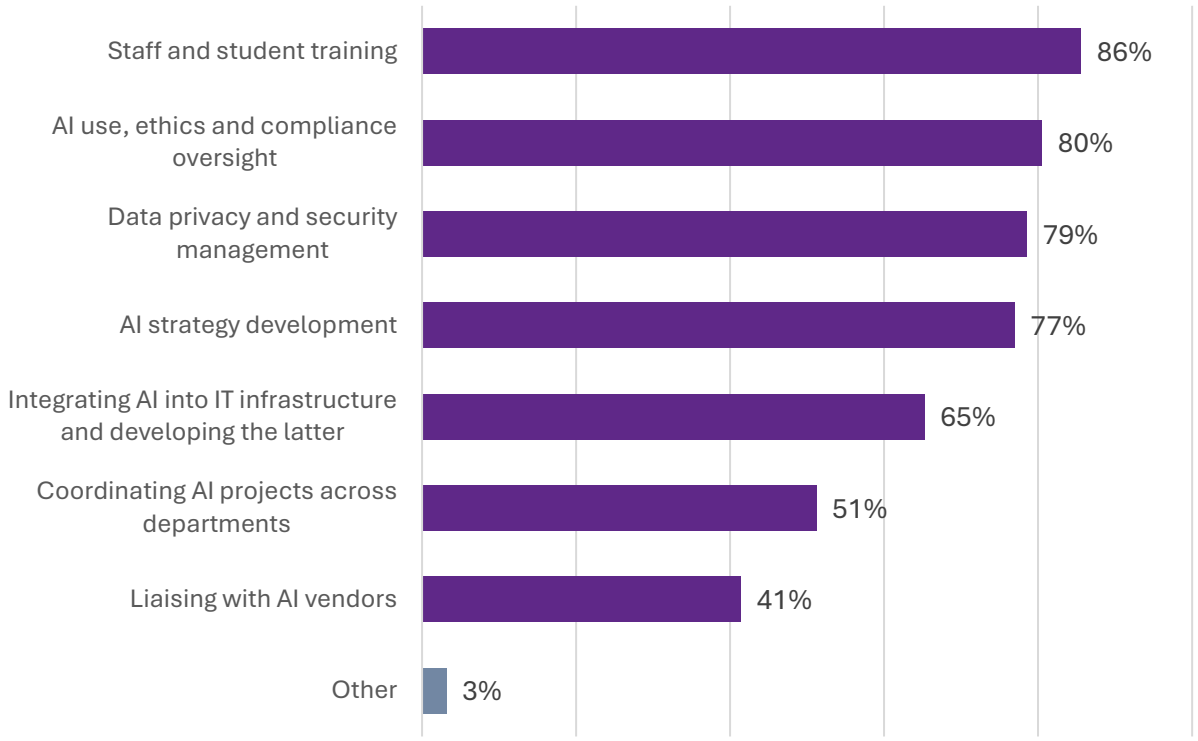

Fig. 20. Main responsibilities of a dedicated AIM (n=256, those who support the need for AIM)

Preferred governance structures are cross-departmental, emphasising the need for collaborative oversight. When explicitly questioned, **26% of responders suggest creating a dedicated AIM role as a separate hierarchical entity** (Fig. 21), suggesting that centralised leadership is currently not widely favoured. At the same time, the main open-ended answers relate to the risk of cost increases and concerns about competencies ("can a single person handle it all"), which in turn are related to a lack of prior experience with AI or IT integration.

The most preferred approach (based on combined percentages) is a shared responsibility model, with 24% favouring **sharing a single AIM function across multiple departments** (e.g., IT, Research, and Academic functions) and 16% distributing this across multiple functions instead of a single responsibility. From the perspective of the AIM role envisioned by the Project, **shared cross-functional AIM and dedicated AIM represent the same solution**, differing only in their reporting lines, thus a **combined 50% represents the top share of opinion**.

From the perspective of placing the responsibility onto a single department, the IT department (14%) and academic department (6%) are also seen as key players, but not dominant, **reinforcing the idea that AI governance is seen as a cross-functional solution**, rather than one with a single point of ownership.

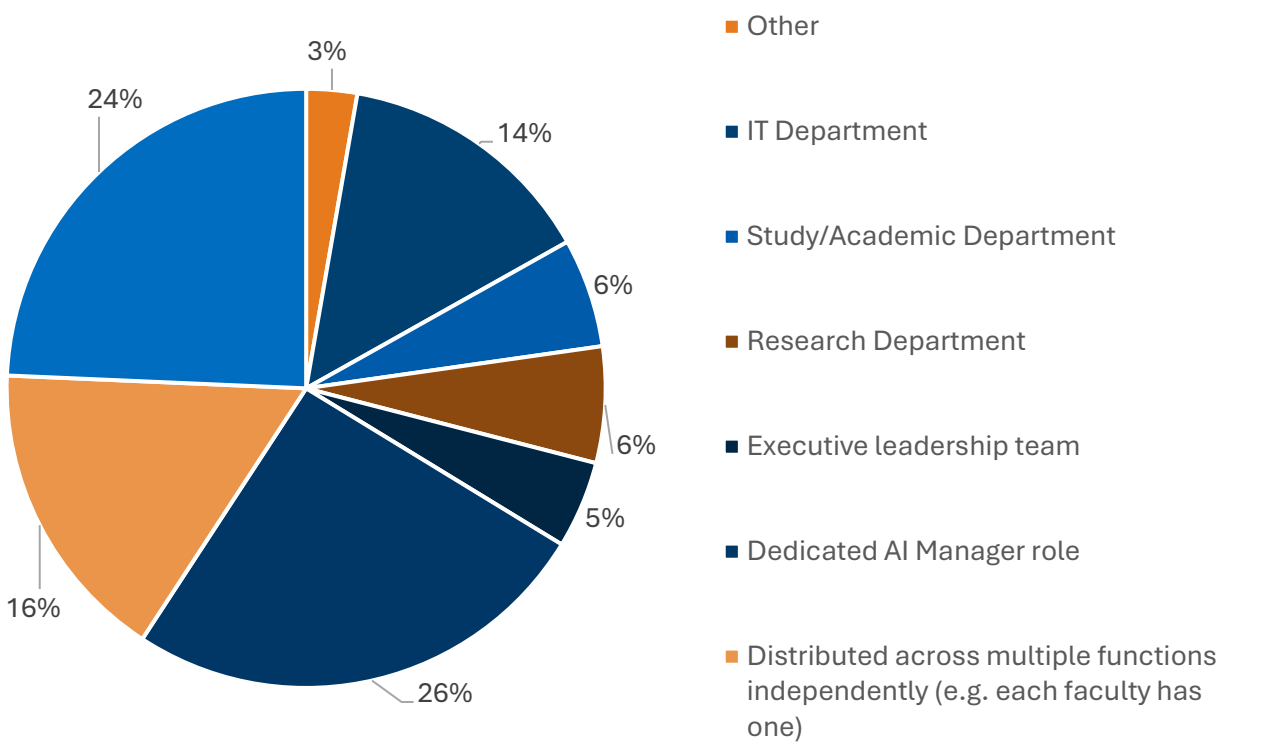

Fig. 21. Preferred governance structures for AIM (n=256, those who support the need for AIM)

