

**White Paper for Universities on Navigating Artificial
Intelligence Innovation Ecosystems in the area of**

AI Governance

Lead Authors

Raphaël WEUTS
KU Leuven, Belgium

Robert Kerwin BILLONES
De La Salle University, Philippines

Contributing Authors

Johannes BLEHER
University of Hohenheim, Germany

Paweł PUJSZO
College of Europe in Natolin, Poland

Rozanne Tuesday FLORES
Bukidnon State University, Philippines

Zsolt ALMÁSI
Pázmány Péter Catholic University, Hungary

GUO Xuanyang
Southwest University of Political Science and Law, China

Jerrold SOH
Singapore Management University, Singapore

Editors

Claudio RIVERA
RTU Riga Business School,
Latvia

Reka TOZSA
Asia-Europe Foundation

Cleo CACHAPERO
Asia-Europe Foundation

Martin HAMMERBAUER
Asia-Europe Foundation



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Executive Summary

The rapid transformation of industries and societies due to Artificial Intelligence (AI) calls for the establishment of robust AI guiding principles, governance frameworks, policies and standards to ensure its ethical, transparent, equitable and safe development. The role of higher education institutions (HEIs) as a pillar of knowledge and a moral compass in the age of AI becomes ever more important. This white paper identifies a set of foundational actions that HEIs must take, in varying forms depending on AI's trajectory. It also highlights specific implementable strategies that can effectively contribute to global AI governance, including social, legal and technical mechanisms that guide safe and efficient development, deployment and use of AI: First, universities must strengthen their leadership in setting the directions of AI development and implementation, guiding the balance between innovation and its responsible use. They must also act as a guiding voice within society, addressing the challenges and implications associated with advanced AI risks. Finally, the role of universities in promoting ethical AI governance and fostering cross-border collaboration in AI policy is crucial, particularly in establishing mechanisms for mutual accountability, resource sharing, and cooperative oversight.

This work examines four potential scenarios of AI evolution, each with distinct governance challenges and opportunities: a new AI winter, a temporarily sustained current trajectory, AI asymptotically slowing towards the qualitative human-level, and AI surpassing that baseline. This paper outlines essential governance actions for university leaders, identifies key stakeholders, and proposes measurable steps. This white paper can serve as a resource for university leaders and decision-makers in navigating the complexities of responsible AI governance.

Current Status Quo and Importance

AI has evolved from a niche academic field to a transformative technology reshaping economies, industries and societies worldwide. Its rapid integration across sectors—including healthcare, finance, education and law enforcement—highlights both its immense potential and the urgent need for effective governance. The current global AI regulations, policy frameworks, ethical perspectives and practices are fragmented. Several organisations and nations, such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the United Nations (UN), the European Parliament, China and Singapore, have issued regulatory documents aiming to balance innovation and fundamental rights. For example, the European Parliament has classified AI ecosystems in education as “high risk” due to their potential to negatively affect safety or fundamental rights (European Parliament, 2023). Where the EU adopts a centralised approach, as seen in the AI Act, it contrasts with China's decentralised approach that features numerous departmental rules (Ministry of Science and Technology of the People's Republic of China, 2021). Asia and Europe's unique approaches cause overlap and inconsistent standards in risk classification, regulated entities and obligations. Such fragmentation poses challenges for universities bridging these different environments and guiding ethical AI development.

These gaps present unique challenges for universities as they balance the complexities in AI development, adoption and its responsible implementation. Because university students enter the workforce after graduation, the way AI is adopted in academia can have major downstream effects on society's understanding and usage of AI tools.

The need for ethical AI governance and safety frameworks highlights the significant role universities are expected to play. As centres of innovation and ethical thought leadership, universities can shape the directions of AI governance by promoting the core principles of responsible AI which includes transparency, accountability, safety, reliability and social impact. University leadership can promote multidisciplinary dialogue and collaboration among academia, industry, government and civil society to bridge gaps and foster shared accountability in AI governance. In many countries, universities already participate in AI governance, although their involvement can vary. Future efforts should formalise their roles as knowledge custodians, policy advisors and international collaboration hubs to address inconsistent regulatory regimes.

Challenges and Opportunities

This analysis divides possible futures into four scenarios regarding AI evolution, loosely mapped onto a standard from a frontier AI lab: Anthropic's AI Safety Levels (ASL). For each scenario, we identify *no-regret moves*—actions beneficial in any event—and highlight the governance tasks that require attention from HEIs.

