

Universities Must Respond to the Increasing Importance of AI

The demand for degree courses in AI-related fields is surging. Adapting to this anticipated growth will likely be a challenge for many educational institutions across the globe.

Mark Ovens, Senior Partnerships Director at Studyportals, says, *"Whilst demand for Higher Education continues to accelerate in this pandemic rebound period, it is vital that Universities safeguard and future-proof their international recruitment strategies by being informed by data trends on the intentions of their potential future students."*

Higher education professionals should be aware of where the strongest demand for AI education is coming from, as well as where most AI courses are being offered.

The latest report from Studyportals can give universities an idea of the future growth potential of AI.

Mismatch Between Supply and Demand for AI Courses

Unsurprisingly, demand for degree courses in AI-related fields is surging. Adapting to this anticipated growth will likely be a challenge for many educational institutions across the globe.

As the buzz around Artificial Intelligence applications like Chat GPT becomes louder, demand for AI degree programmes is outstripping supply.

There is 3.4 times as much interest in Artificial Intelligence courses on Studyportals as there are programmes currently available.

Student interest in Artificial Intelligence programmes on Studyportals (expressed as pageviews) grew 305 percent from January 2018 to January 2023. That compares to a 25 percent increase in pageviews across all programmes.

Meanwhile, programmes for Artificial Intelligence on Studyportals rose 174 percent between January 2018 and January 2023. That compares to 31 percent average growth across all programs on Studyportals.

It is interesting to note that nearly half of all Master's programmes in AI are supplied by the UK (27.6 percent) and the US (18.8 percent). The UK and the US also supply nearly two-thirds of all Bachelor's programmes related to AI (31.9 percent and 31.1 percent of supply, respectively).

AI-Related Fields

AI programmes are also attached to other disciplinary fields outside of Computer Science. Universities can look at combining AI programmes with other disciplinary fields to ensure their institutions appeal to the varying, even possibly niche, interests of prospective students.


Serusha Govender, Science and technology journalist, multimedia producer and metaverse researcher, says there are some unexpected opportunities for universities willing to think outside the box, *"There is also a rising demand for cognitive science students that have studied how AI systems can be designed to mimic the human brain. There is also a need for linguistic specialists who can adapt their skills to working with AI systems like natural language processing (NLP) which require a deep understanding of human language structure and use. Even philosophy graduates who focus on the ethical and social implications of AI are increasingly needed as these technologies become more prevalent in society."*

"In reality, so many more opportunities could be created to indirectly meet this demand as AI itself is fast-evolving and rapidly expanding to new areas. Universities that are able to build more holistic, adaptive approaches into their

current degrees can arm promising, multi-skilled graduates with the ability to repurpose their skills into multiple career avenues to pursue successful careers in the AI sector (or even in the broader workforce)."

An Exciting Moment for Universities

In order to respond to the increasing importance of AI, Universities should consider the following:

- Offering new specialized degrees and courses catering for the high-demand and innovation-driven jobs of the future.
- Restructuring current prospectuses to afford graduates opportunities to pursue successful careers using their knowledge more broadly.
- Combining AI programmes with other disciplinary fields to ensure their institutions appeal to the varying, even possibly niche, interests of prospective students.
- Partnering with industry leaders to provide students with hands-on experience in the field through internships and research opportunities.
- Using data to identify trends, offer the right courses and find the right students.
- Communicating what makes your institution's AI programmes unique and attractive to students. 



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About the Author

Cara Skikne is a communications specialist with a background in journalism. Currently, she is working as a Senior Editor at Studyportals.