The overall perception of the introduction of the AIM function is highly positive if asked if AIM role might improve one's experience with HEI, assuming that the required skills and resources are provided (Fig. 22), as a significant 76% **of respondents believe that an AIM role would improve their experience at their HEI, suggesting strong demand for structured leadership in AI implementation**.

There is **very low resistance to the introduction of the AIM role**, as only 6% say the role wouldn't improve their experience, showing minimal opposition to the idea.

Still, some concerns and uncertainty remain: 18% are unsure, which may reflect **a need for more communication or clarity about what an AIM role would entail in practice**.

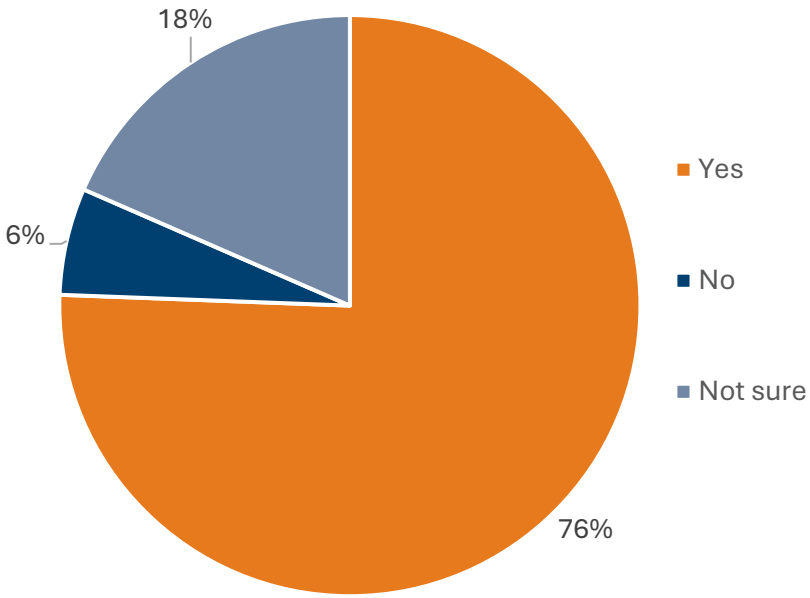

Fig. 22. Evaluation of AIM impact (n=336, all who answered the question "Assuming that an AI Manager role would ensure that it delivers competencies and skills you evaluated as important before, would an AI Manager role improve your experience in your HEI?")

Summary

There is a **lack of, and low awareness of, designated AI leadership** (17% yes, 59% unsure). While **some scepticism regarding the necessity of the role** exists (e.g., 15% believe AI integration is not necessary, and around 6% think that a single person cannot cover everything, that responsibilities are better distributed, or that it is better to rely on policies than on an individual), the **majority support the need for a designated responsibility** (71%).

Key tasks for AIM role, as set by the expectations of HEIs are training of staff and students (86%), **managing ethics, compliance, and responsible use** (80%), **data privacy and security** (79%), and assuming **leadership of the strategic planning and AI integration** into IT (65–77%).

While only **26% support centralisation into a new dedicated position, this, in combination with 24% considering a shared but overarching function across multiple departments (24%), represents a clear majority supporting a need for an AIM role which might operate cross-functionally or under a collective body.**

Additional Insights

These insights, primarily based on the open-ended and non-mandatory questions, may provide valuable guidance for defining the AIM role, its responsibilities, and competence profile, and assist HEIs in building effective integration plans for AI adoption.

Support and Resources Required for Effective AI Integration

The most requested supports for effective AI integration in higher education are courses and training (20%) and frameworks and resources (18%), indicating **a strong demand for foundational capacity-building and structured guidance**.

Other support needs (Fig. 23), such as professional growth (10%), structured instructions (8%), and AI tools in research (6%), **were less commonly mentioned but still highlight interest in deeper engagement with AI.**

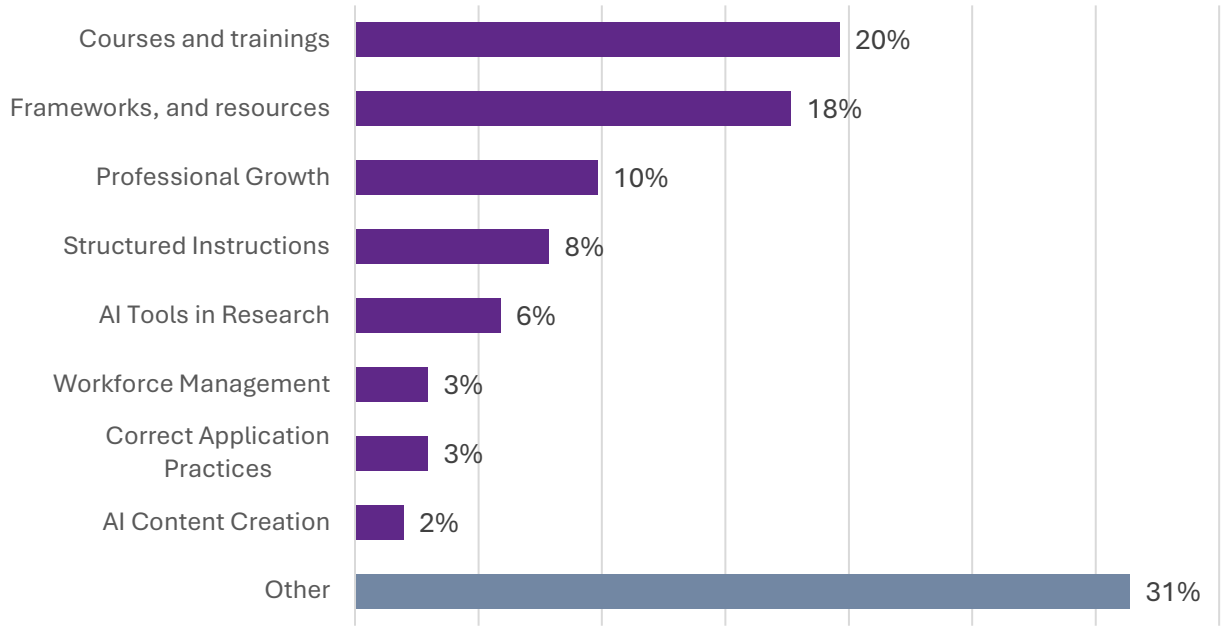

Fig. 23. Support and resources needed for AI integration (n=102, all who answered the question "What resources or support would help you integrate AI more effectively into higher education?")

