HP FUTURES

Skills in the Age of Intelligent Machines

A practical handbook for education systems on how to equip young people for the Future of Work



HP Futures is a global multi-stakeholder and interdisciplinary knowledge network dedicated to promoting innovative thinking in education to shape a more resilient, inclusive and sustainable future.

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Overview

HP FUTURES 2026

This year, the HP Futures initiative, developed by HP in partnership with The Education Leaders Forum, explores the core skills young people will need as intelligent machines reshape learning and the future of work.

Through HP Futures Council sessions, which convened 58 education, policymaking and Future of Work leaders, and conducting in-depth interviews with sector experts based around the world, HP Futures 2026 examines how education systems can best equip learners to succeed in the workplaces and economies of the future.

HP Futures 2026 picks up where HP Futures 2025 left off. HP Futures 2025 examined how schools, universities and policymakers should implement AI responsibly and effectively in education across contexts. HP Futures 2026 builds on this strong foundation to ask how education systems can develop and credentialise the core capabilities students will need in an AI-shaped world, and enable young people to thrive as a result.

HP Futures 2026 asked its expert contributors to debate several key questions:

- ***As careers become non-linear and learning becomes lifelong, what does it mean to truly prepare a young person – not just for a first job, but for a life of reinvention?***
- ***What makes a skill "durable" in an age of intelligent machines? And are we teaching those skills today?***
- ***Where does AI fluency sit within the human skills stack? And how should education systems sequence, integrate, and assess it without losing sight of what only humans can do?***
- ***What would a school, university, or workplace look like if it were genuinely designed around human skill development in an AI-augmented world? And who is already building it?***

Based on these experts' deliberations, the HP Futures 2026 report identifies the durable skills students will need to develop in order to succeed in the future, looks at how and why they will form the infrastructure of AI-era readiness, and showcases where these skills and capabilities are being taught and assessed innovatively and effectively in schools and universities around the globe.

The report that follows brings together the HP Futures Council meeting insights, the HP Futures 2026 Student Survey, expert interviews, and practical case studies from schools, universities, employers, NGOs and public systems around the world. Its aim is to serve as a helpful, practical reference point for policymakers, education leaders, educators, employers and stakeholders striving to prepare young people for the radically changing Future of Work.

We are extremely grateful to all our partners, and would like to extend our thanks again to every HP Futures Council Member and expert contributor for enabling us to create this report.

Throughout this report we use **durable skills as our primary term, defined as human, transferable and developmental capabilities that remain valuable across technological, labour market and social change. We use **AI fluency** – knowing when, why and how to use AI effectively – separately, as an enabling layer that sits on those human foundations.*

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CONTENTS

01 **Preface** 06 - 07
David McQuarrie

02 **Building from HP Futures 2025** 08 - 09

03 **Executive Summary, Key Findings and Calls to Action** 10 - 17

04 **The HP Futures 2026 Student Survey** 18 - 29

05 **The HP Futures 2026 Council Findings** **30 - 55**

- **Chapter 1:** *Defining durable skills in the Age of Intelligent Machines*
- **Chapter 2:** *How to build durable Future of Work skills in practice*
- **Chapter 3:** *The durable skills assessment bottleneck and how to enact systems change*

06 **In-depth Case Studies** **56 - 113**
Building skills in practice around the globe

07 **Afterword** **114 - 115**
Mayank Dhingra

08 **Appendices** **116 - 118**
HP Futures 2026 Council Members & Interviewees



David McQuarrie

Chief Commercial Officer at HP and Chair of HP Futures

01 PREFACE

Educators, policymakers and employers share a responsibility to prepare young people for the opportunities and challenges they will encounter throughout their lives and careers. As artificial intelligence rapidly transforms how we learn and work, that responsibility has never been more important.

The HP Futures initiative is now in its third year, and building on the foundations of previous HP Futures research on responsible AI in education, this year's report explores a critical question: **what skills and capabilities will matter most in a future where intelligent machines can perform an increasing number of routine cognitive tasks?** As the nature of work continues to evolve, many future roles are likely to look very different from those of today, making **adaptability, continuous learning and workforce readiness** more important than ever.

The answer is increasingly clear. **As AI becomes more capable, distinctly human capabilities become even more valuable. Critical thinking, judgment, creativity, communication, collaboration, ethical reasoning, adaptability, resilience, and lifelong learning** are not being replaced. They are becoming even more important. Alongside these durable skills, individuals will also need **AI fluency: the ability to use AI effectively, understand its limitations, question its outputs, and remain responsible for the decisions that matter most.**

Based on this, we brought together educators, policymakers and EdTech experts from around the world through the HP Futures Council, alongside insights from **more than 6,000 young people** who participated in our inaugural HP Futures 2026 Student Survey. Their perspectives matter, as today's students will not only inherit an AI-enabled economy, but they will also help shape it. Their experiences, expectations and aspirations should play an important role in how we evolve both education systems and workplaces.

While perspectives varied, one theme emerged consistently: **education systems must do more to help students develop, demonstrate and continuously strengthen the capabilities that will remain valuable regardless of how technology evolves.**

The findings also highlight an important challenge. **Many education systems still struggle to teach, assess and credential these durable skills at scale,** even as leaders, policymakers and employers increasingly recognise their importance. **Closing this gap will be essential** if today's students are to thrive in a workforce that will continue to evolve throughout their careers.

Students themselves are already thinking deeply about these issues. Our research found that **82% of surveyed students are concerned that while AI may help them work faster, it may also reduce the depth of their learning.** Their perspectives serve as an important reminder that the conversation about AI and education must remain **centred on human development and long-term opportunity, not technology alone.**

At HP, we believe **technology should expand human potential.** That conviction is reflected throughout this report. While the challenges are real, so too are the opportunities. Throughout these pages, you will find examples of schools, universities and employers already redesigning learning experiences, assessment models and workforce practices to better prepare people for the future. These organisations demonstrate what is possible when technology is paired with thoughtful leadership, strong institutions and a clear focus on the skills that matter most.

We are grateful to the students, educators, policymakers, employers, partners, and HP Futures Council members who contributed their expertise to this report. We hope it serves as both a practical resource and a call to action for those working to prepare the next generation of talent for an AI-enabled world. **The decisions we make today will help determine whether technology simply changes the way we work, or whether it expands opportunity and unlocks human potential on a global scale.**

02

Building from HP Futures 2025

From responsible AI implementation to building skills for the Age of Intelligent Machines

The HP Futures 2025 report, AI and the Future of Learning: A strategic blueprint from global education experts, set out to answer an urgent question: how can education systems implement AI responsibly, safely and effectively?

That report brought together global experts across three HP Futures Councils on AI & Students, AI & Educators and AI & Leadership. Across those discussions, Council Members explored how AI is already reshaping how students learn, how educators teach, how institutions operate and how policymakers must think about the future of education.

HP Futures 2025 covered how, where and why students and educators are already using AI tools from a range of providers to do everything from essay writing to lesson planning, assessment and student support. It argued that policymakers now face a narrow window in which to establish the principles, safeguards and institutional capabilities needed to ensure that AI truly serves education and students, rather than steering its evolution without question.

The report, which garnered international media attention, called for education leaders to move beyond fragmented pilots and towards intentional, principles-led implementation. Its recommendations included establishing a Global AI in Education Charter, commissioning national AI-readiness baseline surveys, creating live and regularly refreshed AI policies, investing in in-house education ministry technology teams, giving students a formal role in AI governance, protecting student data, reforming assessment, upskilling educators and ensuring equitable access to high-quality AI tools. Together, these recommendations created a practical foundation for responsible AI adoption in education settings.

The recommendations from HP Futures 2025 carry directly into HP Futures 2026. **Several key themes from the HP Futures 2025 report also resurfaced in HP Futures 2026 discussions. Notably, these included:**

- The risk of cognitive atrophy posed by widespread AI use in education, particularly from a young age. This wariness of students losing their ability to think deeply and with significant critical facilities surfaced in the HP Futures 2026 student survey, as we explore in the HP Futures 2026 Student Survey section.

- The need for all education policymaking and school and university curricula to remain live and agile also recurred in HP Futures 2026 deliberations. Council Members explored how students will need to be served by systems that teach them how to use latest AI tooling alongside durable skills, while credentialising both, meaning that university and K-12 systems cannot afford to take a long time to create new courses, or to leave them static. All AI and skills-related curricula must be fast-evolving and fluid, while retaining rigidly high standards and efficacy.

- The vital need to ensure students have a voice in whatever happens around AI, **the Future of Work and skills-building** also recurred in HP Futures 2026 deliberations. HP Futures 2025 argued that students should not be treated merely as end-users of AI, but should play a role in shaping how AI enters their education. **HP Futures 2026 built on this premise to put student views on future skills, work readiness and lifelong learning at the centre of its findings.**

- Educators and educator upskilling must be prioritised alongside student development if AI in education and future skills-building is to be effective long-term. HP Futures 2025 argued that AI should augment educators, reduce workload and strengthen the teaching profession. **Similarly, the experts whose recommendations are included in this report stressed that if education systems want to evolve to build, credentialise and centre durable skills, teachers and lecturers also need time, upskilling in these areas, training and respect of their professional agency and unique abilities to impart durable skills to the next generation.**

- HP Futures 2025 stressed that equity must remain a core design principle in AI-infused education systems. **HP Futures 2026 equally treats skills equity as a central issue, arguing that the ability to build durable skills, AI fluency and lifelong learning habits must not become another advantage reserved for already-privileged learners and another cause of structural inequality.**

03

HP Futures 2026

Executive Summary, Key Findings and Calls to Action

Executive Summary

Students are AI-confident, but worried about shallow learning.

Students will need to wield durable skills to succeed in AI-powered workplaces of the future.

Education systems broadly recognise that durable skills matter, but do not yet teach, assess or evidence them consistently or effectively.

HP Futures 2026 calls on education systems and policymakers to take action.

The HP Futures 2026 initiative set out to create a handbook-style report reflecting the latest views among education and industry experts on the Future of Work, and recommendations for how education systems can evolve to best equip learners to succeed in a rapidly evolving world.

The decision to centre the HP Futures 2026 report around actionable, informative case studies and a global student survey was taken following discussions with HP Futures 2026 Council Members and interviewees. Contributors had stressed that the most beneficial report outcomes would likely emerge through sharing practical examples of where durable skills are being built successfully in order to help institutions, leaders and policymakers around the world enact their own reforms. They shared this view following discussions around the need for immediate action in education systems today, rather than further discussions on what students might need in future, or another new definition of durable skills.

HP Futures 2026 is built on **four pillars:**

3
Global sessions convening the HP Futures 2026 Council

6,206
Students surveyed, across six languages

Multiple
In-depth 1:1 expert interviews

Global
Case studies from schools, universities and systems leading by example

The report was developed through three global sessions convening the HP Futures 2026 Council, the HP Futures 2026 Student Survey of 6,206 students across six languages, multiple in-depth 1:1 expert interviews, and detailed case studies from around the world of the schools, universities, organisations and systems leading by example – many who are pioneering new approaches while national policy lags behind.

This report features input from organisations working to ensure young people worldwide have access to work experience and upskilling opportunities, from pioneering education leaders reshaping institutions around building durable and AI fluency skills, and from HP's own recruitment leaders on how approaches to hiring are updating in response to latest developments.

The HP Futures 2026 Council members and expert interviewees agreed to anchor their findings around one key factor: that the skills that will matter most in the Age of Intelligent Machines will be human, transferable and developmental. And to stress in this report that, when it comes to building, assessing and credentialising these skills, the time for action is now.

The Key Findings and Calls to Action that follow draw on all of the above to call for urgent changes to policymaking and education systems more broadly. They include calls to set an accepted global standard for credentialising of durable skills, for new assessment models that prioritise evidencing these skills, and for action to be taken immediately to ensure AI-era readiness and durable skills ownership does not become another source of structural inequality.

HP Futures 2026 set out to address one of the most urgent topics in education today: how to ensure education systems equip young people with the skills they will need to thrive in AI-powered workplaces of the future. The recommendations that follow offer a blueprint for where to start in order to achieve this critical goal and set today's students up for long-term success.



Key Findings:

The HP Futures 2026 Student Survey reveals that students today are confident about their own AI abilities, but worry that using AI is making them learn less deeply.

In other words, students around the world are flagging the cognitive-atrophy risk of using AI. **This finding is a warning sign for education policymakers worldwide, and further evidence of why student voices must form part of systems change discussions.**

The skills that matter most in the Age of Intelligent Machines will be human, transferable and developmental.

The HP Futures 2026 Council called these **"durable skills"** and identified a core **Thinking Skills Cluster – critical thinking, systems thinking, design thinking and agile thinking – that students need to hone, underpinning a wider set of durable skills.** The wider set of durable skills identified include: creativity, collaboration, communication, empathy, judgement, adaptability as a mindset, comfort with ambiguity and non-linear careers, self-directed learning, ethical reasoning and resilience.

A key risk factor for cognitive atrophy is cognitive offloading without judgement. The experts contributing to this HP Futures 2026 report decided to classify choicefulness and accountability as key durable skills – skills that are not usually listed in standard definitions.

In workplaces of the future, students will need to know when to use AI, when not to use it, and how to take ownership of AI-assisted work.

Education leaders and policymakers urgently need clear blueprints for how to help students develop the durable skills that will be essential in workplaces of the future.

This report aims to play a part in this process through sharing examples and case studies of where skills-building, assessing and credentialising is being done successfully, to help institutions, leaders and policymakers around the world looking to enact their own reforms.

Future skills must now be viewed as architecture, not enrichment.

The HP Futures 2026 Council agreed to call on education systems to stop treating the durable skills identified above as "soft" or secondary, as they are becoming the core infrastructure of future readiness. Instead, **they must be viewed as the architecture around which education curricula and systems are built,** in order to ensure students are equipped to succeed in workplaces of the future.

AI fluency should be treated as an enabling layer, not a replacement for foundational skills, and be embedded across subjects, disciplines and real-world contexts.

As explored in this report, **AI fluency** – knowing **when, why and how to use AI well** – only becomes valuable when combined with judgement, accountability, domain knowledge and real-world experience. The HP Futures 2026 experts recommend a model of **"AI + X"**: studying AI alongside another discipline, to ensure students always develop foundational knowledge alongside AI use and have an edge in workplaces of the future.

"Stop talking, start implementing":

The HP Futures 2026 Council and expert contributors agreed that while consensus is emerging over the durable skills people will need to succeed in future workplaces, implementation lags. **Not enough education systems today teach these skills, and even fewer assess them. The HP Futures 2026 Council called for durable skills to be consistently taught, assessed and rewarded by education systems globally.**

Assessment remains the biggest bottleneck, and the biggest lever, to widespread building and validating of durable skills.

The HP Futures 2026 agreed to recommend that the strongest way forward here is to **shift from one-off exams towards assessing evidence of process: asking students to produce accumulated demonstrations of skill through portfolios, reflections, artefacts, feedback cycles, project outcomes, public presentations, and traceability of AI use.** In short, AI-era assessment must distinguish cognitive amplification from cognitive offloading, and examine skills alongside foundational knowledge.

All key stakeholders must align on interoperable skills standards across education systems and industry bodies so that students can properly credentialise their effectively assessed durable skills with credentials that travel across borders and sectors.

The Council called on education ministries to urgently align on these interoperable skills standards, and support credentialising implementation.

Education policymaking and systems must become more agile, because AI-era skills needs – and on-the-ground innovation in schools and universities – are moving far faster than policy cycles.

AI and labour market expectations are changing quickly, while curriculum reform, accreditation and regulation continue to move slowly. HP Futures 2026 Council Members explored how innovative schools and universities around the world are devising and implementing skills-building architecture and initiatives that are years ahead of their local national education policy updates. Council Members argued that this needs to end, as it is leading to discrepancies between what students are learning across contexts and income brackets, as the majority of innovation is happening in paid-for education settings.

