Digital Education Council

AI in Higher Education Global Survey 2026

Table of Contents

Foreword

The Digital Education Council AI in Higher Education Global Survey 2026 provides a comprehensive look at AI in higher education, drawing on a foundation of regional research—the Global AI Student Survey 2024, the Global AI Faculty Survey 2025, and the AI in Higher Education Latin America Survey 2026—to build a regional view spanning **APAC, EMEA, US & Canada,** and **Latin America**.

This survey has gathered **45,398 responses**—including **27,284** from students and **18,114** from faculty—across **35** countries. The result is one of the largest and most geographically diverse datasets on AI adoption in higher education assembled to date.

The survey reveals growing AI adoption among both students and faculty, alongside real questions about whether that adoption is translating into learning value. It surfaces signs of emerging over-reliance, highlights uneven progress on assessment redesign and faculty readiness, and reflects shared concerns about skills erosion and curriculum relevance. Together, these insights offer institutions a grounded basis for moving toward strategies that are deliberate and centred on genuine educational outcomes.

This report also references the wider suite of Digital Education Council publications, including the **DEC Global AI Surveys**, **Next Era of Assessment**, the **DEC AI Governance Framework**, and the **AI Skills Opportunity Map**—all available to DEC members at digitaleducationcouncil.com.

For feedback and inquiries

Hui Rong, Research & Intelligence Lead
hui@digitaleducationcouncil.com

Maftuna Mavlonova, Research & Intelligence Associate
maftuna@digitaleducationcouncil.com

DEC Leadership Note

It is our pleasure to publish the Digital Education Council AI in Higher Education Global Survey 2026, our most comprehensive study of AI in higher education to date, drawing on more than 45,000 responses from students and faculty across 35 countries.

The picture it reveals should give leaders pause. AI has moved into the mainstream of student and faculty life faster than institutions have been able to respond to it. Adoption is now widespread, but coherent practice is not.

Most students cannot say whether their assessments permit AI or what their programmes are doing to prepare them for an AI-shaped workforce. Most faculty are adapting on instinct, without the frameworks or institutional support to redesign with intent.

The result is a vacuum where clear institutional direction should be, and in that vacuum a narrative is forming on its own.

Nowhere is this more visible than in the US & Canada, where the data diverges sharply from the rest of the world. As faculty elsewhere lean into AI, confidence in the region is falling and a significant share of students would now support banning AI outright. It sits at odds with what students say they want: a degree that prepares them for a changing world of work.

The signals are stark that universities are not taking the mantle to lead.

The world beyond the campus is tearing ahead, and the gap between how graduates are being prepared and what they will actually face is widening. Left unaddressed, scepticism calcifies into orthodoxy and ad hoc practice becomes the default.

The encouraging news is that this is a leadership problem, not our fate. Students are not asking for less rigour; they are asking for clarity. Faculty want to adapt and need the institutional direction to do so. The institutions that act deliberately now will define the narrative rather than be defined by it.

We are grateful to the tens of thousands of students and faculty who shared their views, and to institutions around the world who make this work possible. We hope this report prompts the deliberate response the moment demands. The Digital Education Council will be there to support our members every step of the way.

Alessandro Di Lullo
Chief Executive Officer

Daniel A. Bielik
President

10 Key Messages

1

Impact

Students See Benefits From AI, but Also Early Signs of Skills Erosion

61% of students say AI frees them to focus more on thinking through ideas, and 31% are attempting more challenging work than before. At the same time, signs of over-reliance are emerging. 22% of students globally say they find it harder to work without AI, 20% say they depend on AI to produce better work, and 19% say they are retaining less.

66% of students worry that AI could make learning too shallow. Faculty share a similar concern: more than 73% worry that students are using AI at the expense of developing their own skills.

The result is a more complex picture of AI's impact. Students recognise its value as a learning support, but both students and faculty are alert to the risk that convenience may come at the cost of authentic learning.

Read More

AI Elevates Learning But Risks Eroding Independent Thinking

Students and Faculty Are Concerned About Shallow Learning

2

Impact

AI Is Entering the Classroom, but Its Learning Value Remains Unclear

AI is entering some courses, but the integration is uneven. Only 15% of students say AI is integrated into many of their courses, while 43% say it appears in a few. Another 43% say they have not experienced any AI integration in their courses.

Where AI is integrated, its value is still mixed. Among students who have experienced AI use in their courses, only 5% say it has transformed how they learn. A further 28% say it enhances their understanding and learning outcomes. For most students, however, the impact is more limited. 42% say AI integration has been only somewhat helpful. Another 24% say AI has brought no clear learning value and feel AI integration is mostly just novel rather than useful. Students in the US & Canada report the most limited benefit, with 42% saying AI integration has not added clear value to their learning.

Read More

AI Is Entering Some Courses, but Learning Value Has Yet to Follow

10 Key Messages

3

AI Literacy Benchmark

An Early Picture of Global AI Literacy

Students and faculty remain at an early stage of AI literacy, with most respondents at beginner to intermediate levels.

Literacy profiles are broadly consistent across regions, with students and faculty showing similar levels of AI literacy proficiency globally.

Read More

Regional Faculty AI Competency Profiles

Regional Student AI Competency Profiles

4

Higher Education and AI

Students Question Faculty AI Readiness

Only 29% of students believe their instructors are well equipped to guide them on AI use. In the US & Canada, this number is considerably lower at 17%. The gap is especially notable given that 64% of faculty say they have participated in AI literacy training.

Read More

Students Question Their Instructors Ability To Guide Them

Over 1 in 2 Faculty Voluntarily Participate in AI Training

5

Higher Education and AI

Students Are Worried About Unfair AI Use Among Peers

60% of students globally worry that their classmates might misuse AI for unfair advantage, rising to 73% in US & Canada. This suggests that the challenge is not only whether students are using AI, but whether they trust the conditions under which others are using it.

Read More

Peer Misuse Is a Widespread Worry

10 Key Messages

6

Higher Education and AI

Students Question Whether Assessments Align With Future Workforce Needs

Only 28% of students feel that most or many of their assessments reflect the work, skills, and judgement they expect to need in an AI-enabled workplace. The remaining 72% do not see this alignment consistently across their assessments. This includes 35% who say only some assessments reflect future workplace needs, and 37% who say none or only a few do so.

Read More

Assessments Lag Behind the Needs of an AI-Driven Workforce

7

Higher Education and AI

Faculty AI Adoption Intent Remains High Globally, but Has Declined in US & Canada

A majority of faculty in APAC, EMEA, and Latin America continue to see themselves using AI in their teaching in the future. This has remained largely unchanged from 2025.

The US & Canada, however, shows a different pattern. Faculty intent to use AI has declined by 9 percentage points, from 76% in 2025 to 67% in 2026. This leaves the region with the lowest future AI adoption intent among all regions.

Read More

Faculty AI Adoption Intent Remains Strong, Except in US & Canada

8

Higher Education and AI

APAC Sees AI's Promise, While US & Canada Worry About Its Risks

Faculty views on AI and the future of teaching diverge sharply by region. APAC faculty are the most optimistic: 57% say they are excited about AI and believe it can make learning more effective and accessible. In the US & Canada, only 26% share this view.

The reverse pattern appears in concerns about intellectual development. In the US & Canada, 55% of faculty believe AI poses a serious risk to human intellectual development. In APAC, only 29% hold the same concern. This more cautious outlook may help explain why faculty in the US & Canada report lower intent to use AI in teaching than their peers in other regions.Students in the US & Canada show similar caution. 43% say they would support an institution-wide ban on AI.

Read More

Faculty Are Optimistic About AI

10 Key Messages

9

The Outlook

Students Worry AI Will Reduce Job Opportunities, With STEM Students Most Worried

Globally, 41% of students worry that AI will reduce job opportunities in their field by the time they graduate. This anxiety peaks in APAC, where 50% of students anticipate a shrinking job market.

This concern varies by discipline and region. In APAC, concern is high across several disciplines, including Humanities and Social Sciences (54%), Business and Economics (53%) and STEM (51%). In the US & Canada, concern is highest among Humanities and Social Sciences students, at 52%.

EMEA shows lower concern overall with STEM students reporting the highest, at 41%, while Education students report the lowest, at 21%.

Read More

41% of Students Worry About Reduced Job Opportunities

Concern About AI's Impact on Jobs Varies by Discipline and Region

10

The Outlook

Students See a Curriculum Relevance Gap, but Faculty Are Less Worried

Students are questioning whether their programmes are keeping pace with AI. 37% express serious doubts about whether their programme is relevant for AI and the future, while only 30% agree that their programme feels current. Confidence is even lower in the US & Canada, at just 19%.

Employers appear to share this concern. According to DEC's 2025 AI in the Workplace Report, 80% of employers said higher education is not keeping up with industry change.

Faculty, however, are more confident than students that their teaching materials will remain relevant in the future. Globally, 43% do not worry that what they teach will be outdated by the time students graduate. Confidence is strongest in the US & Canada, where 58% say they are not worried, including 34% who say they are not worried at all. APAC faculty report the greatest pressure to adapt, with 43% believing that what they teach may be outdated by the time students graduate.

Read More

Students Doubt Their Programmes Keep Pace With AI

43% of Faculty Believe Programmes Will Stay Current

Part I. The Big Picture

1.1 Early Evidence of AI's Impact on Education

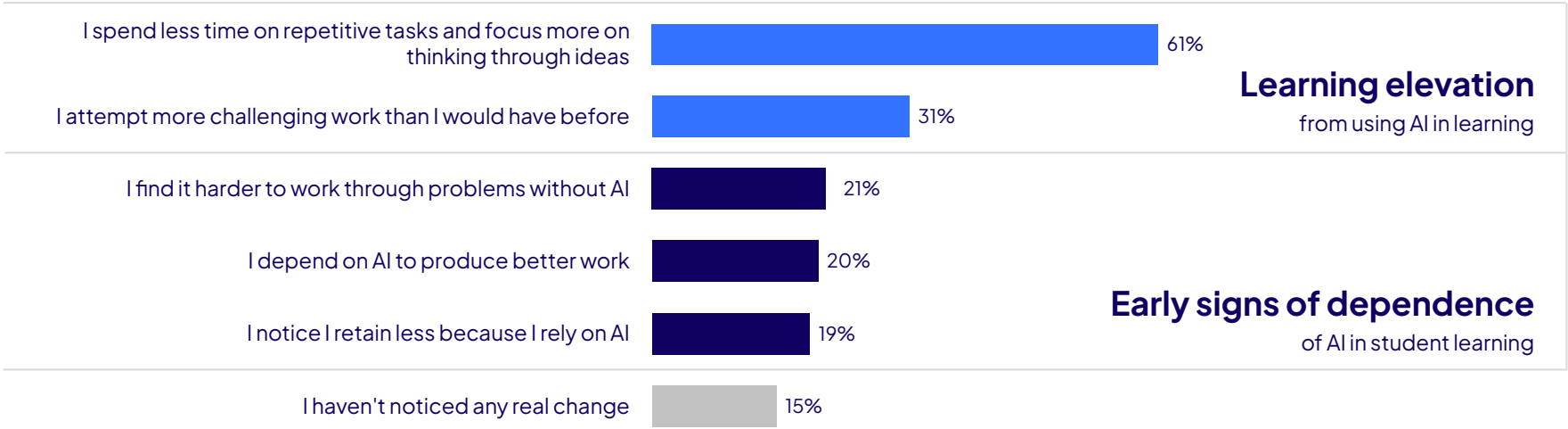
AI Elevates Learning But Risks Eroding Independent Thinking

61% of students say AI frees them to focus more on thinking through ideas, and 31% are attempting more challenging work than before. At the same time, signs of over-reliance are emerging. 21% say they find it harder to work independently without AI, and 19% report retaining less because they rely on AI.

The question for institutions is how to design learning experiences that preserve the independent thinking AI risks displacing.

Perceived Impact of AI on Student Learning

Question: As you use AI more in your studies, what changes have you noticed about how you learn or work?



*Responses only include respondents who answered 'Yes' to 'Have you used / are you using AI in your learning?' (n=8,422)
Source: Digital Education Council AI in Higher Education Global Survey 2026

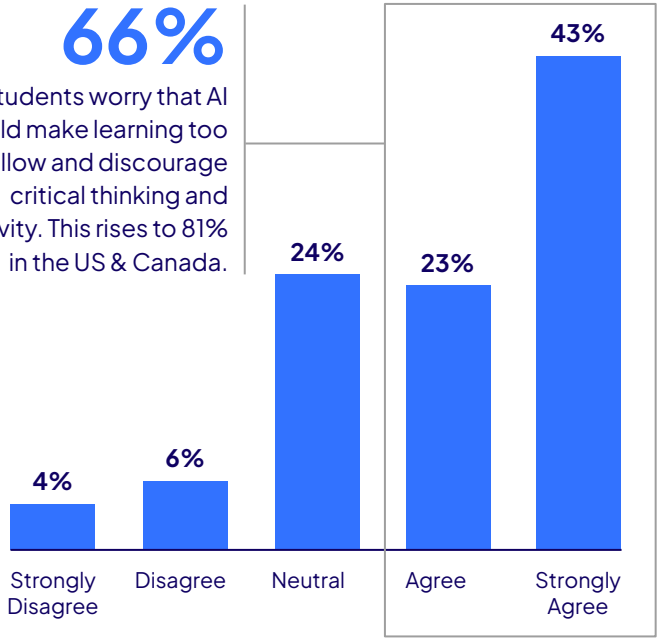
Students and Faculty Are Concerned About Shallow Learning

Student Concerns About AI Weakening Learning

Statement: I worry that using AI could make learning too shallow and discourage critical thinking and creativity.

66%

of students worry that AI could make learning too shallow and discourage critical thinking and creativity. This rises to 81% in the US & Canada.

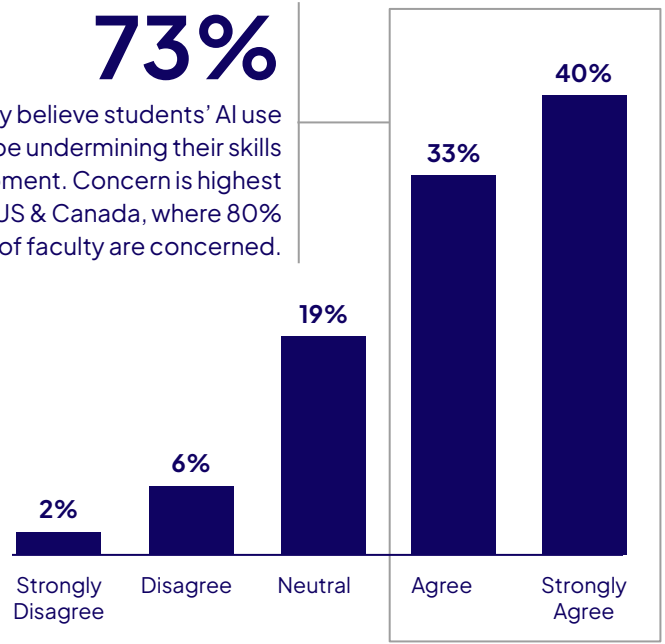


Faculty Concerns About AI Undermining Student Skills

Statement: Students use AI at the expense of developing their own skills.

73%

of faculty believe students' AI use may be undermining their skills development. Concern is highest in the US & Canada, where 80% of faculty are concerned.



Source: Digital Education Council AI in Higher Education Global Survey 2026.

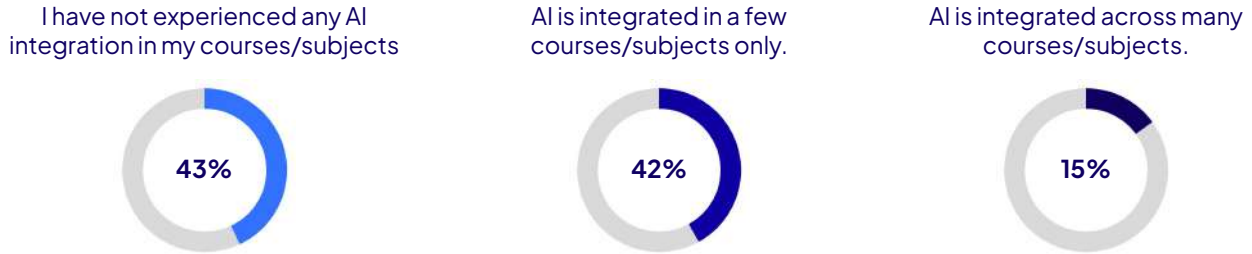
AI Is Entering Some Courses, but Learning Value Has Yet to Follow

43% of students say they have not experienced any AI integration in their courses. 42% say AI is integrated in a few courses. 15% of students say AI is integrated in many courses.

Among students who have experienced AI integration, 42% say it is only somewhat helpful, while 24% say it feels mostly new and novel, with limited learning benefit. This perception is more pronounced in US & Canada, where 42% of students report limited learning benefit from AI integration.

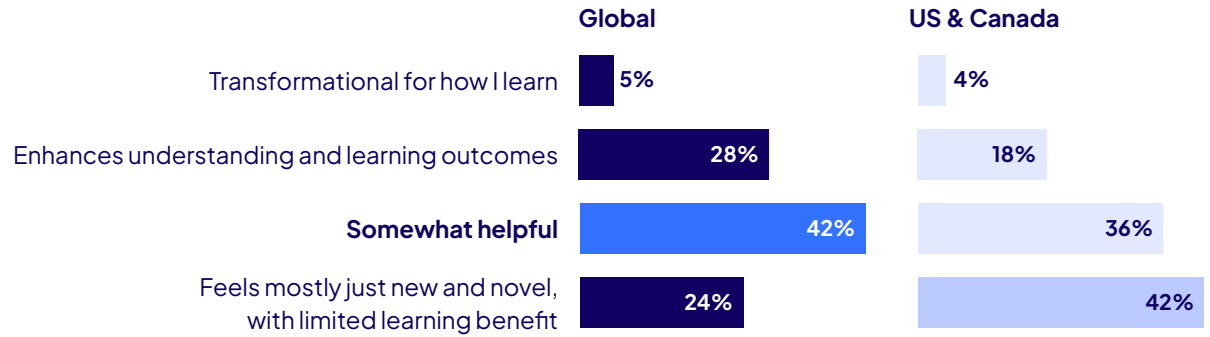
AI Integration Across Courses

Question: How widely is AI integrated across your courses?



Perceived Value of AI Integration in Courses

Question: How would you describe the value of AI integration in your courses?

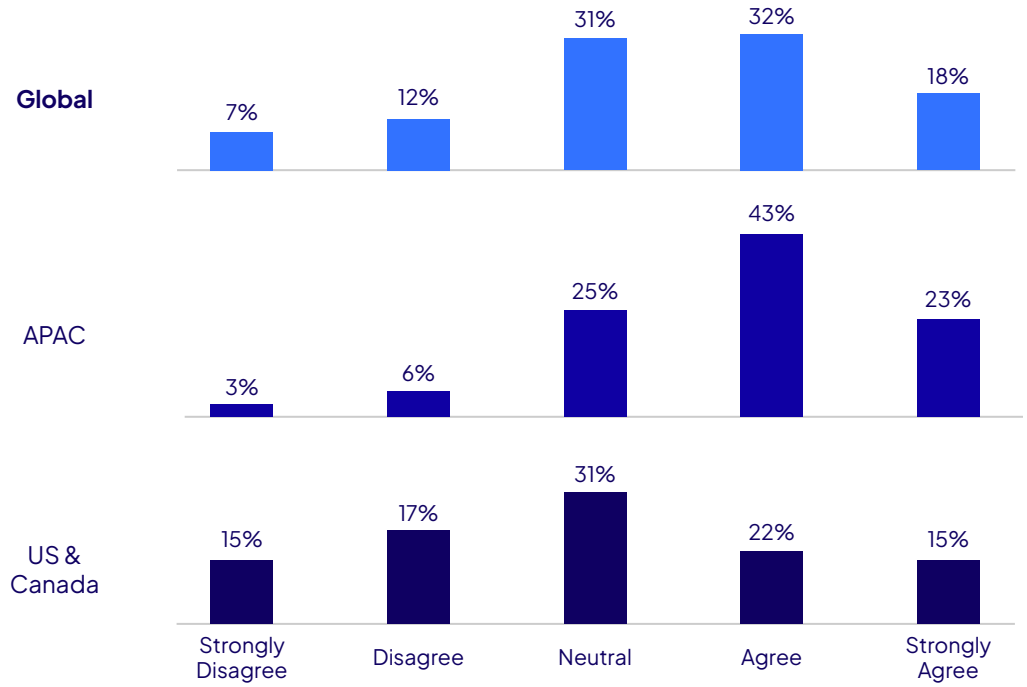


*Responses only include respondents who answered 'AI is integrated across many courses/subjects' and 'AI is integrated in a few courses/subjects only' to 'Q21. How widely is AI integrated across your courses?' (n=6,190)
Source: Digital Education Council AI in Higher Education Global Survey 2026

Perceived Impact of AI on Teaching Quality Is Strongest in APAC

Faculty Perceptions of AI's Impact on Teaching Quality

Statement: AI helps me deliver better quality teaching.



*Responses only include respondents who answered 'Yes' to 'Have you used / are you using AI in your teaching?' (n=3,174)
Source: Digital Education Council AI in Higher Education Global Survey 2026.

63%

of faculty globally agree that AI helps them deliver better quality teaching. The 31% sitting at neutral suggests a significant share are still forming a view, likely reflecting uneven levels of AI integration across institutions.

APAC

Strongest Perceived Impact

66% of APAC faculty agree AI improves their teaching quality, the highest of any region. Only 9% disagree, showing high confidence in AI as a teaching support tool.