Concerns of AI Integration

Application of AI and quality concerns are high on the agenda: the top concerns around AI integration in higher education are related to AI application risks (19%) and its impact on education quality (17%), **indicating apprehension about both technical misuse and pedagogical degradation** (Fig. 24).

Uncertainty about boundaries is a concern: lack of a clear governance framework (12%) and fears about the scale of academic transformation (10%) reflect **broader anxieties about control, regulation, and institutional readiness.**

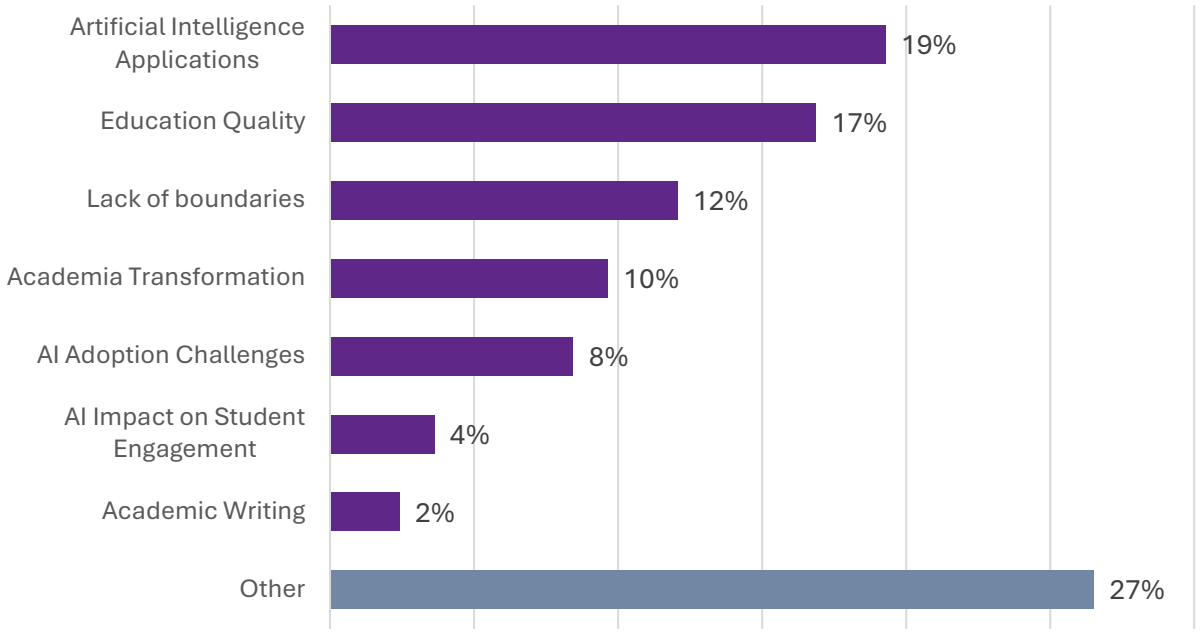

Fig. 24. Concerns of AI integration (n=83, all who answered the question "What are your expectations or concerns regarding AI integration in higher education that you would like to share on top of the answers already provided?")

The Impact of Respondents' Experience on Attitudes to AI Benefits and Risks

Logistic regression was used to identify how key independent variables influence perceptions of AI-related benefits and risks among students and staff. Due to the questionnaire's structure, two subsamples were analysed separately: students (IE codes) and staff (IS codes).

Independent Variables:

- Current experience with AI: IE02, IS01, IS02
- Attitudes and priorities: IE06, IS07
- Importance of AI-related skills: S01, S02

Dependent Variables in Regression:

- AI Benefits: IE04, IS04
- AI Risks: IE05, IS05

Models with questions related to AI Management as dependent variables failed to converge, as the outcome did not yield identifiable maximum-likelihood estimates due to (quasi-)complete separation,

sparse cells, and parameter singularities in a high-dimensional predictor set. Consequently, coefficients are not interpretable, and we refrain from inferring drivers for this outcome.

Each dependent variable was modelled individually. Models that did not converge or had no significant predictors ($p < 0.0505$) were excluded. Both standard and BFGS (Broyden, Fletcher, Goldfarb, Shanno) optimisation methods were used to ensure robust estimation. Detailed model data is included in the appendix with heatmap XLTs.

Complete regression analysis is provided as heatmaps, along with the extended analysis presentation (Appendix 3), and stored on the RISEBA Dataverse. These illustrative figures further indicate the general findings of the analysis for reference purposes only.

The Impact of the Educators' Experience on Attitudes

The separate regression analysis below examines the perceptions of Educators regarding the benefits and challenges of AI, first for HEIs and Educators, and then for students.

Factors Influencing the Educators' Perceptions of AI Benefits to HEIs

The regression coefficient heatmap for the factors influencing perceptions of AI benefits (Fig. 25) suggests several **vital takeaways**:

- **Usability and training provision are foundational:** User-friendly tools and institutional support (training) significantly drive positive perceptions across all dimensions.
- **Ethical and student-centric approaches amplify impact:** Focus on personalisation, adaptability, and ethics (especially in respect to students) correlates with higher perceived benefits
- **Frameworks and negative experiences can undermine AI's potential:** Lack of frameworks or disappointing direct experiences (especially in curriculum or support areas) diminishes confidence in AI.

Both student-centred values and the pedagogical awareness of educators underpin a strong belief in AI's role in personalising learning. This **synergy between student needs and informed teaching practices reinforces the perception of AI as a personalisation tool**.