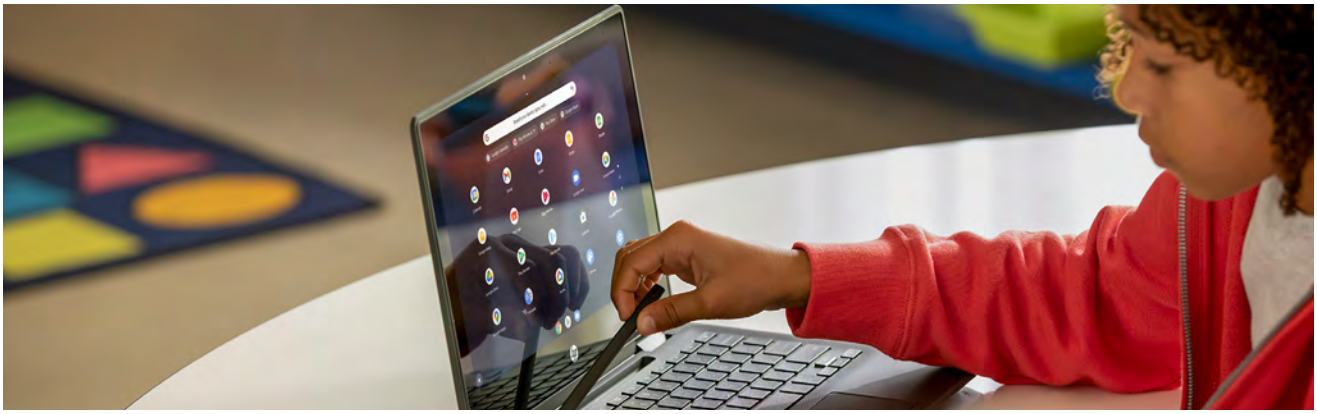
Universities, employers and accreditors all have an important role to play in leading the way in the short-term to ensure that young people can credentialise their durable skills.

Experts highlighted how these bodies often have the room to be more agile and move faster than government policy and assessment systems in the short-term, and should play their part. The report recommends universities and accreditors build assessments and courses that reflect workplace expectations, AI use and durable skills capabilities.

Higher education institutions should work to change their admissions pathways so as not to block K-12 innovation around building durable skills through only rewarding narrow traditional measures.

rict regulation and targets to meet, and fairly narrow university application/admission criteria. These must be widened to allow for curriculum innovation around building durable skills.





Education policymakers worldwide must work to close the provision gap between the AI-shaped future students expect and the education they currently receive.

The HP Futures 2026 Student Survey shows that students expect AI to be central to their careers, especially for research and synthesising data. Yet fewer than three in 10 students globally say most of their current learning includes AI, digital skills or responsible technology use. This has to change, and this report outlines ways in which this can be achieved.

Equity must sit at the centre of new durable skills and AI fluency-building initiatives, or these competencies risk becoming another source of structural inequality.

In this report, students and experts based in LMICs call for more equitable digitisation and digital tools access, whilst also showcasing the world-class durable skills-building projects already succeeding on the ground in these contexts.

Policymakers should note from this HP Futures 2026 report that the most effective models for teaching durable human, transferable and developmental skills build these through including practical and real-world experiences.

Students build judgement, collaboration, communication, resilience and adaptability when they work on real problems, with real constraints, real feedback and real audiences. For example, the Franklin School Case Study is an example of "skills architecture" succeeding in practice, the JA Worldwide Case Study shows the long-term value of experiential entrepreneurship and learning through failure, and the Springpod Case Study shows how virtual work-based learning through employer-linked experiences can help build skills and lead to students securing high-value employment.

Industry and employers should partner with schools and universities more closely, to ensure ongoing dialogue and shared understanding of the skills students need to succeed in a rapidly changing world – all whilst ensuring that employers do not have too large a say in defining education alone.

The HP Futures 2026 Council explored how this is a tricky balance to strike, but one that will be crucial in the years ahead. The rapid disappearance of informal entry-level work means that education systems need to evolve to ensure students graduate equipped with durable skills, AI fluency and experience in workplaces to help them secure the equivalent of today's entry-level jobs.

Future-facing employers are moving from task-based hiring towards evidence-based judgement of capability.

In this HP Futures 2026 report, employers share how they increasingly need people who can move beyond low-level tasks into higher-level reasoning, system integration, applied AI use, emotional intelligence and strategic influence. Today, when CVs and personal statements can be AI-generated, employers increasingly want young people to "show rather than tell". Applicants will need to have real-world experience and the ability to explain what they did, why it mattered and how they used tools.

The role of the educator is changing and will be essential in ensuring young people develop durable skills long-term.

This HP Futures 2026 report explores how, if durable skills-building reforms and initiatives are to work well in practice, educators now require additional training, agency, onboarding and peer support to become facilitators and assessors of durable skills. Experts stressed that if educators are left out of the equation, reforms are likely to fail.

Calls to Action:

The HP Futures 2026 Council and HP Futures 2026 expert contributors call on key education, governmental and employment stakeholders to:

- Make policy reforms based on recognising that the skills that matter most in the **Age of Intelligent Machines** will be **human, transferable and developmental,** and are underpinned by a **Thinking Skills Cluster** of critical thinking, systems thinking, design thinking and agile thinking.

- Acknowledge that **cognitive atrophy is a real risk** and so **"choicefulness"** and **"accountability"** must also be recognised as key durable skills in education systems going forward.

- Stop treating durable skills as "soft" secondary or extracurricular, and start treating them as **curriculum architecture.** Durable skills are becoming the **core infrastructure of future readiness,** and must be resourced, timetabled and assessed accordingly.

- Keep **literacy, numeracy and identity-forming learning** at the core of education, while using creative, hands-on approaches to deliver fundamentals and durable skills simultaneously.

- **Teach "AI + X":** Treat building students' **AI fluency as an enabling layer, not a replacement** for foundational skills, through embedding AI fluency across the curriculum as an enabling layer, paired with domain expertise, while teaching all durable skills.

- **"Stop talking, start implementing":** Education systems broadly know what matters, but do not yet overall adequately teach, assess or evidence it, so systems must move to implementation.

- To work to close the **provision gap** between the AI-shaped future students expect and the education they currently receive. The HP Futures 2026 Student Survey shows that students expect AI to be central to their careers, especially for research and synthesising data. Yet **fewer than three in 10 students globally** say most of their current learning includes AI, digital skills or responsible technology use.

- Recognise that **assessment remains the biggest bottleneck** when it comes to widespread building of durable skills, and education systems therefore need to respond by creating **standardised assessment pathways** for durable skills that are recognised by higher education institutions and employers across geographies.

- Take **students' voices** into account when creating durable skills-based curricula. The student survey is a warning sign for education policymakers worldwide, and further evidence of why student voices must form part of systems change discussions.

- Align on **interoperable skills standards** across education systems and industry bodies so that students can properly credentialise their durable skills with credentials that travel across borders and sectors.

- Expand **project-based, practical and community-engaged** durable skills building projects across contexts to help students build durable skills from the early years.

- Design future skills-building programmes for **public systems and low-resource** contexts to ensure that durable skills do not become another source of inequality, through using methods such as including teacher-mediated AI, low-bandwidth delivery and predictable costs.

- Build **educators' durable skills alongside students'.** If durable skills-building reforms and initiatives are to work well in practice, educators now require additional training, agency, onboarding and peer support. If they are left out of the equation, reforms are likely to fail.



04

HP Futures 2026 Student Survey

Listening to students' views on the Future of Work

Overview

During our final HP Futures 2026 Council session, many Council Members shared what they are seeing students say about AI and the Future of Work. The wide range of answers shared demonstrated again why **student voices must sit at the centre of reporting and decision-making in education and future skills policy.**

Some Council Members described students who seemed relaxed, even detached, about the idea of rising labour market disruption. Others described young people already worrying about job security, burnout and whether they would find work that suited them. Some students were deciding to choose their favoured degree pathways despite warnings that AI may reshape careers, while others were already using AI to compare job options and create side hustles. Will Campbell, Group CEO and Head of School at Franklin School in New Jersey, said that some Franklin students with strong financial literacy skills are already using AI to evaluate the job market, compare work options and assess the likelihood of employment if they apply for different roles.

For this reason, **Council Members warned against assuming students are either universally excited by AI or universally frightened of it.** Several reported that students were active users of Generative AI tools such as ChatGPT and Claude, but remained sceptical of AI-generated creative work, particularly where it feels inauthentic or appears to undermine originality.

The discussions also highlighted **major differences depending on context, age and income group.** Council Members reported hearing from European and US-based university students who are **now nervous about their ability to secure a knowledge economy job post-graduation in a way they would never have been prior to the release of ChatGPT in 2022.**

By contrast, Ricardo Phillips, Director General of Universidad Insurgentes, which operates more than 20 campuses in Mexico, said that his students **did not fear the ability to get a job post-graduation due to AI, because many are already working in informal or gig-economy roles.** For them, the main fear is that it will become increasingly difficult to transition into the formal, higher-skill work jobs which continue to feel distant, inaccessible or designed for someone else despite the introduction of AI and their university education. Other Council Members said that their students' biggest fear was being able to personally build the skills, confidence and networks to access the AI-led jobs of the future.



These discussions cemented our belief in the value of conducting the **HP Futures 2026 Student Survey.**

The survey, which ran for seven weeks over May and June 2026, asked students worldwide about how prepared they feel for the Future of Work, the skills they believe will matter most in future workplaces, how they are using AI today, and whether they believe their education is helping them build the capabilities they need to succeed in life.

HP Futures 2026 Student the Online Survey
May – June 2026

7 weeks
Fielded May–June 2026

6,206
Student responses collected

37
Countries represented

6 languages
English, Spanish, Portuguese, Bahasa Indonesia, Italian, Arabic

88%
of respondents were aged 12–17 (remainder under 12 or over 25)

The online survey received 6,206 responses from students in 37 countries across versions published in English, Spanish, Portuguese, Bahasa Indonesia, Italian and Arabic. We have included their responses in full here in recognition of the importance of creating policy that values the input of the generation that will be exposed to AI-disrupted workplaces from day one. Respondents ranged from under 12 to over 25 years old, with 88% of those stating an age between 12 and 17.

Please note that the HP Futures 2026 Student Survey should be read as a **global listening exercise.** It does not replace national data, and country-level findings should be interpreted with appropriate sample-size caveats. The survey's core value lies in the scale and consistency of the themes that emerged across languages and regions, and the wide breadth of students it polled.



HP Futures 2026 Student Survey:

Findings

Overall, the HP Futures 2026 Student Survey found that while students are confident in their ability to wield AI and succeed in job markets of the future, they are simultaneously worried about what AI use is doing to their learning.

The survey found that **82% of students worry that while AI helps them work faster, they are not learning material as deeply.** In other words, students around the world are themselves flagging the cognitive-atrophy risk of using AI, and creating **a striking paradox: the same students that are confident on one hand (81% believe their education is preparing them for work; 80% are confident they can use AI effectively), are deeply concerned about what AI use is doing to their learning.**

The findings echoed and reflected inputs shared during the HP Futures Council sessions. As one Council Member put it: where the Industrial Revolution's displacement of physical labour produced obesity, the displacement of cognitive labour risks creating a kind of "mental obesity". Ali Khan, COO of Beaconhouse school group in Pakistan, said that his students are often highly sceptical of Generative AI in creative outputs, especially images and videos, because they feel it "robs them of originality".

Alper Utku, founder of next-gen university Amsterdam Tech, shared that his students feel similarly to those answering the survey. He explained that his students use AI, yet are "not big fans" of the technology. The leader said his students are keenly aware that "if you want to build good [technology] products, you can use AI, but you will need human agency".

Meanwhile, as seen in the survey, other Council Members reported finding students relatively relaxed about the impact of AI on their careers, while their parents were the people expressing concern. David Harkin, CEO of 8billionideas, said that "parents are more scared than children", and many children seem to think "we will be ok" when it comes to job prospects. Gemma Thornley, Principal of Arbor School Dubai, said many of her students remained focused on short-term exams and university offers, and were "quite chilled and laid back about the future and what that holds". As Yael Karakowsky, CEO of SER Network, put it: AI may feel frightening to adults who have watched it evolve, but for younger generations it is increasingly "just the norm now".

However, it is important to stress that **this optimism was not universal. Student respondents based in high-income countries (HICs), as per the World Bank definition, and respondents at the older end of the respondent segment (late teens) were all more worried about their job prospects.** We also heard from Council Members across contexts about this concern. For example, Fanny Moral, head of growth at African international schools network Enko Education, had heard students expressing worries about "the job market and not finding a job that suits them".

The survey also surfaced other interesting findings. These include students' preference for using analogue methods such as handwritten notes and printing out materials to read on paper – a perhaps surprising finding given the vast majority of survey respondents were in their teens. **When learning really matters, 25% of students say they use handwritten notes as their preferred learning method for retaining information – 7% more than those preferring AI-generated summaries for this purpose (18%).**



25%
Prefer handwritten notes to retain information



18%
Prefer AI-generated summaries

To end the survey, the HP Futures team asked this question to student respondents:

> ? If you could give one message to education or workplace leaders about preparing students for an AI-driven future, what would it be?

In total, 6,185 students left an answer, in six different languages. The dominant theme, repeated across every language and region, was remarkably consistent: the message would be to **teach us to think with AI, not to let it think for us.** Students overwhelmingly asked for AI education rather than AI bans, warned in their own words against dependence and "lazy thinking".

Notably, student respondents in low-and- middle income countries (LMIC), as per the World Bank definition, paired their messages with requests for the basics that will allow them to build the AI and durable skills this report explores: working computers, connectivity and equal access. These concerns were echoed in our HP Futures Council sessions, when Komal Dadlani, CEO of Lab4U, a Chile-based startup transforming mobile devices into science instruments, stressed that she is seeing student attitudes depend heavily on context, including whether they come from high-income or low-income communities.

Students emphasise the following themes regarding an AI-driven future:

- **Human-AI collaboration vs competition:** A central message is that students should be prepared to work with AI rather than compete against it. Leaders are encouraged to shift the educational focus away from rote memorisation and towards cultivating uniquely human skills - such as critical thinking, creativity, ethical judgement, and emotional intelligence - that machines cannot easily replicate.

- **Responsible and balanced use:** There is a strong consensus on the need to teach students how to use AI responsibly and ethically. Many respondents warn against over-reliance, arguing that complete dependency on AI for schoolwork or problem-solving undermines cognitive development, logical reasoning, and individual creativity.

- **Need for AI literacy and practical integration:** Many students advocate for integrating AI and digital literacy into the curriculum as a formal, practical subject. Suggestions include providing hands-on workshops, teaching prompt engineering, and utilising AI as a "thinking partner" or research assistant rather than a shortcut for answers.

- **Concerns regarding consequences:** Significant concerns were raised about the impact of AI, particularly regarding environmental sustainability (eg: water and energy consumption), job displacement, and the potential erosion of foundational human skills and independent thought.