US & Canada

Divided Opinion

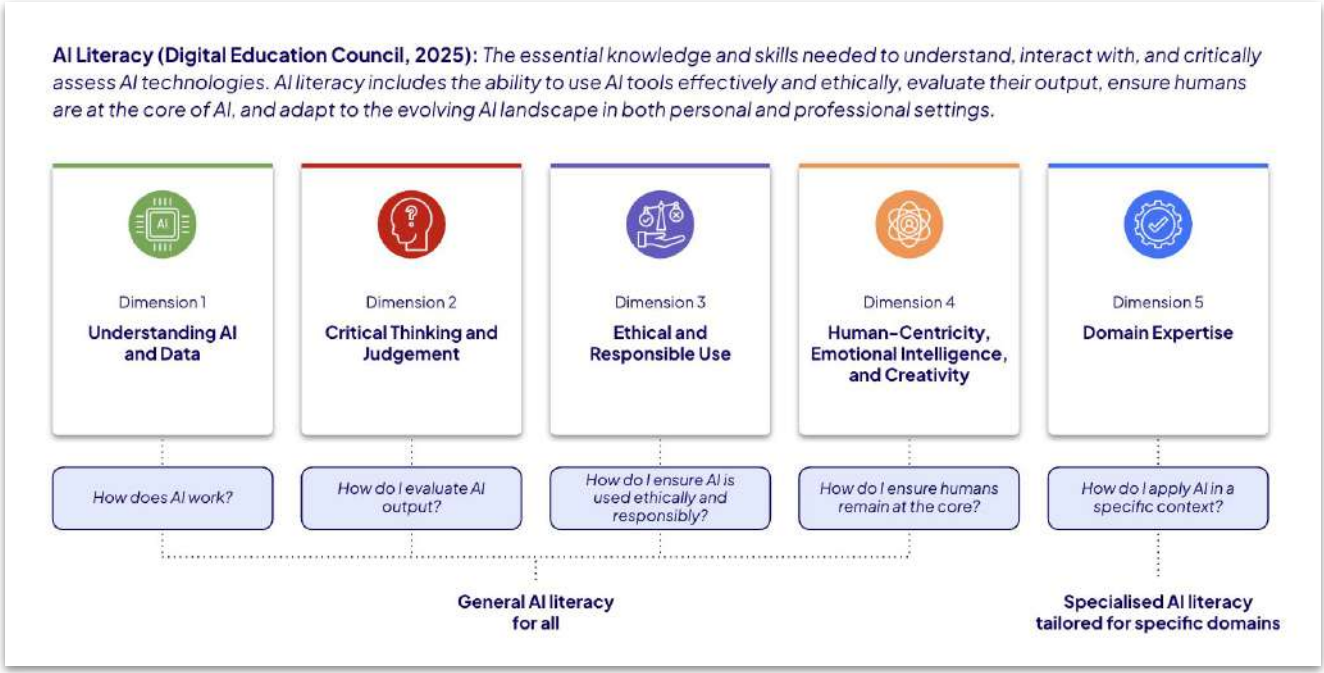
37% agree AI improves teaching quality, while 32% actively disagree. This reflects varied stances by educators on what AI can do for teaching.

1.2 AI Literacy: Global Snapshot of Faculty and Students

Assessing AI Literacy

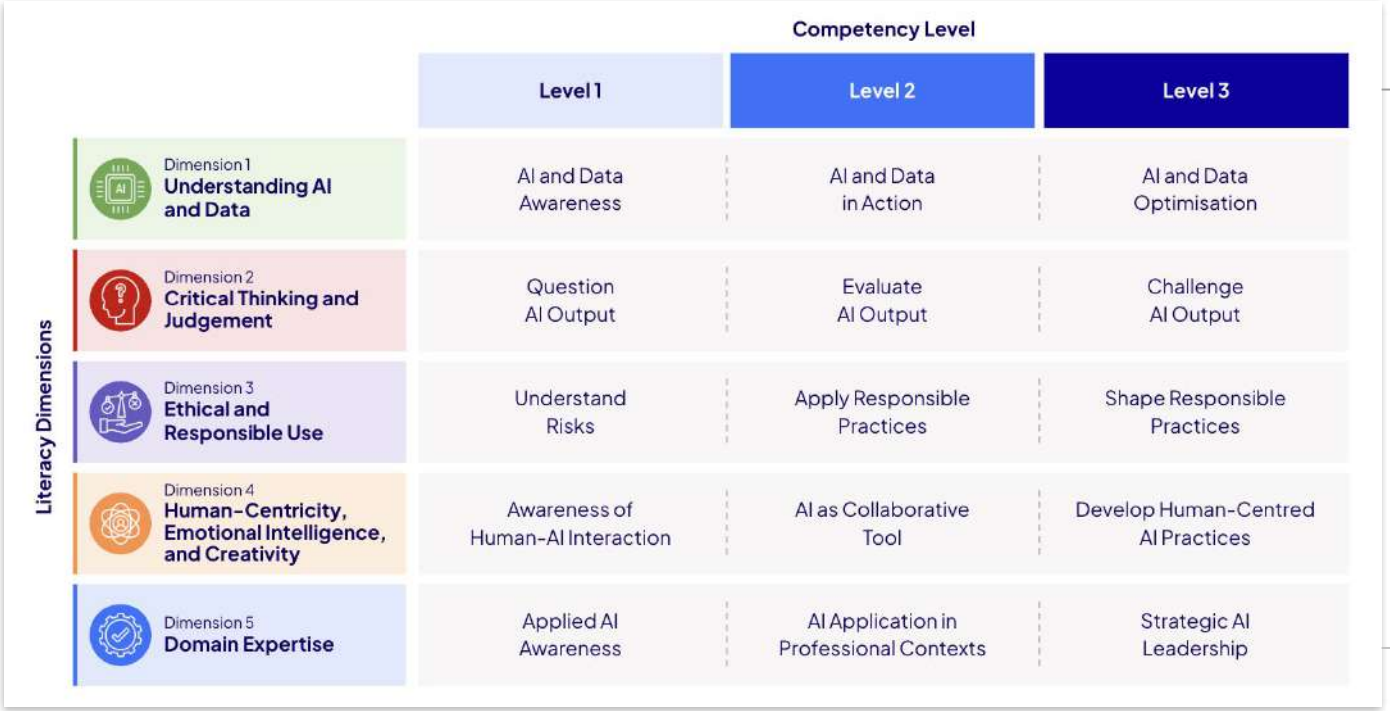
AI Literacy Assessment

This section assesses AI literacy among students and faculty, based on the Digital Education Council AI Literacy Framework. The framework evaluates literacy across five dimensions and defined competency levels, enabling systematic analysis and comparison of AI literacy throughout the report.



Source: Digital Education Council AI Literacy Framework

Methodology: AI Literacy Assessment Using the DEC Framework



AI Literacy Assessment

Building on the three AI competency levels defined in the DEC AI Literacy Framework, this survey developed an AI Literacy Assessment tool to measure AI literacy among both students and faculty across the five key dimensions.

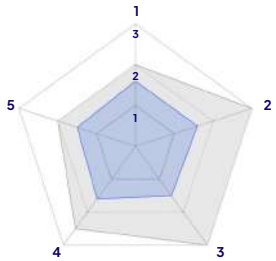
Regional Faculty AI Competency Profiles

Based on the three competency levels across the five dimensions defined in the DEC AI Literacy Framework, the **Faculty AI Literacy Profiles** are assessed and mapped below, comparing current global and regional scores with the recommended mastery levels proposed in the Framework.

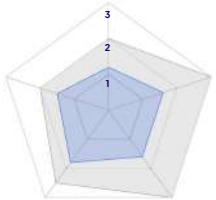
AI Competency Profile

Faculty

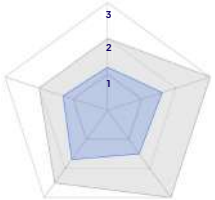
- Recommended Mastery Level
- Current Level



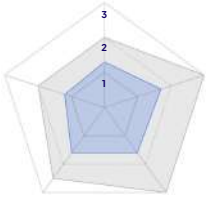
Global



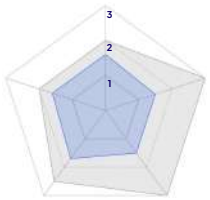
APAC



EMEA



US & Canada



Latin America

Dimension	Level (avg.)	Level (avg.)	Level (avg.)	Level (avg.)	Level (avg.)
1 Understanding AI and Data	1.4	1.2	1.2	1.3	1.6
2 Critical Thinking and Judgement	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.7	1.5
3 Ethical and Responsible AI Use	1.5	1.6	1.5	1.6	1.5
4 Human-centricity, Emotional Intelligence, and Creativity	1.7	1.8	1.7	1.6	1.7
5 Domain Expertise	1.5	1.5	1.3	1.2	1.6

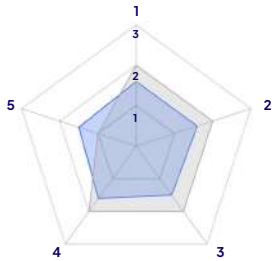
Regional Student AI Competency Profiles

Based on the three competency levels across the five dimensions defined in the DEC AI Literacy Framework, the **Student AI Literacy Profiles** are assessed and mapped below, comparing current global and regional scores with the recommended mastery levels proposed in the Framework.

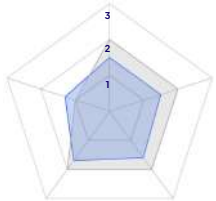
AI Competency Profile

Student

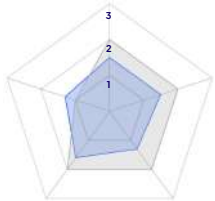
- Recommended Mastery Level
- Current Level



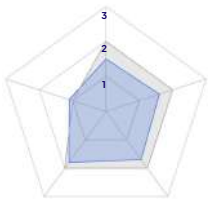
Global



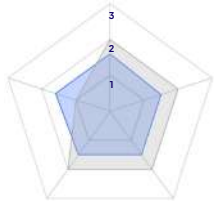
APAC



EMEA



US & Canada



Latin America

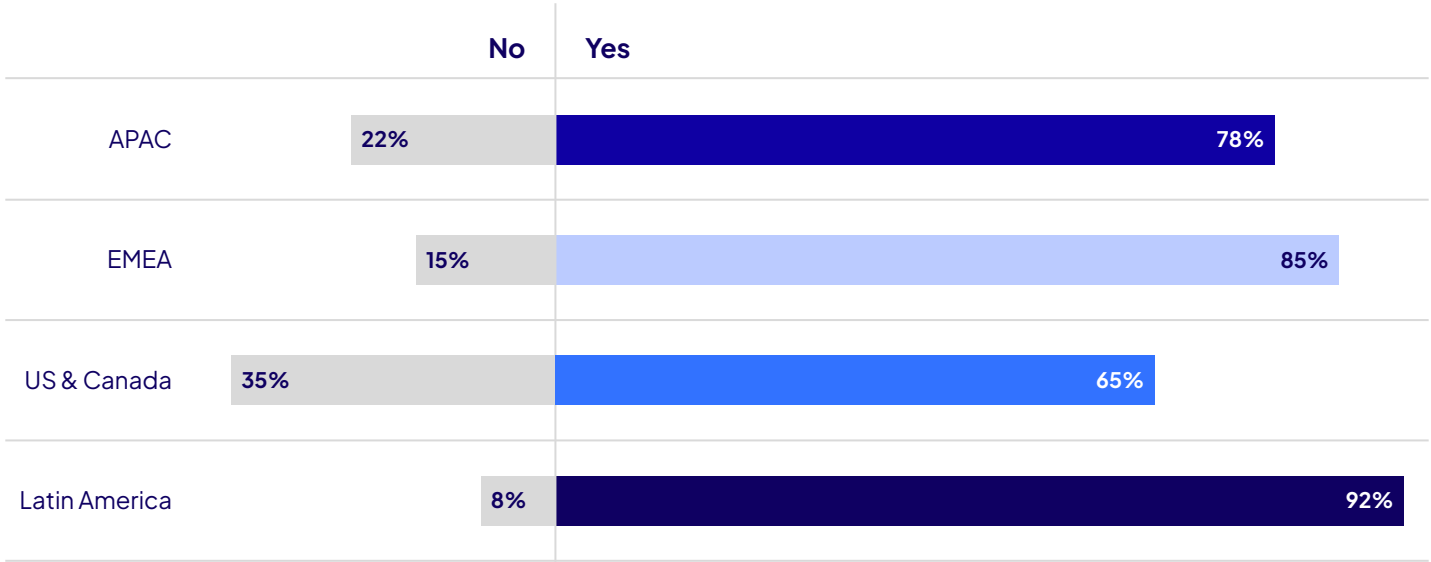
Dimension	Global Level (avg.)	APAC Level (avg.)	EMEA Level (avg.)	US & Canada Level (avg.)	Latin America Level (avg.)
1 Understanding AI and Data	1.6	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.6
2 Critical Thinking and Judgement	1.6	1.5	1.5	1.6	1.5
3 Ethical and Responsible AI Use	1.5	1.6	1.3	1.7	1.5
4 Human-centricity, Emotional Intelligence, and Creativity	1.6	1.7	1.6	1.8	1.5
5 Domain Expertise	1.5	1.3	1.3	1.1	1.6

1.3 Higher Education and AI

88% of Students Use AI in Their Learning, Lower Rates in US & Canada

Student AI Use for Learning

Question: Have you used / are you using AI in your learning?

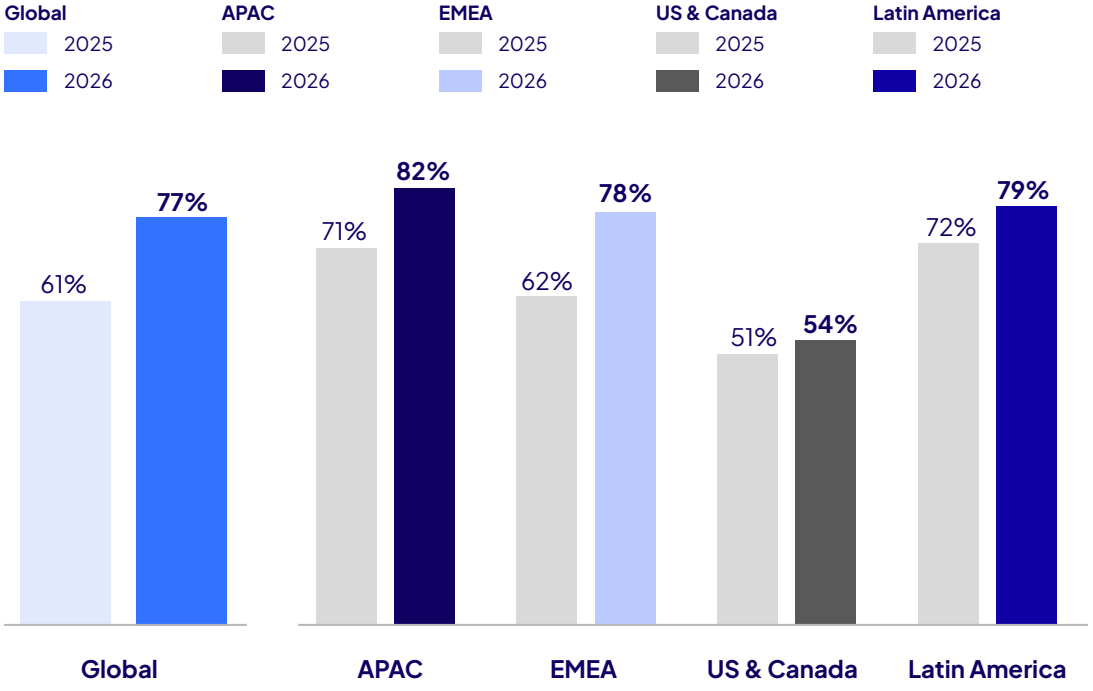


[1]Digital Education Council Global AI Student Survey 2024.
Source: Digital Education Council AI in Higher Education Global Survey 2026.

Faculty AI Adoption Is on the Rise

Faculty AI Use for Teaching

Question: Have you used / are you using AI in your teaching?



77%

of faculty use AI in their teaching, trailing behind student adoption (88%). Compared to 2025, faculty adoption of AI has increased by 16 percentage points.

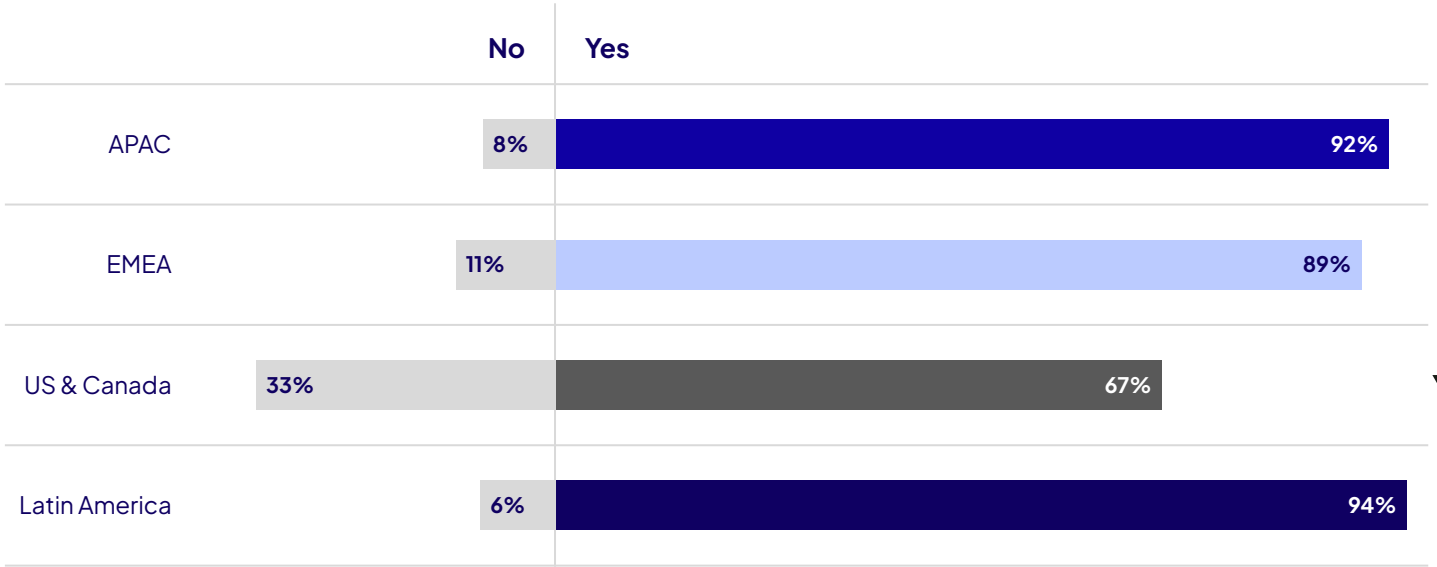
EMEA recorded the largest increase, from 62% to 78%. The US & Canada saw only a slight rise, from 51% to 54%, remaining the region with lowest adoption.

Source: Digital Education Council AI in Higher Education Global Survey 2026.

Faculty AI Adoption Intent Remains Strong, Except in US & Canada

Faculty Intent to Use AI in Teaching in the Future

Question: I see myself using AI in my teaching practices in the future.



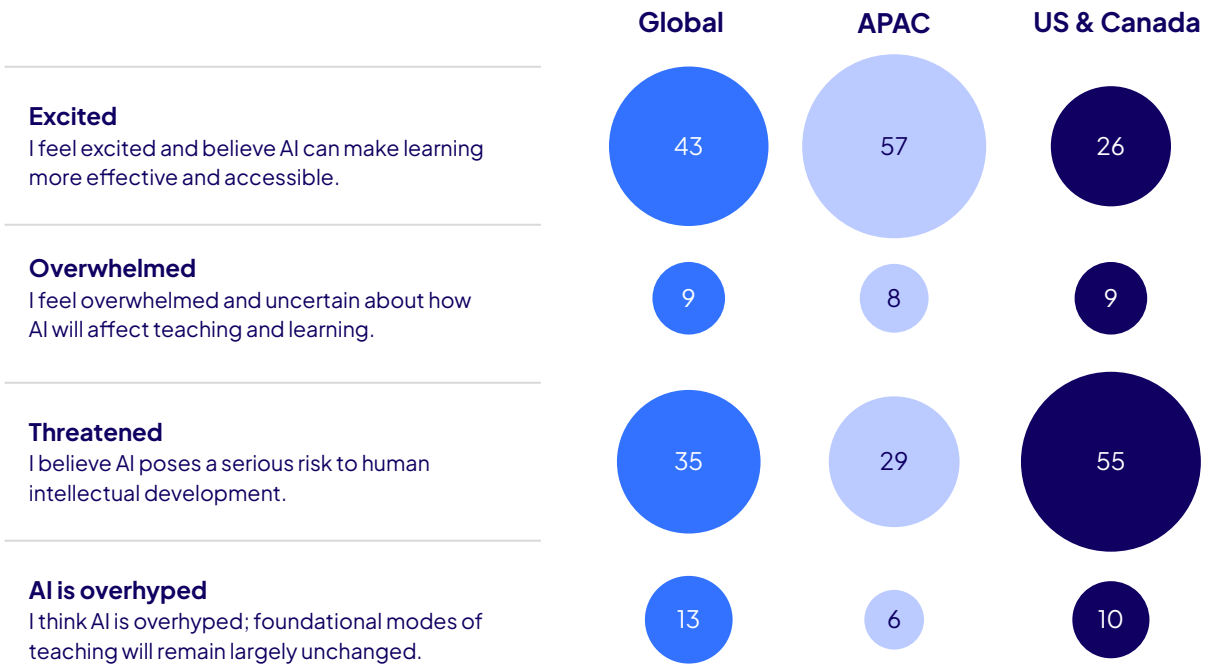
9 percentage-point decline compared to 2025[1]

[1]Digital Education Council Global AI Faculty Survey 2025.
Source: Digital Education Council AI in Higher Education Global Survey 2026.