While **usability and student critical AI skills strongly promote the belief in AI's role in improving course content**, on the other hand, educator scepticism, ethical concerns, and viewing AI primarily as an admin tool slightly dampen confidence in content enhancement. **This highlights the importance of framing AI's value as both pedagogical and content-related, rather than just administrative.**

Administrative efficiency through AI is maximised by strong human and technical infrastructure, particularly staff expertise, IT compatibility, and training. Student skills in ethical reasoning and AI evaluation also play a supportive role. **However, rigid frameworks, negative or unclear AI experiences, and possibly overregulation can significantly dampen perceived benefits.**

Staff expertise, practical student skills, and student-centred AI integration most strongly support enhanced data insights. These findings suggest that real-world applications and ethical awareness, rather than just theoretical understanding, drive data value. **However, less practical institutional**

applications (like admissions or professional learning) **and theoretical knowledge without actionable use can diminish perceptions of AI's data benefits.**

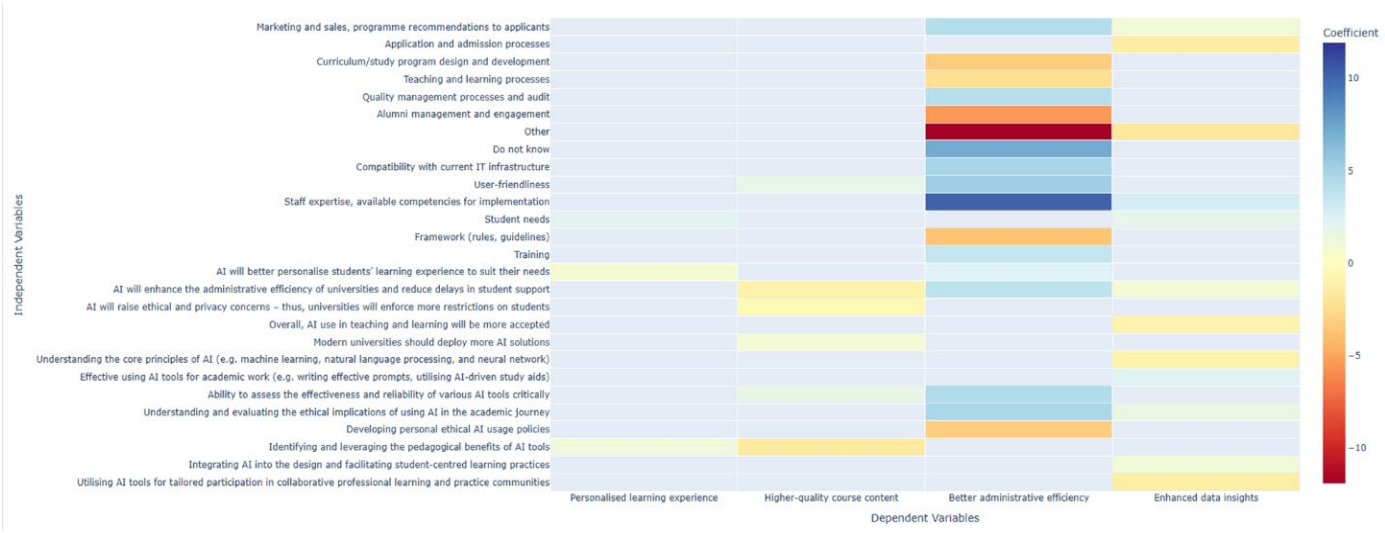

Fig. 25. Factors influencing the Educators' perceptions of AI benefits to HEIs

Factors Influencing the Educators' Perceptions of AI Challenges to HEIs

The regression coefficient heatmap for the factors influencing perceptions of AI challenges (Fig. 26) suggests several **vital takeaways**:

- **Ethical and pedagogical awareness heightens concern about implementation barriers**, especially around integrity, staff readiness, and privacy.
- **Hands-on experience, particularly in quality or management processes, mitigates fear of change and technical limitations** - practical use builds confidence.
- **Financial and expertise constraints remain central barriers**, especially where trust or understanding of AI's value is incomplete.

Ethical concerns are amplified by awareness and high expectations, primarily when driven by brand reputation, reflective practice, or responsible student engagement. However, practical educators' confidence in safe AI use significantly lowers concern, suggesting that empowering practitioners through training and practice may be the most effective way to reduce perceived ethical risks.

Budget constraints are perceived most strongly where institutional experience, pedagogical ambition, and ethical readiness exist - but funding doesn't follow. In contrast, cost-effective practices and the skilled, ethical use of tools reduce perceived barriers. **The most significant divide is between those waiting for investment and those already building low-cost, practical AI strategies.**

Uncertainty and budget constraints correlate with concerns about privacy and cybersecurity, while proactive, ethical, and structured use of AI - especially by students and educators - **lowers these concerns.** Awareness and preparedness are associated with lower perceived data risks.

Uncertainty, financial constraints, and a deeper pedagogical awareness drive the perceived lack of expertise. Those who critically engage with AI understand its complexity and recognise institutional shortfalls, while limited knowledge and funding make it hard to address these gaps.

Staff expertise gaps are most strongly perceived where awareness, cost, and operational AI use collide. Ethical awareness among students and operational expectations drive demand for skilled staff. However, direct experience with AI in administrative contexts and trusted tool providers reduces these concerns, as do educators using AI for their learning, showing that engagement is key to overcoming skill deficits.

Concerns about academic integrity are elevated by high standards, student focus, and pedagogical depth, all of which bring awareness to how AI might challenge academic norms. However, ethical leadership among educators and non-academic applications of AI raises less concern, pointing to the importance of responsible role modelling and appropriate deployment areas.

Fig. 26. Factors influencing the Educators' perceptions of AI challenges to HEIs

Factors Influencing the Educators' Perceptions of AI Benefits to Students

The regression coefficient heatmap for the factors influencing Educators' perceptions of AI benefits to Students (Fig. 27) suggests several **vital takeaways**:

- **Institutional readiness** (staff expertise, clear frameworks, tool usability) **is the most consistent positive driver** across all benefits, especially for engagement and support.
- **Pedagogical clarity and student-centred integration increase personalisation, content quality, and creativity**, but excessive **caution around AI safety or over-theorised knowledge dampens impact**.
- **Trust and familiarity with AI** (brand reputation, "do not know" optimism) **fuel perception of benefit,** but this may hide a gap between perceived and actual implementation success.

