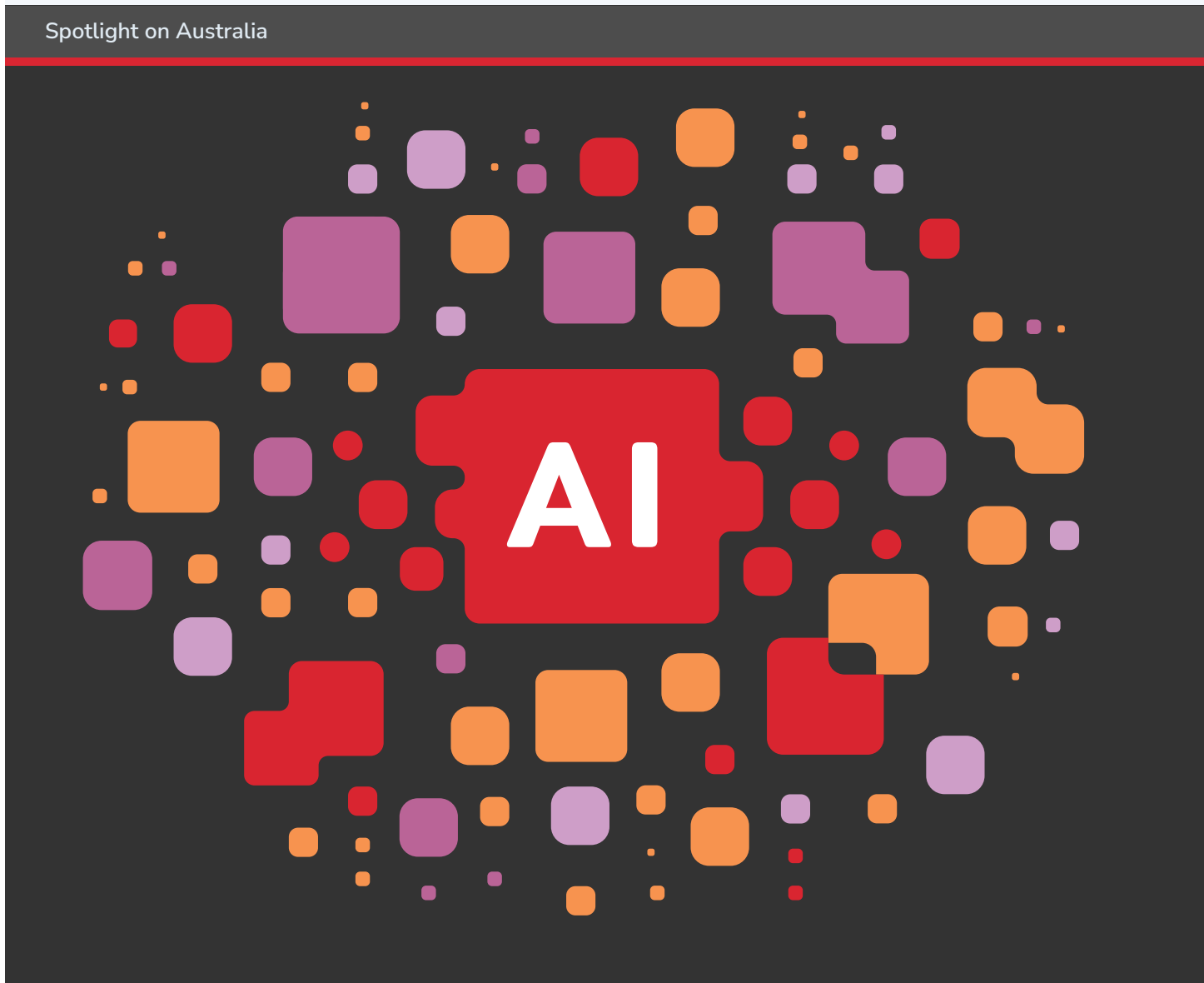# anthology

AI in Higher Ed: Hype, Harm, or Help

The perceptions and realities of AI among university leaders and students.

