

Artificial Intelligence in Higher Education: Balancing Equity, Access, and Innovation

Dates: Tuesday 9th – Wednesday 10th June 2026

Venue: Online and in person at the Whitworth Art Gallery, University of Manchester, Manchester, UK

Organiser: Manchester Institute of Education, The University of Manchester

Generative AI is rapidly changing higher education. Alongside excitement about new possibilities for learning and research, there are growing questions about who benefits and who might be left behind. This conference explores how GenAI could be used to make higher education more equitable and accessible, and how it might deepen existing divides.

Bringing together researchers, educators, students, technologists, accessibility professionals and policymakers, we'll consider the practical, ethical, and policy challenges of using GenAI to support diverse learners and learning processes. The event will mix keynotes from leading educators, researchers, and policymakers, reflective discussions, lightning talks, a workshop and research posters to create space to share ideas, surface tensions, and imagine more inclusive futures with AI in higher education.

We are inviting submissions for both lightning talks and research posters. The conference will be held in a hybrid format. The lightning talks will take place in person, while research posters can be presented either online or in person.

Additional information can be found below;

Call for in-person Lightning Talks

We invite proposals for 5–7 minute reflections on one of the following themes:

1. Highlighting best practice. Examples of what's working, what feels promising, or what we can learn from early experimentation of using GenAI in HE. This might involve teaching, research, design, policy, or support work that uses generative AI to enhance participation, accessibility, or inclusion.
2. Reflections on challenges. Honest accounts of difficulty, tension, or uncertainty when using GenAI in HE. We're particularly keen to hear about things that haven't gone to plan, or that raise wider questions about equality and inclusion in the AI moment.

The lightning talks are about starting conversations, not delivering finished answers. If you've been trying something out, or thinking critically about what others are doing, we'd love to hear from you.

Call for in-person or online Research Posters

We're also inviting submissions of proposals for research posters that explore the relationship between AI, accessibility, and inclusion in higher education. This could be based on empirical research, conceptual work, a co-designed project, or an initiative still taking shape.

We will ask those successful to provide a printed hard copy (in A1) to be displayed on the day, but also a digital copy so we can share it with participants online. We envisage the poster session to be a space to exchange ideas, connect across disciplines, and share work in progress as well as completed studies.

We especially welcome posters that foreground student perspectives, marginalized experiences or inclusive approaches to research and design.

Submission Information

Please complete the submission form below by December 20th with a title and up to 150 words describing your proposed lightning talk or research poster.

<https://forms.cloud.microsoft/e/hjQYZjPtL2>



We'll notify contributors of outcomes by January 31st 2026.