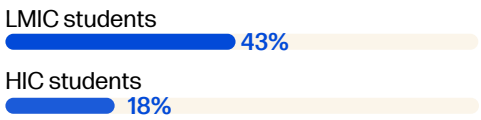


HP Futures 2026 Student Survey:

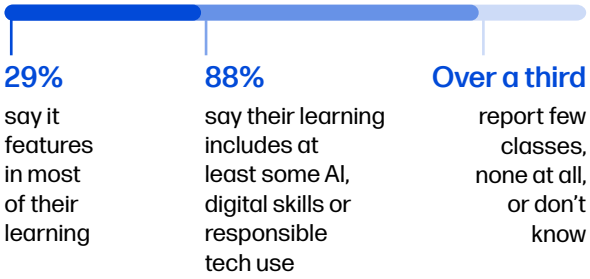
Findings in detail

Students are confident that education is preparing them for work. Four in five students (81%) are confident their education is preparing them for the world of work. However, conviction divides sharply between HICs and LMICs: 43% of LMIC students are very confident vs 18% in HICs

81%
of students overall are confident their education prepares them for the world of work

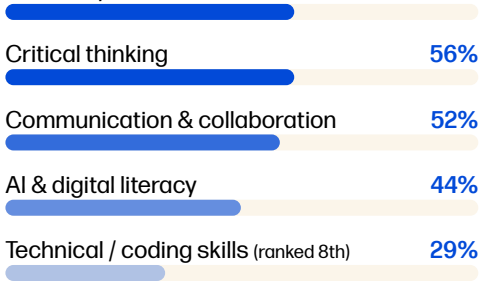


Embedding of AI and digital skills teaching in schools is broad but shallow. While nearly nine in 10 students (88%) say their learning includes at least some AI, digital skills or responsible technology use, fewer than three in 10 students (29%) said it features in most of their learning, and over a third report few classes, none at all, or don't know.

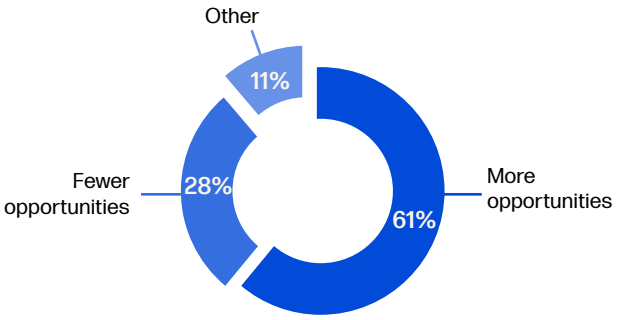


Students believe creativity and critical thinking are the most important skills for the future job market. Students put durable human skills above technical ones. **Creativity (56%) and critical thinking (56%) top the list,** and communication and collaboration (52%) came ahead of AI and digital literacy (44%). Notably, technical or coding skills (29%) rank only eighth.

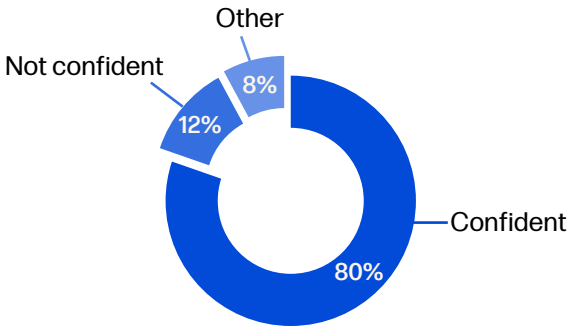
Students put durable human skills above technical ones.



Students believe AI will create more opportunities than it will take away. Nearly two-thirds (61%) of students believe AI will create more career opportunities than it will take away. Just 28% disagreed with the statement, but optimism divides starkly, with 66% agreeing in LMICs vs just 39% in the HICs, and falling as low as 30% in the United States.



Students worldwide are strikingly self-assured about their own AI capabilities. We posed this statement: "I feel confident I will be able to use AI tools effectively and responsibly in my future career." 80% of students responded saying that they feel confident they will be able to use AI tools effectively and responsibly in their future careers, with only 12% disagreeing.

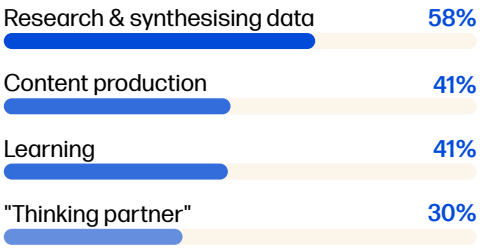


When students want to retain material, they still reach for analogue methods such as printing or handwriting notes. Perhaps surprisingly, students reported writing by hand or printing notes being the single most popular approach, with nearly half of student respondents (49%) choosing a method involving print or handwriting. Meanwhile, fewer than one in five students (18%) chose AI summaries as their preferred method.

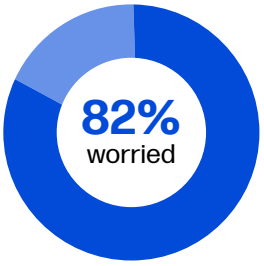
25% prefer handwritten notes – the single most popular method

18% prefer AI-generated summaries

Research and data synthesis is far and away students' top expected career use of AI. Research and synthesising data is the top expected career use of AI (58%), followed by content production (41%) and learning (41%). Notably, fewer than a third (30%) expect to use AI as a "thinking partner", which shows today's students see AI as a tool for tasks, not as a substitute for thought.



Students worry that while AI helps them work faster, they are not learning as deeply. A striking 82% of students worry that while AI helps them work faster, they are not learning as deeply – a concern that cleared 75% in every major country surveyed and peaked at 90% in Indonesia.



75% +
in every major country surveyed

90%
Peak in Indonesia



Student Survey Quotes

The HP Futures 2026 Student Survey asked students:

"If you could give one message to education or workplace leaders about preparing students for an AI-driven future, what would it be?"

"Teach us to master AI": Students told education leaders they want to think with AI - they do not want AI to think for them

> Courage to ask what no one has asked. Humility to test something 20 times with AI until it works. Character to decide when to switch the AI off and take responsibility on your own.
>
> *-Student, Brazil, 17*

> The future is not driven by AI, but by the humans who control it. AI is an efficient tool, but it makes humans lazy about critical thinking. My message to leaders: prepare students to master AI, not be mastered by it.
>
> *-Student, Indonesia, 16*

> Don't ban AI - teach the right way to use it. Make students great at critical thinking, checking AI outputs, and having their own ideas. The goal is for us to be AI's boss, not AI's slave.
>
> *-Student, Indonesia, 14*

> Make artificial intelligence (AI) a partner for thinking, not a crutch that replaces reason.
>
> *-Student, Indonesia, 16*

> Know how to use AI before AI knows how to use you.
>
> *-Student, United States, 16*

> Make every learner AI-literate, but deeply human.
>
> *-Student, United States, 12*

> Teach students how to think, not just how to use AI. Technology changes; curiosity, creativity and judgement endure.
>
> *-Student, Italy, 18*

> Teach students not just how to use AI, but how to think more critically than AI can. In the future, what matters most is problem-solving, creativity and ethics - things AI can't replace.
>
> *-Student, Philippines, 13*

> Prepare a course of study on artificial intelligence for all specialisations - explaining how to deal with it correctly, avoid its downsides, and benefit from it in the best ways.
>
> *-Student, Saudi Arabia, 21*

Students asked education leaders to update what is taught and tested

> The world is already using AI – why are schools afraid to acknowledge this? The design of education systems is not set up for this, and it is limiting us.
>
> *-Student, Australia, 36*

> Stop focusing on banning or policing AI use, and start redesigning assessment and tasks for a world where AI is a co-worker.
>
> *-Student, Pakistan, 16*

> Stop teaching people to memorise answers, and start teaching them how to ask the right questions.
>
> *-Student, Singapore, 11*

> Teach how to ask the right questions rather than memorise the answers: the future is not about competing with AI on speed, but surpassing it in empathy and intuition.
>
> *-Student, Italy, 14*

> AI has taught me more than any class this year.
>
> *-Student, United States, 16*

> Please prepare your children for 2040.
>
> *-Student, India, 14*





Students asked education systems to better recognise the importance of building human skills

> AI can generate information instantly. What it can't replace is a human who knows which questions to ask, when to trust the output, and what actually matters. The most future-proof skill isn't coding or prompting – it's critical thinking under uncertainty.
>
> *-Student, Italy, 18*

> Stop training people to be second-rate computers. Start training them to be first-rate humans.
>
> *-Student, Pakistan, 12*

> Teach students how to effectively prompt, evaluate, and partner with AI tools as cognitive co-pilots, rather than viewing them as replacements.
>
> *-Student, Singapore, 14*

> Don't teach people to compete with AI – teach them to work with AI. Some human skills, like creativity, emotions and curiosity, can't be replaced by AI.
>
> *-Student, India, 13*

> Instead of just treating AI as a shortcut for quick answers, schools should teach us how to use it as a brainstorming partner. We need to learn how to use these tools to challenge our ideas, check our work, and push our creative projects further.
>
> *-Student, Philippines, 14*

> AI is a new revolution. Used well – for example, making tests to gauge your level – it's great. But what it cannot do is think for you and do the work.
>
> *-Student, Spain, 16*

> In every subject there should be a moment for using AI – and they should use it responsibly.
>
> *-Student, Argentina, 14*

> Teach students how to think critically, solve problems creatively, and connect with people deeply – these human skills will always matter more than any tool.
>
> *-Student, Philippines, 13*

Students also shared warnings and negative reaction to AI

> For me AI is not a helpful service, because it contributes to the decline of human thinking – by asking it questions it solves our problems instantly. It's better to think with your own head than to skip over difficulties with AI.
>
> *-Student, Italy, 17*

> Please stop using AI – our planet is dying and we are actively in water bankruptcy. This is not a tool we need and is not at all vital to education. It's killing our planet and our brains.
>
> *-Student, United Kingdom, 16*

> I plan to become an artist or graphic designer, but some teachers actually prefer AI-generated work. I don't like that, because AI doesn't need much effort to make an image. Please regulate it more wisely and don't keep telling students to use AI for things that humans should do.
>
> *-Student, Indonesia, 15*

> May the future not be driven by AI – may it be used as a tool and a last resort, not the first. Prioritise thinking and learning no matter how many mistakes you make, because making mistakes is part of learning.
>
> *-Student, Argentina, 14*

> AI isn't teaching us – it is making us lazy.
>
> *-Student, United Kingdom, 17*

> Be careful – don't make everyone's future rely on AI, or they won't have any social or communication skills whatsoever!
>
> *-Student, Australia, 11*

> AI is growing fast, and it's scary to think about jobs changing or being replaced – such as art. Instead of ignoring it, schools should teach students how to use AI responsibly, so we're prepared, not replaced.
>
> *-Student, United Kingdom, 16*



- Students in lower-resourced contexts called on their education system leaders to provide them with the essential digital infrastructure they will need to succeed future workplaces

> Provide computers, because we really need them – students break the keys, the computers freeze constantly and the internet doesn't work properly. We also need water; some days it's really hot and there's no water.
>
> *-Student, Brazil, 12*

> Improve public education, because we don't want to learn superficially – we want to leave school ready for the future, whatever we want to be.
>
> *-Student, Brazil, 12*

> I wish for decent teachers, proper rules, less pressure on students, better quality of education, and care for the environment and the students.
>
> *-Student, Saudi Arabia, 15*

> We want advanced AI technology in the classroom.
>
> *-Student, India, 14*

> Let people outside Java experience technology at the same standard as in Java, and give Indonesia a technology standard that can keep up with the global current. Indonesian children aren't stupid – they're smart – but they face limited facilities.
>
> *-Student, Indonesia, 13*

> I want to ask that AI be made free of charge, to make it easier for less well-off students to learn without worrying about ongoing costs.
>
> *-Student, Indonesia, 15*

- Students shared positive visions of AI and how it could help them in future

> AI depends on your prompt – so if you are wise, AI gives double your wisdom.
>
> *-Student, Pakistan, 11*

> Encourage students to test the limits of artificial intelligence.
>
> *-Student, Saudi Arabia, 19*

> Prepare the world for the young - we are the future of Brazil.
>
> *-Student, Brazil, 12*

> AI is a tool to be used, not a weapon to be feared.
>
> *-Student, United Kingdom, 15*

> AI is not the road – but it helps us walk the road more easily.
>
> *-Student, Singapore, 14*

05

HP Futures 2026 Council Findings

CONTENTS

Chapter 1:
Defining durable skills in the Age of Intelligent Machines **32 - 34**

Chapter 2:
How to build durable Future of Work skills in practice **35 - 42**

Chapter 3:
The durable skills assessment bottleneck and how to enact systems change **43 - 55**

Chapter 1:

Defining durable skills in the Age of Intelligent Machines

The HP Futures 2026 Council's initial discussions centred on what makes skills "durable" in an Age of Intelligent Machines, and whether education systems are currently equipping students with these skills.

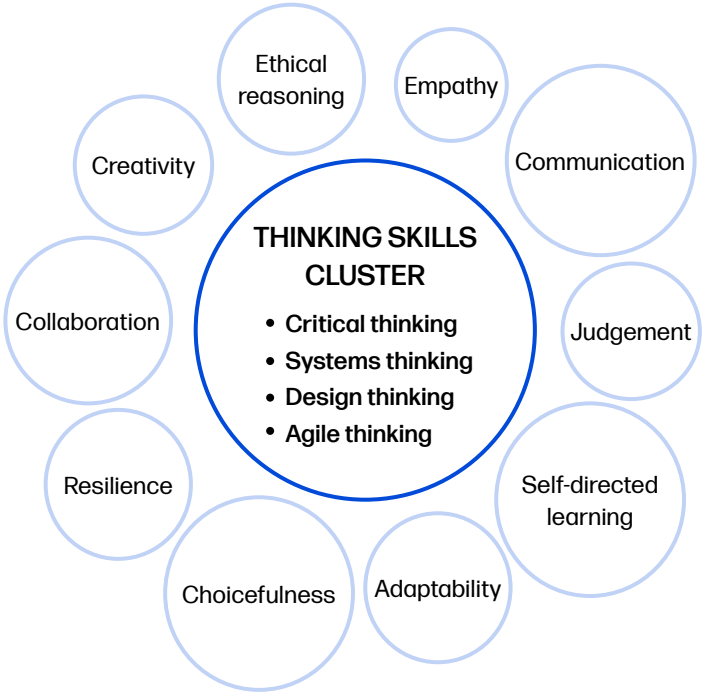
Throughout the Council's deliberations, there was strong alignment that **durable skills are fundamentally human and transferable,** and that they include skills such as **critical thinking, systems and design thinking, creativity, collaboration, empathy, adaptability and self-directed learning.**

Discussions also stressed the growing need to help students build a vital level of comfort with ambiguity and resilience, as the world of work they are entering is developing at pace, and **the idea of a "job for life" is gone in most contexts.** Overall, there was broad agreement that while many durable skills are widely recognised, **most education systems still do not adequately assess or reward these skills, meaning they are not consistently prioritised.**

The durable skills identified by the HP Futures 2026 Council

Across several sessions, Council Members identified a consistent set of durable skills that students will need as AI reshapes learning and work. These were: critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, communication, empathy, judgement, adaptability, resilience, ethical reasoning, choicefulness, self-directed learning, systems thinking, design thinking and agile thinking.

Council Members also identified a more specific **Thinking Skills Cluster,** comprising **critical thinking, systems thinking, design thinking and agile thinking,** and decided to recommend these in this report as the ultimate transferable capabilities to ensure all students are equipped with across education settings.



In-depth definitions:

- Council Members discussed **critical thinking** as the ability to question information, evaluate evidence, identify assumptions and make reasoned judgements.
- Council Members framed **creativity** as the ability to generate ideas, make connections, imagine alternatives and create original work.
- The Council explored how **collaboration and communication** are some of the most essential durable skills because most complex work will continue to require people to align around shared goals, resolve tension, listen to different perspectives and persuade others.

- **Judgement, ethical reasoning and empathy** were repeatedly raised by Council Members as essential durable skills for the future because AI can support decision-making, but cannot hold responsibility in the way employers require.

- **Adaptability and resilience** were discussed as both skills and mindsets. Council Members warned that students are entering a labour market in which careers are becoming less linear, technologies are changing more rapidly, and many traditional entry-level routes are being redefined. They discussed how, in that context, adaptability means more than reacting to change. Now, it means building the confidence to learn again and operate in unfamiliar settings, to recover from setbacks, and to make choices even when information is incomplete.