Spotlight on Australia

In the constantly evolving landscape of higher education, the emergence of artificial intelligence (AI), its integration into technology and our daily life, and its use by students have brought incredible opportunities and complex challenges. As universities embrace this new age, understanding the unique viewpoints of students and university leadership—the key stakeholders—is vital in capitalising on the potential of AI while addressing possible ethical, pedagogical, and operational challenges.

Anthology conducted a global survey of more than 5,000 higher education leaders and current students in 11 countries to hear their thoughts about the opportunities, challenges, adoption, and impact of artificial intelligence. The study reveals insights highlighting the need for a collaborative approach regarding AI to help enrich the educational experience and ensure future-ready graduates.

This report focuses on the responses from students and university leaders in Australia, including where there are significant differences compared to their counterparts in other countries.

Students, Leaders, and Artificial Intelligence

Based on the survey results, students in Australia are the most likely of all countries surveyed to be frequent users of generative AI, with 35% of students considering themselves frequent users. Furthermore, an additional 23% consider themselves occasional users; this represents nearly six in 10 students who at least occasionally use generative AI—higher than all countries other than Brazil (63% of students are at least occasional users). Therefore, students in Australia appear to have embraced generative AI—only one in five students has never used generative AI writing tools or is unfamiliar with them.

3 in 4 students in Australia expect their use of generative AI to increase in the next six months

In addition, three in four students in Australia expect their use of generative AI to increase in the next six months, indicating even further interest in using the tools—only two respondents indicated that their use would decrease in the next six months, continuing to show high adoption. University leaders in Australia are less familiar with generative AI than students, as 16% of university leaders consider themselves to be frequent users of AI, while an additional 27% are occasional users, which is still over four in 10 university leaders who at least use AI occasionally—one of the highest results in the survey, only trailing leaders in the United Arab Emirates and Singapore. Additionally, 57% of leaders indicate that their use of generative AI is likely to increase somewhat or significantly in the next six months. This speaks to the continued opportunity to increase the incorporation of AI tools, including generative AI, into university processes and the classroom.

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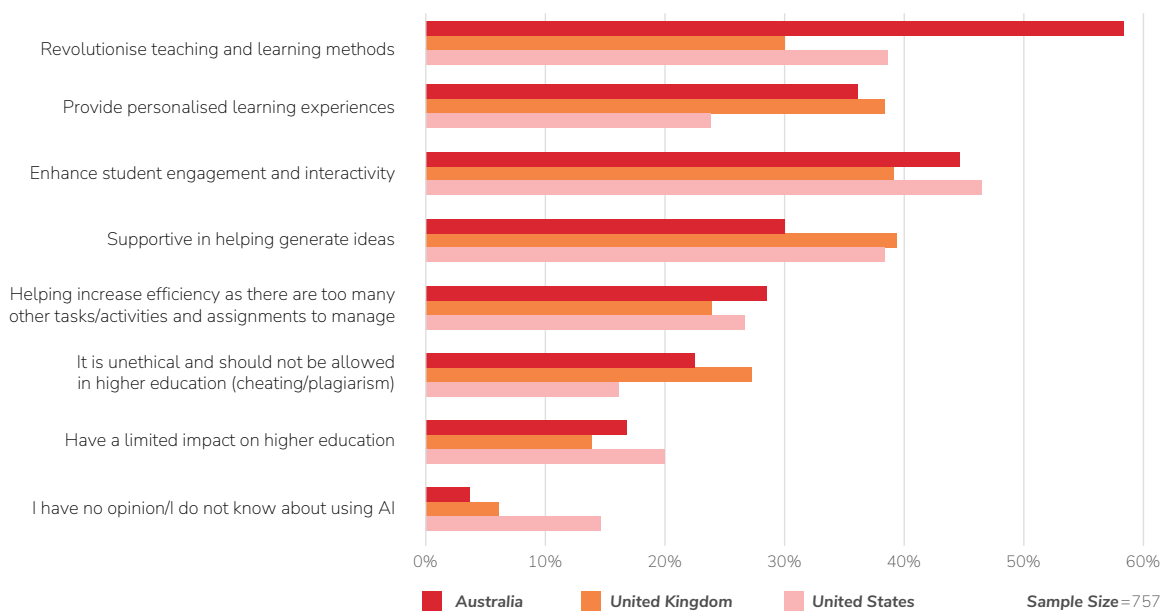
The Role of AI in Higher Education

When asked about opportunities related to AI and its potential role in higher education, students and leaders in Australia appear excited about the ways that AI, including generative AI, will impact higher education.