Faculty Are Optimistic About AI

Faculty Sentiment on AI and the Future, % of respondents

Question: Which statement best describes how you feel about AI and the future of teaching?



Though faculty are largely optimistic about AI, they still have some concerns.

Globally, 43% of faculty feel excited about AI's potential to make learning more effective. APAC faculty share a more optimistic outlook, with 57% expressing excitement.

Yet 35% of faculty globally still see AI as a serious risk to intellectual development, reflecting a significant undercurrent of concern.

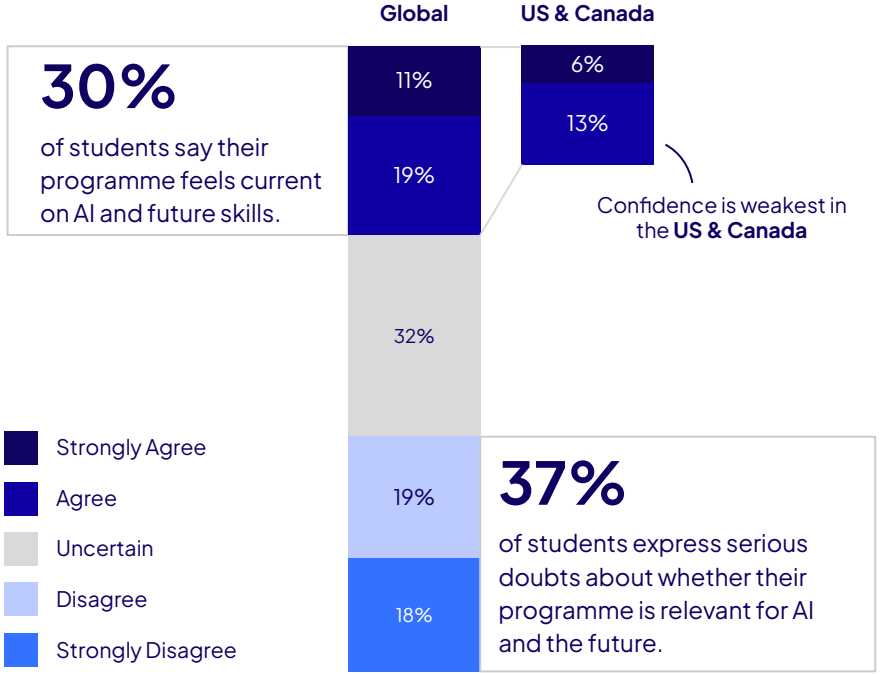
In US & Canada, this concern becomes the majority view at 55%, making it the only region where worry outweighs optimism. It stands apart from the broader global trend.

Source: Digital Education Council AI in Higher Education Global Survey 2026.

Students Doubt Their Programmes Keep Pace With AI

Student Confidence in Programme Future Relevance

Statement: My programme feels current and relevant in terms of AI and future skills.



Only 30% agree their programme feels current in terms of AI and future skills, and most answers cluster at neutral or below. US & Canada displays the lowest level of confidence in their programmes. Perceived curricular currency is becoming a reputational variable institutions cannot ignore.

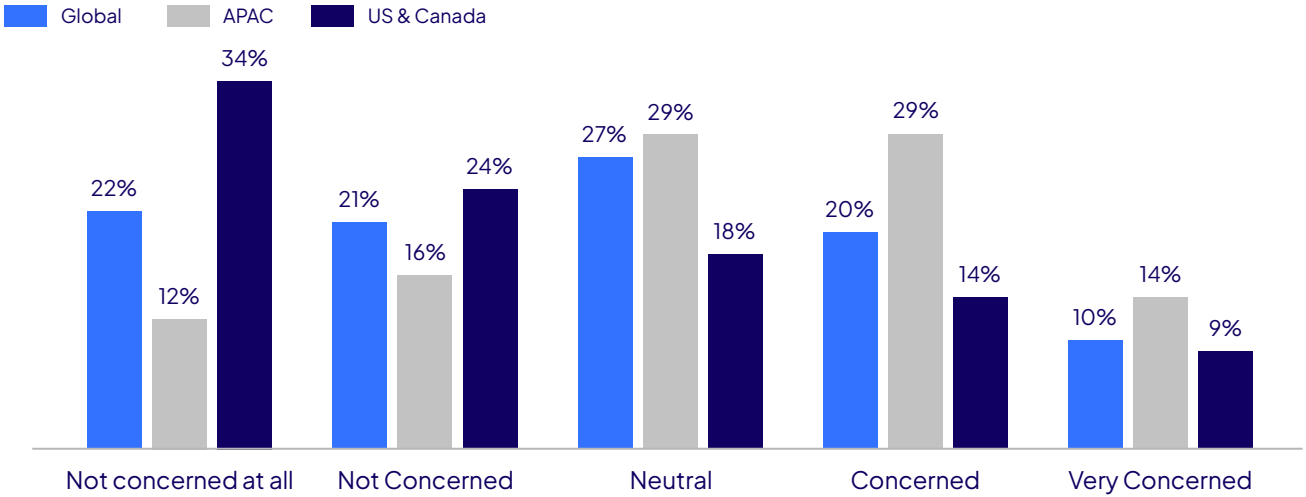
As AI reshapes labour markets, the perceived relevance of a degree is becoming a competitive differentiator. Institutions that fail to visibly embed AI into their curricula risk being seen as irrelevant.

Source: Digital Education Council AI in Higher Education Global Survey 2026.

43% of Faculty Believe Programmes Will Stay Current

Faculty Concern About Curriculum Relevance

Statement: What I teach today may be outdated by the time students graduate.



APAC

Feels Most Pressure

43% agree that what they teach may be outdated by the time students enter the workforce, the highest level of concern across all regions.

US & Canada

Most Confident

58% disagree that what they teach will be outdated by graduation, the highest level of confidence across all regions.

Globally, faculty are largely confident that their curricula will remain relevant.

43% disagree that what they teach will be outdated by the time students graduate, outpacing the 30% who believe it will.

This 30% also points to a sizeable concern that AI is accelerating the pace at which professional knowledge moves, and that curricula may struggle to keep up.

Source: Digital Education Council AI in Higher Education Global Survey 2026.

More Than Half of US & Canada Students Would Support an AI Ban

Student Attachment to AI Access by Region

Statement: I would be disappointed if AI is prohibited in my institution.

I would be disappointed if AI is prohibited in my institution.	Global	APAC	EMEA	US & Canada	LATAM
Strongly Agree	**32%**	26%	33%	20%	34%
Agree	**19%**	21%	20%	13%	20%
Neutral	**27%**	18%	21%	11%	31%
Disagree	**9%**	10%	11%	12%	7%
Strongly Disagree	**14%**	25%	15%	43%	8%

Globally, the largest single group (32%) strongly agrees they would be disappointed if AI were banned, more than double the share who strongly disagree (14%).

The regional picture inverts this sharply. In US & Canada, 43% would not be disappointed by a ban, while EMEA and LATAM show the strongest attachment to AI access.

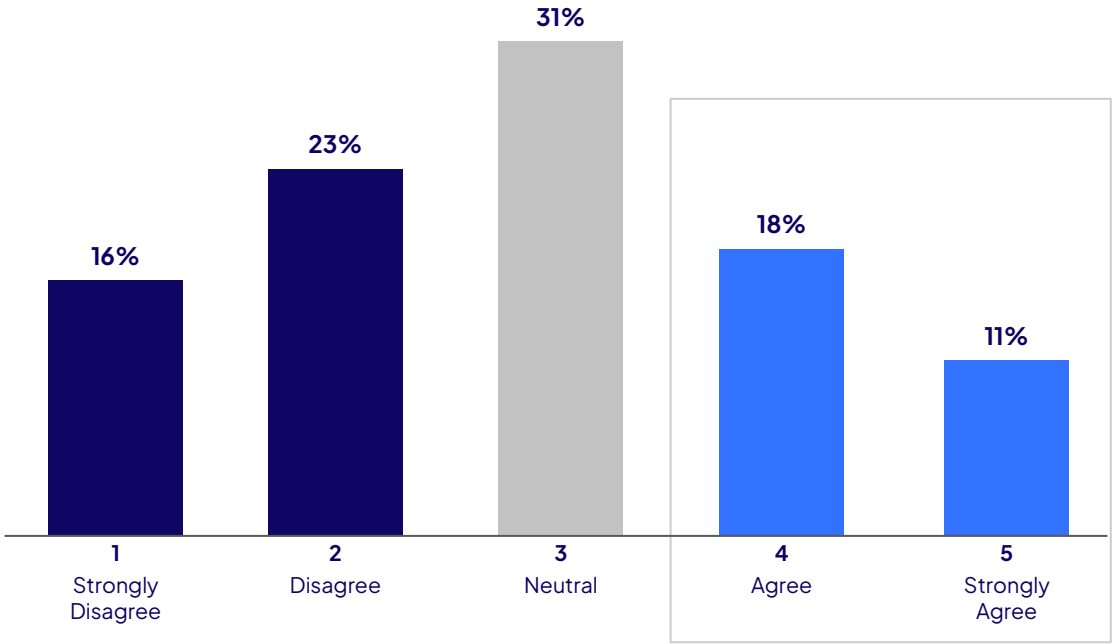
Institutions operating across multiple regions cannot assume a shared student relationship with AI. A blanket permissive or restrictive policy will be experienced very differently depending on where it lands.

Source: Digital Education Council AI in Higher Education Global Survey 2026.

Students Question Their Instructors Ability To Guide Them

Students' Perceptions of Instructor Readiness to Guide AI Use

Statement: My instructors are well equipped to guide me on AI use.



29%

of students believe their instructors are well equipped to guide them on AI. With nearly three in four unconvinced, the gap between student need and perceived instructor readiness is one institutions cannot afford to leave unaddressed.

US & Canada

Only 17% of students agree or strongly agree that their instructors are well equipped to guide them on AI use.

Source: Digital Education Council AI in Higher Education Global Survey 2026.

Peer Misuse Is a Widespread Worry

Student Concern About Peer AI Misuse and Unfair Advantage

Statement: I am concerned that my classmates might misuse AI, creating unfair advantages or undermining the value of my education.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Global	7%	7%	26%	22%	38%
APAC	6%	9%	21%	22%	42%
EMEA	13%	14%	25%	18%	30%
US & Canada	7%	8%	12%	15%	58%
Latin America	5%	5%	29%	24%	37%

Concern about peer AI misuse is widespread. Globally, 60% of students agree or strongly agree that classmates may misuse AI, creating unfair advantages or undermining the value of their education. This concern is most pronounced in US & Canada, where 73% agree or strongly agree. Without clear and enforceable guidance, AI use may be perceived not only as a learning issue, but as a risk to the credibility of student work.

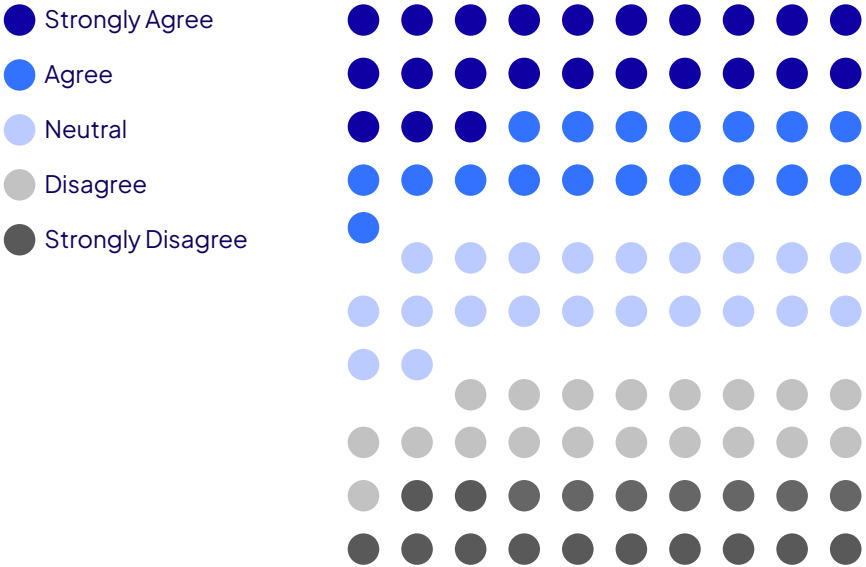
Source: Digital Education Council AI in Higher Education Global Survey 2026.

1.4 Outlook and Workforce Readiness

41% of Students Worry About Reduced Job Opportunities

Student Concern About AI's Impact on Future Job Opportunities

Statement: I worry that AI will reduce job opportunities in my field by the time I graduate.



41% of students worry that AI will reduce job opportunities in their field by the time they graduate. This anxiety peaks sharply in APAC, where 50% of students anticipate a shrinking job market.

21% remain uncertain about AI's future job impact.

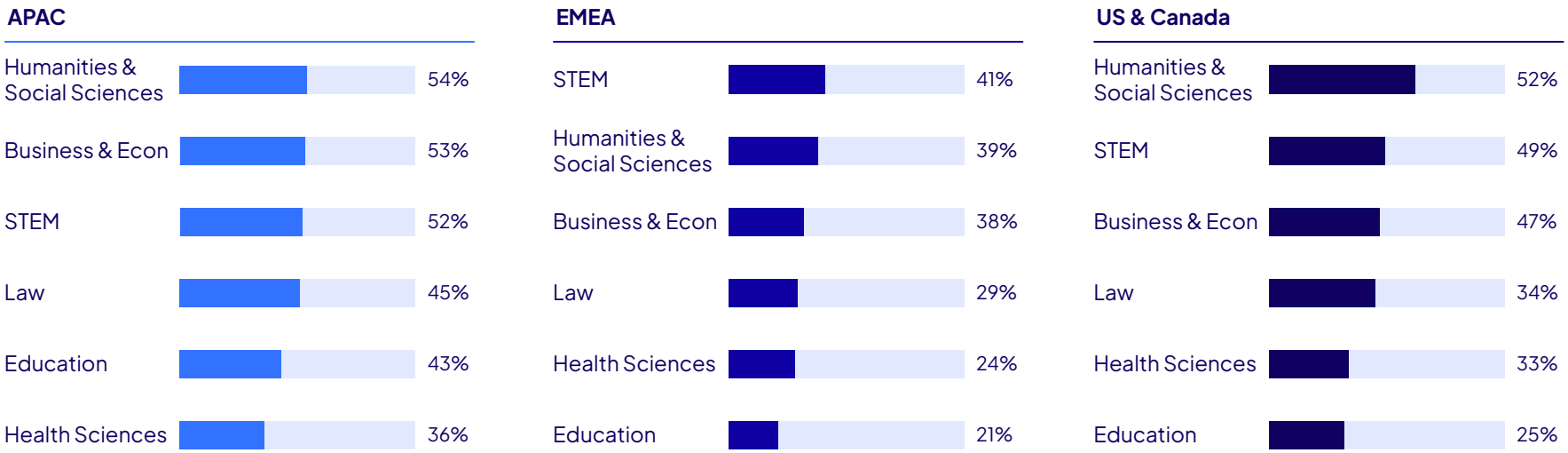
Source: Digital Education Council AI in Higher Education Global Survey 2026.

Concern About AI's Impact on Jobs Varies by Discipline and Region

Regional patterns differ markedly. In APAC, concern is high across several disciplines, including Humanities and Social Sciences, Business and Economics, Law, and STEM. In US & Canada, concern is highest among Humanities and Social Sciences students at 52%. EMEA shows lower concern overall, with Education students reporting the lowest level at 21%.

Student Concern Over AI Reducing Future Job Opportunities by Discipline

Statement: I worry that AI will reduce job opportunities in my field by the time I graduate.

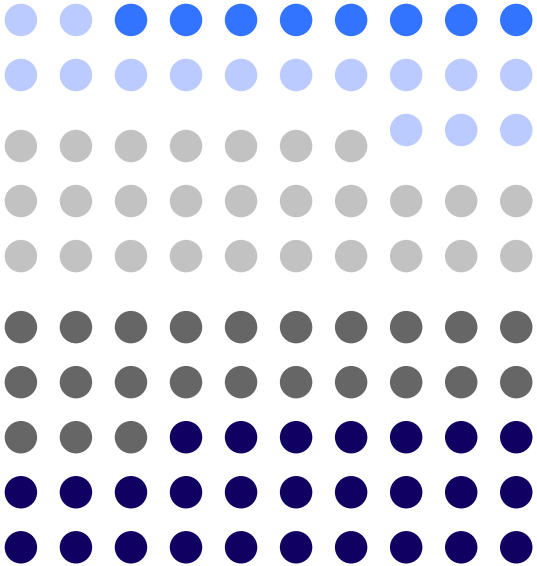


Source: Digital Education Council AI in Higher Education Global Survey 2026.

Students Feel Underprepared to Use AI Professionally

Student Professional AI Preparedness

Question: My current studies are preparing me adequately to use AI professionally.



23%
of students feel **adequately prepared** to use AI professionally

27%
of students are **neutral**

50%
of students feel **underprepared** to use AI professionally

US & Canada

66% feel underprepared, pointing to a significant gap between what is being taught and what the professional world increasingly demands.

Only **12%** of students in US & Canada feel their studies are preparing them to use AI professionally, the lowest of all regions.

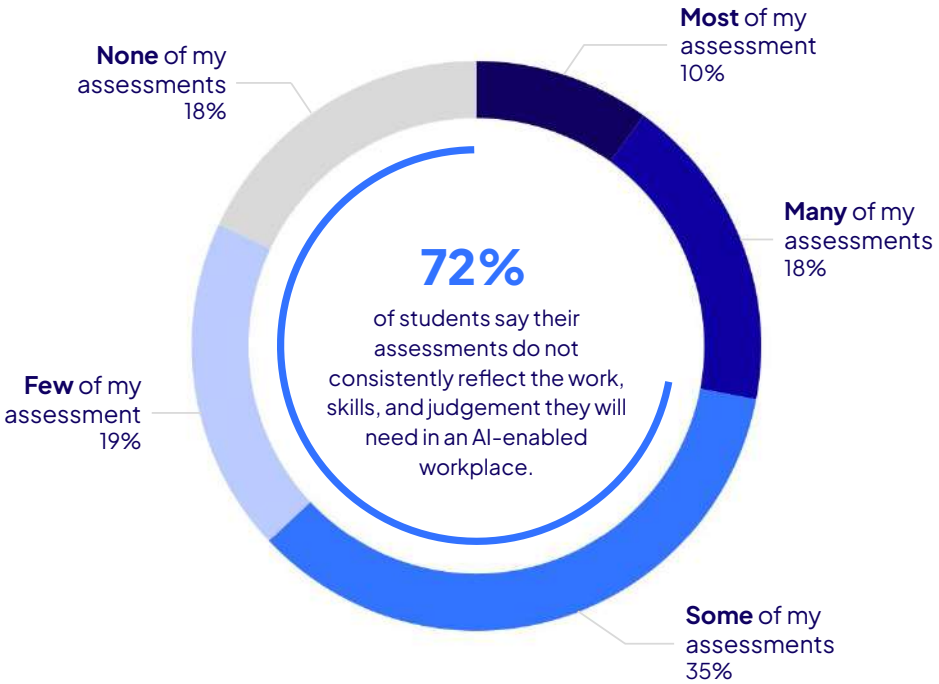
- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Source: Digital Education Council AI in Higher Education Global Survey 2026.

Assessments Lag Behind the Needs of an AI-Driven Workforce

Student Confidence in Assessment Relevance

Question: I believe my assessments reflect the work, skills, and judgement I will need in an AI-enabled workplace.



Only 10% of students say that most of their assessments reflect the work, skills, and judgement they expect to need in an AI-enabled workplace. A further 18% say this applies to many of their assessments.

By contrast, 72% of students do not see this alignment consistently across their assessments. This includes 35% who say only some assessments reflect future workplace needs, and 37% who say none or only a few do so.

The finding suggests that assessment relevance is becoming a significant pressure point. As AI reshapes the capabilities students expect to need after graduation, many students do not yet see their current assessments as consistently preparing them for that environment. This concern is especially pronounced in US & Canada, where 48% say none or only a few of their assessments reflect AI-enabled workplace requirements.

Source: Digital Education Council AI in Higher Education Global Survey 2026.