- Council Members also suggested **self-directed learning and reflection** as new durable skills that students need to hone. They discussed this in the context of the likelihood that today's students will need to learn, unlearn and relearn throughout their careers, rather than complete one phase of formal education and then rely on that preparation for decades while learning on the job. This reality therefore means that the ability to self-direct and self-start learning, continuous curiosity and learning agility will be essential to Future of Work readiness.

> Together, these durable skills as defined point to a broader conclusion: that as intelligent tools become more powerful, education systems must also become more deliberate about teaching, assessing and credentialising the capabilities that students will need to ensure they are used effectively and safely in future.

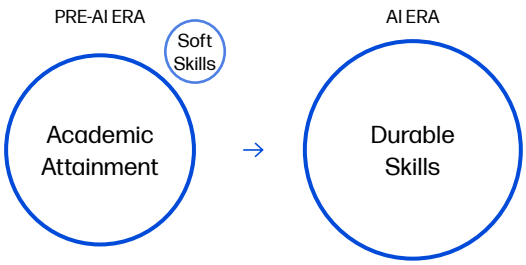


The human element as foundational: from “soft skills” to core education infrastructure

Council Members were clear that the phrase **“soft skills”** no longer captures the importance of the durable skills and capabilities identified above. The Council explored how, in many systems, using the term “soft skills” has contributed to the impression that vital human skills such as creativity, communication, collaboration, judgement and adaptability are **valuable but secondary,** which has historically seen their measurement sidelined in favour of measuring academic attainment alone.

The Council’s view was that this framing is no longer tenable. In an age where intelligent tools can produce essays, complete coding and create entire apps at previously inconceivable speed, so-called “soft skills” – including the ability to question, verify, contextualise, communicate and take responsibility under pressure – will now form part of the **core infrastructure of learning and work.**

As one Council Member noted, **it is still impossible to simulate with AI the true impact of five colleagues debating an issue, and human interaction and dialogue remains essential for effective multi-stakeholder decision-making.** Today’s students will need to have honed these skills and be ready to use them at a high level in tomorrow’s workplaces, where the pressure to deliver above what AI can offer will be enormous.



This is why HP Futures 2026 Council Members argued that **durable skills must move from the margins of the education ecosystem to its centre.** Education policymakers and leaders must now ensure that durable skills-building starts to be recognised as a foundational element in education, rather than as secondary “enrichment”. **The Council agreed to state in this report that, in the AI era, durable skills must be prioritised in curricula, and accompanied by clear pedagogy and trusted assessment and credentialising pathways.**



Chapter 2:

How to build durable Future of Work skills in practice

The HP Futures 2026 Council discussions moved from **"what are durable skills?"** to explore **"how do we build, sequence, assess and govern them in real systems?"**

Across the HP Futures 2026 Council discussions, Council Members repeatedly cautioned that **the world does not need another report simply listing durable skills,** but it does need one that can outline how education systems can stop leaving their development at the edge of the timetable.

The Council's discussions covered when to start teaching durable skills, the concept of AI Fluency, the idea of building a skills stack for the Age of Intelligent Machines, further recommendations and practical case studies.

How to approach building durable skills in practice

1 Start teaching durable skills early on

There was a clear view expressed in the Council's deliberations that teaching durable skills should ideally begin in childhood and early years education, as this helps students embed critical skills early on. As explored in HP Futures 2025, building these skills early on is also becoming ever-more crucial because AI is being embedded in education at a rapid pace, and students need to be able to think critically as they use these tools at younger ages.

> Nik Kafka, Founder and CEO of Teach A Man To Fish, said: **"When it comes to these durable skills, very often we leave it far too late to start working on them."**

Case Study:

Brazil: Instituto Escolas Criativas on building future skills alongside foundational learning in the early years

Instituto Escolas Criativas is a **Brazilian non-profit organisation** working with education departments to create the conditions for more meaningful learning.

The Institute works through Creative Learning, an approach that encourages students **to explore, investigate, create, play, collaborate and reflect.** In practice, students are asked to **draw out rather than merely receive information** through asking questions, building projects, testing ideas, expressing themselves and learning with others.

It is a case study in how forward-thinking models are already proving that **durable skills can be built from an early age through foundational learning** when teaching is designed around creativity, agency, belonging and real-world meaning. Escolas Criativas' success in Brazil's public education system also shows that it is possible for large public systems to deliver foundational learning that embeds durable skills. This is not skills-building that remains the preserve of the privileged few.

In 2024, Instituto Escolas Criativas **reached more than 1 million students, 58,637 teachers, 2,505 schools and 16 public school systems** across Brazil. Its impact evidence suggests **stronger engagement and gains in foundational academic outcomes, including mathematics.**

The Institute's key argument is that **these skills should not be postponed until secondary school, higher education or work.** They can and should be cultivated from the early years through well-designed learning experiences that are aligned with the curriculum and rooted in the everyday life of public schools.

» Read more about the skills-building successes seen in Brazil in the Case Study section.

2 Support students to hone adaptability as a mindset



A recurring theme in the Council's early conversations was the need to build students' adaptability and tolerance for uncertainty. Council Members stressed that adaptability must be nurtured as a mindset, rather than treated only as an employability skill.

To do this, Council Members explored how students need to garner repeated experiences that help them feel capable of adapting. For example, Council Members recommended giving students unfamiliar problems, and allowing them to try, fail, receive feedback and try again. This is vital, because through working with peers, responding to ambiguity, testing ideas in public and learning from complexity, students can learn to build the adaptability that will be crucial to their success in future workplaces.

3 Support students to develop "choicefulness" and accountability

Another key concept that emerged from the Council's early discussions was that accountability and "choicefulness" are also increasingly becoming critical durable skills.

The Council defined and recognised choicefulness as an emerging skill against the backdrop of a new reality that will see students need to make conscious, responsible choices about when to use AI, when not to use it, and how to take ownership of AI-supported work.

For example, to hone this capability, Council Members recommended that students learn to ask what purpose AI is serving in a task, what they should think through before involving a tool, what kind of help they are asking for, how they will verify the output, where their own judgement enters, and when they should ignore AI.

The Council explored how this ability, combined with the presence of character and mind to remain accountable, will become increasingly important in future workplaces. Graduates will need to explain what they produced and how they retained human responsibility.

> As Council Member Alper Utku, Founder and President of Amsterdam Tech, put it: **"When the Industrial Revolution took away the physical jobs through the machines, the result of the Industrial Revolution was obesity. Now we have the cognitive jobs taken away from us, and I think there's the danger of mental obesity ahead of us. The question is: how do we develop people who will not be obese in that sense?"**

4 Build out and prioritise project-based and real-world learning experiences

Council Members agreed that project-based and real-world learning are some of the clearest and most evidenced routes to building durable skills, particularly when they connect classroom learning to real-world contexts.

Council Members shared examples of this working in action, including students working on clean water challenges, collaborating in teams, solving conflicts and learning leadership through the process. Council Members shared how drawing in students' passion projects can also help build agency and durable skills. The Council referenced the US' pioneering Alpha School, where students combine academic work with entrepreneurial **"Alpha X"** projects (see below), as well as examples of children using AI tools to support independent creative projects.

Case Study:

Alpha School: A case study in complete curriculum overhaul leading to durable skills-building

Alpha School is a private, K-12 school network in the US operating over a dozen campuses and a remote programme. It uses a **"2 Hour Learning"** model where AI tutors handle academic instruction in core subjects, while human "guides" mentor students. The remainder of the day focuses on creative projects and building life skills – the future-proofing qualities we are calling durable skills in this report.

At Alpha School, every student works on a passion project through the Alpha X programme alongside their other work. This programme sees students build durable skills before they are evaluated in a gamified way. Students are given feedback and supported through processing this, and give a TED talk on their passion project.



5 Flip the classroom to engage students

Council Member Boris Walbaum is co-founder and President of Forward College, a European higher education institution founded in 2021. Forward College is an innovative institution that operates campuses in Lisbon, Paris, and Berlin, with students spending one academic year at each campus during their studies.

Walbaum shared the university's novel **"Flip the Classroom"** approach with the Council, and recommended it as a model to emulate, because it costs very little to implement and is proving effective.



Case Study:

Forward College: An actionable "Flip the Classroom" case study

Forward College has been experimenting with approaches that combine flipped learning, personal development, project-based learning and explicit skills assessment.

Forward College students prepare autonomously, including with AI, while class time focuses on practice, discussion, feedback and human interaction. This approach aims to preserve the classroom as a "moment of truth" – a place where educators see what students understand, how they interact with others, and how they apply knowledge without over-reliance on technology.

The university also runs a personal development programme that targets building social intelligence in year one, emotional intelligence in year two and practical intelligence in year three. Students receive feedback from peers and teachers on their durable skills, and use that feedback to understand strengths and areas for development.

How it works:

Every year, students complete a 360-degree assessment of what Forward College calls "deep skills": cognitive, social, emotional and practical capabilities. They gather feedback from peers and teachers, receive a profile of their relative strengths, and take part in one-to-one debriefs to make sense of the results.

Students then create an individual development plan, choosing one or two skills to focus on and identifying what success would look like, how they will improve, and where they can practice the skill in school or real life. The emphasis is not on ranking students against each other, but on helping them understand their own developmental profile.

> Boris Walbaum, co-founder and President of Forward College, told the Council: **"Flipping the classroom is about developing self-directed learning... When you flip the classroom, the classroom is the moment where you actually practice with the students, most of the time without technology. So, that's the "moment of truth" where you see what your students have learned. That's how you get social interaction, and it's how you nurture the appetite for learning, because that appetite results from social interactions."**

The university leader also explained that Forward College deliberately looks to hire and promote teachers with expertise in building these durable skills, and the ability to structure and design a course and connect with students. Forward College offers teachers mentoring, plus a two-day onboarding and a peer mentor for the questions that only come up in practice.

Forward College has found the model very effective both in terms of student skills-building and wider engagement – factors the Council agreed will be crucial for universities to deliver going forward. As Walbaum put it during the Council meeting, "durable skills can only be built in engaged classrooms".

Forward College lessons:

- **Flip the classroom to protect human learning:** AI can support preparation, while class time should prioritise interaction, practice and feedback
- **Treat engagement as a core challenge:** Future skills reform must nurture the appetite for learning, not only list competencies
- **Assess deep skills deliberately:** Social, emotional, cognitive and practical skills need structured feedback and development plans
- **Train educators as facilitators:** Teacher recruitment and onboarding should prioritise the ability to connect with students, not only subject expertise

6 Support students to learn to build their "trust stack"

The council explored how trust is now emerging as an additional critical durable skill in the age of Generative AI.

For example, Council Members highlighted that future professionals will be judged not only on outputs, but on how transparently they think, verify information, and take responsibility when using AI. The Council discussed the idea of a "trust stack" within portfolios, combining evidence of thinking processes, demonstrated AI literacy behaviours such as verification and bias checks, and clear traceability through disclosure and versioning.

AI Fluency and its role – including the "AI + X" approach

The HP Futures 2026 Council defined AI fluency as the ability to use AI inside real subjects, projects, disciplines and workplaces.

As a Council, members agreed to stress that AI fluency must be integrated across subjects and real contexts, rather than pursued and taught as an end in itself, or solely as a separate technical course. The Council summarised this view as taking an "AI + X" approach: education systems should help students learn how to use AI whilst simultaneously developing deep knowledge and expertise in a subject area, whether economics, communication, mathematics or anything else. Council Members discussed how taking this approach will help make students a lot more secure in future workplaces.

Case Study:

Arbor School Dubai: Creating a curriculum where durable skills building is embedded

Council Member Gemma Thornley, Principal of Arbor School in Dubai, described how her school manages to thread eco-literacy and durable skills-building throughout its curriculum while still working within the English National Curriculum.

The Arbor model took eight years of work to develop and hone – and helped the school win a prestigious World's Best School Prize – and is still evolving. It combines academic knowledge with real-world application, using ecological and environmental education as a lens for problem-solving, collaboration, reflection and global awareness. Thornley said the approach helps students build durable skills through activities such as applying scientific knowledge to design a sustainable solution in one of the school's biodomes, or engaging in systems thinking to understand interdependence.

The school is now working to map and evidence the skills students are already developing.



The Council also stressed that equity must remain central to the AI fluency conversation. Council Members agreed that it was important to state in this report that the conversation cannot only focus on well-resourced contexts, but must recognise contexts where governments are focused on basic education quality and school-feeding programmes rather than AI. The Council discussed how teacher-first and AI by intermediation strategies can be useful here, as explored in the case studies below. Several Council Members also suggested access to AI to build up fluency should be treated more like a public utility, alongside running water, electricity or internet connectivity.

Case Study:

Teach A Man To Fish: How to embed durable skills in low-resource settings

Nik Kafka is founder and CEO of award-winning London-based international NGO, Teach A Man To Fish. The NGO partners with low-resource primary and secondary schools worldwide to run project-based, experiential entrepreneurship education.

Teach A Man To Fish works with students to identify needs in their community and then to design a business idea around addressing these needs. The idea is that they then generate income through this business project, with students building both agency and wider durable skills along the way.

Kafka said the model has been proven to develop skills including problem-solving, communication, teamwork, resilience and creativity. In low-resource contexts this approach serves a perfect double function, engaging young people and bringing in resources. Crucially, students gain a huge amount of agency by being part of the solution rather than passive beneficiaries.

Recently, Teach A Man To Fish has been using AI to support the model through providing access to AI tools such as ChatGPT to teachers in low-resource settings. Each teacher then uses AI to give feedback on students' business plans, which means projects only need one AI tool and students do not need to have smartphones.

Kafka shared the case study as an example of how equitable AI-supported skills development does not always require direct access to expensive tools and licences for every student. Supporting teachers and using familiar channels can be a practical and low-cost first step.



The HP Futures Council's Skills Stack for the Age of Intelligent Machines

The Council's discussions pointed towards the idea of designing a practical skills stack for education systems.

The Council stressed that it is important to recognise that foundational knowledge still matters immensely. Despite advances in AI, having a strong knowledge base remains essential for interpretation, decision-making and critical engagement. Students must continue to build their foundational knowledge in order to judge the quality of what intelligent machines produce. This means that the base of any future skills stack has to be the foundational skills: literacy, numeracy, subject knowledge, social-emotional development and identity formation.

Then, students need to build those durable human skills on top of that foundation, including critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, communication, empathy, judgement, adaptability, resilience, ethical reasoning and self-directed learning. Then, across those sits the Thinking Skills Cluster identified above, comprising critical thinking, systems thinking, design thinking and agile thinking.

Finally, the applied enabling layer in the Thinking Skills Stack is AI Fluency in context. Council Members discussed whether AI fluency should sit "on top of" the human skills stack, cut across it, or be sequenced after students have built strong foundational capabilities. There was broad agreement that AI fluency cannot be separated from human skills such as reasoning, judgement, ethics, accountability and communication, and that it therefore sits inside the stack as an enabling layer.

At the top of the skills stack is accountable agency, as identified above. The ability to make choices, explain reasoning, verify outputs, take responsibility and continue learning over time will likely be the pivotal ability that enables students to retain jobs in the long term.

This vision of a Skills Stack does not require education systems to choose between knowledge and skills, or between AI fluency and human development. Instead, it posits that future readiness depends on all three elements: building strong foundations, honing durable skills, and building the AI fluency, accountability and trust layer on top to deliver responsible AI use.

Case Study:

HP: Employers are moving towards evidence-based judgement of capability

Technology sector and other fast-reacting employers are increasingly moving from task-based hiring towards evidence of reasoning, authenticity, applied AI use and human judgement. Against this backdrop, employers are saying they need education systems to prepare students to explain how they think and work, not only show what they produce – and, in the longer-term, to be able to show proof of their durable and AI skills through standardised qualifications.