In fact, nearly six in 10 students feel that AI will revolutionise teaching and learning methods. This is notable and speaks to an expectation of students that university leaders should keep in mind. The second highest number of students (44%) felt that AI will help enhance student engagement and interactivity, followed by providing personalised learning experiences according to 36% of students. Student opinion in Australia generally mirrored that of students in a number of countries in the top three identified areas. Even though students were generally positive about the opportunities with AI, slightly fewer than one in four students feel that specifically generative AI is unethical and should not be allowed in higher education—in line with results from most other countries.

Students also indicated a high level of comfort using AI chatbots, with over four in 10 students indicating that they are very comfortable using these, and an additional 31% indicating that they are somewhat comfortable using these. Students in Australia were among the highest of the countries surveyed in being very comfortable using chatbots. There is likely an opportunity for universities to add chatbots to help better serve students given this high level of comfort.
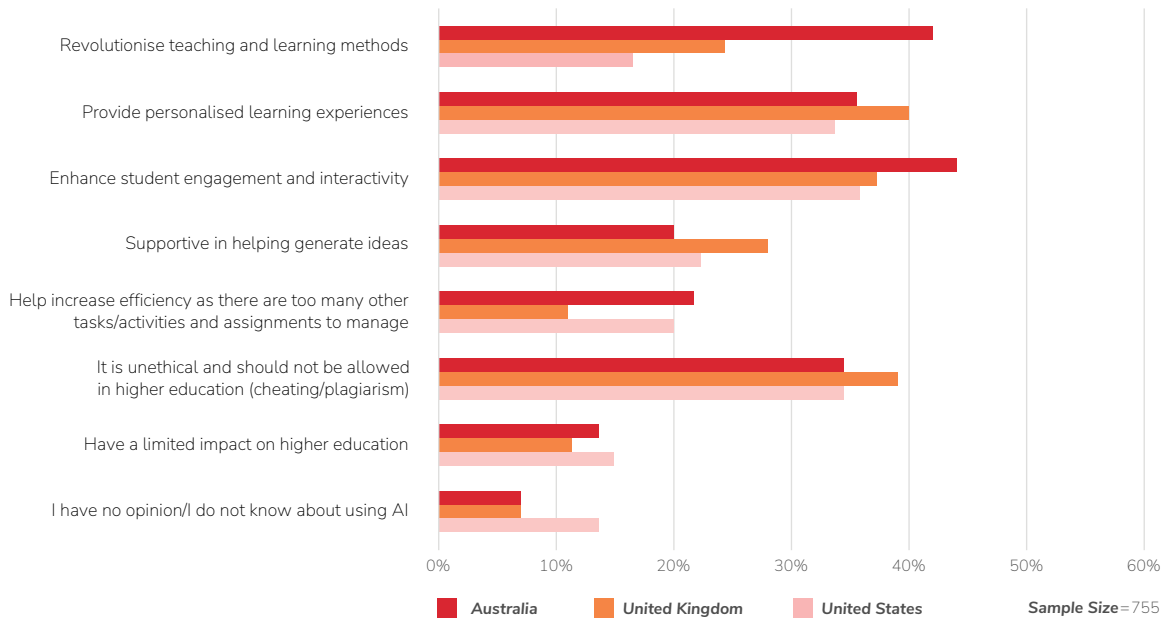
Students' View of Role of AI in Higher Education

What role do you think artificial intelligence (AI) will play in higher education? (Please select all that apply.)

University Leaders' View of Role of AI in Higher Education

What role do you think artificial intelligence (AI) will play in higher education?
(Please select all that apply.)

While it is to be expected that students more quickly adopt new technology, including generative AI, in this case, it is especially important that university leaders and faculty members familiarise themselves with this technology, as it presents new opportunities to adjust their approach to teaching.