1. New AI winter (ASL-2)

In this scenario, AI applications are limited mainly to non-critical implementations such as video games, consumer electronics and specific Industry 4.0 applications.

2. Sustained AI progression (ASL-2)

AI extends into more critical domains—e.g., lethal autonomous weapons systems, predictive policing, financial evaluations, recruitment, education and healthcare—without encountering an industry-wide “winter”.

3. Near human-level AI (ASL-3)

AI approaches human intelligence levels, but capability increases slow down the closer to the qualitative human-level baseline AI comes. Thereby AI remains sub-human in a qualitative intelligence sense, but with greatly expanded autonomy (e.g., self-driving cars, humanoid robots, intensifying Industry 4.0).

4. AI surpassing human baseline (ASL-4)

AI continues progressing (even if slowed), surpassing the human intelligence baseline. According to some experts, this scenario will entail Artificial General Intelligence (AGI); whether such a term is applicable for this scenario is out of scope of this white paper.

Scenario 1: New AI winter

AI progress slows down and applications are limited to non-critical implementations such as video games, consumer electronics and specific Industry 4.0 applications (Ahmed, Jeon, & Piccialli,

2022). The no-regret moves for AI governance include ensuring equal opportunity for all by making AI technologies accessible and beneficial to a diverse range of users, including emerging student profiles like lifelong learners (Ayala, 2002; Debasree Chakraborty, 2020; Fidalgo & Thormann, 2024; Masrek et al., 2024). Privacy and cybersecurity are crucial, along with transparency in whether one interacts with AI or a human being (Lemley & Casey, 2019; Felzmann et al., 2020; Yang & Chu, 2024). Clarification for accountability and liability for AI actions is also essential (Koops et al, 2010; Santoni & Meccaci 2021).

Scenario 2: Sustained AI progression

AI maintains its current pace and extending into non-critical areas and more critical domains like lethal autonomous weapons systems (LAWS), predictive policing, financial evaluations, recruitment, education and healthcare. The no-regret moves for AI governance include those described from the previous scenario, along with new requirements such as transparency, and extending to explainability. The new aspects are comprised of the need for human agency and oversight, issues around AI safety, trustworthiness, bias, feedback loops (Ensign et al., 2018; Mayson 2021), confounders (Lengerich et al., 2022) and representative data. Additionally, sustainable energy and water use, along with transparency in their consumption, are equally vital.

Scenario 3: Near human-level AI

AI systems approach human or sub-human intelligence levels without surpassing human general intelligence (Bostrom, 2017, pp. 63-74), remaining asymptotically below it. More advanced autonomous systems are implemented in various applications, including self-driving cars, humanoid robots, and an intensified version of Industry 4.0. Speed superintelligence and collective superintelligence may emerge, but qualitative superintelligence is not achieved (Bostrom, 2017, pp. 63-74). The no-regret moves for AI governance include those from earlier scenarios, along with managing changes to jobs by automation, protecting AI systems from data poisoning and educating stakeholders on risks like proxy deviation and instrumental convergence (Bostrom, 2017, pp. 131-139).

Scenario 4: AI surpassing human baseline

This scenario highlights the continued growth trajectory of AI development. In this scenario AI may slow down, however not sufficiently to prevent AI reaching a level that surpasses qualitative human intelligence. Such future includes AI systems creating subgoals, increasing the need to manage instrumental goals (Bostrom, 2017, pp. 131-139). Some prominent AI experts have stated that AI entails an existential risk to humanity. Examples are Nobel Prize winner Geoffrey Hinton (Hinton, 2024) and a couple hundred prominent experts signing a statement on existential risk by AI (Centre for AI Safety, 2023). Such risk would most likely come from this scenario. The no-regret moves in AI governance include all those from earlier scenarios, along with global monitoring and enforcement for ASI-4 AI alignment. This requires accommodating diverse ethical systems across regions and decoupling day-to-day ethics from existential threat management. Cooperation on frontier models should shift from a leader-centric approach to shared incentives.