For this report, senior HP recruitment leaders, Kymberly Flaigg and Martin Stier, shared how early-career work is already changing as AI becomes embedded into HP's everyday business processes.

For example, in the past, an intern might have been asked to consolidate data, improve a spreadsheet or complete a discrete administrative task. But now, in HP's AI-enabled workplace, the same intern may be expected to connect multiple data sources, build automated workflows, trigger next steps and anticipate risks.

HP has already identified three emerging categories of AI talent in its graduate recruitment pipeline:

- Specialist AI and machine learning experts
- Applied AI talent who can connect business processes and technology
- AI-fluent everyday users who can prompt, script, choose tools and work responsibly with AI in daily tasks.

The third category is the most relevant to education systems because not every student needs to become an AI engineer, while almost every student in an education setting today will need to become AI-fluent.

» Find out more about HP and employers' recruitment and skills-evaluation evolution in the Case Studies section.



Chapter 3:

The durable skills assessment bottleneck and how to enact systems change

Across the HP Futures 2026 Council discussions, Council Members repeatedly identified a lack of consistent and quantified assessment of durable skills as a major bottleneck to embedding their teaching in education systems around the world.

The Council discussed how skills like collaboration, judgement and sense-making are harder to assess than traditional subject knowledge, and argued that systems must find credible ways to assess these capabilities, or they will find it almost impossible to prioritise them consistently. If these skills are not assessed in a more uniform way in the near future, it will be very difficult for employers to benchmark these skills even as they become more important.

The Council discussed why this assessment bottleneck remains in place across education systems worldwide, and despite recent innovation in schools and universities to try to build and assess durable skills. They explored how, even where schools have found methods such as work-based and project-based learning that develop these skills, even internally they are still struggling with how to assess them.

Council Members also pointed to the reality that governmental curriculum reform cycles can take many years, which is too slow for the pace of current technological change and the changing requirements this is creating for student accreditation.

The HP Futures 2025 report called for live policymaking, annual refresh cycles and principles-first AI implementation. The HP Futures 2026 council agreed that this approach needs to be extended towards durable skills-building, too. If AI-era work and learning are changing constantly, the systems assessing and credentialising the skills students will need in workplaces of the future cannot be updated every few years. Council Members stressed that action must be taken now.

Potential solutions identified, and which Council Members called on policymakers and education institution leaders to explore, included:

- **All education policymakers and leaders should view building durable skills as a pillar to underpin curriculum architecture, rather than seeing them merely as optional enrichment.**

  Council Members discussed how this architecture needs to include a clear skills framework, curriculum time, teacher professional development, real-world practice, feedback loops, reflection, assessment, credentials or portfolios, employer, university or community links, and student voice.

  The Council also discussed how, without architecture and clear assessment criteria, building durable skills will remain dependent on individual teachers, short-term pilots or isolated enrichment programmes.

Case Study:

Minerva Baccalaureate: Accelerating systemic change through a skills-based secondary model

Council Member Alison Tanker is Managing Director, International, at Minerva Baccalaureate, an innovative secondary school programme that teaches students essential skills across disciplines. The MBacc integrates with existing curricula and aims to set students up with skills they need for university and beyond.

Drawing on years of work implementing project-based learning, entrepreneurship courses and skills-based education across schools, Tanker described a recurring structural challenge: institutions recognise the importance of durable skills, but struggle to move them from isolated modules into the core architecture of their systems.

Minerva Baccalaureate is a successful example of how schools can trial what more systemic change to building a curriculum around durable skills could look like, while operating within existing requirements and norms. The MBacc model is built around a skills taxonomy, assessment focused on transfer, and instructional development that helps teachers root their own practice in those capabilities. Schools in contexts including South Korea and Kazakhstan are now integrating the model while continuing to meet their national system requirements.

As Tanker told the Council, this type of change is essential, because schools cannot continue to offer "a little bit of critical thinking over here, an entrepreneurship class there" if they want to create the structure that will allow students to build and evidence durable skills.



Case Study:

Franklin School: A real-life example of rebuilding an education model around explicit skills development

Will Campbell is Founding Head of Franklin School in New Jersey, USA. The school embeds applied, project-based learning across its curriculum, helping students develop practical skills in areas such as systems thinking, entrepreneurship, technology, collaboration and creative problem-solving.

Campbell personally devised and led on the school's unique curriculum, and was heavily influenced by the World Economic Forum's Global Skills Taxonomy – a framework Campbell believes far too few educators know, and one he argues should be a foundational starting point for students at a young age.

» Find out more about the WEF's framework in the box on page 45.

How it works:

Franklin's key structural move was to separate the skills curriculum from core subjects. For example, essay writing is taught in the skills curriculum, leaving English teachers free to make their lessons deeper and more engaging, as students arrive with this element prepared. Franklin students receive **100 minutes per week** of dedicated skills development, led by subject specialists, in a space deliberately free of grading consequences, so they can practice, fail and try again without their grade average and university application paying the price.

Skills are then embedded within disciplines students care about, to considerable effect. Campbell recounted that when data analysis was taught through NBA basketball and climate change, critical-thinking outcomes across data-analytical subject areas **rose from 4.5 to 8 out of 12 – a near-80% gain**, and the model Franklin is built on.

Franklin also built industry micro-courses to complement this setup. These are **10-to-12-week** courses taught by industry professionals or highly experienced educators, designed to give students lived experience of professional environments, including professional pressure, rejection and networking.

Next, the programme includes **Capstone 450**, which sees students identify real-world problems, network with professionals – including CEOs and government officials – and present their findings in a professional setting, mirroring a pitch in a business meeting. An annual community showcase then invites experts and community members to challenge students to justify their research.

Notably, to ensure educators also benefit from the school's setup, Franklin runs an extensive year-long onboarding and professional development programme, and encourages teachers to pursue their own crafts so that they are able to genuinely model what Campbell calls an "insatiable love of learning".

The Council highlighted Franklin as living proof of one of this report's central findings: that durable skills are only built when they are given deliberate space and prioritisation in the curriculum, supported by expert teaching.

» **Find out more detail on Franklin's model in the Case Studies section.**





What is the World Economic Forum's Global Skills Taxonomy?

The World Economic Forum's **Global Skills Taxonomy** provides a common language for identifying, comparing and tracking the capabilities people need in a changing labour market. Rather than replacing national, employer or education-sector frameworks, the Forum describes it as a "universal adapter" that allows different skills systems to map against one another. This can help employers, governments and education providers align curricula, training, recruitment and workforce planning around a shared understanding of skills.

The taxonomy organises **93 skills** within two overarching areas: skills, knowledge and abilities, and attitudes. These extend across cognitive capabilities, management, technology, engagement and physical abilities, as well as self-efficacy, working with others and ethical or socially responsible attitudes. The framework includes technical capabilities such as AI and big data, cybersecurity and technological literacy alongside analytical thinking, creativity, resilience, curiosity, leadership, empathy and environmental stewardship.

The framework's main value lies in making broad concepts such as "future skills" – what we are terming "durable skills in this report" more precise. It gives education systems and employers a basis for defining learning outcomes, identifying skills gaps and designing more responsive training and assessment.

- **The concept of building up decentralised systems, where schools and districts have room to interpret curricula and build local links with employers and communities, to help form part of a solution to this issue.**

  Council Members made this recommendation after discussing how curriculum reform cycles in many systems can take six to 10 years, while AI and labour market expectations are changing much faster. They argued that more decentralised systems, where districts and school leaders can interpret curricula, adapt teaching materials and build links with employers and communities, may be better placed to respond.

> Council Member Ricardo Phillips, Director General of Universidad Insurgentes, said: **"Policymakers are way, way behind all this... Policymakers are more confused than ever on what they should do with this... We're still running curriculum designs that were based in the 1950s, and we just get creative to figure out how to get around them."**

- **The potential for education systems/leaders to rely on stakeholders such as private accreditors and employers rather than government policy to help more rapidly adopt durable skills-building programming and assessment processes.**

  Council Members discussed whether **governments are currently equipped to keep pace with AI's impact on education and work.** They shared concerns that **policy, funding and curriculum systems are often moving too slowly,** and that schools may need other levers to support faster change, including **leaning on accreditors or employers as an alternative route to faster systems upgrades.**

  New qualifications are emerging, as explored in the OxfordAQA case study below. Meanwhile, the Council discussed how working with employers and industry is more tricky and **"no magic wand",** but can lead to results.

  The Council agreed to recommend that **education leaders build the education-employer bridge deliberately through co-designed assessment, credentials, internships, work experience at scale and aggregated expert access, while keeping educational purpose in educators' hands.**

  The Council's strongest example for achieving this at a national level was seen in **Indonesia,** where **students earn academic credit for up to a full semester of structured industry, social and entrepreneurial experience,** supported by a **matching fund that made employers co-creators of education rather than critics of it.**

» See the Indonesia case study below.

Case Study:

The Oxford AQA International GCSE Global Skills Projects: Pioneering new non-exam qualifications built around future skills

Awarding bodies are starting to launch new qualifications built around honing the durable skills that will be essential in workplaces of the future.

For example, OxfordAQA has launched the International GCSE Global Skills Projects, a standalone qualification that teaches real-world capabilities like research, planning and sustainability. The course carries the same recommended teaching time as a full GCSE, with **120-140 guided learning hours,** but rather than taking exams, students complete project-based assignments to build future-ready skills.

Introduced for first teaching **in September 2025,** it is designed to develop the skills students need for further study, employment and life. Students investigate a subject connected to their studies or personal interests and produce either a research report of around **2,500 words** or an artefact accompanied by a shorter research report. They also complete a collaborative sustainability action project. Schools mark both components, with OxfordAQA providing external moderation.

The qualification, developed alongside education company **8billionideas,** aims to act as a stepping stone to higher education qualifications like the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ). Drawing on its Critical Curriculum, 8billionideas has produced classroom resources connected to areas including entrepreneurship, careers, financial literacy, leadership, sustainability and technology. These themes can provide contexts through which students practice the qualification's underlying research and project skills.

How schools can work effectively with businesses and industry: Advice from the experts

- Council Member Ronit Avni is a Canadian entrepreneur and founder and CEO of Localized, a company that connects learners and organisations with global employers and helps them build future-focused skills. Avni shared how the impact of industry experts working with students to build skills compounds, and shared an example of how an expert in sustainable cities at PwC spoke about careers in his field at a Localized session. Two years later, the expert messaged Avni to say PwC had just recruited a young Lebanese former student onto his exact team, who told him he had learned that consulting careers existed from that session.

  Avni's advice for anyone building employer links to help students build skills fast is to embed sessions in mandatory classes, or to aggregate across a consortium.

- Council Member David Harkin is CEO of 8billionideas, an award-winning UK-based education company that partners with schools and governments in over **25 countries** to empower students with future-focused life skills.

  He shared three points of advice for any education institution leader looking to partner with industry:

> You can be an entrepreneur, but it doesn't mean you can teach entrepreneurship.

> Businesses getting involved is fantastic, but some businesses don't know how to interact with students.

> Governments lean on big businesses for advice and support, yet the rise of the micro-economy means students in our schools today are more likely to work in businesses of under ten employees, and that's a very different skill set than being in a huge corporation.

> Council Member Boris Walbaum, co-founder and CEO of innovative university Forward College, said: **"It won't hurt to partner with businesses to build skills, but businesses are also short-sighted, and they don't have the long-term ROI that we should have in education."**



Case Study:

Indonesia: Linking higher education to work without abandoning purpose

Iwan Syahril, Senior Advisor, The Global Institute, and former Director General in Indonesia's education ministry, described a national programme that sent university students into companies, NGOs, government institutions and other organisations for structured real-world learning.

Students received supervision, curriculum support and academic credit. **More than 500,000 students** participated. Industry was invited to **co-develop curricula and teach inside universities, while a matching fund helped align industry investment with government support.**

This case study is a clear example of how governments can work to support students to succeed in future workplaces through giving academic credit for structured real-world experience and incentivising industry to co-create learning, while retaining a broader public purpose for education.

» Find out more detail about the Indonesian approach in the Case Studies section.

- **Both education institutions and employers moving to prioritise traceability in their own assessments and systems.**The Council discussed how, in education, traceability can act as **both a safeguard against cheating through using AI and as a learning tool in itself.**

  Embedding traceability processes can help **students understand their own thinking, show educators where judgement entered the process, and give prospective employers evidence that a candidate can use AI responsibly.**

  HP's Madrid-based Education Ambassador & Consultant, José Luis Diez, shared a vision for how students today should be assessed **not only on outcomes, but also on their ability to explain their reasoning, validate AI outputs and decide when not to trust them.**

  > As he said: **"Traceability is not just a compliance requirement under the AI Act... It is a pedagogical principle."**

  The Council discussed ways in which schools and universities can improve their traceability, including asking students for portfolios of work over time. Council Members shared that they had found the strongest approaches **use multiple data points, feedback, coaching, reflection and authentic performance.** These ask students to **demonstrate growth, rather than rely only on performance at one fixed moment.**

  Council Members also recommended trying an increased focus on public presentations and viva-style assessment that are very hard to circumvent with AI. **Investing heavily in peer and mentor feedback** was also suggested as ways in which institutions can help students prove their workings and improve their durable skills at the same time.

Case Study:

Talisis, Mexico: Rebuilding higher education around AI, human skills and access

Mexican university group **Talisis** is an example of a university already attempting system-wide AI transformation.

The institution has trained thousands of teachers to use AI, signed an agreement for **25,000 OpenAI licences,** partnered with **Amazon Web Services,** and is now **embedding AI support into its learning management system. From September 2026, its project-based courses are expected to include AI teacher or coach support.** Talisis has also used AI to reduce course production costs and is exploring **more personalised, lower-cost learning pathways for middle- and lower-income students.**

Now, Talisis CEO, Dionisio Garza Sada, said the university is completely rebuilding its curriculum in a way that focuses on delivering the **"human skills"** and **"survival skills"** students need for the future, alongside AI expertise and courses.

» Read more about Talisis and its work in the Case Studies section.

Case Study:

Amsterdam Tech: Reshaping around programmatic assessment for durable skills

Amsterdam Tech, the next-generation university in the Netherlands, offers a higher education example of **assessment reform in action.**

Learners gather **multiple forms of evidence** across their journey, including **assignments, feedback, reflections and evidence of applied skill.** Feedback is central to the process, with students working with coaches to understand what they have demonstrated and what still needs to be evidenced.

In the Netherlands, regulators give higher education providers room for innovation, and Amsterdam Tech has used that space to develop what it calls programmatic assessment. Now, the university uses this approach instead of traditional exams. This means the institution gathers evidence for skills in different ways – **low-stake, medium-stake and high-stake data points** – instead of relying on exams, grades and attendance measurements. Feedback is central to the process, with students working with coaches to understand what they have demonstrated and what still needs to be evidenced. **There are no fixed assessment dates;** the student has the freedom to showcase the skill within the programme, and **once they have shown everything, they graduate.**

Amsterdam Tech has already had great success with this approach. The university's Founder and President, Alper Utku, said that all its recent graduates are **"placed and working in amazing jobs".**

> Alper Utku, Founder and President of Amsterdam Tech, said: **"The hidden benefit of this model is it gives a lot of accountability to the learner. That is actually what we want – accountability is the hidden skill that we all want to develop. The secret lies in the design.**
>
> **"[Around the world] regulators should give more space to providers for innovation and development, rather than us waiting for the regulators to innovate for us."**

- **Education systems from K-12 through to higher education working more directly with employers to ensure students are equipped with the durable skills future workplaces will require.** Council Members discussed examples of employer-linked challenges where students can use AI, such as the Springpod partnership with Jaguar Landrover which offered students from across contexts complete virtual work experience with the car-maker, and saw students assessed purely on whether they meet the intended outcomes.