Fig. 27. Factors influencing the Educators' perceptions of AI benefits to Students

Personalised learning is best supported by intentional educational design, student analytical skills, and a clear understanding of AI's customisation potential. However, when AI is used mainly in administrative or compliance-focused domains, it fails to convey a personalised experience, highlighting the need for learner-centred AI integration.

High-quality course content is driven by usability, institutional readiness, and foundational conceptual knowledge. However, ethical caution and administrative uses of AI seem to distract from or reduce the perceived benefits of content, suggesting that AI's educational value must be framed and executed carefully to avoid misalignment or overscepticism.

A more straightforward learning process with AI is driven by student-centric design, pedagogically aligned integration, and analytical student engagement. However, overregulation, excessive caution, and issues related to cost or usability can significantly hinder these gains. Balance between purposeful guidance and operational flexibility is key.

Creative expression with AI is most empowered when tools are trusted, intuitive, and seen as interactive. However, overly administrative use cases, deep theoretical focus, and cautious critique may limit students' freedom and willingness to experiment. Creativity thrives when AI is experienced as a flexible and responsive partner, rather than a system of constraints.

High-quality student support through AI is most closely linked to human and system readiness, especially staff competence and tool usability. Positive beliefs and visible institutional ethics further reinforce quality. However, deep ethical scrutiny from students may reduce trust in support systems, highlighting a need to balance responsibility with usability and transparency.

Student engagement is maximised when AI is trustworthy, interactive, and supported by skilled staff and clear institutional frameworks. Ethical awareness contributes positively – but only when it's empowering, not restrictive. Overregulation, overly cautious "safe use" training, and abstract theoretical exposure reduce engagement by limiting autonomy or relevance.

Factors Influencing the Educators' Perceptions of AI Risks to Students

The regression coefficient heatmap for the factors influencing perceptions of AI challenges (Fig. 28) suggests several **vital takeaways**:

- **Uncertainty, administrative emphasis, and vendor-driven implementations amplify fears** around academic integrity, depersonalization, and peer disconnection.
- **Structured frameworks, pedagogically grounded use**, and ethical AI literacy consistently **reduce perceived risks**.
- **Concerns arise not from AI itself but from how it is applied and explained** – transparency, support, and inclusive design are key to mitigating these effects.

Fig. 28. Factors influencing the Educators' perceptions of AI risks to Students

Perceived lack of personalisation in AI-supported learning decreases when institutions provide structured frameworks and when students generally trust AI's educational role. However, AI used mainly for administrative efficiency may raise concerns about neglecting individual learning needs.

Privacy concerns are driven by uncertainty, administrative or lifelong learning AI use, and increased ethical awareness. However, when students are empowered to act responsibly and institutions apply AI in student-centred, pedagogically grounded ways, these concerns are significantly reduced.

Concern about diminished skill development due to AI is heightened by strong conceptual awareness of AI and broad institutional acceptance, suggesting that those most familiar with AI recognise its risks of overreliance. However, when AI is used to support personalised learning or is well-integrated into infrastructure, it is seen as enhancing, not replacing, actual knowledge development.

Fear of being wrongly accused of misconduct is highest when staff lack clear guidance on AI use. Transparency, orientation, and policy clarity are key to mitigating this risk. Familiarity with structured institutional use of AI helps reduce anxiety about academic violations.

Strong brand tools and advanced student AI skills can increase the risk of losing personal tutor contact, as students become more self-reliant or the tools are perceived as replacing human roles. However, pedagogically grounded AI and well-integrated systems mitigate this concern, maintaining meaningful academic relationships.

Administrative, cost-driven, or isolated AI applications increase concern about reduced social and institutional engagement. However, when AI is accepted, academically embedded, or implemented within a strong infrastructure, it supports or even strengthens student-school and peer communication.

Perceived alienation of students with lower AI skills rises in unclear institutional contexts or when AI is used without explicit inclusivity measures. However, structured frameworks and student-centred AI integration help mitigate this divide, promoting equity across skill levels.

The Impact of the Students' Experience on Attitudes

This section is based on responses by Students and assesses only the factors influencing their perceptions of AI benefits and risks for Students.

Factors Influencing the Students' Perceptions of AI Benefits

The regression coefficient heatmap for the factors influencing perceptions of AI benefits (Fig. 29) suggests several **vital takeaways**:

- **Positive beliefs in AI's potential** (especially around support and engagement) drive stronger perceptions across all benefit areas.
- **Student and educator AI literacy and ethical awareness play a dual role** - when strong, they enhance confidence in AI's value; when weak or sceptical, they reduce perceived benefit.
- **Practical AI integration** (e.g., support systems, admission, career services) is the most consistent driver of perceived positive student experiences across domains.

Fig. 29. Factors influencing the Students' perceptions of AI benefits

Perceived enhancement of personalised learning through AI is linked to students' evaluative and responsible engagement with AI tools. However, overly technical or structural uses of AI, or general scepticism about AI's broader educational role, may reduce its perceived capacity to personalise learning.

Perceived improvement in course content quality is tied to both belief in AI's ability to personalise learning and a foundational grasp of ethical considerations. However, deeper critical focus on AI ethics and privacy, particularly when framed restrictively, may inversely relate to perceptions of content enhancement.

Perceived **benefits** in the ease and clarity of the learning process are supported by institutional enthusiasm for AI deployment**. At the same time,** intensive ethical scrutiny of AI's risks appears to inhibit this perception, possibly due to concerns overshadowing potential efficiencies.

Creative expression through AI is enhanced when students critically engage with AI tools in an applied way and when institutions foster supportive, efficient environments. However, when the focus is on error detection, ethical risks, or purely theoretical knowledge, it tends to suppress perceived creative potential.

Perceived improvement in student services is strongly linked to direct experiences of AI in support-related areas and positive beliefs about its administrative efficiency and educational benefits. Conversely, informal or self-directed study use of AI appears to reduce this perception, possibly due to **a** lack of structured support context.

Factors Influencing the Students' Perceptions of AI Risks

The regression coefficient heatmap for the factors influencing perceptions of AI risks (Fig. 30) suggests several **vital takeaways**:

- **Critical and ethical AI literacy** helps reduce fears about data privacy and tutor replacement, while increasing awareness of AI's academic effects.
- **Students who experience or value AI-led services** like admissions or career support are more concerned about skill degradation and a lack of administrative help.
- **Pedagogical confidence in AI** helps mitigate concerns about disengagement, while reliance on it for institutional functions tends to amplify them.