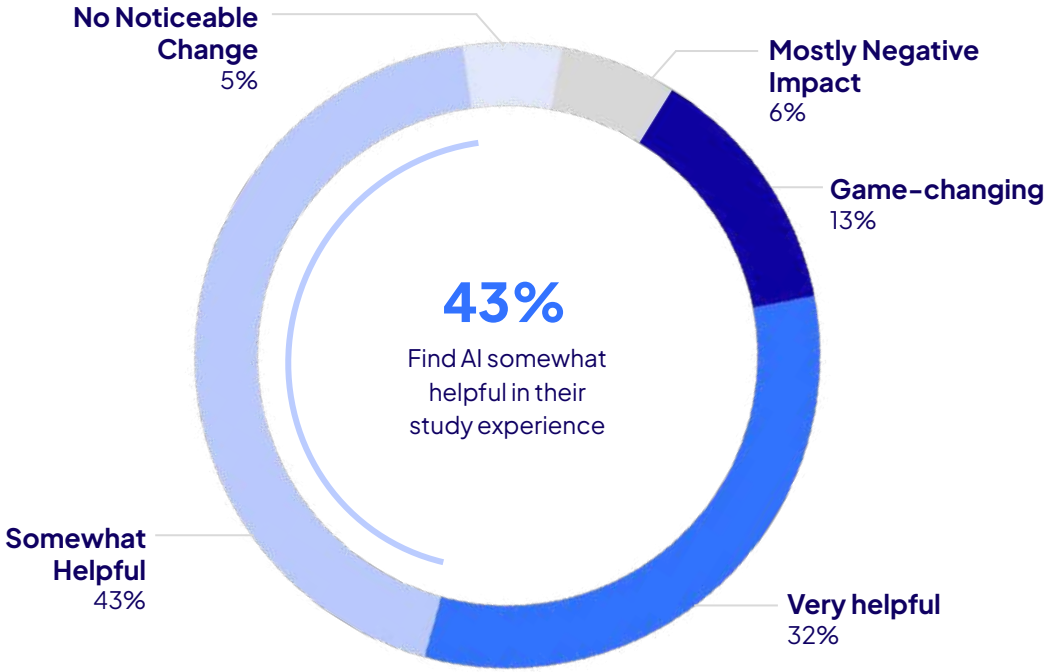
Part II. The Deep Dive

2.1 State of AI Adoption

Most Students Find AI Helpful, but Few Find It Game-Changing

Student Experience of Influence of AI in Studying and Learning, % of respondents

Question: To what extent has AI influenced your study experience?



Students' experiences with AI in education are largely positive

The most common response for their experience with AI is that it is somewhat helpful (43%) in their study experience.

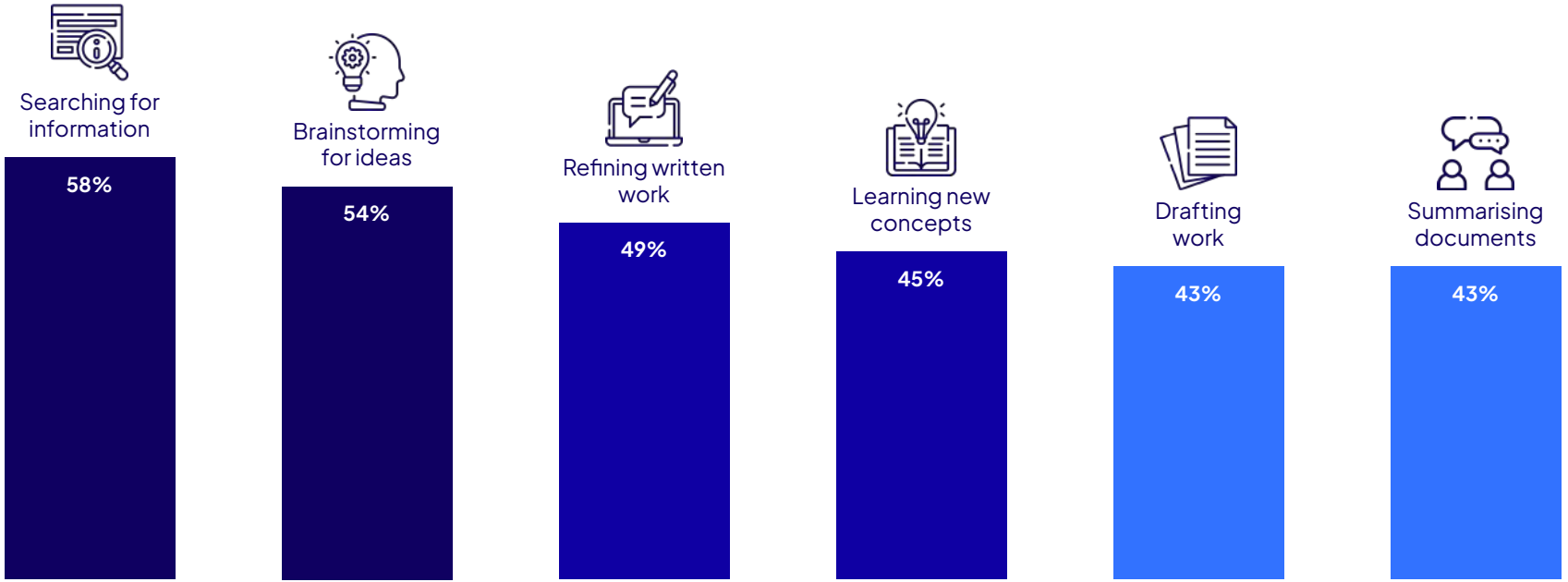
Only 13% describe AI as game-changing, suggesting AI has yet to reach its full potential for most learners. For most, AI adds value to how they already learn rather than changing their processes.

*Responses only include respondents who answered 'Yes' to 'Have you used / are you using AI in your learning?' (n=8,422)
Source: Digital Education Council AI in Higher Education Global Survey 2026

Top AI Use Cases Among Students

Top 6 AI Use Cases by Students

Question: What do you usually use AI for? (Select all that apply)

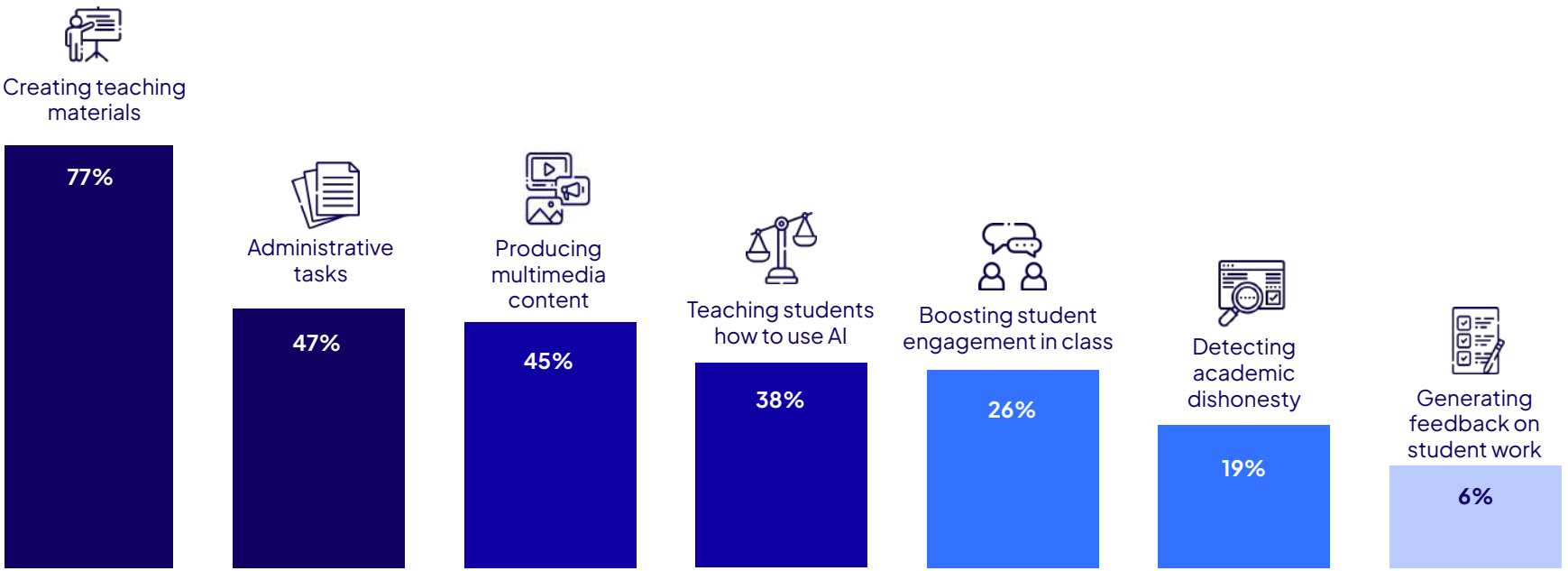


*Responses only include respondents who answered 'Yes' to 'Have you used / are you using AI in your learning?' (n=8,422)
Source: Digital Education Council AI in Higher Education Global Survey 2026

Automating Preparation: How Faculty Use AI

Top 7 AI Use Cases by Faculty

Question: What do you use AI for in your teaching? (Select all that apply)

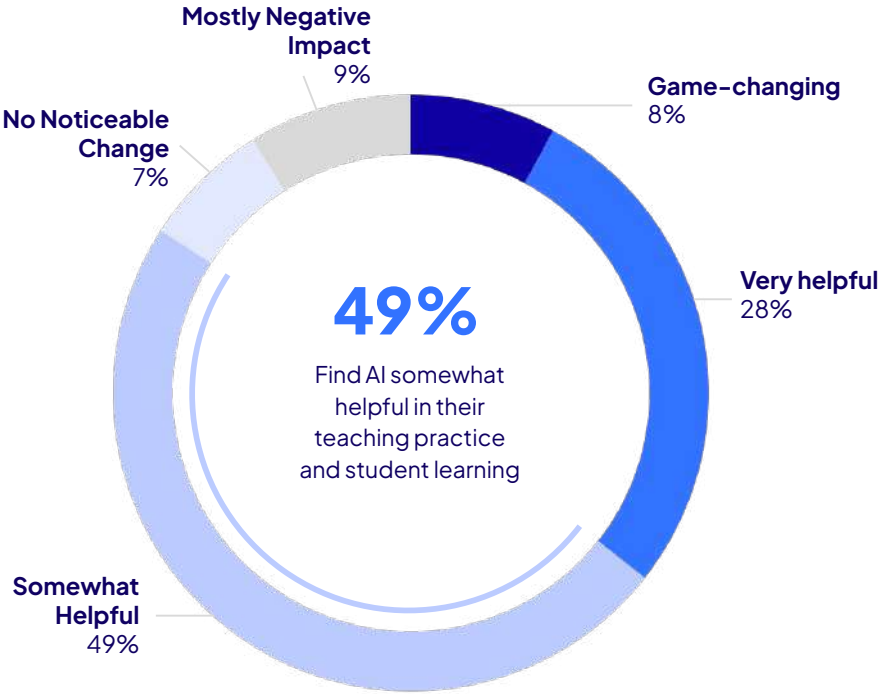


*Responses only include respondents who answered 'Yes' to 'Have you used / are you using AI in your teaching?' (n=8,956)
Source: Digital Education Council AI in Higher Education Global Survey 2026.

AI Has Made Teaching Somewhat Better For Half of Faculty

Faculty Experience on Influence of AI in Teaching, % of respondents

Question: To what extent has AI influenced your teaching practice and student learning?



Faculty experience of AI in teaching is broadly positive

49% of faculty describe AI's influence as somewhat helpful. A further 36% go further, rating it very helpful or game-changing. For most faculty who use AI, the influence on their teaching is net positive.

APAC

Most Positive Influence

41% describe AI's influence as very helpful and 11% call it game-changing. Faculty who find AI's influence positive are more likely to integrate it further.

US & Canada

Most Negative Impact

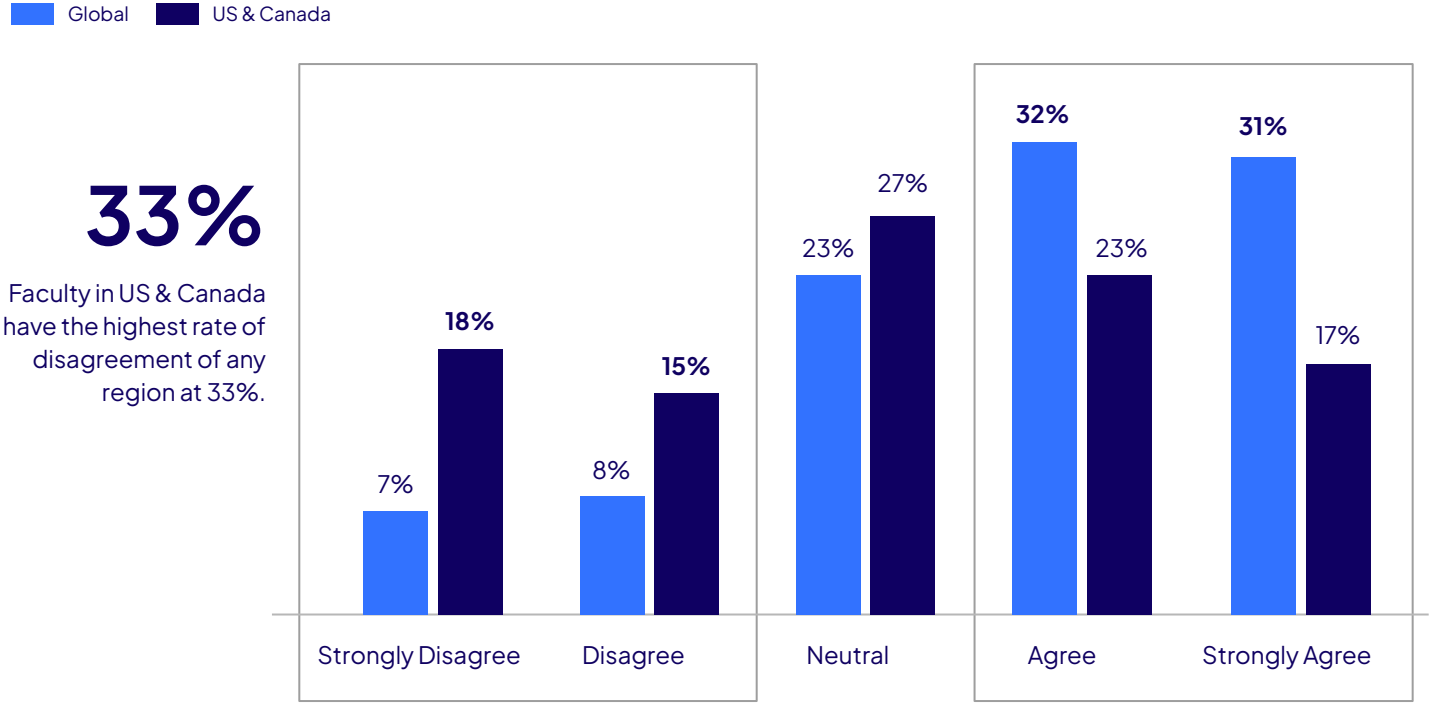
17% of faculty report that AI has had a mostly negative influence on their teaching practice, the highest rate across all regions.

*Responses only include respondents who answered 'Yes' to 'Have you used / are you using AI in your teaching?' (n=3,174)
Source: Digital Education Council AI in Higher Education Global Survey 2026.

AI Delivers Efficiency Gains for 63% of Faculty Globally

Faculty Perception on Whether AI Reduces Time on Teaching Tasks

Statement: AI reduces the time I spend on routine teaching tasks.



33%

Faculty in US & Canada have the highest rate of disagreement of any region at 33%.

63%

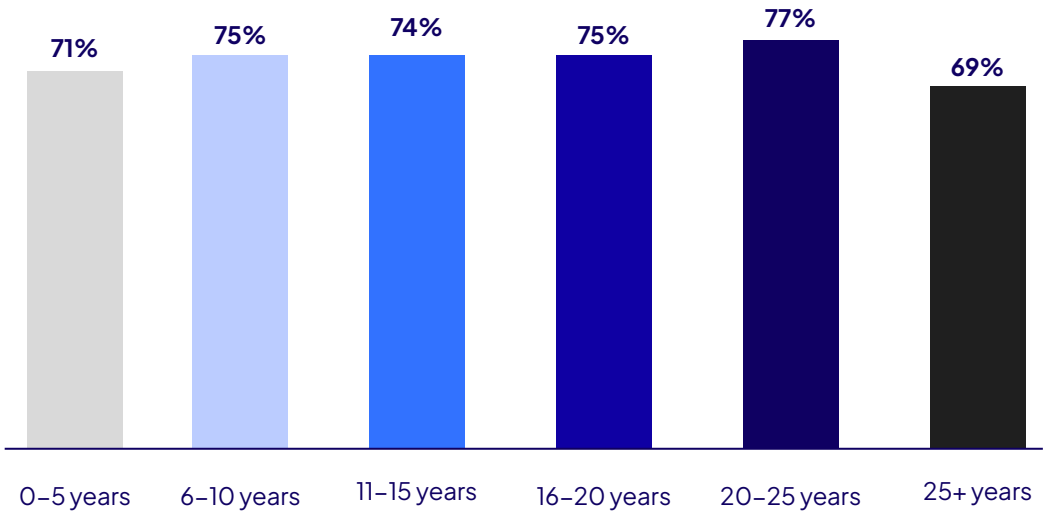
Two thirds of faculty globally agree that AI reduces the time they spend on routine teaching tasks.

*Responses only include respondents who answered 'Yes' to 'Have you used / are you using AI in your teaching?' (n=3,174)
Source: Digital Education Council AI in Higher Education Global Survey 2026.

AI Adoption Is Consistent Across All Levels of Teaching Experience

Faculty Used/Are Using AI in Teaching by Seniority

Question: Have you used / are you using AI in your teaching?



Faculty AI Usage

77% of faculty currently use AI in their teaching, with adoption remaining consistent across all levels of experience. *(refer to page 21)*

Across all seniority bands, from under 5 years of experience to 25 or more, adoption rates vary by just 8%.

AI adoption in teaching is **not a generational or experience-based trend** and is largely independent of career stage.

Source: Digital Education Council AI in Higher Education Global Survey 2026.

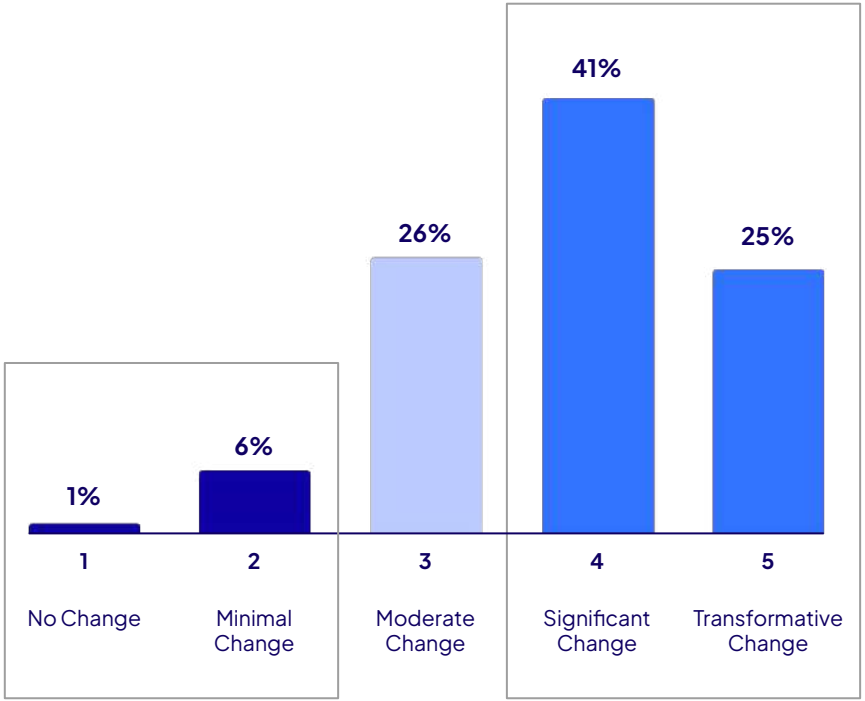
66% of Faculty Expect AI to Bring Significant Change to Their Role

Faculty Perceptions of the Impact of AI on the Role of Instructors

Question: How much change do you think AI will bring to your role as an instructor?

7%

Only 7% of faculty believe that AI will bring no to minimal change to the roles of instructors



66%

Two in three respondents believe that AI will bring significant to transformative change to the roles of instructors.

Source: Digital Education Council AI in Higher Education Global Survey 2026.

Faculty Expect Change, Not Job Loss

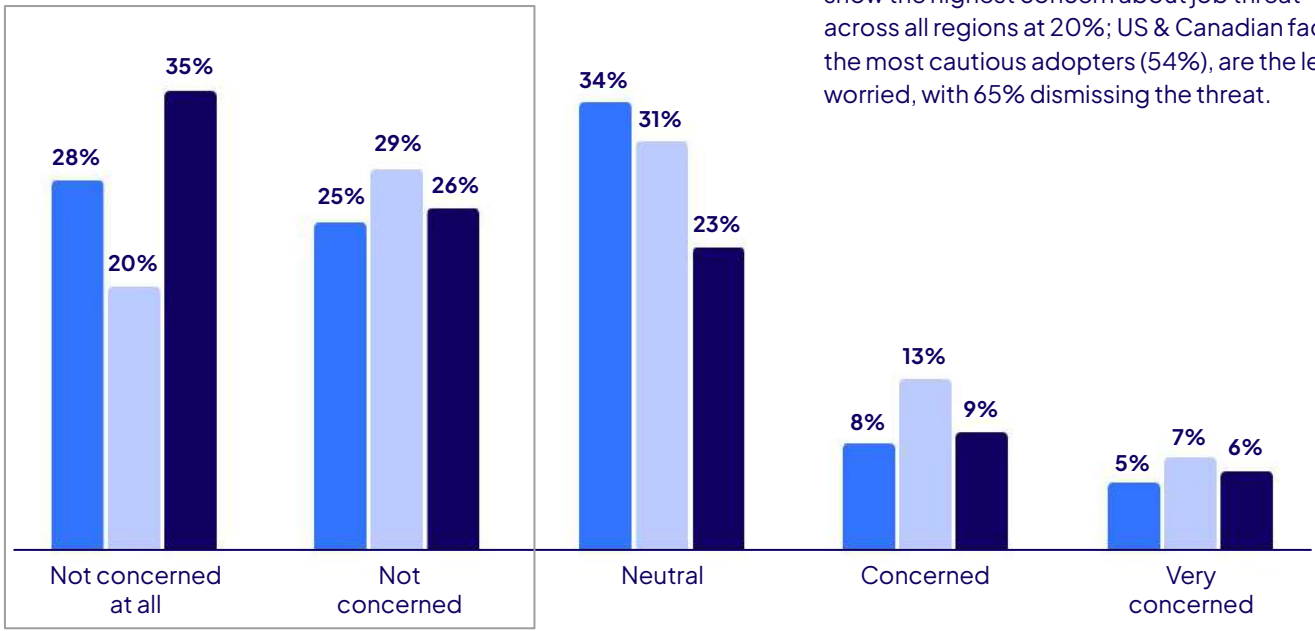
Faculty Views on AI Becoming a Threat to Their Job

Statement: AI is becoming a threat to my job.