Case Study:

Springpod: Work-based learning at scale

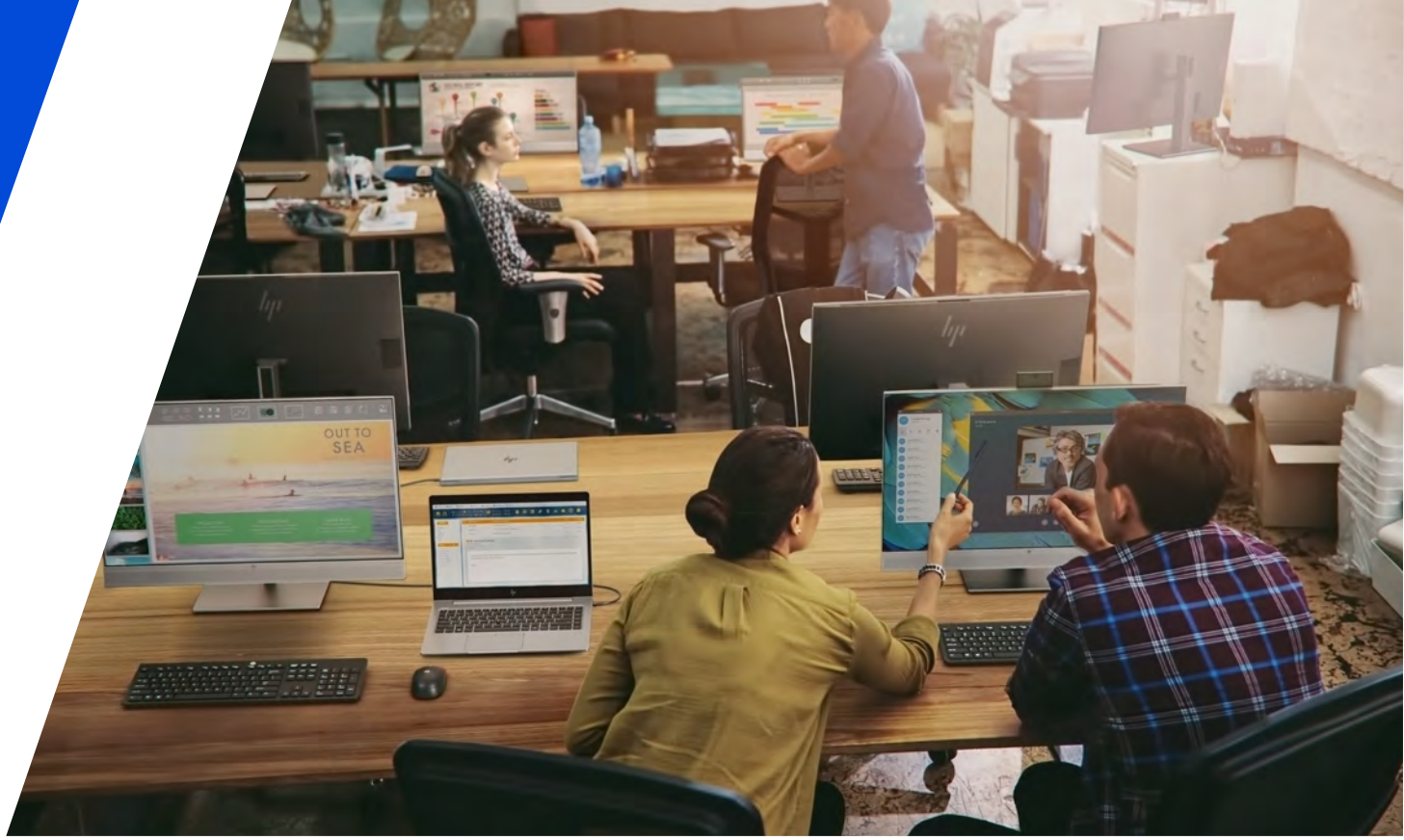
Springpod is a platform offering virtual work experience to students across contexts, giving students the chance to access employment experiences and demonstrate durable skills in action.

Its programmes allow students to engage with employer-designed tasks, virtual work experience, career readiness modules and micro-internships. Employers include **major companies across sectors,** and the model is free to students because employers fund participation.

Company co-founder, Sam Hyams, says that the model helps students build evidence of capability and gain exposure to employers they may otherwise never encounter.

» Read more about Springpod, its work and research in the Case Study section.





Case Study:

JA Worldwide: Entrepreneurship as durable-skills practice

The US-headquartered JA Worldwide gives students structured opportunities to build ventures, test ideas, work in teams and learn from failure. Through this model, it builds self-efficacy and other durable skills at crucial moments in students' lives.

The JA Company Program is an immersive entrepreneurship experience for students aged 15–25, usually lasting **12–20 weeks. More than 450,000 young people participate each year.** Students create companies, build business concepts, finance ventures, market products or services and assess profitability.

Council Member Caroline Jenner, COO at JA Worldwide, shared that in the last five years, around **75,000 young people** have earned the Entrepreneurial Skills Pass created by JA Europe. Jenner said that when JA goes back to those students later, it finds they get jobs faster, and that the credential helps them get into universities, especially those with business studies programmes looking for applicants who can prove enterprise experience.

» Read more about JA Worldwide and its impact in the Case Study section.

- **Higher education systems changing their own credentialising and assessment criteria for applicants.** The Council raised the issue that higher education pathways may actually be constraining innovation around durable skills and AI Fluency earlier in the system. For example, Council Members discussed how schools may want to innovate, but remain constrained by the fact that students are often still being prepared for traditional university admissions and tertiary education pathways. This can limit how far schools can move towards more creative, skills-based or AI-integrated models.

  Council Members explored how **universities therefore have a major role to play,** and can accelerate change by r**ecognising durable skills in future applicants,** from **portfolios and project evidence to holding in-person interviews, requiring interdisciplinary work, AI accountability and wider non-exam credentials.**

The importance of centring educators in the building durable skills discussion

Council Members stressed that teachers and lecturers remain central to whether any of the durable skills teaching and assessment explored in this report can work in practice.

The Council discussed how educators need **support, training, clear policy guidance, practical tools and appropriate assessment frameworks** if they are expected to help students build the skills needed for tomorrow's workplaces.

This view echoes the **HP Futures 2025 report** focus, which emphasised the importance of securing teacher buy-in for any AI implementation and tooling roll-out. The Council explored how, as AI takes on more routine support, teachers and lecturers will increasingly act as **coaches, mentors, facilitators, designers of learning environments and assessors** of whether or not students are building essential durable skills.

Council Members agreed to state in the report that education leaders and policymakers should deliver AI fluency training to educators before large-scale student rollout, and ensure that systems work with teachers to ensure they are comfortable with any assessment reform.

Case Study:

SER Network: A case study in how training teachers first pays off

Council Member Yael Karakowsky shared an example of this teacher-centred approach working in action.

Karakowsky is Chief Executive Officer at the SER Network of 27 schools, **all working with underserved and underprivileged communities in Mexico, with operating budgets too low to invest heavily in AI.**

The leader explained how her network decided to focus **first on upskilling teachers,** offering weekly professional development on how to use AI tools, and on how to build their own durable skills. For example, teachers were trained in how to teach **responsible, ethical and smart use of AI,** including **critical thinking, how to ask questions in the right way, and how to look out for information.** Karakowsky said she took this approach **"so that teachers don't feel neglected, and see this as a tool that enables and helps them perform their jobs, and don't feel threatened".**

Karakowsky said SER made the strategic decision to prioritise training teachers because every child will encounter AI tools somewhere in their lives, so teachers must also be equipped. SER schools are now piloting an AI tutor to work one-on-one on the achievement gap, a project made possible by a young entrepreneur who offered to fund the tool himself. The CEO said this is a positive example of how industry can step in to support low-resourced schools to help students build durable skills that will help them in the Future of Work, and could be replicated in other settings.



Case Study:

Universidad Insurgentes: A case study in how to bring teachers on board with systemic change

Ricardo Phillips is Director General of Universidad Insurgentes, which operates **more than 20 campuses in Mexico.** Phillips explained how teachers at his university are trained through joint ventures and credentialed with digital credentials. Today, nearly 100% of his teachers hold a third-party credential in advanced AI use, through partnerships with Google and Coursera. The university's teachers are also trained in ethics, and help measure the values and ethics of students from entry to exit, verified by third parties.

Furthermore, micro-credentials from Coursera are mixed into project-based classes – the university has one of the top completion rates on Coursera globally – and because it always asks third-party platforms for the data, tutor-teachers can see where each student is inside the credential and manage the relationship. **"It's got to be measurable,"** Phillips said. **"You need a digital badge from a third party."**

Phillips said this setup has proven effective **"because that's where the kids really put themselves forward".** The IFC reviews Universidad Insurgentes every year, and last year rated it best in its class for employability among first-generation student institutions in Mexico and the Americas.





Talisis and Instituto Escolas Criativas: Examples of teacher-first implementation

Both Talisis and Instituto Escolas Criativas are further examples of how to successfully support teachers to reform processes and embed durable skills at the centre of curricula and operations.

- Talisis has trained **7,000 teachers** to use AI as a pedagogical tool. Early attempts at conventional courses didn't work, but Garza Sada said the university's breakthrough came from cultivating teacher **"power users"**, who then feel confident using AI. The university management hopes this means teachers will be amenable to curriculum changes that will see them lead more intensely on building durable skills, while **offloading other elements of the curriculum to AI.**

- Instituto Escolas Criativas has invested heavily in professional development for educators, leaders and technical teams from day one, and its AI-related work with a third party gives teachers a safe space to explore tools, bias, ethics and classroom practice. This has led to success in bringing teachers on board with curriculum updates.

> Ricardo Phillips, Director General of Universidad Insurgentes, said: **"We put our kids in front of teachers seven, eight hours a day – they're the ones behind this. So what are we doing about them? How are we supporting them, how are we putting policy to them, how are we measuring them? At the end, it's people, with people, and people. And AI is a big enhancer."**

Council Members' messages to governments

We asked what our Council would say to governments, and the overwhelming response was to change the status quo urgently:

> Council Member Alison Tanker, Managing Director of International Programs at Minerva Baccalaureate, said: **"How dare we, as leaders in this space, continue to take our time when we are losing years of kids' lives trying to figure this out?"**

06

In-depth Case Studies

Building skills in practice around the globe

CONTENTS

Skills-building across Indonesia 58 - 61

Instituto Escolas Criativas, Brazil 62 - 65

Franklin School, USA 66 - 71

DQ Institute, Singapore 72 - 77

Springpod, UK 78 - 83

JA Worldwide 84 - 87

HP, Global 88 - 95

Arizona State University, USA 96 - 98

Talisis, Mexico 99 - 103

The Wattle Vision and Higher Education initiatives across Australia & New Zealand 104 - 113

Case Study:

Skills-building across Indonesia

Building digital access and durable skills in resource-constrained contexts

Overview

Iwan Syahril is Senior Advisor at The Global Institute, and a Former Director General of the Ministry of Education in Indonesia. The HP Futures 2025 report showcased a major digital transformation project Syahril helped lead in the country as an example of how a ministry can build the foundations for equitable AI and digital transformation by **investing in in-house public-sector technology capacity.**

Between 2019 and 2024, the Indonesian ministry overhauled its systems with an approach that **improved institutional memory, reduced vendor lock-in,** and deployed a major digital overhaul across **low-income and low-connectivity contexts.**

The approach involved building a **400-person in-house technology team** inside the education ministry, which allowed technology implementation decisions to be made **with policy goals in mind,** rather than treated as outsourced implementation after the strategy had already been written.

The approach proved successful. Based on research it commissioned, the ministry found **teachers felt less anxious using familiar phones than new devices.** Platforms were designed to **run on 2G and 3G, with content capped at 6MB/hour,** enabling access in remote regions. Adoption was **incentivised through product quality rather than compulsion,** and the new platforms' value soon spread through word of mouth. **By 2024, the initiative had reached more than 3 million teachers, with over 95% of schools using school report cards and budgeting tools.**

400	3M+	95%+	6MB/hr
In-house tech team members	Teachers reached	Schools using report cards and budgeting tools	Content cap for 2G/3G access

For the 2026 report, Syahril was asked what he believes education systems – particularly those operating in low-resource contexts – should do to help ensure students develop the durable skills that will help them succeed in workplaces of the future. He shared examples of initiatives that are working on the ground in Indonesian higher education settings today, and frameworks for policymakers to consider as they look at transforming skills-building.

"Start with the human question"

Syahril's central argument on future skills is that any policymaking in this area must start with the question: **"What kind of human beings do education systems want to create?"**

In his HP Futures 2026 interview, Syahril argued that countries need to think about human capital development through both the **individual lens** – the skills, values and capabilities young people need – and the **collective lens** of **"shared humanity".** In his view, regardless of whatever technology changes are occurring, education systems should always ask whether society is moving towards or away from that vision of shared humanity.



Iwan Syahril said: **"What kind of human beings do we want to create? At the individual level, I think this is the core question in terms of human capital development. Each system will have to answer this question.**

"The bigger picture is the collective vision of our society. To me, it's about our shared humanity. **Technology comes and goes,** and we can talk about different things at different times, but the question is always whether we are **making progress or regressing** in terms of realising our shared humanity... When we think about the Future of Work, the future of jobs, I think this should be our way to assess whether we are going in that direction or not, because **it's always a choice."**

A three-layer framework for durable skills and a "national development vision" for skills-building

Syahril also shared a three-layer framing for viewing durable skills and their development:

Foundational Skills: The core cognitive, emotional, and social capacities required for basic human functioning and all further learning. For example: literacy, numeracy, emotional regulation, and self-awareness.

Strategic Skills: The higher-order reasoning and adaptive capacities required to solve complex problems, make choices, and navigate ambiguity. For example: critical thinking, complex problem-solving, creativity, navigating complexity, ethical dilemma resolution, and social imagination.

Technical Skills: The contextual knowledge and operational fluency required to leverage specific tools and technologies. For example: AI fluency, digital literacy, data analysis, coding, financial modelling, digital content production, project-management methods, and sector-specific professional skills.

The transformation expert stressed that while the technical layer is urgent, it should not dominate the conversation, because building the foundational and strategic skills is "equally or even more important".

Syahril advised policymakers in LMICs to start with a clear national development vision, then build skills-building priorities for young people around this vision. **For example, in Indonesia, the country would succeed through prioritising skills-building in areas such as financial literacy, agriculture, entrepreneurial skills, green skills and community-based problem-solving.**

> Iwan Syahril said: **"Countries need to be strategic. They need to be clear about the vision of their national development, what they want to focus on, before they think about the strategy for human capital development."**

Why policymakers should invest in non-formal learning systems and "the pedagogy of unlearning"

Syahril also urged policymakers to invest in forming lifelong, non-formal learning systems to help people build and credentialise all three types of skill outlined above, and cited Singapore as a strong example of making progress in this area. The country has invested heavily in human capital, and offers structured ways to keep training.

> He said: **"We need to rethink education. It's not just about formal education, but the rise of non-formal education, because we need to continuously learn, unlearn and relearn lifelong."**

Syahril also suggested policymakers take another concept into account when forming their plans, which he termed the "pedagogy of unlearning".

Syahril said systems too often assume people can automatically move from old ways of working to new ones, but learning something new usually requires people to unlearn previous assumptions and habits. He used the education-based example of trying to move teachers away from teacher-centred to student-centred pedagogy. Even with strong research evidence, he said, educators may resist because the old method has worked for them in the past. Syahril argued that this is an example of why "unlearning" needs to be recognised, supported and given space in a future where students will be asked to switch roles and careers multiple times.