Fig. 30. Factors influencing the Students' perceptions of AI risks

Concerns over data privacy risks grow with deeper ethical scrutiny and critical assessment of AI's impact, whereas practical, responsible, and safety-oriented AI use tends to alleviate fears.

The belief that AI use leads to reduced skill development is tied to passive or procedural experiences with AI, particularly in administrative areas. In contrast, engaging with the AI conceptually or seeing it as a beneficial academic support tool tends to mitigate these concerns.

Experiencing AI tools in academic settings can raise concerns about reduced tutor interaction, likely due to increased automation or self-service elements. However, developing evaluative skills around AI use appears to counteract this perception, suggesting that active, reflective engagement can preserve the sense of human guidance.

Concerns about diminished administrative support are strongly reduced when AI is experienced in structured, critical, and ethically informed ways, especially in admissions or evaluation. However,

reliance on AI-driven career services or overemphasis on outcome metrics may foster a sense of reduced human administrative involvement.

Perceptions of reduced peer and institutional engagement are heightened by AI's role in administrative areas like career services and pedagogical automation. However, when AI is seen as a tool for collaboration, personalisation, or critical assessment, these concerns diminish, highlighting the importance of human-centric AI integration.

Common Perception and Touchpoints Across Audiences

This section identifies common perception themes in Educators and Students, mapping their attitudes and describing these groups. This information is valuable for preparing effective AI integration plans, developing and introducing the AIM role and delivering effective communication to stakeholder audiences based on a proper understanding of their attitudes and concerns. Multidimensional analysis is used to assess perceptions and plot them visually, defining clusters with similar properties.

Common Perceptions among Educators

There are four distinct groups identified by mapping data based on latent profile analysis (Fig. 31) that have been labelled and briefly described below (Table 1), retaining the visual placement as per mapping.

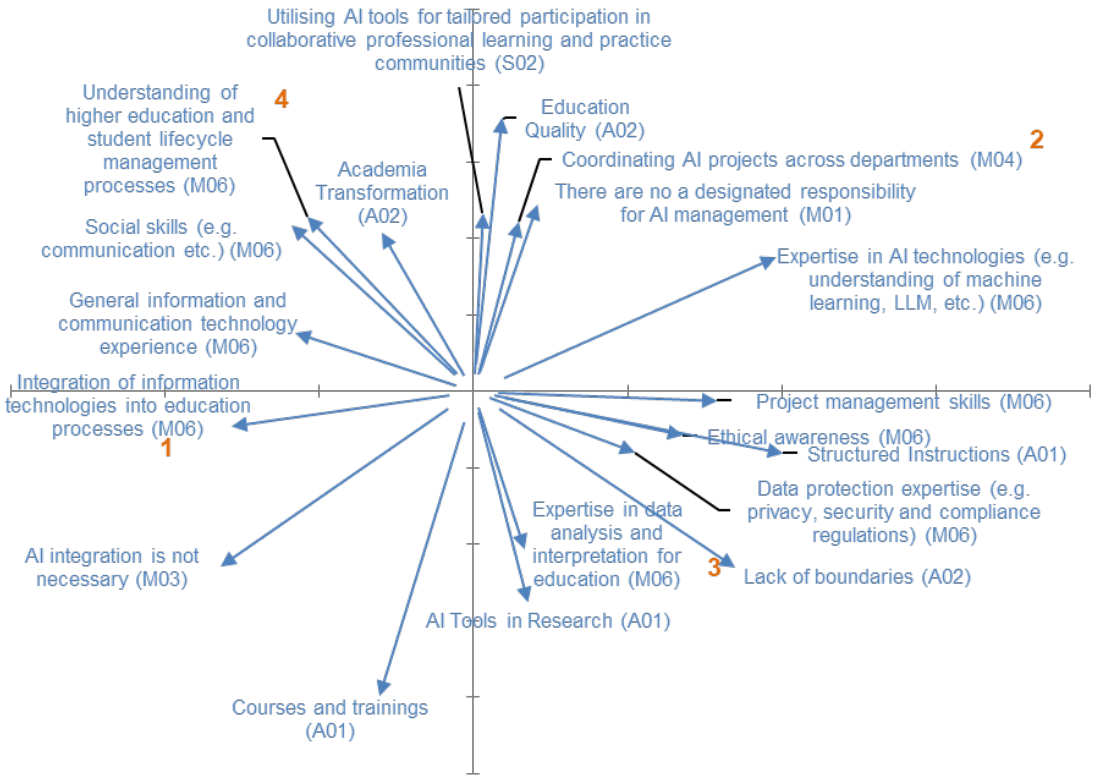

Fig. 31. Common perception themes among Educators

GROUP 4: **RELUCTANT REFORMERS** *This reflects their willingness to foster collaboration, adaptability, and the integration of AI through socially skilled, academically aware leadership, rather than relying on rigid technical systems, as they view educational transformation as a challenge or risk posed by AI.* **Perceptions:** They view educational transformation as a challenge that requires a nuanced approach. As a result, this group seeks an AI manager who combines IT expertise with a deep understanding of academia. The ideal candidate should be capable of integrating technology into education while also demonstrating strong social skills that align with the group's collaborative values. Rather than emphasising formal structures or rigid technical frameworks, they prioritise adaptability and a human-centred approach to AI. Stakeholder engagement is more important to them than strict adherence to procedures.	**GROUP 2:** **EDUCATION-FOCUSED TECHNOLOGISTS** *Strong technical proficiency, willing to see a structured approach, and strategic vision for AI integration in education, with an emphasis on quality and collaboration.* **Perceptions:** This group might be more technically skilled, as they are looking for structured instructions and an AI manager who has even higher skills, including AI expertise (such as understanding machine learning and LLMs), project management skills, and data protection knowledge. They also show familiarity with the higher education landscape and the use of AI tools in research and teaching. These individuals typically advocate for tailored AI implementation and demonstrate a clear focus on education quality.
GROUP 1: **AI SCEPTICS** *This captures their core attitude—doubt toward AI integration—and aligns with their own stated need for training or digital initiatives.* **Perceptions:** They are sceptical about the integration of AI, showing relatively strong agreement with the idea that "AI integration is not necessary." These participants typically lack involvement in training, research tools, or coordinated digital initiatives. This group reflects a reserved and possibly under-resourced profile, showing reluctance toward digital transformation and limited readiness for AI adoption.	**GROUP 3:** **SYSTEM-CENTRED SPECIALISTS** *This name reflects their focus on formal structures, technical frameworks, and clear accountability, as well as their preference for expertise and precision over collaboration or adaptability.* **Perceptions:** This group score low on the social and cooperative aspects of transformation, as they may struggle with adaptability, cross-functional cooperation, and participatory practices; they prioritise the need for formal systems, technical frameworks, and strict responsibility models. They view an AI manager as someone with a deep understanding of AI and its applications, as well as strong project management skills that reflect their way of thinking.