53%

of faculty globally do not see AI as a threat to their job.

This pattern remains largely unchanged from 2025, when 51% of faculty said AI was not a threat to their job.



APAC vs US & Canada

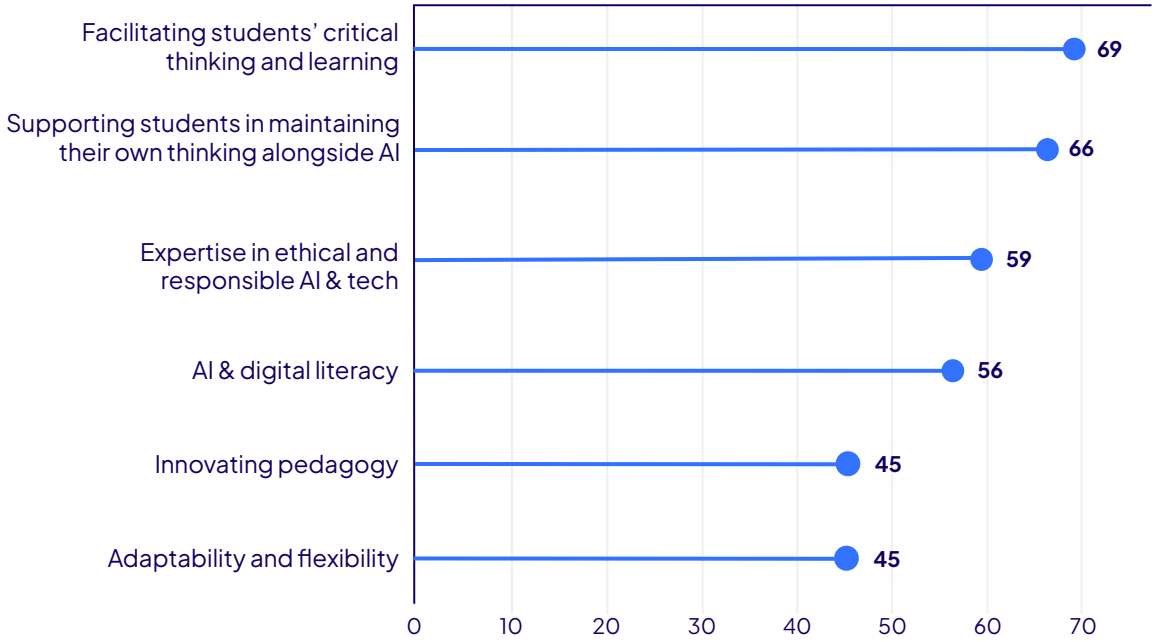
APAC faculty, the most active AI users (82%), show the highest concern about job threat across all regions at 20%; US & Canadian faculty, the most cautious adopters (54%), are the least worried, with 65% dismissing the threat.

Source: Digital Education Council AI in Higher Education Global Survey 2026.

Top Skills Educators Need in the Age of AI

Top 6 Skills of Educators

Question: In your view, what are the top skills that an educator will need in the age of AI and digital? (choose up to 5 out of 9)



Faculty are clear on the skills they most need in the age of AI: 69% name facilitating students' critical thinking and learning, and 59% name expertise in ethical and responsible AI use. Assessment design is selected by 44%.

US & Canada stands out on the human skills end, with 88% naming critical thinking facilitation and 69% emotional intelligence, well above the global figures. The picture is consistent across regions: faculty are prioritising the distinctly human dimensions of teaching over technical AI fluency.

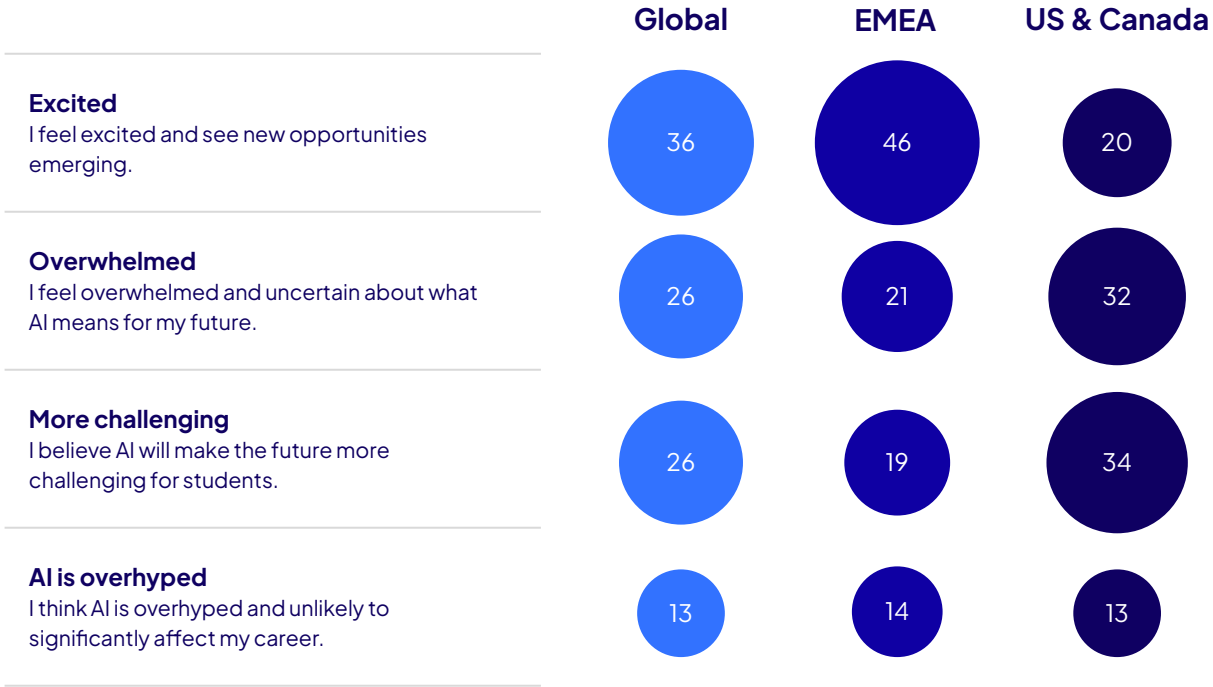
Source: Digital Education Council AI in Higher Education Global Survey 2026.

2.2 Career Readiness and the Workforce

Students See AI Opportunity, but Unease Dominates

Student Sentiment on AI and the Future, % of respondents

Question: Which statement best describes how you currently feel about AI and your future?



Most students approach AI with caution

Globally, 26% of students feel overwhelmed and another 26% expect AI to make the future more challenging. Only 36% feel excited about the opportunities it brings.

The optimism also varies by region, with the highest levels in EMEA at 46% and the lowest in US & Canada at 20%.

Source: Digital Education Council AI in Higher Education Global Survey 2026. Data presented as percentage (%) of student respondents.

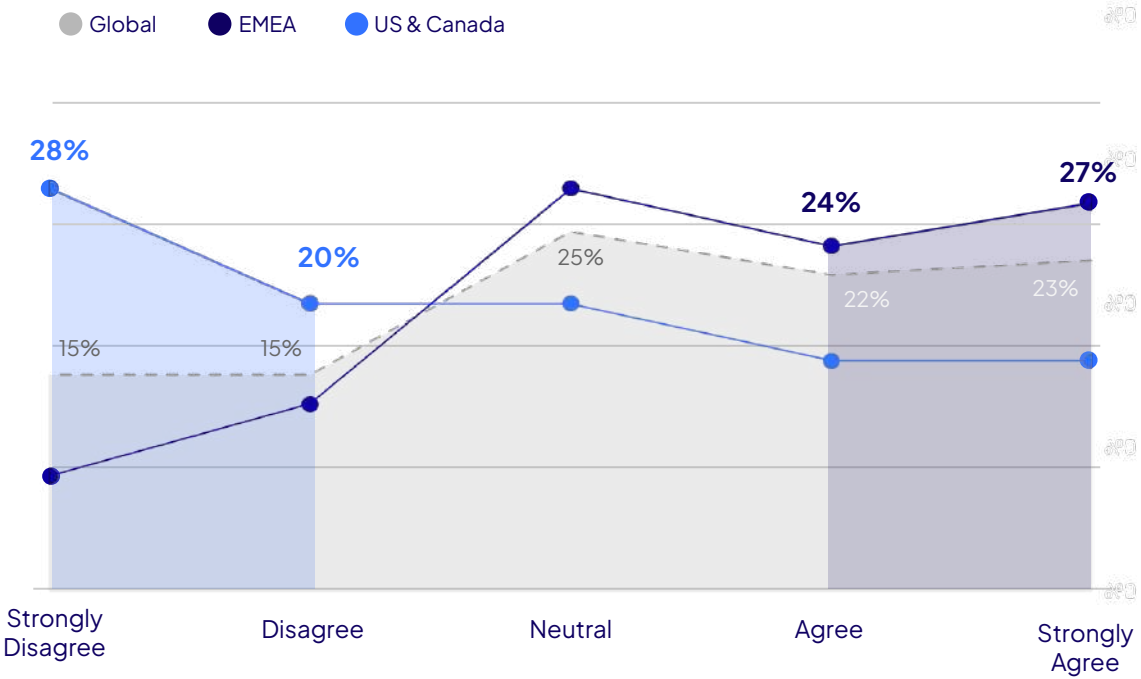
45% of Students View AI as Essential for Career

Students' View on AI Skills an Essential Skills in Their Fields

Statement: AI skills will be essential in my field by the time I graduate.

US & Canada

48% of students disagree or strongly disagree that AI skills will be essential for their careers.



EMEA

More than half (51%) of EMEA students expect AI skills to be a career essential by the time they graduate.

Global

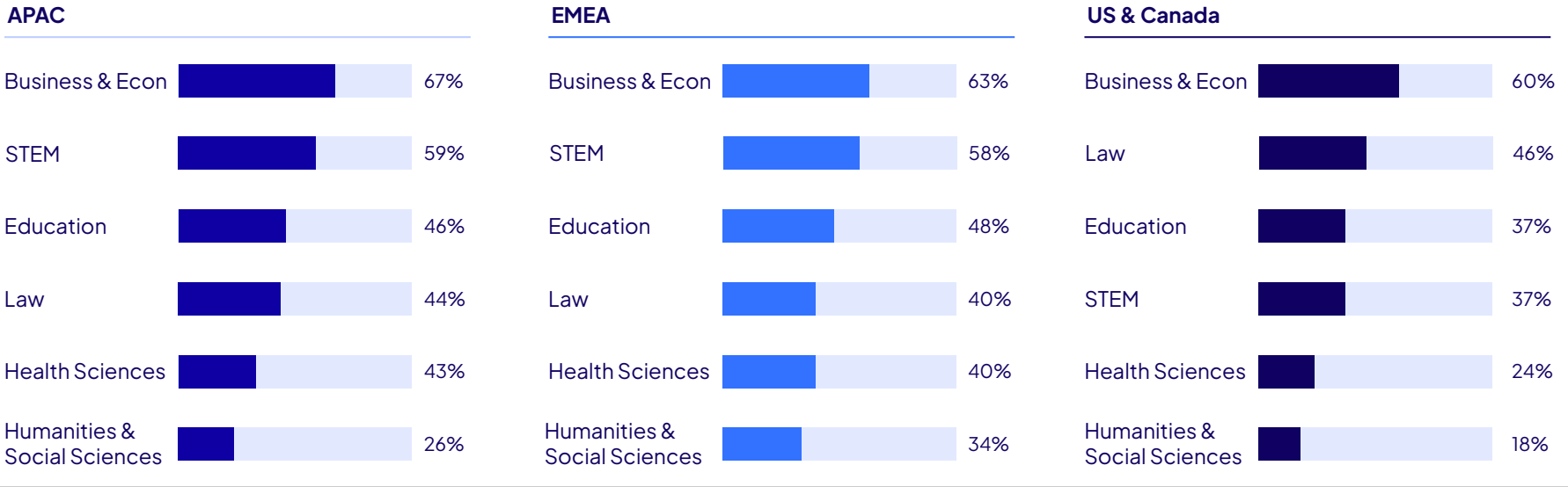
45% of students expect AI skills to be a career essential. Institutions have a narrow window to close that gap before students enter the workforce.

Source: Digital Education Council AI in Higher Education Global Survey 2026.

Student Views on AI Skill Relevance Differ by Field and Region

Students' View on AI Skills as Essential in Their Fields, by Discipline

Statement: AI skills will be essential in my field by the time I graduate.



Students' views on AI skill relevance differ by region, even within the same fields. The most consistent pattern is in Business and Economics, where students across all three regions see AI skills as essential — 67% in APAC, 63% in EMEA, and 60% in US & Canada. STEM shows a divide, with perceived relevance at 59% in APAC and 58% in EMEA, but 37% in US & Canada. Humanities and Social Sciences remains comparatively lower across all regions.

Source: Digital Education Council AI in Higher Education Global Survey 2026.

2.3 Global AI Literacy by Dimension

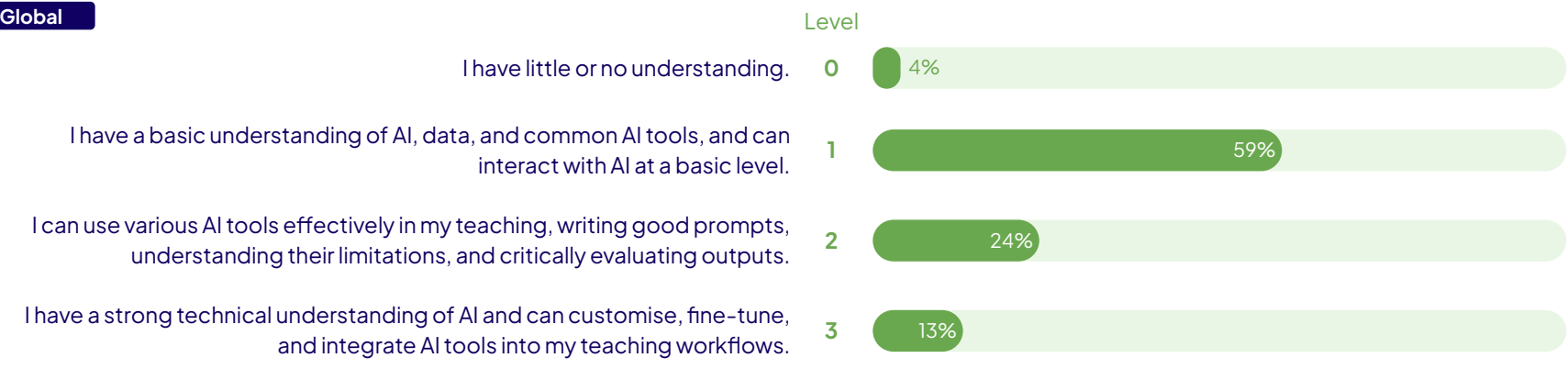
Faculty Still Learning the Basics of AI

Faculty AI Literacy Self Assessment

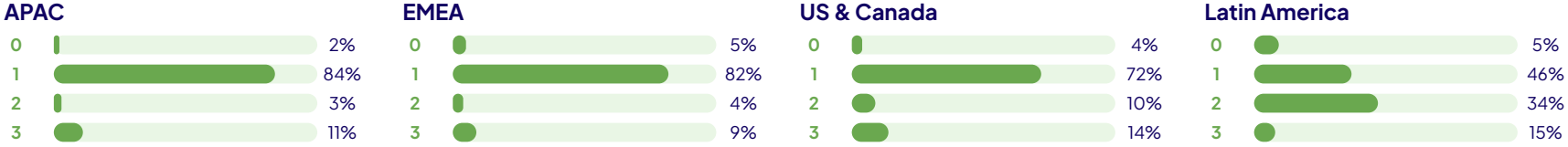
Question: Which of the following statements best describes your understanding of AI?

Dimension 1
Understanding AI and Data

Global



Regional Breakdown



Source: Digital Education Council AI in Higher Education Global Survey 2026.

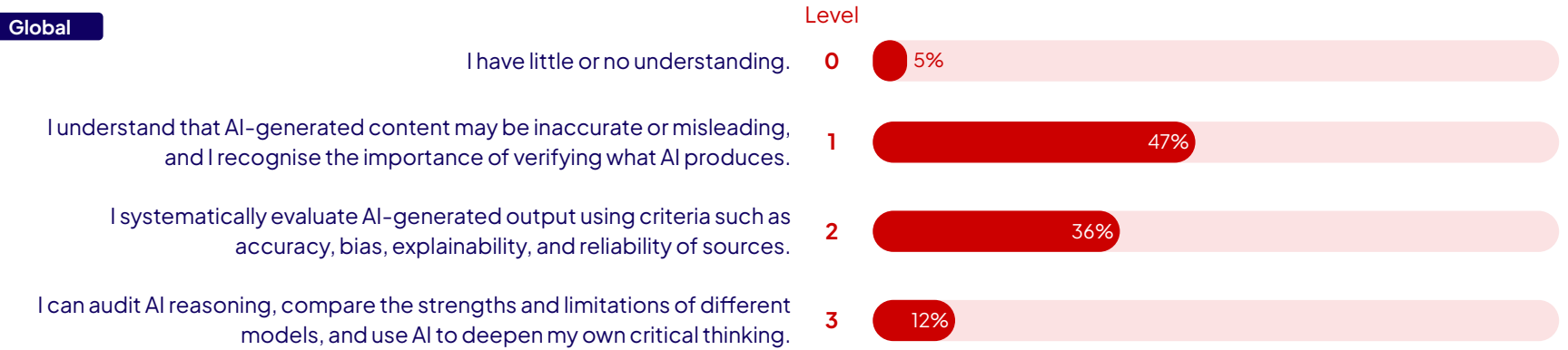
Faculty See AI Risks, but Evaluation Skills Remain Limited

Faculty AI Literacy Self Assessment

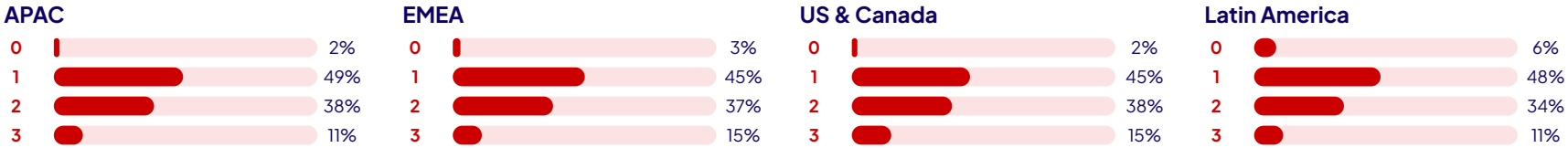
Question: Which of the following statements best describes your ability to critically assess AI-generated content and insights?

Dimension 2
Critical Thinking and Judgement

Global



Regional Breakdown



Source: Digital Education Council AI in Higher Education Global Survey 2026.

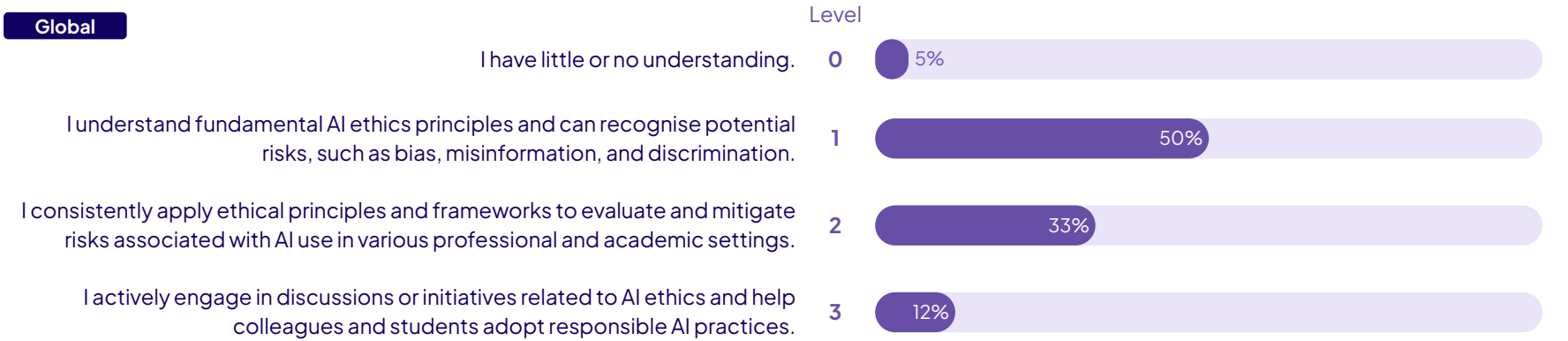
55% of Faculty Understand AI Ethics but Fall Short in Practice

Faculty AI Literacy Self Assessment

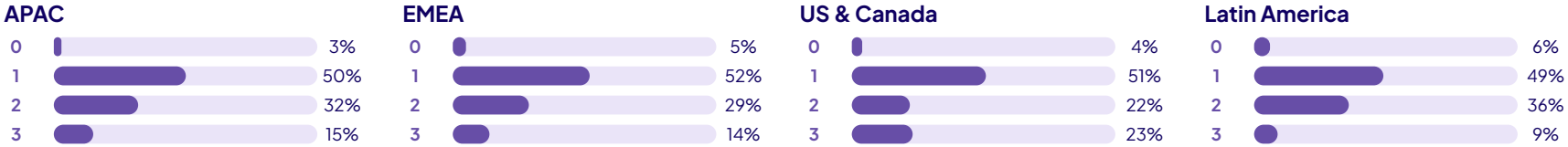
Question: Which of the following statements best describes your understanding and practice of ethical and responsible AI use?