> He said: **"What is not covered a lot, but is super important in my experience, is what I call the pedagogy of unlearning... People assume that when we learn a new thing and migrate from the old thing, it's automatic. It's not. When we learn new things, most of the time it requires us to unlearn the previous understanding, assumptions or habits... To learn a new thing, to learn a new method, requires us to unlearn. This unlearning is not automatic, and we need to address this explicitly, acknowledge this, and give and hold space for this."**

Skills-building in action: Implementing a university work-study model in Indonesia

During his tenure in senior government leadership, Syahril and his ministry colleagues drove **system-wide reforms** to align education with the evolving world of work. A cornerstone of this collective effort was a **national higher education work-placement programme** designed to close the gap between academic theory and real-world application.

To help Indonesian students gain workplace and durable skills, the programme sends university students into **companies, NGOs, government institutions and other organisations for one to three semesters** as part of their courses. Students receive **up to 20 credits** towards their degrees per semester. The initiative also involved industry co-developing some curricula with universities, and industry experts teaching sessions inside universities. The programme has reached **more than 500,000 university students,** and has been a success.

Syahril explained how, to launch the programme, the education ministry created incentives, including a **matching fund** where industry and universities could collaborate on problem-solving projects. He said the programme had strong employer feedback, helped some students earn industry credentials, and data after three years showed participating students **found jobs faster after graduation and earned higher salaries.**

> He said: **"It is about minimising the gap, and building the interaction between students and their prospective employers. They are not guaranteed jobs in these companies or organisations, but they build relationships, they build networks, and they build these muscles and skills.**
>
> **"Critical thinking, communication skills, collaboration, creativity, problem-solving – these are the skills that we know we don't build inside classrooms. We build these skills in the real world."**

The implementation of the programme was not all easy, however. Syahril shared that **some lecturers felt the programme threatened their academic freedom** or displaced courses they had traditionally taught. In some cases, this led to students having to complete both their external work experience programme and additional exams in order to receive academic credit.

> **"Resistance was quite high from the lecturers because they feel like you are taking over their freedom, the courses that they used to teach," he said: "It's not easy. I think the hardest battle in education transformation is in higher education. K-12 education is not as hard a battle... Professors are a different kind of stakeholder."**

A three-layer framing for viewing durable skills and their development:

Foundational Skills: Literacy, numeracy, emotional regulation, self-awareness

Strategic Skills: Problem-solving, critical thinking, creativity, complexity navigation, social imagination

Technical Skills: AI fluency, digital literacy and emerging tools

Case Study:

Instituto Escolas Criativas, Brazil

Building foundational and durable skills for millions of early-years students

Overview

Instituto Escolas Criativas is a **Brazilian NGO** working with **over 1 million students** in public school systems across Brazil. The organisation supports education departments across the country to transform schools into more **hands-on and thought-provoking learning environments** where early-years students can learn durable skills. It aims to ensure teachers feel supported, and that learning is connected to students' interests, communities and real-life questions.

Launched as part of the **LEGO Foundation's Tech & Play with Technology initiative,** with support from the **Lifelong Kindergarten group at MIT Media Lab** and **Fundação Lemann,** Instituto Escolas Criativas went **independent in 2023** to expand its work with public school systems across Brazil.

Creative Learning: How Instituto Escolas Criativas works and its impact

The Institute works through **Creative Learning,** an educational approach that encourages early-years students to learn by exploring, investigating, creating, playing, collaborating and reflecting. In practice, this means that students are prompted to **ask questions, build projects, test ideas, express themselves and learn with others,** rather than being taught to receive information.

Instituto Escolas Criativas has also partnered with a third party to develop initiatives focused on **teacher professional development and digital competencies.** These initiatives aim to support teachers to adopt AI and digital programmes, and ensure Brazilian teachers feel **supported rather than marginalised** by using digital tools.

There are **"nine dimensions"** in every Escola Criativa (Creative School), including:

- Student belonging and agency
- Teacher practice
- Curriculum integration
- Professional development
- Community engagement
- Use of time and space
- Appropriation of technologies
- Reflection and monitoring
- Diversity, equity and inclusion

Together, these dimensions ensure that creativity and other durable skills are built into the ethos and overall running of a school.

> Rodrigo Rocha, head of external relations for Instituto Escolas Criativas, said: **"We believe durable skills should not be postponed until secondary school or higher education. They can and should be cultivated from the early years, through well-designed learning experiences that are aligned with the curriculum and rooted in the everyday life of public schools."**

Instituto Escolas Criativas has three strands:

It supports regional Brazilian Education Departments in building the structures needed for systemic change. These include helping to build public policies, guidelines, implementation strategies and to institutionalise good practices.

It invests in professional development for educators, school leaders and technical teams. This education helps schools design learning experiences that promote student agency, creativity, experimentation and peer exchange that reflect their contexts.

It strengthens school and community engagement through communities of practice, local multipliers, campaigns and recognition strategies. The idea is for Creative Learning to not remain an isolated classroom practice, but become part of a broader culture within the school system.

In 2024, the organisation reached over **1 million students** across **2,505 schools** and **16 public school systems** across Brazil, including **two state-level and 14 municipal systems.** An external impact assessment of its impact on these schools, carried out with the evaluation organisation **Germina,** found that the programme **contributed to stronger foundational learning and improved engagement outcomes.**

In 2024, the organisation reached over

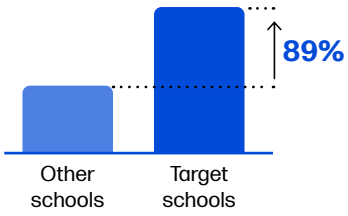
1 million
students

2,505
schools

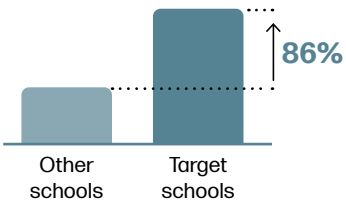
16 public school systems
two state-level and 14 municipal systems

Basic Education Development Index

+89%
in the early years of elementary education



+86%
in the final years of elementary education



It found that students in participating schools were **10.4% more engaged** in classes whose teachers reported being part of the programme. Target schools also showed an **89% increase** in the Basic Education Development Index in the early years of elementary education and an **86% increase** in the final years, compared to other schools in the same networks.

Notably, the programme added **5.4 points** to expected mathematics performance in the Brazilian national assessment system in the final years of elementary education – equivalent to **four months of learning recovery in mathematics** in one school year.

5.4 points
to expected mathematics performance

=

equivalent to
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of learning recovery in mathematics in one school year.

Recognising the importance of continued focus on foundational skills-building

Guilherme Cintra is Director of Innovation and Technology at Fundação Lemann, an early funder of Instituto Escolas Criativas and its work.

Cintra is proud of Instituto Escolas Criativas' achievements, and stressed the importance of its work building both foundational and durable skills in the early years.

> He said: **"Global conversations about AI, creativity, collaboration and future skills often focus on higher education or the labour market, but in many countries education systems are still working to secure foundational learning. Building durable skills capabilities must begin early alongside continued focus on building foundational skills to help children develop confidence as learners alongside foundational literacy and mathematics skills.**
>
> "Escolas Criativas is bridging that gap between foundational and creative skills [teaching]."

Caruaru, Pernambuco: A case study of teaching durable and foundational skills in action

Instituto Escolas Criativas shared an example of its model's success in Caruaru, in northeast Brazil.

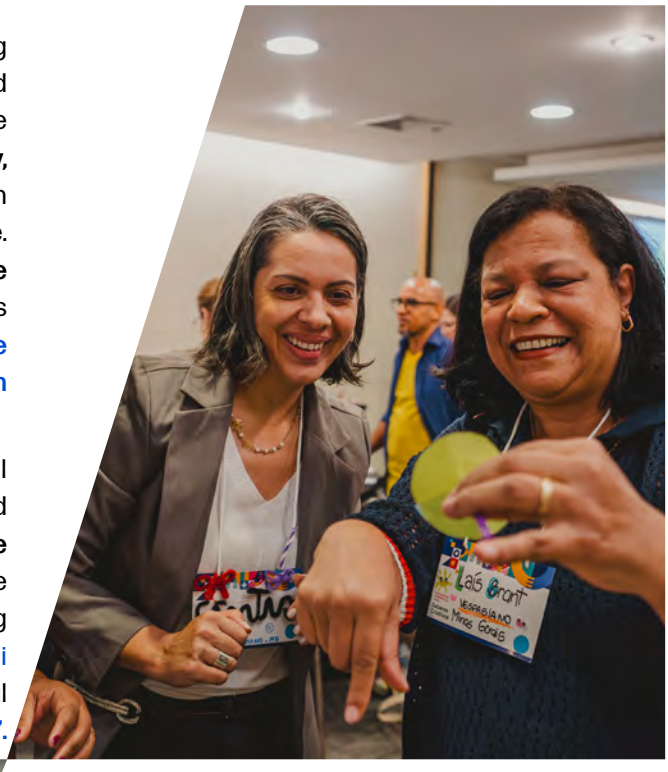
The region's municipal school system joined the Creative Schools programme in 2020, starting with five schools. By June 2023, the programme had expanded to 20 schools across mostly rural communities.

The municipality's technical team delivers programme training, monitors schools' **Creative Learning activity plans,** and runs **monthly training sessions.** Some sessions are for participating teachers, while others are for **"ambassadors"**, who are responsible for **passing learning on to colleagues in their own schools.** The approach proved successful: **Wellington Galindo,** a local pedagogical adviser, said teachers embraced the approach once they understood it, and have called it **"contagious"** and **"emotional".**



Caruaru school leaders and teachers are now using the Creative Learning model to help students build their **creativity, critical thinking and autonomy.** The model has been deployed in **reading, technology, mathematics and literacy projects,** and these often draw inspiration from the city's strong local culture. Rocha said the vast majority of these projects **combine technology and non-digital materials,** and teachers make sure to use technology as a tool **"to make students more active, autonomous and creative in the construction of their own learning".**

Students have worked with cordel poetry, a traditional form of popular rhymed poetry strongly associated with northeast Brazil. Students **learn rhyme, produce their own poems, review each other's work,** and create illustrations using **isogravura,** a low-cost printmaking technique using polystyrene. One teacher, Roseli Pennycook, said this practical production is essential because **"when [a child] produces, they will not forget".**





Students also engage in **Scratch programming,** a free programming language and online community where you can create your own interactive stories, games, and animations, and hands-on projects and school events such as **"Oxente Day".** Oxente Day is a vibrant, culturally rich school event in Brazil, and in Pernambuco it marks a large annual gathering themed around **"Ideias nascem de gente",** which translates in English as **"Ideas are born from people".**

The overall result has been that **students have become more autonomous and active in their learning, teachers feel more fulfilled, and families are becoming more engaged with schools.**

> Rocha said: **"The Caruaru case is especially interesting because it shows that innovation in education is not about importing a ready-made model. It is about helping each school system use its own culture, challenges and community strengths as material for learning."**

Rocha added that Caruaru has an important lesson to share on future skills reform, in that it shows **durable skills-building success when programmes are tailored to be culturally sensitive and engaged, and aligned with the day-to-day lives of both teachers and students.**

> One Escolas Criativas student said: **"Creative Learning awakens something better in us."**

Case Study:

Franklin School, USA

How to redesign an education model around building durable skills

Overview

Franklin School in Jersey City, USA, has devised a novel operating model principally oriented around building durable skills and workforce readiness alongside academic excellence.

The school has been running an explicit skills curriculum for over four years, with standalone weekly sessions, industry micro-courses taught by professionals, and a capstone programme that sends students out to work with CEOs, non-profits and government officials twice a week during their 12th Grade (the final year of K-12 education in the USA), before presenting, reflecting and iterating on their projects. As a result, Franklin students leave school with real-world experiences in working in industry, defending their ideas, and adapting to both feedback and new environments.

Notably, Franklin – which **won the prestigious World's Best School Prize for Innovation in 2025** – also extends its skills-building ethos to all its teachers. As school Founding Head Will Campbell put it in his interview for HP Futures 2026, Franklin's leadership has created space for personal development (PD) in every teacher's schedule in order to help teachers stay "at the leading edge on delivering, range and relevance".

As explored below, Franklin is living proof of one of this report's central findings: that durable skills can be actively built when they are given deliberate space and prioritisation in the curriculum, supported by expert teaching, with permission to fail.

The background: How the model was built

Campbell launched Franklin after working in both higher and K-12 education settings, and noticing over and over again that he was encountering students who had strong transcripts but struggled with ambiguity and critical thinking.

> "I had some genuinely, exceptionally talented students who simply could not operate in the ambiguous space at all," Campbell said. **"Everything had to be prescribed, everything had to be spelled out. What I was largely witnessing was students taught not to think, but to serve as knowledge sponges."**

Then Campbell discovered that, across both local and international results within the IB programme (a programme he had developed a great passion for), students were averaging roughly 6 out of 12 on the Critical Thinking criterion of the Extended Essay. They were, he realised, being assessed on competencies almost nobody had ever explicitly taught them. Some years later, Campbell resolved to design a school model that deliberately and explicitly taught critical thinking, alongside other durable skills, every single week, rather than leaving them to emerge merely as an incidental by-product or an optional extra.



He explained: **"We were guiding them through skills rather than genuinely teaching them through those skills. The more insidious problem was that we walked them through it and then graded them immediately, leaving the students no meaningful room in which to take risks. We all recognise the value of failure, yet no student will ever embrace failure when its consequence is automatically, unavoidably negative."**

In 2018, Campbell drew up an initial plan on his iPad for how a school designed around this principle could look – and Franklin School today almost exactly meets that vision.

In detail: The Franklin School model

The Skills Curriculum

- **Franklin separates the skills curriculum from core subjects. Students in Grades 9 and 10 receive 100 minutes per week of dedicated skills development across two timetabled periods, and taught in four-week modules by the school's teachers who are best equipped in each skill area.**

Crucially, the space is deliberately free of grading consequences, but comes with detailed feedback and a chance to learn and improve. This means students can practice, fail and try again without their transcript and university applications being affected.

Campbell said: **"The students actually get to sandbox, take risks, see the rubrics of assessments, and then actually be assessed on performance, knowing that they've already received detailed feedback."**

- **To set up its skills curriculum, Franklin's leadership, especially the Director of Curriculum and Science Department Lead, worked to identify skills that departments taught repeatedly, then agreed shared best practice, and moved the teaching of those skills into separate lessons. This gave subject teachers time back in their lessons, and had positive outcomes for student learning.**

Essay writing is a telling illustration of this principle at work. Campbell said: **"Franklin recognised that teachers typically devote four to five hours annually to teaching essay writing within subject lessons. Rather than duplicating that process across every subject, Franklin relocates it into its skills curriculum sessions, reclaiming that time from subject lessons and returning it to teachers. Those teachers can then deploy the recovered hours on transdisciplinary projects and Socratic seminars every three weeks rather than merely once a term."**

Industry micro-courses

Franklin has built **industry micro-courses** to sit around its skills curriculum.

These are 10-to-12-week courses taught by people in industry, or teachers with at least a decade of industry experience. Students' interests are mapped in Grade 9 and matched to exposure in Grade 10, giving the school nearly a year of lead time to build partnerships. The courses are designed to give students lived experience of professional environments, including professional pressure, rejection and networking.

Campbell is precise about what "industry" means here.

> He explains: **"Everyone invokes industry, and leaps straight to the job. Yet industry is the whole texture of nuance that inhabits your space every single day: ambiguity, communication skills, rejection, pressure, deadlines. That isn't subject material. That's the material of life, unfolding within your work."**

Franklin draws on its location to bring in experts ranging from financial advisers and executives at companies like Nike, to top doctors from Mount Sinai and magazine editors. The school also partners with GK, an organisation that trains presidential candidates and Fortune 500 executives to teach public speaking, to help its students develop those skills.

The school also helps build entrepreneurial skills from early on as part of supporting its Skills Curriculum. Franklin Student Ventures is a year-long entrepreneurship course held in the style of Shark Tank that draws on the school's parent community.