Table 1. Groups with common perception themes among Educators

Common Perceptions among Students

There are six distinct groups identified by mapping (Fig. 32) that have been labelled and briefly described below (Table 2), retaining the visual placement as per mapping.

However, it is worth noting that **there are a few groups that share common properties** (Groups 2 and 4, and Groups 1 and 3). The group pairs 2 & 4 and 1 & 3 differ notably in their emphasis on data privacy,

ethics, and the effective use of AI, particularly in areas like critical assessment, identifying hallucinations, and recognising inaccuracies.

Group 1 and Group 4 place greater importance on data privacy and ethical considerations, reflecting their cautious stance and values-driven outlook.

Groups 3 and 4 emphasise the effective and responsible use of AI, suggesting they are more focused on practical competencies, such as identifying AI-generated errors and understanding its implications for learning and decision-making.

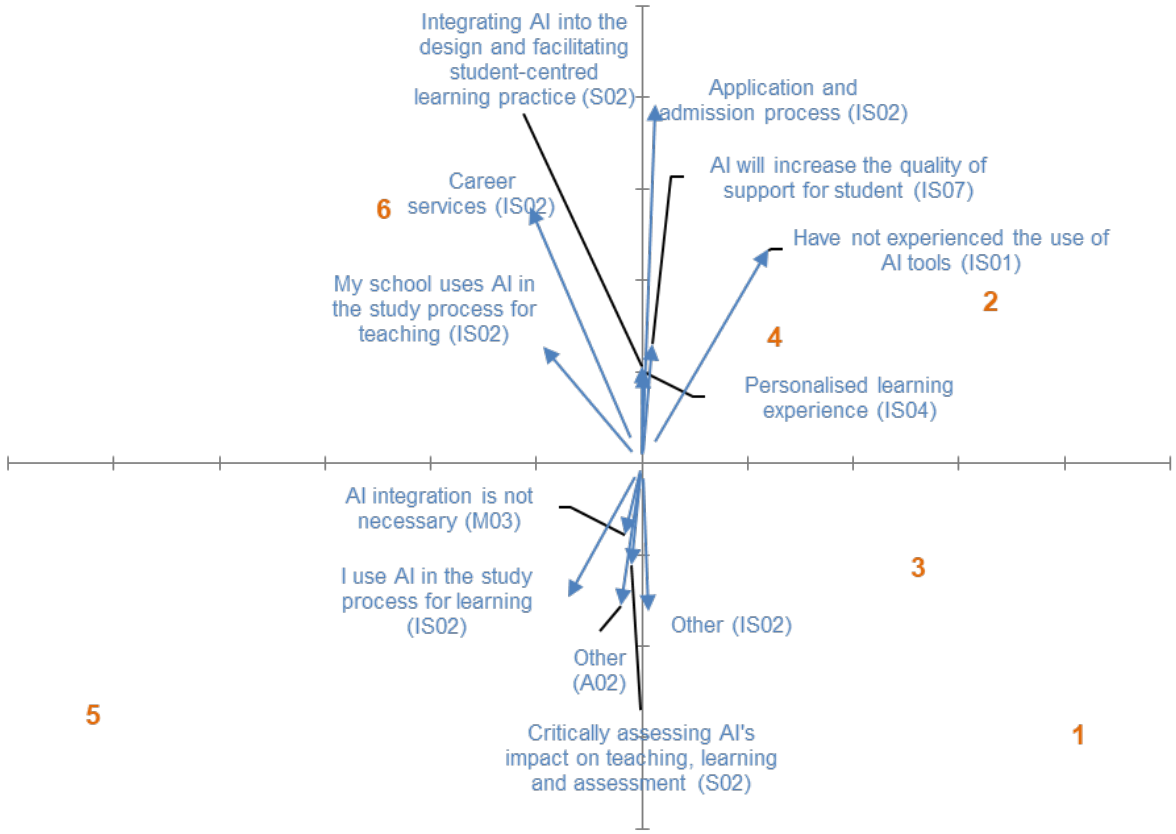

Fig. 32. Common perception themes among Students

GROUP 6: STUDENT-CENTRED BELIEVERS *This highlights their focus on AI's potential to enhance learning and support, even if they aren't heavy users themselves. They value human-centred, educational applications of AI.* **Perceptions:** This group has limited personal experience using AI, but they have encountered its application in teaching, learning, and career services. They believe that AI will enhance personalised learning experiences and improve the quality of	**GROUPS 2 AND 4: HOPEFUL OBSERVERS** *This reflects their limited personal use of AI, but a positive outlook on its potential to enhance learning and support, especially in structured educational processes.* **Perceptions:** Both groups have limited direct exposure to AI tools but have encountered them in the application and admission process. They also believe that AI will enhance personalised learning and improve the quality of student support. They place a high value on educators'

student support. They place a high value on educators' ability to integrate AI into student-centred learning.	ability to integrate AI into student-centred learning.
GROUP 5: **CRITICAL INDIVIDUALISTS** *This reflects their personal use of AI, limited exposure to broader institutional applications, and emphasis on critical evaluation rather than uncritical optimism.* **Perceptions:** This group uses AI personally but has not observed its practical application in other areas of the academic journey. Their selection of alternative responses may reflect a less positive attitude toward the outcomes they have experienced. As a result, they place a high importance on educators' ability to critically assess the impact of AI.	**GROUPS 1 AND 3:** **SECOND-HAND SCEPTICS** *This highlights their limited direct experience with AI and a cautious or negative attitude influenced by others' stories or perceptions, rather than personal use.* **Perceptions:** These groups seek a critical evaluation of AI, despite having limited hands-on experience with it. They do not expect personalised or student-centred practices. Most likely, their negative attitude is shaped by the experiences of others.

Table 2. Groups with common perception themes among Students

Qualitative Research Findings

Qualitative focus groups conducted across Germany, the Netherlands, Turkey, and Latvia confirm the quantitative findings, with no differences observed across the countries, thereby reinforcing the international relevance of the findings.