Dimension 3
Ethical and Responsible AI Use

Global



Regional Breakdown



Source: Digital Education Council AI in Higher Education Global Survey 2026.

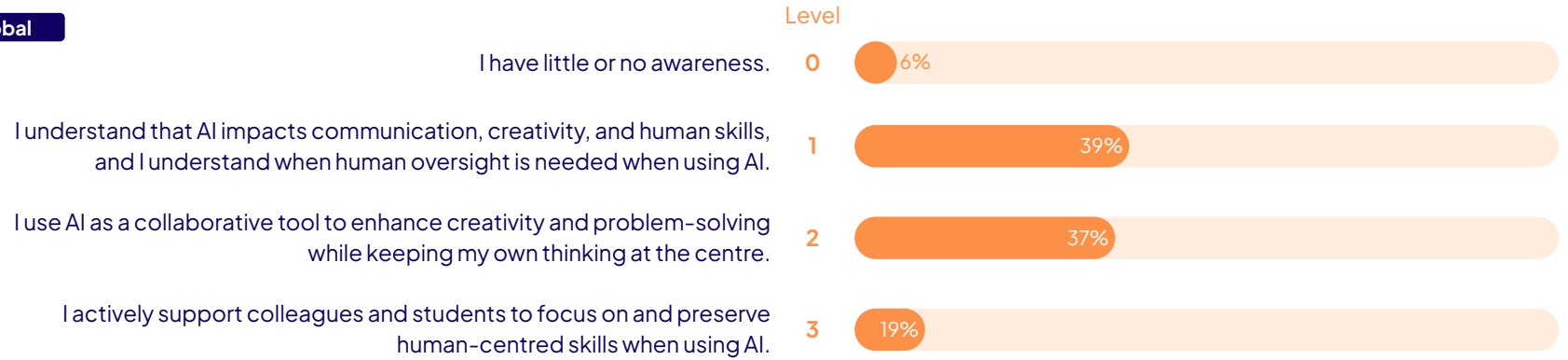
Faculty Grasp Human-Centred AI in Theory, Less So in Practice

Faculty AI Literacy Self Assessment

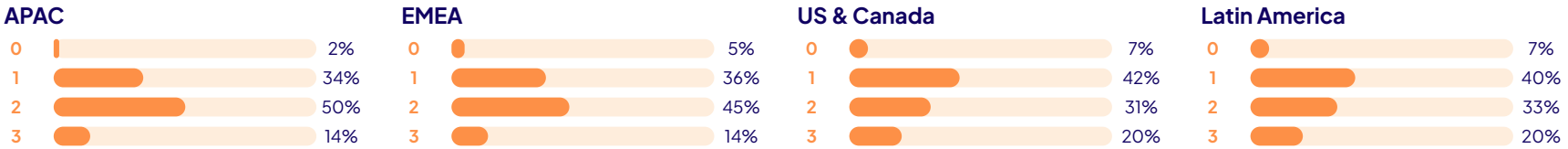
Question: Which of the following statements best describes your approach to human-centricity, emotional intelligence, and creativity when using AI?

Dimension 4
Human-Centricity, Emotional Intelligence, and Creativity

Global



Regional Breakdown



Source: Digital Education Council AI in Higher Education Global Survey 2026.

Faculty AI Literacy Sits Between Awareness and Integration

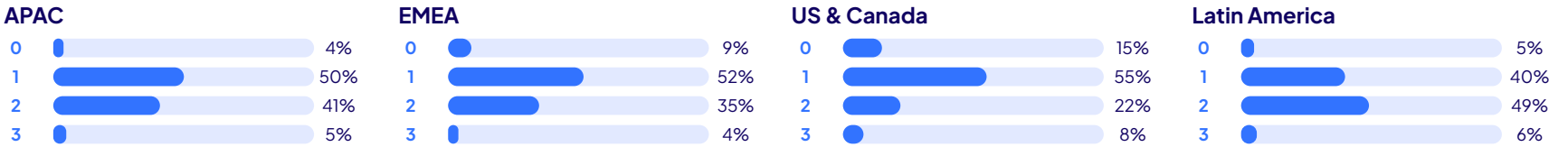
Faculty AI Literacy Self Assessment

Question: Which statement best describes your current level of understanding and use of AI in higher education?

Dimension 5
Domain Expertise

Global

Regional Breakdown



Source: Digital Education Council AI in Higher Education Global Survey 2026.

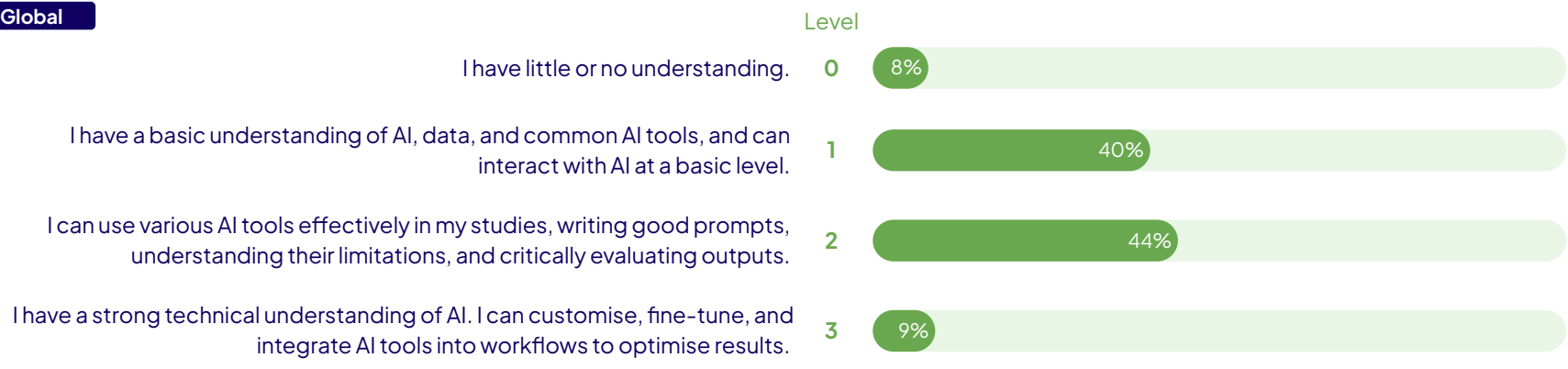
Students Outpace Faculty on AI Understanding and Application

Student AI Literacy Self Assessment

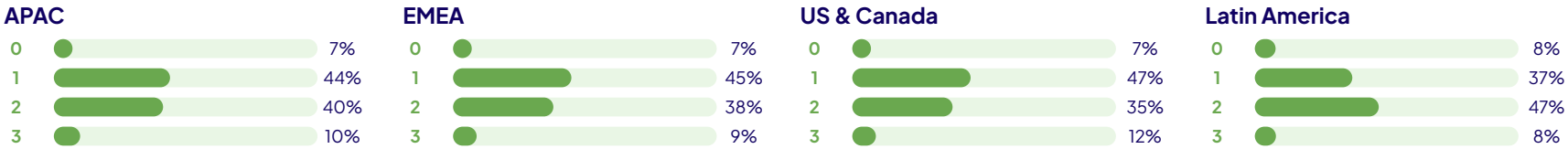
Question: Which of the following statements best describes your understanding of AI?

Dimension 1
Understanding AI and Data

Global



Regional Breakdown



Source: Digital Education Council AI in Higher Education Global Survey 2026.

Students Show Awareness of AI Risks, but Struggle with Evaluation

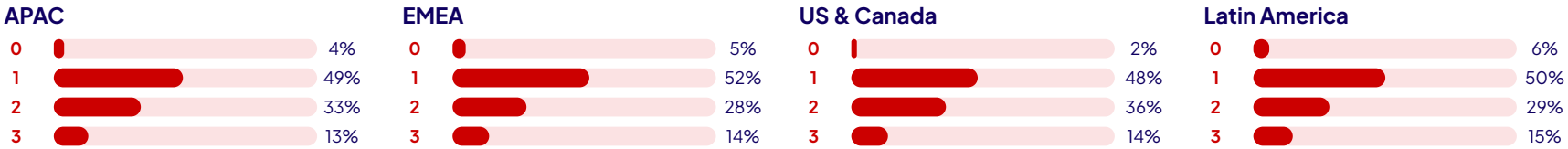
Student AI Literacy Self Assessment

Question: Which of the following statements best describes your ability to critically assess AI-generated content and insights?

Dimension 2
Critical Thinking and Judgement

Global

Regional Breakdown



Source: Digital Education Council AI in Higher Education Global Survey 2026.

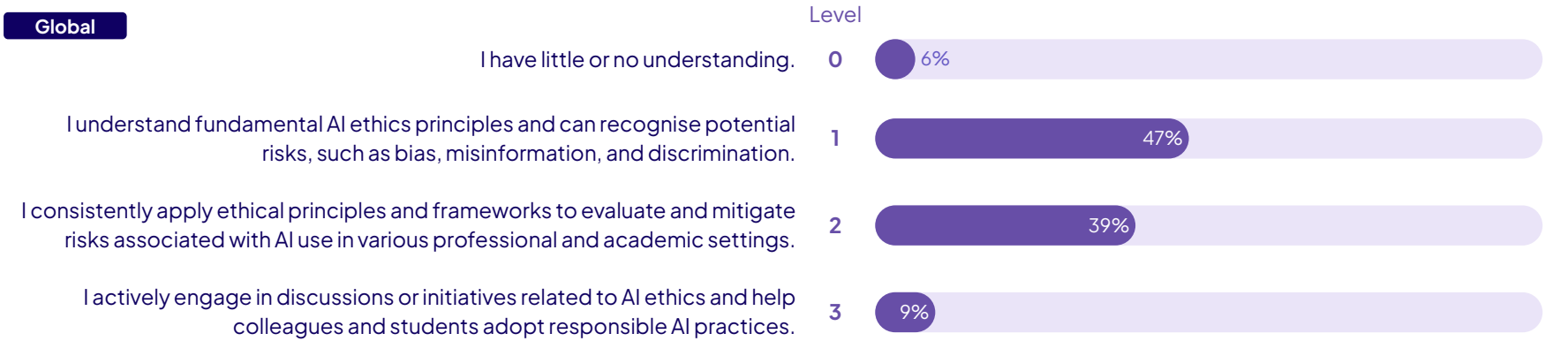
Ethical Awareness Is Common Ground, but Practice Lags Behind

Student AI Literacy Self Assessment

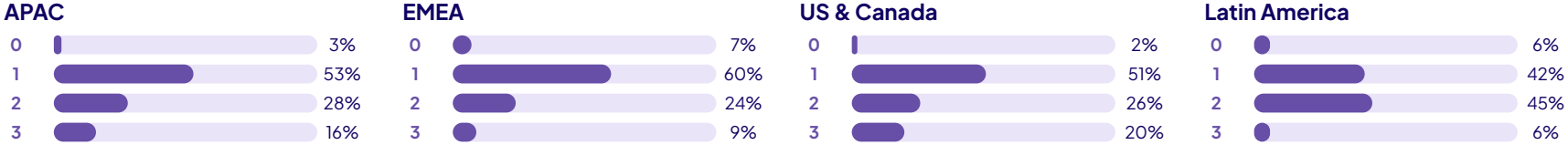
Question: Which of the following statements best describes your understanding and practice of ethical and responsible AI use?

Dimension 3
Ethical and Responsible AI Use

Global



Regional Breakdown



Source: Digital Education Council AI in Higher Education Global Survey 2026.

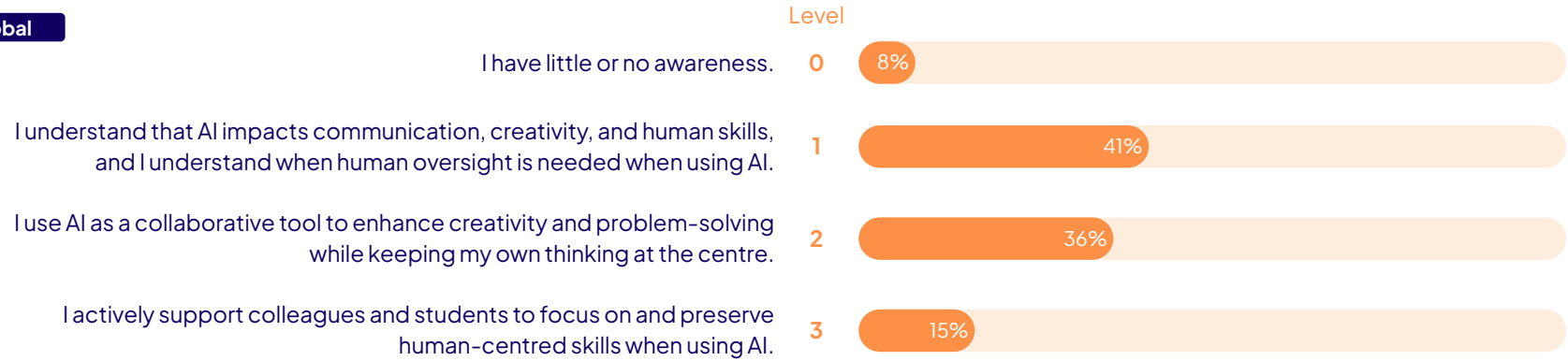
Students Understand the Importance of Human-Centred AI Use

Student AI Literacy Self Assessment

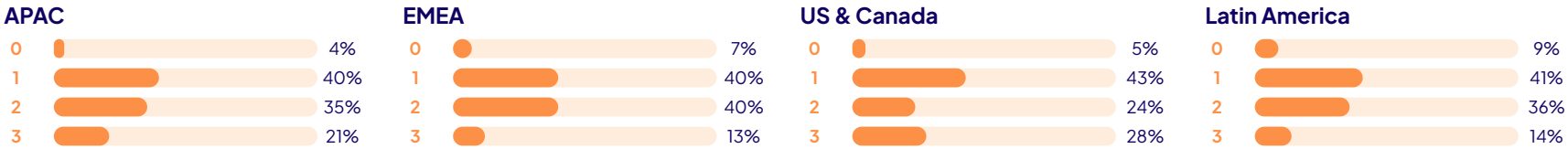
Question: Which of the following statements best describes your approach to human-centricity, emotional intelligence, and creativity when using AI?

Dimension 4
Human-Centricity, Emotional Intelligence, and Creativity

Global



Regional Breakdown



Source: Digital Education Council AI in Higher Education Global Survey 2026.

AI Fluency Is Yet to Translate into Strong Domain Application

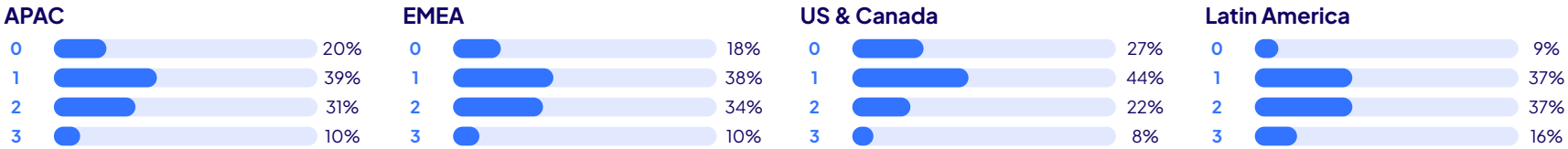
Student AI Literacy Self Assessment

Question: Which of the following statements best describes how you understand and use AI in relation to your career planning or future profession?

Dimension 5
Domain Expertise

Global

Regional Breakdown



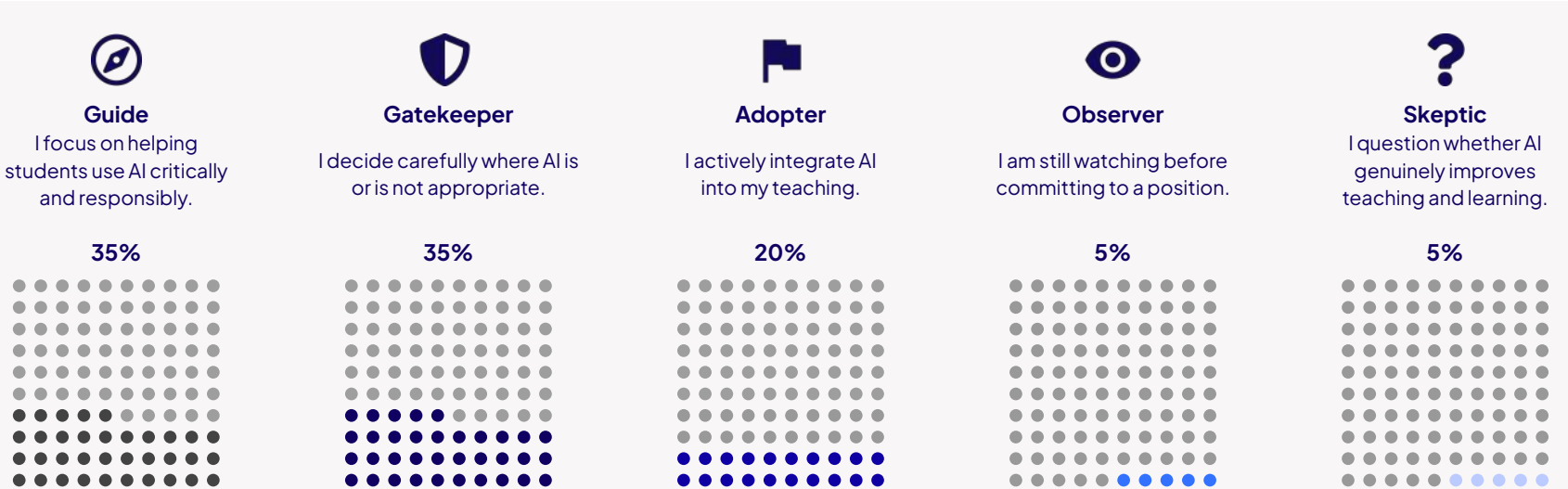
Source: Digital Education Council AI in Higher Education Global Survey 2026.

2.4 AI in Teaching and Assessment

Faculty Are Guiding and Guarding AI, Not Yet Teaching With It

Faculty Approaches to AI in Teaching

Question: Which best describes how you approach AI in your teaching?



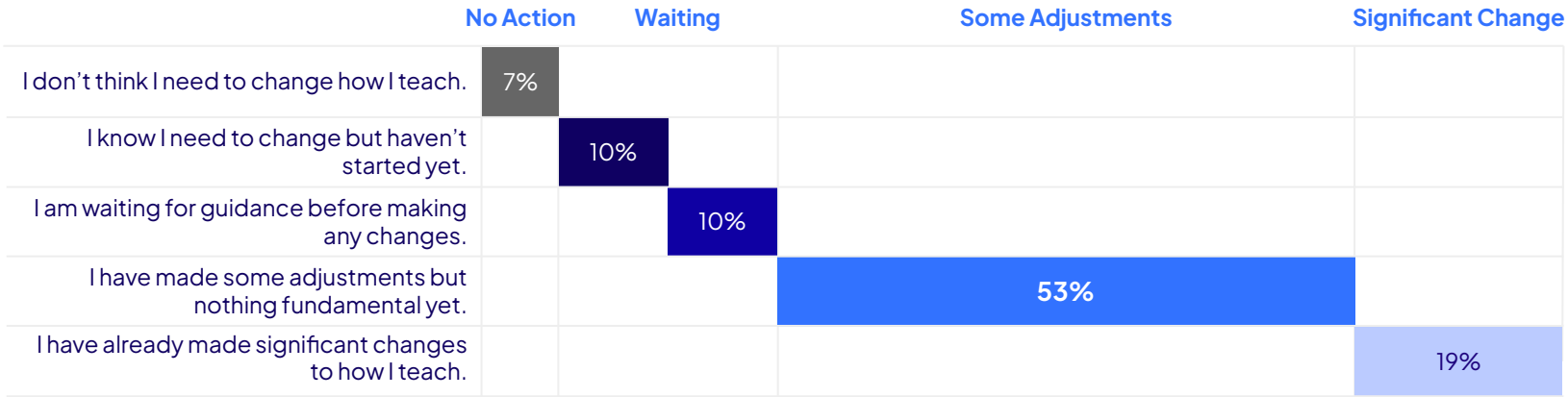
"**Guide**" and "**Gatekeeper**" are the two dominant stances faculty take toward AI in teaching, each selected by **35%** of respondents. Only **20%** describe themselves as proactively integrating AI into their teaching. The pattern suggests that faculty are engaging with AI, but many remain in a supervisory role, helping students navigate AI use or setting boundaries, rather than redesigning teaching around it.

*Responses only include respondents who answered 'Yes' to 'Have you used / are you using AI in your teaching?' (n=3,174)
Source: Digital Education Council AI in Higher Education Global Survey 2026.

Faculty Are Adjusting Around AI, But Few Are Redesigning Teaching

Stage of Adapting Teaching Practice to AI

Question: How would you describe where you are in adapting your teaching practice to AI?