University leaders are generally aligned with students on the opportunities that AI can bring to higher education. Forty-four percent of university leaders see AI as enhancing student engagement and interactivity (second for students), followed by 42% of university leaders seeing AI as revolutionising teaching and learning methods, with 35% indicating that AI will help provide personalised learning experiences. While the order is different than for students and a notably higher percentage of students view AI as impacting teaching and learning methods, there is general alignment between the groups. This was not the case across some of the other countries surveyed, including the Philippines, South Africa, and Singapore, and can be helpful as universities in Australia continue to explore ways to incorporate AI. On the other hand, 34% of university leaders feel that generative AI is unethical and should not be allowed in higher education, which was the second highest of any country surveyed. Therefore, there are clearly two minds related to the use of AI in higher education and university leaders should continue to discuss the use of AI at their institution. These differences are opportunities for continued conversation about the possibilities to seek to more closely align expectations of both students and university leaders regarding AI and its impact on higher education.

When asked to anticipate the most significant ways AI tools will impact higher education and university operations, over one in three leaders pointed to the ability to use AI to expand thinking by assisting with

brainstorming (35%), while just under one in three leaders indicated that AI could assist in course building (32%). On the other hand, the same percentage expressed concern that it may create new challenges in identifying plagiarism in assessment (32%). While a high percentage see an opportunity for AI to help with course building, only about two in 10 leaders identified AI as a way to help draft assessment questions aligned to learning outcomes (22%). However, nearly three in 10 leaders (29%) see the potential for AI to help query student data to develop retention or student success campaigns. Compared to other countries, Australian university leaders, along with those in Brazil and Singapore, were the only who rated helping with brainstorming highest, but leaders were generally in line with other countries in seeing the opportunity for assistance with course building. Leaders in Australia were the second largest group to highlight opportunities for retention and student success campaigns with AI —indicating that this group may be a bit ahead of their peers in other countries when it comes to seeing the potential of AI. However, the concern expressed related to identifying plagiarism was among the highest by country and was shared by a similar number of university leaders in the United States, the United Arab Emirates, and the Philippines, while university leaders in the United Kingdom were the most concerned about this area. This continues to highlight varying perspectives on the most significant ways that AI tools will impact higher education in Australia and the opportunity for further discussion.

Universities in Australia have generally taken a proactive approach to addressing the potential implications of AI, as 63% of leaders reported that their universities have rolled out a university-wide policy with respect to generative AI writing tools like ChatGPT, while an additional 25% report working on one currently. Universities should continue to develop policies related to AI use at the institution to help faculty members and students understand how AI should or should not be used.

Based on these results, Australia is clearly on a path to more broadly incorporate AI into higher education, both from the student and university leader perspectives. There are continued opportunities for reflection and conversation to more closely align expectations and to ensure that AI tools will meet the needs of students and the university in strengthening the educational experience for students.

Opportunities

- Review ways that AI can help enhance the student experience based on student sentiment
- Consider and implement ways that AI can be used to enhance the educational experience both inside and outside of the classroom
- Foster dialogue between and among students and university leaders around the opportunities AI presents, as well as potential drawbacks or other impacts

Methodology

Data collection was conducted online among university leaders and students across 11 countries in August 2023, including Australia, Brazil, Mexico, the Philippines, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, South Africa, Spain, the United Kingdom, the United Arab Emirates, and the United States. Separate questionnaires with similar questions were utilised to enable comparisons. To qualify, student respondents had to indicate that they were currently enroled at a higher education institution and were pursuing a degree or diploma. University leader respondents had to indicate that they were currently senior leaders (dean, provost, rector, etc.) at a higher education institution. In total, 2,617 university leaders and 2,728 students qualified for and completed the survey. In Australia, 252 students and 252 university leaders responded to the survey.

About Anthology

Anthology offers the largest EdTech ecosystem on a global scale for education, supporting more than 150 million users in 80 countries. With a mission to provide dynamic, data-informed experiences to the global education community through Anthology Intelligent Experiences™, we help learners, leaders, and educators achieve their goals by offering over 60 SaaS products and services designed to advance learning. Discover more about how we are fulfilling our mission for education, business, and government institutions at **www.anthology.com**.