The focus group research was primarily oriented towards in-depth discussion and understanding of the following areas:

1. Rating the competencies required for the AIM role;
2. Assessing the optimal institutional placement of the AIM in the organisational hierarchy;
3. Defining the required qualifications and prior knowledge for the candidates for the AIM role;
4. Defining the key responsibilities and tasks delegated to the AIM.

Vital AIM Competencies

Regarding the competencies required for the AIM role, a list of 15 core competencies, as identified through quantitative research, was provided for rating, and the list was expanded upon during the discussions. Notably, the list was perceived as comprehensive, and no major skills or competencies were added to it – only five suggestions across all groups, which generally rephrase or detail already existing entries (e.g., "Coaching competence" is part of the predefined "Mentor, facilitator or trainer skills", etc.). Participants rated the list of skills according to a predefined 4-point scale from "Not

important" to "Very important". With minor differences, ratings reflected the same perspective in all four countries, resulting in a consensus for the top skills for the AIM role.

A consolidated view of the most vital skills (Table 3) includes only the skills which were evaluated as "very important" to any extent in all the countries. It shows the unweighted average importance of these competencies in percentage and skills, ranked in consensus order from highest to lowest.

Vital Skills and Competencies Rated and Ranked	Importance, %
1. Expertise in AI technologies (e.g. understanding of machine learning, LLM, etc.)	76.5
2. Ethical awareness	65.3
3. Leadership and change management skills	64.3
4. Social skills (e.g. communication, etc.)	63.3
5. Using hands-on AI tools (e.g., generative AI for research, writing, etc.)	63.3
6. Data protection expertise (e.g. privacy, security and compliance regulations)	41.5
7. Understanding of higher education and student lifecycle management processes	40.0
8. General information and communication technology experience (e.g. basic principles of computers, networking technologies, etc.)	37.3
9. Understanding of learning and teaching processes	35.3
10. Mentor, facilitator or trainer skills	29.8
11. Integration of information technologies into education processes	26.5

Table 3. The most vital skills for the AIM role, as per the consensus rating across countries

A common agreement across countries reflects the top 5 skills that are evaluated remarkably higher than the others, particularly led by expertise in AI technologies (77%), followed by similarly rated skills (63-65%) in ethical awareness, leadership, and change management, as well as **social skills and hands-on proficiency with AI tools.**

Institutional Placement of AIM

While the opinions on the institutional placement of AIM vary, **there is a distinct preference for a dedicated AIM role, either as a separate or shared function** across multiple departments that are primarily engaged. **Germany and Latvia have defined a dedicated AIM role as their preference**. At the same time, **Türkiye and the Netherlands prefer shared or AI team responsibility across multiple departments** (supporting arguments primarily relate to concerns of governance and the ability of a single person to meet all the expectations and have all the vital competencies). **These findings align with the quantitative research, thereby supporting the need for a dedicated function.** At the same time, its institutional placement might be subject to the specifics of the HEI.

Required Qualifications and Prior Knowledge of AIM

The qualifications and experience of the AIM candidates have been perceived differently by participants, mostly falling into two distinct camps – one focused on IT experience and the other **on education expertise**. This suggests a somewhat Limited vision about the role, considering previously rated competencies for the person, unless the AI management function is collective and shared among several responsible individuals. A perception of the function being technical was more pronounced in less technology and AI-integrated environments in the quantitative research, which aligns with the focus group insights. Besides these, **there is an alignment across countries that experience in project and change management, as well as stakeholder management, is essential**.

A consensus across focus groups defines some **mandatory aspects for the role, such as higher education, understanding of the education industry, experience in managing change and implementing cross-functional projects**.

Key Responsibilities and Tasks of AIM

The alignment regarding the key tasks and responsibilities of the AIM role, regardless of its institutional placement, **was evident across countries**. Most of the participants emphasised the **strategic and overarching nature of the role – strategy development, overseeing the ethical use of AI, and facilitating the growth of AI competencies among staff and students were the top choices**.

The following areas were commonly identified as the most critical tasks and responsibilities to be delegated to the emergent AIM function:

1. AI strategy development and implementation
2. AI use, ethics and compliance oversight, development and implementation of guidelines
3. Staff and student training, assistance to HEIs' organisational functions in using AI
4. Market screening for AI solutions and liaising with vendors
5. Integrating AI into IT infrastructure and coordinating AI projects across departments
6. Data privacy and security management, incident management

Summary

A common perception of the AIM role was identified across the countries, with outputs confirming the insights from the quantitative research.

Participants emphasise **vital competencies for the AIM role in ethical management, technical proficiency, and pedagogical innovation**.

There is a str**ong preference for introducing the AIM role through dedicated or shared AI governance models**, with clear delineations of roles and responsibilities.

Diverging national perspectives emerged regarding the pace and perceived urgency of adopting formal AI management structures, yet countries were aligned on the key tasks and responsibilities for the role.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The research confirms strong institutional demand for structured AI management roles at HEIs.

Recommended actions for HEIs include:

- establishing cross-functional AI governance structures with dedicated AI management responsibility,
- prioritising staff and student training in ethical, technical, and pedagogical AI competencies,
- ensuring clear communication and transparency around AI implementation and governance.

These steps will enable HEIs to leverage AI effectively, enhancing educational outcomes and institutional efficiency.

Recommended actions for the Project Team include:

- based on the research findings, define the AIM role profile, including responsibilities, required competencies and qualifications,
- developing a competency framework and the training programme, e.g. micro-credential-based, for reskilling and upskilling to the AIM role,
- testing the developed solutions from a soft launch perspective to scaling, including liaising with national and EU institutions to roll out the AIM qualification,
- disseminate the results of the research in scientific and professional audiences, both in education and other industries, with the potential to replicate.

Recommendations for further research include:

- further fine-tuning of the instruments of the research and expanding geographic and institutional coverage to verify the relevance of the findings on a larger scale,
- designing and implementing follow-up research to assess and monitor the effect of AI integration and new AI management models in HEIs.

List of Appendices

The following appendices, due to their diverse and specific formats, are provided as separate files or datasets in English on the project website at https://force-ai.eu/results-2/ and are available for free download:

1. Quantitative research survey questionnaire.
2. Qualitative research methodology and focus group guidelines.
3. Extended quantitative research findings presentation with regression coefficient heatmaps and multidimensional analysis projections.

Any other materials can be obtained from the Project Team upon request in line with the best practice of Open Science.