Guiding Principles

To tackle these four scenarios, universities need clear principles that underpin their stance on AI governance. Drawing on the existing frameworks (e.g. OECD's AI Principles, G20' AI Principles, China's Ethical Norms for New Generation Artificial Intelligence (新一代人工智能伦理规范), EU's Ethics guidelines for trustworthy AI), the following principles seem important for AI Governance:

- 1. Transparency.** AI developers and deployers should disclose, to a feasible extent, how algorithms process data, how decisions are made and who is accountable. HEIs can serve as neutral bridges, facilitating the disclosure of essential information to governments and society while respecting confidentiality.
- 2. Accountability.** Clear mechanisms for assigning responsibility must exist when AI systems fail or cause harm. Universities can help define these accountability frameworks through research, policy advising and convening dialogues between government and industry.
- 3. Safety and Reliability.** AI systems must operate safely and reliably across varying contexts. HEIs can lead by integrating safety protocols in their research and by advising governments on best practices for AI deployment and monitoring.
- 4. Fairness and Inclusivity.** AI must not perpetuate discriminatory biases or create unequal barriers. HEIs can perform audits, develop inclusive datasets, and help shape equitable policies ensuring that AI benefits all segments of society.
- 5. Social Impact.** AI adoption should promote broader societal well-being, ensuring that technology does not undermine human autonomy or dignity. HEIs can stand firm against AI uses that inflict harm to individuals or society.
- 6. Flexibility.** Relevant stakeholders ought to realise that the consequence of the dynamic evolution of AI as a technology is that it requires iterative adjustments to existing rules and good practices. HEIs can serve as a pillar of modern society to preserve, discover, create and transfer knowledge.

As custodians of knowledge, HEIs must take on the important role of safeguarding AI principles, actively promoting and advocating for ethical AI governance and safety. HEIs also have a moral high ground to stand firm against external pressures that may violate the core AI principles such as clear “red flags” on AI use that may inflict harm to an individual or the society. Universities can serve as bridge for cross-border collaboration on AI development and policymaking.

Recommended Actions and Strategies

The four scenarios outlined above require different actions and strategies for effective AI governance and risk mitigation. Here, we examine the various recommended actions and strategies that HEIs can implement.

Scenario 1: New AI winter

Universities must develop internal AI governance policies to ensure responsible AI use within their institutions. There is a need to establish programmes to train educators to help them effectively teach courses on responsible AI use and governance. The development of internal AI policies and training courses can contribute to a better understanding of the current and future capabilities of AI systems. This can lead to a more realistic expectations of the trajectory of AI technological development. HEIs can also add AI governance to curricula with focus on AI ethics and safety frameworks. University administrators should recognise the enduring role of human values in governing AI and ensure that ethical considerations remain central to AI governance. Progress can be measured through metrics such as the number of HEIs adopting internal AI governance policies, participation rates in AI governance training programmes, the integration of AI governance into curricula and the level of user awareness regarding AI interactions. The immediate next steps involve policy development by HEIs for internal AI governance policies. The training initiatives should be organised to build capacity in teaching AI governance to key stakeholders. The curriculum integration must incorporate AI governance topics into existing curricula and programmes. The stakeholders must be made aware about AI capabilities and limitations.

Scenario 2: Sustained AI progression

HEIs must identify vulnerabilities and biases in AI systems, integrating AI governance into educational programmes and advancing research to address emerging challenges in governing AI. HEIs should broaden interdisciplinary research initiatives and establish themselves as key certifiers of ethical data collection and AI alignment. The AI tools can also be used to assist students by providing guidance, addressing socio-economic challenges (Roshanaei et al., 2023) and supporting those with intellectual (Garg & Sharma, 2020; Kharbat et al., 2020) or physical disadvantages (Almufareh et al., 2024; Chalkiadakis et al., 2024) in accessing higher education. They should leverage AI avatars to increase student enrolment and support diverse learning needs. It can also support emerging student profiles, such as lifelong learners, using AI agents and avatars. HEIs must advocate for policymakers to implement regulations that prioritise explainability and promote sustainable AI practices. HEIs must encourage AI industry leaders to adopt thorough testing methods to identify vulnerabilities and prioritise sustainable resource use. Success can be measured by the increased competitiveness of HEIs, reflected in the growth of their research output on AI governance. Additional measures include the adoption of sustainable practices in AI development and an increase in student enrolment facilitated by AI-powered avatars. The next steps call for HEIs to establish interdisciplinary research units to tackle complex AI governance challenges, contribute to policy development through research and expertise and leverage AI to improve education accessibility and quality.