71% of faculty **have completed or are actively working toward** AI-resilient assessments. 17% have only clarified policy without redesigning, and 12% have not started. AI-resilient assessment is underway, but far from universal.

AI-Integrated Assessment Redesign

The Digital Education Council's Next Era of Assessment report outlines emerging methodologies for designing AI-resilient assessments, including critiquing AI-generated work and comparing human and AI output.

Source: Digital Education Council AI in Higher Education Global Survey 2026.

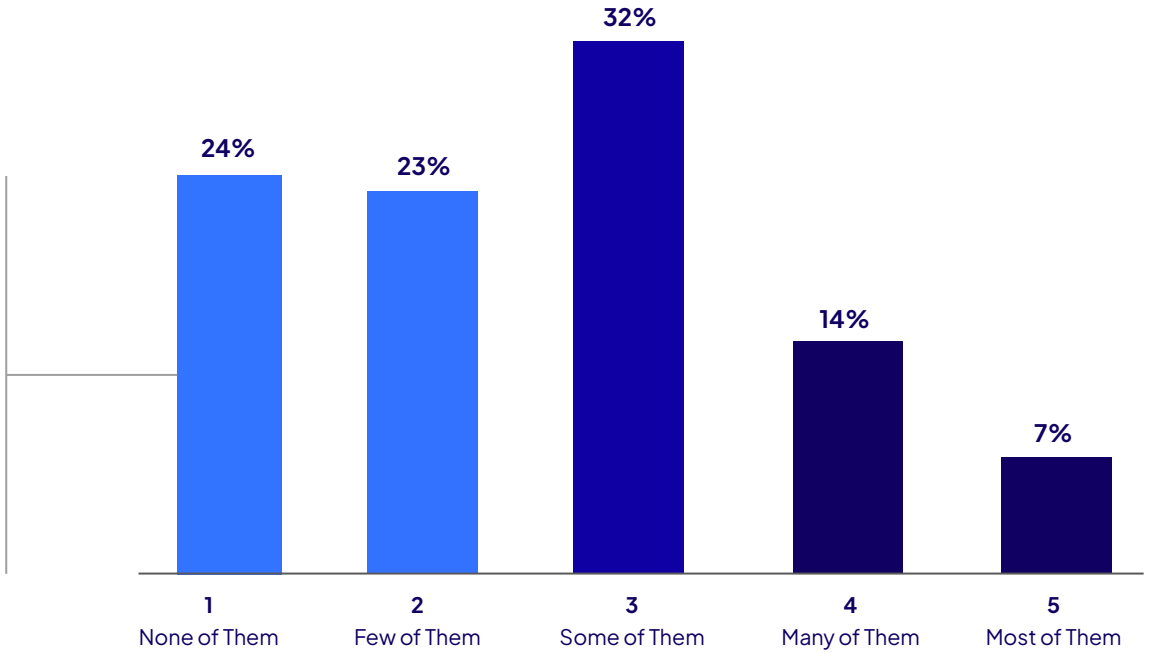
Students Report that AI Use Remains Limited in Assessment Design

AI Use Policies in Assessments

Statement: I believe my assessment allows, encourages, or requires students to use AI as part of the work.

24%

of students globally report not being allowed, encouraged, or required to use AI in any of their assessments. In US & Canada, this number is highest among all regions at 38%.



Source: Digital Education Council AI in Higher Education Global Survey 2026.

57% of Students Lack Clear Guidance on AI Use in Assessments

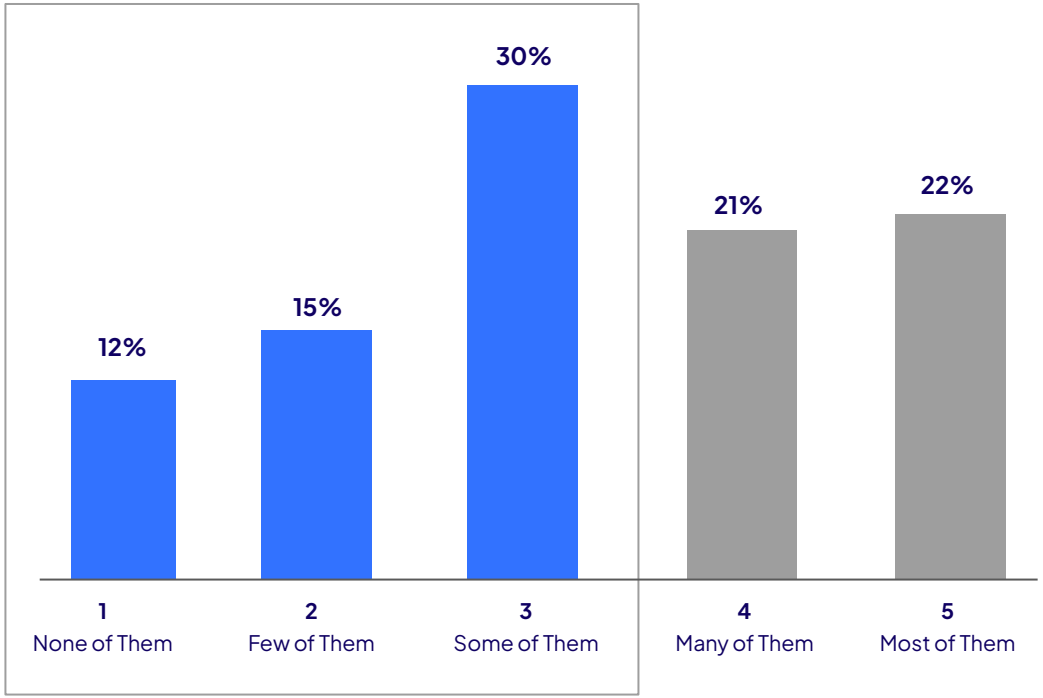
Students' Perceptions of Instructor Clarity on AI in Assessments

Statement: I believe my instructors clearly explain whether and how AI can be used in assessments

57%

of students say their assessments come with inadequate AI guidance.

Most students are navigating at least some assessments without knowing whether AI is permitted. Where rules are ambiguous, the conditions for the unfairness students already worry about are quietly set.



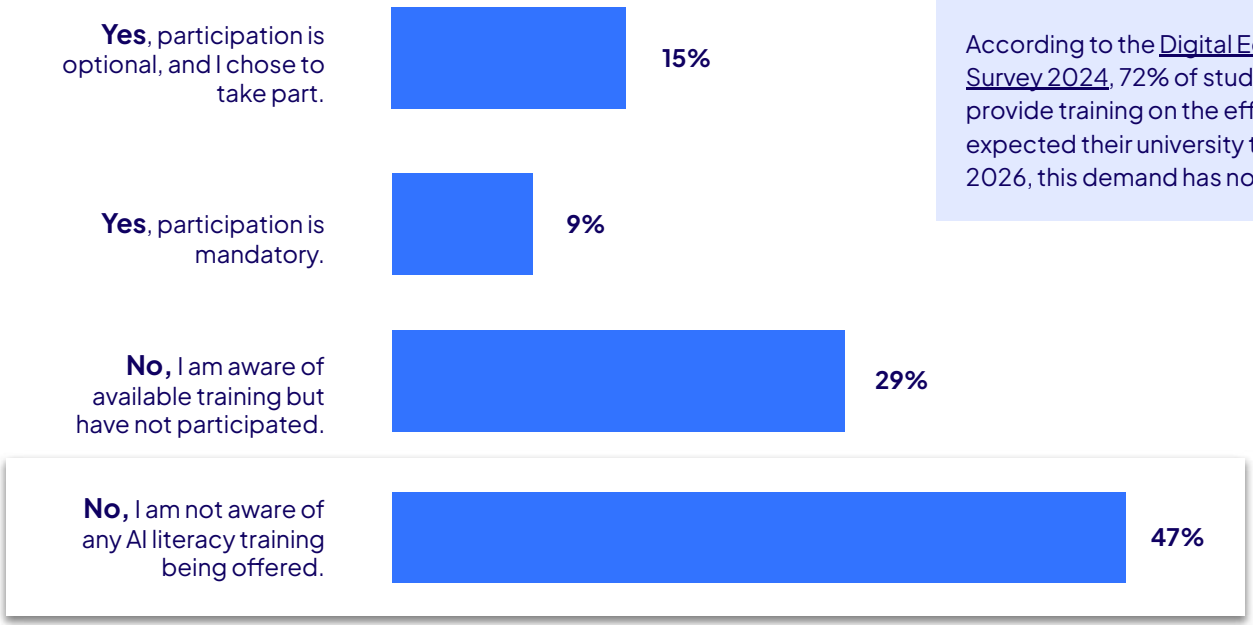
Source: Digital Education Council AI in Higher Education Global Survey 2026.

2.5 Institutional Support & Resources

AI Literacy Training Has Yet to Reach Students at Scale

Student Participation in AI Literacy Training

Question: Have you participated in any AI literacy training offered by your institution?



The Training Gap

According to the Digital Education Council Global AI Student Survey 2024, 72% of students agreed that universities should provide training on the effective use of AI tools, and 72% expected their university to offer more AI literacy courses. By 2026, this demand has not yet translated into broad participation.

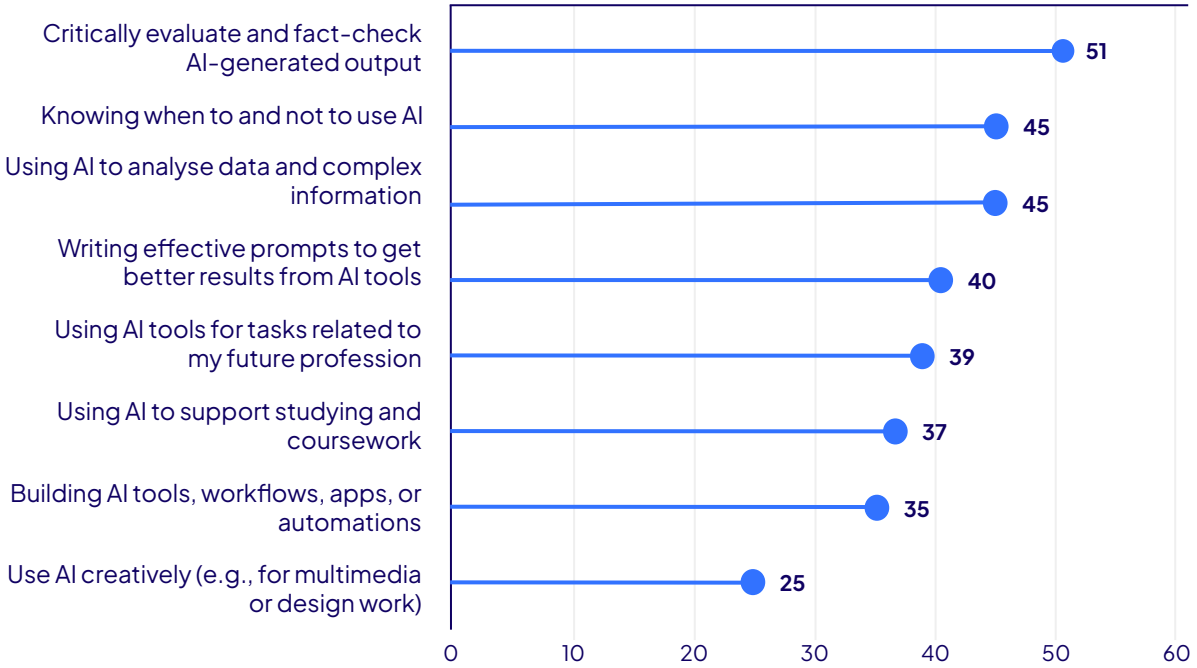
Two years on, 76% have never participated in any, and 47% are not even aware that such training exists. The data points to a dual challenge for institutions. AI literacy training must be more visible to students, but it must also be designed and delivered in ways that encourage participation and make its relevance clear.

Source: Digital Education Council AI in Higher Education Global Survey 2026.

Students Prioritise Critical Evaluation in AI Skills Development

Skills Students Most Want to Develop, % of respondents

Question: What AI skills do you still want to develop? (Select all that apply)



Students' biggest AI skills priority is the ability to critically evaluate and fact-check AI-generated output (51%). This is followed by knowing when and when not to use AI (45%).

These findings suggest that students are not only seeking technical proficiency. They want the judgement needed to use AI appropriately, assess its outputs, and understand its limits.

The demand for AI literacy training is therefore clear, but it is also specific. Students are asking for support that helps them become more discerning and responsible users of AI.

Source: Digital Education Council AI in Higher Education Global Survey 2026.

Faculty Confidence in Developing Students' AI Skills Remains Limited

Faculty Confidence in Developing Student AI Skills

Statement: I am confident my teaching effectively develops the AI skills students need.

40%
of faculty **do not feel confident** their teaching develops the AI skills students need[1]

34%
of faculty feel uncertain in their teaching

26%[2]
of faculty **feel confident** their teaching effectively develops AI skills in students.

US & Canada

Least Confident

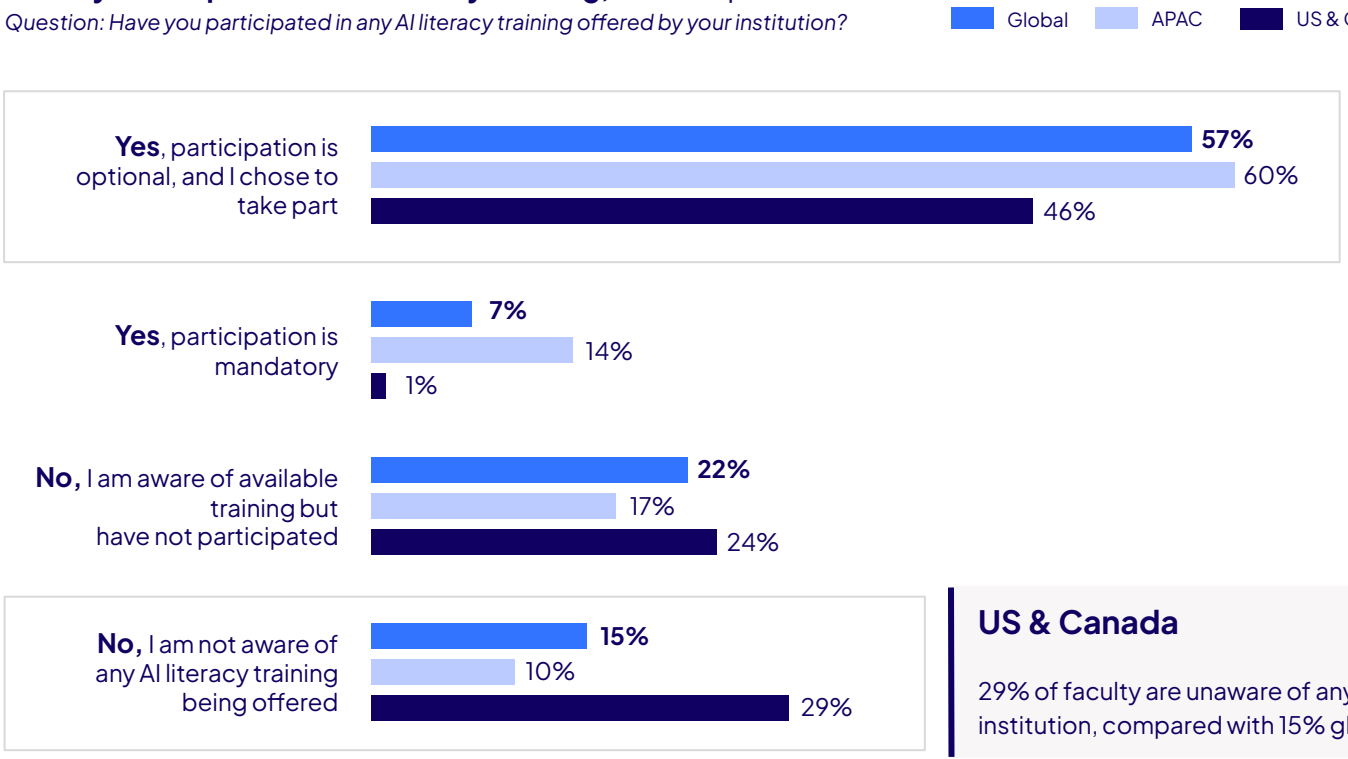
In the US & Canada, 58% of faculty do not feel confident that their teaching effectively develops the AI skills students need. This is the highest share across all regions and more than double the rate reported in APAC.

[1]This refers to faculty who responded with 'Strongly Disagree' or 'Disagree' in the question 'I am confident my teaching effectively develops the AI skills students need.'
[2]This refers to faculty who responded with 'Strongly Agree' or 'Agree' in the question 'I am confident my teaching effectively develops the AI skills students need.'
Source: Digital Education Council AI in Higher Education Global Survey 2026.

Over 1 in 2 Faculty Voluntarily Participate in AI Training

Faculty Participation in AI Literacy Training, % of respondents

Question: Have you participated in any AI literacy training offered by your institution?



Globally, voluntary participation is the main form of faculty engagement with institutional AI literacy training, reported by 57% of respondents.

APAC records the highest voluntary participation at 60%, and also the highest mandatory participation at 14%. In US & Canada, voluntary participation remains the largest category at 46%, but overall engagement is lower and awareness gaps are more pronounced.

US & Canada

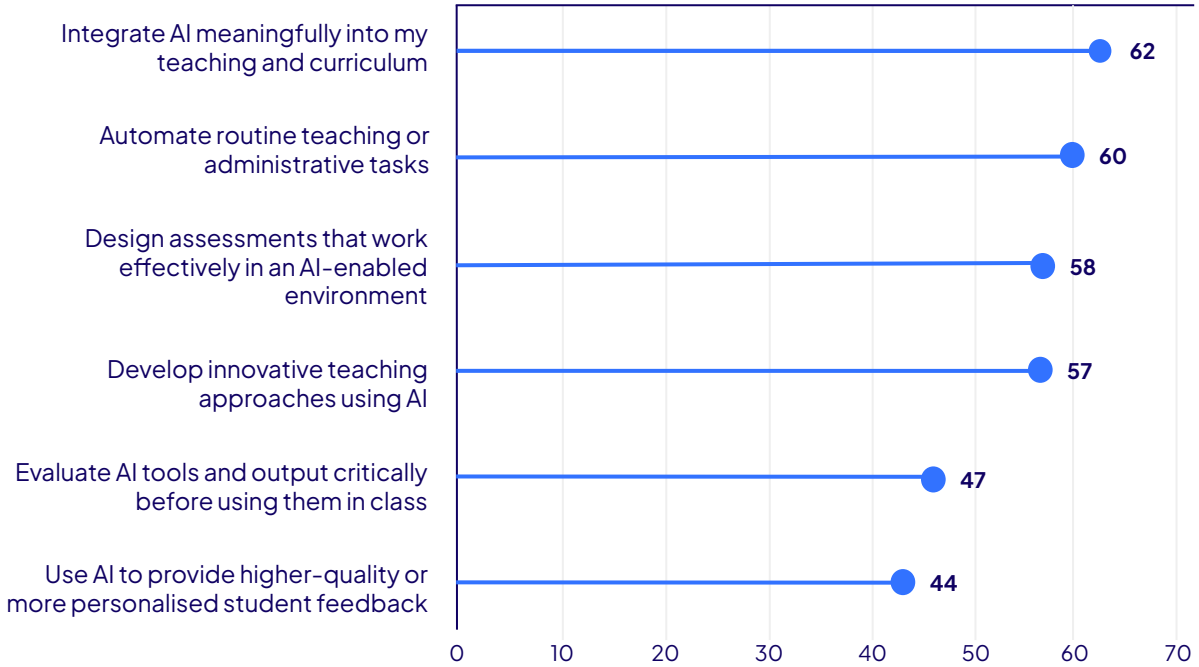
29% of faculty are unaware of any AI literacy training offered by their institution, compared with 15% globally.

Source: Digital Education Council AI in Higher Education Global Survey 2026.

Faculty AI Upskilling Prioritises Teaching Practice and Efficiency

Skills Faculty Want to Most Develop, % of respondents

Question: Which AI skills would you most like to develop? (multi-select)



Faculty prioritise AI skills that can be applied directly to teaching practice. The leading priority is integrating AI meaningfully into teaching and curriculum (62%). This is followed closely by automating routine teaching or administrative tasks (60%). Assessment design follows closely at 58%.

The data suggest that faculty are seeking practical capability rather than general AI fluency. Their priorities centre on using AI where it can improve teaching design, reduce routine workload, and support adaptation to an AI-enabled classroom.

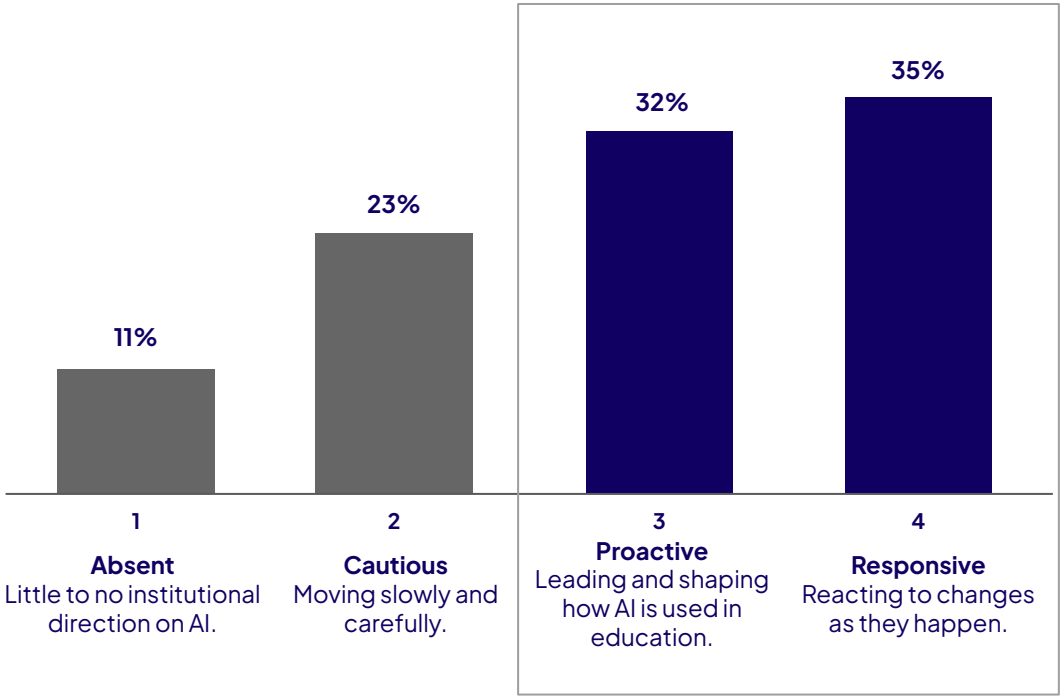
Source: Digital Education Council AI in Higher Education Global Survey 2026.

2.6 Institutional Policy & Guidelines

Institutional AI Approaches Are More Often Responsive Than Proactive

Faculty Perceptions of Their Institution's Overall Approach to AI

Question: How would you describe your institution's overall approach to AI?



Faculty perceptions suggest that institutions are engaging with AI, but proactive leadership is not yet the dominant approach. Globally, 35% of faculty describe their institution as responsive to AI, while 32% describe it as proactive.

At the same time, 34% describe their institution's approach as cautious or absent. This indicates that institutional AI direction remains uneven, with many faculty still experiencing AI governance as a response to emerging change rather than a clearly defined strategic agenda.

US & Canada

24% of faculty describe their institution's AI direction as absent, the highest share across all regions. This suggests that a significant proportion of faculty are operating with limited institutional guidance on how AI should be used in education.

AI Guidelines Are in Place, but Practical Application Remains Limited

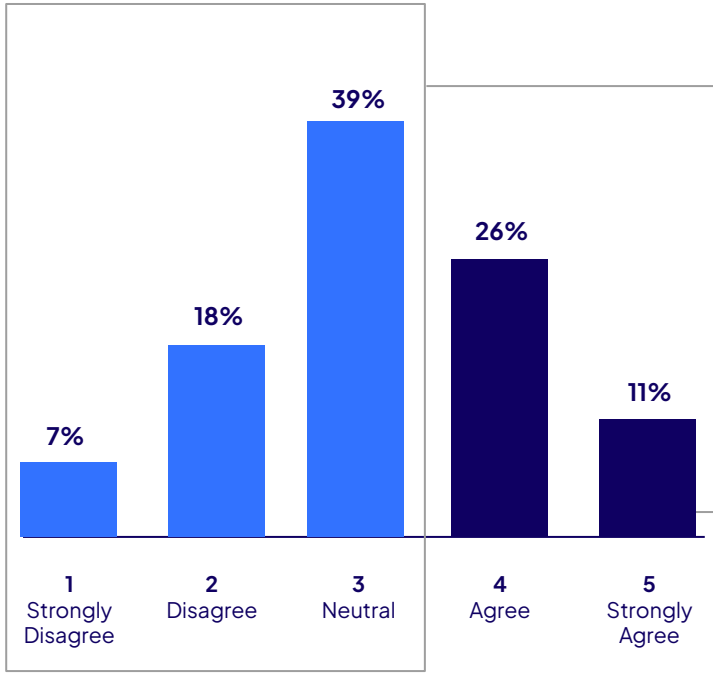
Faculty Perceptions of Institutional AI Guideline Practicality

Statement: My institution's AI guidelines are practical and easy to apply.

In 2025, faculty views on institutional AI guidance were already cautious. 40% disagreed that their institution's AI guidelines were comprehensive, while a further 40% were neutral.

In 2026, faculty perceptions remain mixed. Only 37% agree that their institution's AI guidelines are practical and easy to apply, while 39% remain neutral and 25% disagree.

This suggests that the challenge has shifted from whether AI guidelines exist to whether they provide usable direction for teaching practice. Institutions may be developing AI policies, but many faculty have yet to experience them as clear, practical guidance.



64%

of faculty do not agree that their institutional AI guidelines are practical and easy to apply.

11%

Only 11% of faculty perceive their institution's guidelines to be practical and easy to apply.

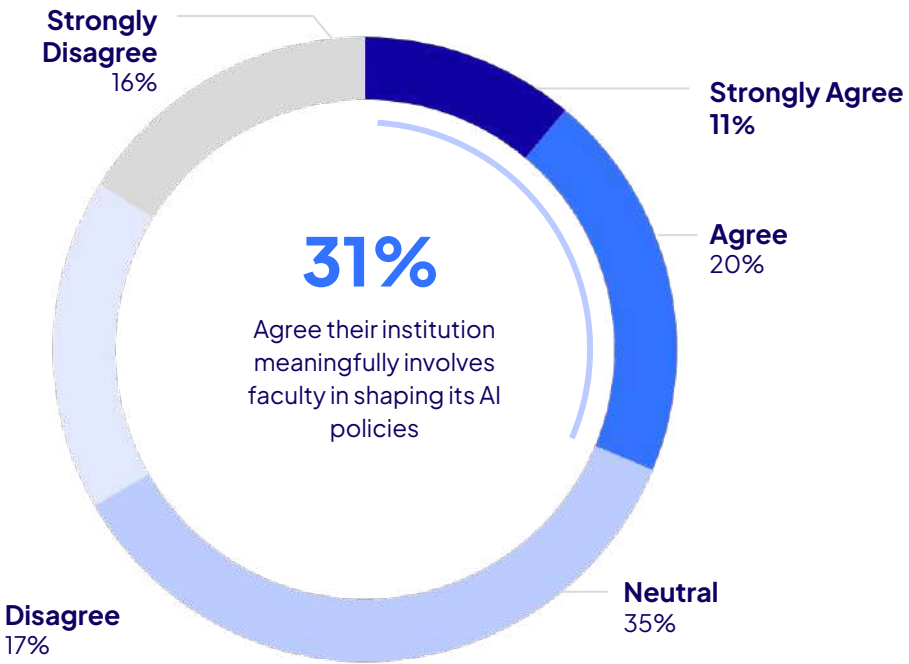
*Responses only include respondents who answered 'Proactive — leading and shaping how AI is used in education'; 'Responsive — reacting to changes as they happen'; 'Cautious — moving slowly and carefully' to 'How would you describe your institution's overall approach to AI?' (n=3,862)

Source: Digital Education Council AI in Higher Education Global Survey 2026.

Meaningful Faculty Involvement in AI Policy Design Remains Limited

Faculty Perceptions of Meaningful Involvement in Institutional AI Policy, % of respondents

Statement: My institution involves faculty meaningfully in shaping its AI policies.



Involvement remains the exception, not the rule globally

Only 31% of faculty globally agree their institution involves them meaningfully in shaping AI policies. The most common response is neutral at 35%. For most faculty, meaningful involvement in AI governance remains out of reach.

APAC

APAC faculty are the most likely to feel involved, with 48% agreeing their institution includes them meaningfully in AI policy design and just 6% strongly disagreeing.

LATAM

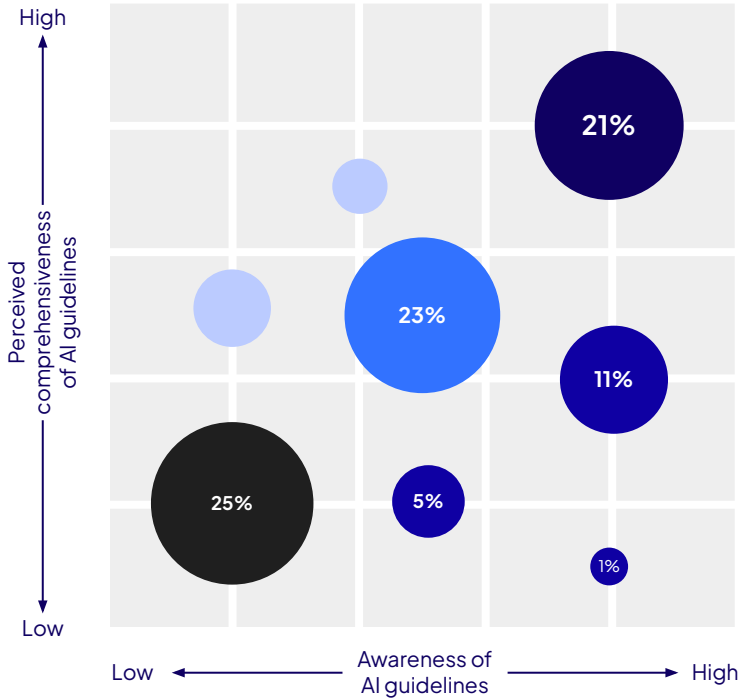
LATAM shows the strongest sense of exclusion. 20% strongly disagree that their institution involves them meaningfully, the highest rate of any region. Only 28% agree.

*Responses only include respondents who answered 'Proactive — leading and shaping how AI is used in education'; 'Responsive — reacting to changes as they happen'; 'Cautious — moving slowly and carefully' to 'How would you describe your institution's overall approach to AI?' (n=11,181)

Source: Digital Education Council AI in Higher Education Global Survey 2026.

AI Policy Clarity Is Improving, but Progress Remains Slow

Faculty Awareness and Perception of Comprehensiveness of AI Guidelines



Question: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the statement? (1–strongly disagree, 5–strongly agree):

- My institution has comprehensive AI guidelines in place.
- I'm aware of the AI-related regulations and policies at my institution.

6% of faculty are fully aware of their institutional AI guidelines and feel they are fully comprehensive.

The Well-Informed, 21%
Faculty perceive their institution's AI guidelines as comprehensive and are well aware of them. The share has grown slightly from 16% in 2025[1].

The "We Can Do Better", 17%
Faculty are aware of their institution's AI guidelines but find them lacking in comprehensiveness.

The Uncertain, 23%
Faculty are unsure about the comprehensiveness of the AI guidelines and they have a moderate level of awareness.

The Lost, 25%
Faculty are both unaware of the AI guidelines and believe them to be lacking in comprehensiveness. The share has remained largely unchanged from 27% in 2025[1].

*Responses only include respondents who answered 'Proactive — leading and shaping how AI is used in education'; 'Responsive — reacting to changes as they happen'; 'Cautious — moving slowly and carefully' to 'How would you describe your institution's overall approach to AI?' (n=11,181)
1 Digital Education Council Global AI Faculty Survey 2025.
Source: Digital Education Council AI in Higher Education Global Survey 2026.

Student Voice in Institutional AI Decision-Making Remains Limited

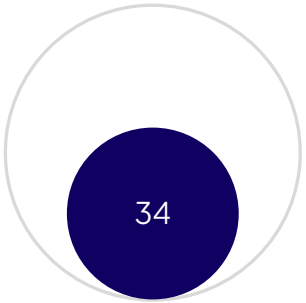
Student Perception of Institutional Feedback on AI, % of respondents

Statement: My institution actively seeks student feedback on AI.

Students feeling heard in AI-related decisions in 2024

Only 34% of students report that institutions actively seek their feedback on AI in 2024[1]

Students feeling heard in AI-related decisions in 2026



Only 34% of students report that institutions actively seek their feedback on AI in 2026

In 2024, only 34% of students who wanted involvement in institutional AI decisions said their institution actively sought their feedback. In 2026, the share remains unchanged at 34%.

This suggests that student participation has not expanded alongside wider AI adoption in teaching and learning. Strengthening student feedback channels will be important if institutions want AI policies to reflect the needs and expectations of those most directly affected.

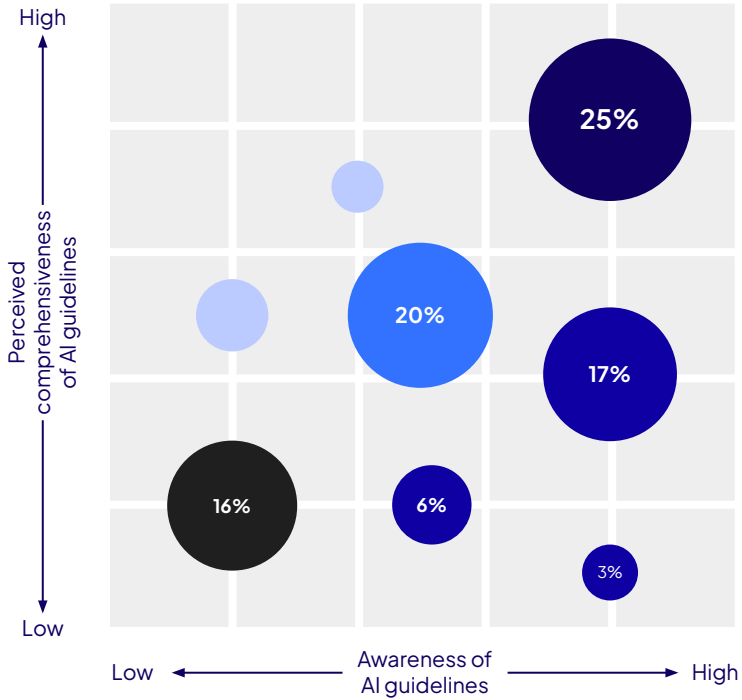
AI Communication Structure

Digital Education Council members can refer to the Executive Briefing #011 Elevating AI Communication to establish a multi-level communication structure.

[1]Digital Education Council Global AI Student Survey 2024.
Source: Digital Education Council AI in Higher Education Global Survey 2026.

25% of Students See AI Guidelines as Clear and Comprehensive

Student Awareness and Perception of Comprehensiveness of AI Guidelines



Question: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the statement? (1–strongly disagree, 5–strongly agree):

- My institution has comprehensive AI guidelines in place.
- I'm aware of the AI-related regulations and policies at my institution.

10% of students are fully aware of their institutional AI guidelines and feel they are fully comprehensive.

The Well-Informed, 25%
Students perceive their institution's AI guidelines as comprehensive and are well aware of them. The share has grown from 23% in 2024[1].

The "We Can Do Better", 20%
Students are aware of their institution's AI guidelines but find them lacking in comprehensiveness.

The Uncertain, 26%
Students are unsure about the comprehensiveness of the AI guidelines and they have a moderate level of awareness.

The Lost, 16%
Students are both unaware of the AI guidelines and believe them to be lacking in comprehensiveness. The share has declined from 29% in 2024[1].

1. Digital Education Council Global AI Student Survey 2024.
Source: Digital Education Council AI in Higher Education Global Survey 2026.

3. About DEC and Copyright Details

Digital Education Council Publications

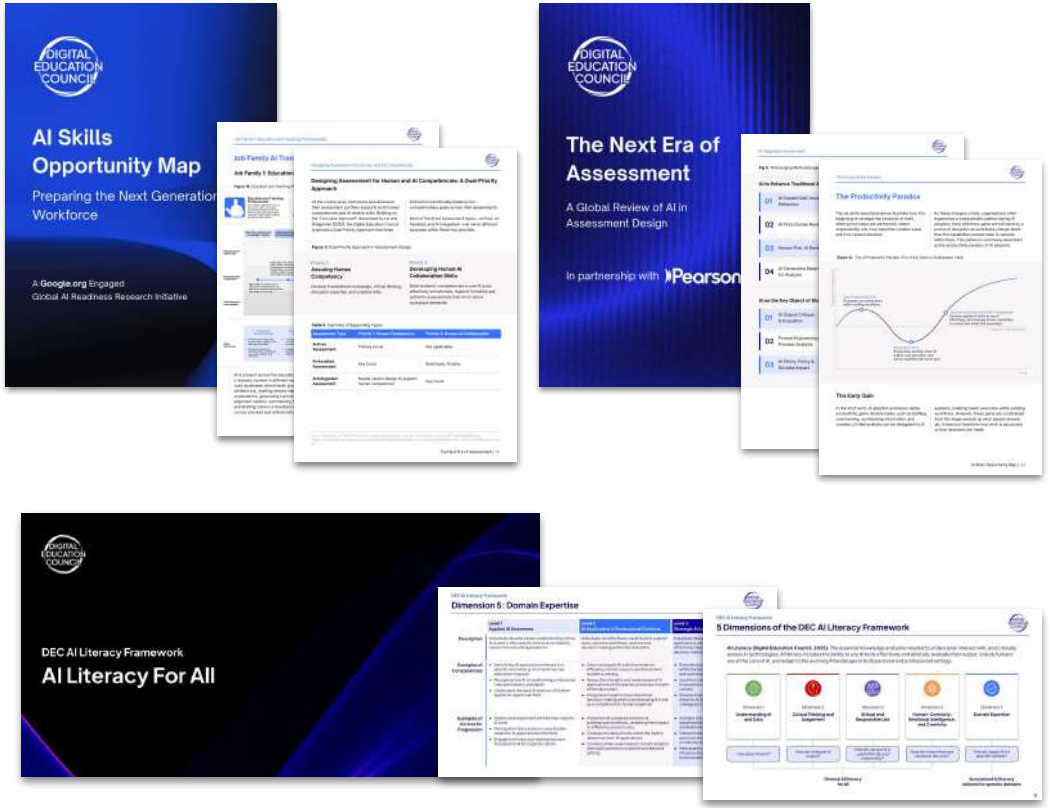
The Digital Education Council publishes a range of reports and delivers exclusive monthly Executive Briefings to its members.

Recent publications include:

- DEC AI Skills Opportunities Map
- DEC The Next Era of Assessment
- DEC AI Literacy Framework

Our members use them as working documents to guide their institutional transformation in response to evolving trends in education and skills.

Explore



Digital Education Council Executive Briefings

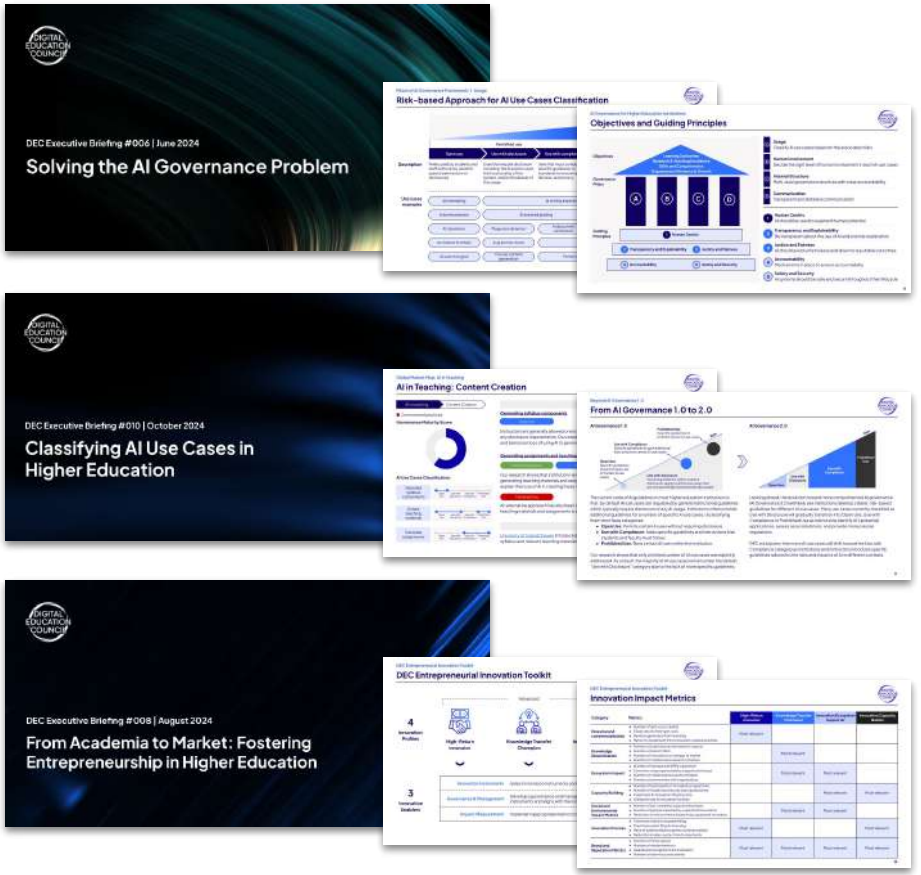
The Digital Education Council delivers monthly Reports and Executive Briefings to its members.

These Reports and Executive Briefings share key insights, practical frameworks and usable tools to support AI adoption, governance, and sustainable innovation in higher education.

Our members use these as key working documents to help them work through the transformation in the world of education and skills.

Explore

Examples of Executive Briefings



Digital Education Council Meetings

Thematic Working Groups

DEC Working Groups serve as a global platform for collaborative discussions for DEC members, fostering knowledge sharing and establishing best practices to drive innovation. The Thematic Working Groups are focussed on practical outcomes and run on a one-year cycle.

DEC Global Summit

The DEC Global Summit is an in-person and outcome-focussed event exclusively for DEC members. The Global Summit is a key opportunity to address global challenges and explore actionable strategies for positive integration of digital and artificial intelligence technologies.

Become a Member

Examples of Meetings

Copyright and Contact Details

Suggested Citation: Digital Education Council, *AI in Higher Education Global Survey*, 2026.

For additional requests and feedback please contact:

Hui Rong
Research and Intelligence Lead
hui@digitaleducationcouncil.com

Maftuna Mavlonova
Research and Intelligence Associate
maftuna@digitaleducationcouncil.com

For membership enquiries please contact:

Maria Oliver Roman
Global Engagement and Operations Director
maria@digitaleducationcouncil.com


DIGITAL
EDUCATION
COUNCIL