Scenario 3: Near human-level AI

HEIs can facilitate international collaboration by assisting governments in finding common ground to address AI governance challenges. A roadmap must be developed to guide research and education opportunities during an AI disruption. Interdisciplinary research units should be established to address complex AI governance challenges. HEIs should take the lead in establishing international forums for policy dialogue, acting as custodians of AI knowledge with a

focus on governance and ensuring the valid certification of ethical AI practices. They can also develop evaluation guidelines for sound methodologies and the ethical collection of data, while assessing the alignment of AI agents. HEIs can leverage science diplomacy to help governments collaborate globally, establishing cohesive AI governance policies and managing workforce transitions resulting from AI advancements. Industry stakeholders should be supported in developing international standards, establishing best practices and enhancing data security measures. Success can be measured by creating HEI-driven collaborative platforms, adoption of international AI governance policies, increase in number of interdisciplinary research initiatives and proper monitoring and management of data poisoning events. The next steps involve HEIs hosting international conferences on AI governance, developing strategic plans to maintain competitiveness, creating educational programmes on AI risks and management and forming international expert boards to guide governance and certify AI use.

Scenario 4: AI surpassing human baseline

HEIs can support the establishment of an international convention on AI monitoring by offering incentives to joining members, such as reduced compute costs and access to expertise from leading AI organisations. An intergovernmental body, such as the Council of Europe, could serve as the secretariat for the proposed monitoring convention, enabling other nations to join. Nations should collaborate on AI governance, separating applied ethics from existential threat management to facilitate cooperation. An AI governance think tank centre led by experts from academia, governments, industries and civil society, such as an Asia-Europe Policy Centre on AI Governance, can be formed to evaluate AI policies, resolve conflicts of interest, review and update AI governance syllabi, organise train-the-trainer programmes on AI governance and serve as an international AI governance board for participating institutions (Dafoe, 2018). HEIs must educate the public and policymakers on complex AI concepts, such as instrumental convergence, treacherous turn (Bostrom, 2017, pp. 142-145) and existential risks in AI alignment to foster informed discussions and policy decisions. HEIs must advocate for policymakers to prioritise superalignment research, focusing on mitigating long-term AI risks. They must integrate AI alignment into curricula to shape public discourse, allocate a portion of AI research funding to long-term risk mitigation and participate in Asia-Europe policy centres to lead AI governance initiatives. HEIs must act as moderators, facilitating international dialogues and leading the creation of conventions to harmonise AI governance strategies (Donahoe & Metzger, 2019; Moscardini, Strachan, & Vlasova, 2020; Urmunete, 2023; van Kolfshoeten & Shachar, 2023). Success can be measured by the number of countries and organisations participating in AI governance conventions, the percentage of curricula focused on superalignment topics, the proportion of AI research funding allocated to long-term risk mitigation and the establishment and impact of the Asia-Europe Policy Centre on AI Governance. The next steps involve HEIs integrating AI alignment, instrumental convergence and existential risks into curricula, allocating a portion of AI research funding to long-term impact studies and mitigation strategies, joining international coalitions to lead AI governance, establishing the Asia-Europe Policy Centre for expertise and policy development and creating regularly updated AI governance syllabi supported by train-the-trainer programmes.

Key Actions

1. **Support regulators' understanding** of social, economic, sovereign and global existential AI risk.
2. **Establish and participate in a global network of HEIs** that work on ethical AI governance and safety frameworks; lacking such a project a regional network e.g., an Asia-Europe policy centre on ethical AI governance and safety. Such a network can collaborate on establishing an international convention dedicated to monitoring AI advancements and fostering responsible development; incentivising participation by sharing knowledge and resources.
3. **Create internal AI policies, strategies and governance mechanisms** that adhere to the core AI principles of transparency, accountability, safety, reliability, fairness and inclusivity, social impact and flexibility.
4. **Integrate AI governance, ethics and safety into existing curricula**; especially programmes incorporating AI. Develop specialised courses on AI governance for lifelong learners.
5. **Develop executive management training and certification for AI governance** where the target audience is key executives and managers in government, industry and academia. These decision-makers should be equipped on the ethical and safe AI integration into key organisational functions to ensure responsible and effective AI deployment.
6. **Establish an AI innovation sandbox in HEIs** that adheres to the core AI principles. The resulting innovations can be tested within the HEIs or partner communities.
7. **Develop a pool of experts trained as science advisers and science diplomats** equipped to guide policymakers in government and industry. These emerging knowledge brokers should specialise in translating research findings into actionable policies, ensuring evidence-based decision-making and bridging the gap between academia and real-world governance.
8. **Establish thought leadership in ethical AI governance and safety** by initiating awareness campaigns that highlight both the benefits and risks of AI usage. Actively engage in discussions, provide expert insights and promote best practices to ensure AI development aligns with ethical standards and fosters public trust.

Conclusion and Call to Action

The recent advancements in AI have created both significant opportunities and considerable challenges. The role of HEIs as a pillar of knowledge and a moral compass in the age of AI becomes ever more important. The main guiding principle of this work emphasised that AI must benefit human society, with core AI principles of transparency, accountability, safety, reliability, fairness and inclusivity, social impact and flexibility. HEIs must stand firm against AI use that violates the

core AI principles, especially those with clear red flags, such as AI use that inflicts harm to an individual or the society.

This work examines four different AI evolution scenarios including a new AI winter, a temporarily sustained current trajectory, AI asymptotically slowing towards the qualitative human-level and AI surpassing that baseline. Given these scenarios, HEIs are challenged to rethink their role in society—from being custodians of knowledge, to actors that actively safeguard AI principles and advocate for AI governance centred around human values. International cooperation becomes essential to address existential risks posed by AI surpassing the qualitative human baseline. Delaying such cooperation could prove too late. With the current global fragmentation and focus on technological superiority, nations tend to prioritise sovereignty and strategic imperatives over early cooperation in AI development. HEIs can leverage science diplomacy and find common ground between nations. HEIs can advocate for the creation of an international convention on monitoring AI progress toward advanced systems, which can encourage members to join by offering shared knowledge and resources, balancing sovereignty with safety to foster early international cooperation for safe AI development.

HEIs must lead AI governance by creating responsible AI policies, integrating AI ethics into curricula and training faculty on governance principles. They must promote interdisciplinary AI research to tackle AI challenges and strengthen their position as thought leaders. HEIs should lead international collaborations, participate in AI governance initiatives and shape public policy through stakeholder engagement. Establishing AI governance research centres and certifying ethical practices can enhance credibility and authority. By studying the long-term impacts of AI, joining global coalitions and promoting ethical discussions on AI, HEIs can strengthen their reputation as thought leaders, attracting top talent, funding and partnerships, while shaping the future of AI governance. The leadership of universities in promoting ethical AI governance and safety initiatives can help shape the direction of global AI governance, strengthening their role in key policy developments and enhancing global reputation in the evolving AI technology landscape.

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Background

Established in 2021, the **ASEF Higher Education Innovation Laboratory (ASEFInnoLab)** creates opportunities for higher education stakeholders from Asia and Europe to expand their professional network, exchange knowledge, and collaboratively build their capacity to address common global challenges.

The programme's fifth edition (**ASEFInnoLab5**) focused on Universities' Role in AI Innovation Ecosystems. It was a comprehensive peer-to-peer learning experience implemented virtually from May to June and in-person on 21-25 October of 2024. The ASEFInnoLab5 Onsite Event in Shanghai, China laid the foundation for the development of three high-level white papers focused on AI Governance, AI in Education, and AI for Sustainable Development as well as the design of the upcoming ASEFInnoLab6 Project.

Implementing Partners



Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF)

ASEF is an intergovernmental not-for-profit organisation located in Singapore. Founded in 1997, it is the only institution of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM). ASEF promotes understanding, strengthens relationships and facilitates cooperation among the people, institutions and organisations of Asia and Europe. ASEF enhances dialogue, enables exchanges and encourages collaboration across the thematic areas of culture, education, governance, sustainable development, economy, public health and media. For more information, please visit <https://asef.org/>.



Fudan University

Fudan University is a major public research university in Shanghai, People's Republic of China. Founded in 1905, today it is widely considered as one of the most prestigious and selective universities in the country. The QS University Rankings 2021 ranked Fudan as the 7th most reputable university in Asia, while it is classified as a Double First Class University by the Ministry of Education in China. Fudan also actively incubates high-tech industries and encourages them to convert knowledge to power. In return, the multi-pattern development of the high-tech industries helps the University to industrialise the research outcomes. For more information, please visit <https://www.fudan.edu.cn/en>.

Supporting Partner



Asia-Europe for Artificial Intelligence (AE4AI) Network

The AE4AI Network was established by academics and university managers from Asia and Europe in 2023 with the intent to enhance universities' role in AI innovation ecosystems and together pursue collaboration and actions on AI Governance, AI in Education, and AI for Sustainable Development. For more information, please visit <https://www.asiaeuropa4ai.org/>.

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