Capstone 450: Networking, reflection, iteration

To help students hone durable skills further, Franklin launched its **Capstone 450 initiative.**

The project sees students identify real-world problems, network with professionals for guidance – including chief executives and government officials – and present their findings in a professional setting that mirrors a pitch to a CEO.

Students are initially asked to approach a CEO, a non-profit or a government official with their idea and a request to act as a mentor. Next, they are required to ask that mentor to connect them with someone else. This setup deliberately challenges students to network.

Then, the project helps students develop presentation and feedback reception skills. On returning to the school building from their networking and planning sessions, students are guided through reflection sessions, asked to present their artefacts on a board and walk visitors through them like a CEO pitch, then reshape their plans based on feedback.

The year ends with a community showcase attended by more than 400 people, who walk Franklin's four floors challenging students to justify their research and prototypes. One student built a 3D jet model and invited visitors to criticise its angles and velocity.

> **"Capstone 450 trains students to become agile thinkers,"** Campbell said.

Trusting students to understand the complex reality of their Future of Work

The Franklin model is also underpinned by the idea that students can and should be trusted with more complex things earlier in their lives.

The school shares real job-market data with students, including the difficult narratives, and makes sure to frame their position around agility. As Campbell points out, most students don't start thinking about job opportunities until college, which puts them on the back foot.

Why Franklin offers teachers the same skills-development opportunities – and why it matters if you want this model to succeed

Campbell explained how Franklin's professional development mirrors its student offer, to ensure that educators feel as supported and nurtured as the young people they teach - and to ensure everyone is bought into the skills curriculum concept.

New faculty get a full year-long onboarding into the school's transdisciplinary approach, and every teacher has a second protected period to passionately pursue their own craft.

> **"We cultivate and model an insatiable love of learning in everything we do,"** Campbell said.

The principal contrasts this with the sector's norm: personal development that is enforced, not cyclical, and often delivered at the end of term when teachers are exhausted. The school receives huge numbers of applicants for every vacancy, and Campbell links this directly to this setup.

Looking forward: Can Franklin's model scale?

Campbell wanted this report to underscore that, while Franklin School has enjoyed considerable success as a private institution, scaling durable-skills architecture remains genuinely challenging, particularly within public systems, given the degree of control and regulation exercised by education departments, yet entirely achievable. Franklin, he added, would welcome the chance to partner with both public and private institutions in making that a reality.

In just **four years Franklin has grown to 200 students,** while Dwight's New York school, its more than 150-year-old sister institution of **1,100 students,** is also successfully running the micro-courses model, offering early evidence that **the design can scale beyond a single innovative school.**

However, Campbell recognises that the micro-course model leans on parent and industry networks that private New York and New Jersey-based schools like Franklin and Dwight have in abundance. **"This model would be really hard to replicate in disadvantaged communities, because they just don't have the parent network, and they don't have the industry network,"** he acknowledged.

This is precisely why, over the longer term, Campbell said, Franklin School intends to considerably broaden access to its model by making the curriculum available through a lower-cost online school, pitched at a more accessible price-point and named "Franklin Global Online."

> He said: **"Every student in the world has the right to education, and we think we have a framework that can get students prepared best for skill development application and to become the deepest thinkers possible.**
>
> **"We're working to cultivate thinkers, not knowledge-sponges, thinkers who will always be able to reason critically and analytically. If students possess these skills, then whatever the workplace comes to look like in future, they will be able to hold their own. We believe we've achieved this in a way that has students perpetually questioning and exploring every avenue. Our students become problem-solvers of their own environment, and we want to empower far more of them to build these skills."**

The four-year journey

About Franklin

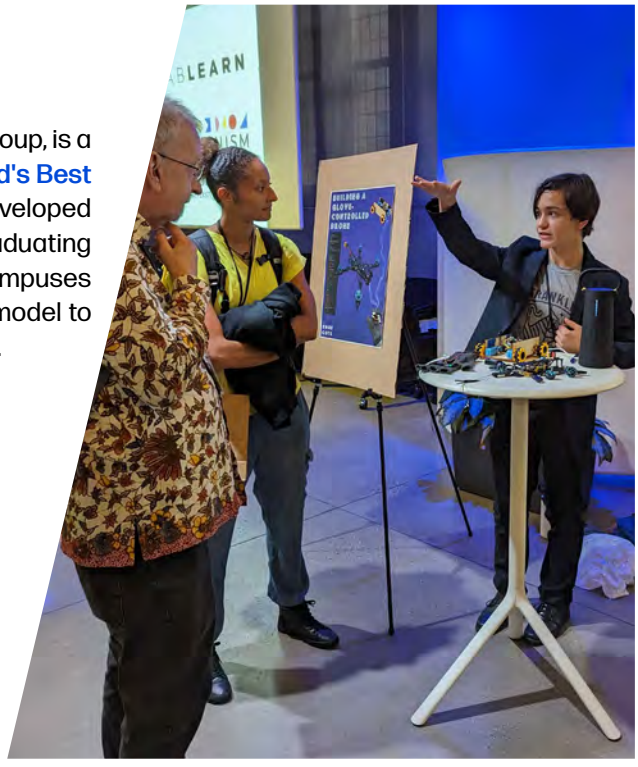
Franklin School Jersey City, part of the Franklin Schools group, is a private high school recognised by T4 Education as a **World's Best School for Innovation.** The Knowledge Systems were developed and validated at Jersey City through its inaugural graduating class and are now the blueprint for new Franklin campuses opening internationally from August 2027 – bringing the model to thousands of additional students across three continents.

Franklin School
Jersey City, USA

2027
New Franklin campuses begin opening internationally.

3 Continents
The model will reach thousands of additional students.

WORLD'S BEST SCHOOL PRIZES
Innovation



Key takeaways from the Franklin case study include:

- **Treat durable skills as architecture, not enrichment.** Give students dedicated curriculum time, assessment alignment, and public demonstration.
- **Give students explicit skills instruction and space to practice and fail before attaching any grades to their skills performance.**
- **Focus on helping students build systems thinking, adaptability, ways of knowing, perspective-taking and futures-thinking.**
- **Build and offer industry "micro-courses" to help prepare students to utilise work experience effectively,** rather than sending them into internships without preparation or clear outcome goals.
- **Invest in offering teachers professional and durable skills development,** too – a lasting and effective durable skills-building model depends on a shared language and teachers feeling valued and nurtured, too.

Supportive quotes from Franklin students:

> **I think the core aspects of transdisciplinary learning are co-creation, dimensional and open-minded thinking, and problem-solving. I mainly think it involves critically examining and questioning the understanding and extent of our knowledge to improve and then apply what we learn to help solve other problem spaces. My Capstone was one of the assignments that heavily required transdisciplinary learning principles because it required me to analyse a global problem and dissect all the flaws of it, argue why these specific qualities are wrong, and then introduce my own, plausible solution that could potentially solve this problem. Also, in order to do all of that, I need to utilise the knowledge that I already knew about these topics, do more research from different perspectives to deepen my understanding, and then use this knowledge from all these different sources to aid in my critical thinking and analysis skills. During Skills we do more than systems maps and analysis of problems. We learn to integrate collaboration, public speaking, and deep analysis of problems that we will eventually see in our lives. The class allows us to question things, stay on our toes, and learn how we can affect situations for the better.**
>
> *-Student 1*

> **In skills, we use a lot of agency and communication when doing group projects. It's very important that during class time we have tons of agency to be able to navigate the problem without holding a teacher's hand and also being able to communicate with others you may not know. During TD week 1, we explored the problem space around Indigenous communities and how these communities are subjected to marginalisation. We learned about the issue, the causes of it, the effects, and also coming up with solutions that could aid this issue. During this lesson, we were required to use Empathy and perspective taking in order to truly understand the significance and importance of these Indigenous spaces and communities being mistreated.**
>
> *-Student 2*

Case Study:

DQ Institute, Singapore

Building the global standard for digital intelligence, and the machinery to act on it

Overview

Dr Yuhyun Park is the founder of the DQ Institute and a world-leading expert in digital skills, ethics, and sustainability.

Dr Park created the **Digital Intelligence (DQ) Standard (IEEE3527.1TM),** a global standard for digital literacy, skills, and readiness that was **standardised by the IEEE Standards Association in collaboration with the OECD and the World Economic Forum, and has been implemented in over 100 countries.** A pioneer in online safety, Dr Park developed the **Child Online Safety Index (COSI), the world's first global metric for children's online protection.** COSI has informed and influenced major child protection and digital wellbeing frameworks, including the Global Cybersecurity Forum's Child Protection in Cyberspace (CPC) Index, National University of Singapore's Digital Wellbeing Indicator Framework, and the G20's Measurement of the Digital Economy. She also launched **#DQEveryChild movement that has empowered children in more than 80 countries** to be responsible digital citizens and has contributed to global digital citizenship initiatives led by Singtel, LEGO, Google, and more.

DQ's new platform, **Powered by DQ, launched in summer 2026,** lets any government, company or individual teacher build their own AI-literacy learning programmes and assessments, aligned to the global standard, **without needing prior AI expertise.**

Why this matters as we enter the Age of Intelligent Machines

Dr Park's central message to HP Futures 2026 was direct: **the global conversation on AI, education and skills has repeated the same points for too long without leading to enough action.**

Dr Park said she has heard calls for critical thinking, creativity, empathy and human skills to be embedded in learning systems for many years, yet **the divide between education systems, employment needs and digital inequality has continued to widen.**

As the expert put it in her interview for HP Futures 2026: **"We need to stop talking and do the work."**

Dr Park caveated that she understands why education systems have struggled to make these essential changes. First and foremost, she said, **education systems were designed to protect children and future generations, and therefore tend to be cautious by design. But this is no longer tenable in an environment where technology is evolving at lightning speed.** Dr Park believes that **policymakers, industry and education leaders must now urgently fund and roll out new systems** that can bridge that pacing gap.

> She said: **"Education itself has been constructed in the most conservative way, rightly so, it's by design. We built this system more than a hundred years ago, and the Ministry of Education is, in many ways, like the Ministry of Defense: protecting children's minds is directly connected to protecting a country's future. Given today's explosive technological growth, however, things are changing so fast. We often ask: 'Why doesn't the education system change as fast as technology and society do?' But this is the wrong question. Because the education system was never designed to change that way... Now, these two major paradigms have collided. This is a historical moment."**





Introducing new global standards for assessing durable future skills

Today, the terms AI literacy, digital literacy, AI skills, digital skills, digital readiness and AI capacity are used widely across education and workforce debates. But **they are not always defined consistently, and this creates a major problem for systems change** and makes it difficult to build programmes, recognise credentials and scale what works.

Dr Park has spent **nearly two decades** working to address this issue and ensure that young people can develop the **social, emotional, cognitive and ethical capabilities** they need to live, learn and work in the AI era. DQ's work, she said, has been to **"ensure that there's a common language across the world",** across sectors, nations and levels of education and work.

This makes the DQ Standard and its Powered by DQ platforms particularly relevant to HP Futures 2026. As explored earlier in this report, the HP Futures Council agreed that **students' ability to succeed in future workplaces will depend heavily on being able to evidence their AI fluency and durable skillset.** DQ offers a way to **turn skills-building efforts into a measurable and interoperable system.**

What DQ does

Since 2009, DQ has worked to move digital citizenship, child online safety and AI-digital literacy from the margins of education and policy into a global framework.

Its work has developed in **three phases.** The first phase focused on foundations, building child online safety and digital citizenship. Its early iZ HERO and DQ World programmes were designed to build **cyber-risk awareness, empathy, critical thinking and healthy digital habits before harmful online habits could become entrenched** in young people. This model is a real-life example of **building durable skills from the early years** – one of the calls to action shared in this report.

DQ's second phase turned it into a global movement, and set a **global standard for digital literacy, digital skills and digital readiness used in over 100 countries.** The third and most recent phase is **Powered by DQ, the AI-enabled engine** DQ has designed to help governments, institutions and organisations define, measure, build, validate and benchmark AI-digital capacity programmes aligned with global standards.

Powered by DQ is the implementation engine that now sits on top of **more than 1,000 international and national frameworks and programmes** interconnected through the DQ standards (IEEE 3527.1). The platform is designed to help any government, institution or organisation build AI-digital capacity programmes that are aligned with global standards, and can be tailored to local needs.

Many education systems continue to struggle to move from broad principles to practical delivery, so powered by DQ aims to make the process **faster, lower-cost and more consistent.** The idea is that instead of individual governments and institutions spending years trying to create this type of framework from scratch, they can build on a global standard, configure DQ to their own context, and then measure, validate and benchmark progress. DQ's materials state that it can make **programme development 100 times faster and reduce cost to around 1% of traditional curriculum development,** while aligning outputs to existing global standards.

Implementation example: Gyeongsangbuk-do, Republic of Korea

DQ recently successfully partnered with a Korean provincial government to implement and scale an **end-to-end AI-digital capacity system.**

It is a case study in what a durable skills and capacity-building system can look like when it is treated as **fundamental infrastructure that connects education, skills, ethics, labour market readiness and regional development.**

Gyeongsangbuk-do is South Korea's largest province, with **around 2.6 million residents** and major industrial hubs in semiconductors, secondary batteries and steel. **In October 2025,** during the **2025 APEC Summit,** Gyeongsangbuk-do signed an MOU with DQ Institute to build a **globally interoperable AI-digital capacity system** powered by the DQ engine. The province aimed to create an end-to-end system, tailored to its local context and **scale across other APEC regions to help attract global talent.**

Now, the Gyeongbuk AI-Digital Literacy Standards are structured around three domains:

Gyeongsangbuk-do, Republic of Korea
~2.6M yerleşik · Ekim 2025 MOU · APEC Summit

Confident use of AI-digital: Can people use digital tools effectively and communicate confidently in AI-mediated digital environments?

Safe use of AI-digital: Can people protect themselves and others from AI-enabled and digital risks?

Wise use of AI-digital: Can people understand AI, amplify their abilities with it, and own the decisions they make?

These three domains are then broken into **six competencies:** AI-digital skills and media literacy; digital communication and global mindset; digital safety and wellbeing; data security and privacy management; AI foundation and practical use; and AI ethics and human decision-making. The certification system is tiered across four levels: AI-Digital Access, for digital inclusion; AI-Ready Citizen, as a universal civic baseline; AI-Enabled Worker, for workforce capability; and Sector-Applied, for future sector-specific expertise.

Phase 2 is designed to turn that framework into a **full capacity ecosystem,** with assessments, dashboards, learning programmes, certification and benchmarking. The expected benefits include **workforce mobility, portable credentials, a more capable local workforce, productivity gains and resilience against demographic decline.**

Skills the DQ model builds

The DQ Standard and Powered by DQ approach maps closely onto several of the durable skills identified by the HP Futures Council.

It builds **AI fluency,** but defines it more broadly than tool use. Students, workers and citizens are expected to understand AI, use it practically, recognise risks, protect data and take responsibility for decisions.

It builds **ethical reasoning,** because AI and digital ethics are embedded into the framework, rather than added as an optional component.

It builds **judgement and accountability,** especially through the "Wise Use of AI-Digital" domain, which asks whether individuals can amplify their abilities with AI and own the decisions they make.

It builds **digital citizenship,** connecting skills to responsible participation in digital communities.

It builds **interoperability,** allowing credentials and frameworks to be recognised across systems, borders and sectors.

It **helps policymakers address equity** by giving governments a system for measuring readiness and targeting support, rather than relying on ad hoc assumptions about who is prepared.



Key takeaways from Dr Park and DQ

This case study offers several lessons for education systems looking to move from discussion to implementation:

- **Future skills need a common language.** If governments, employers, schools and universities define AI literacy differently, systems will struggle to scale or credential learning consistently.
- **Building child online protection should be treated as durable skills-building.** Digital wellbeing, safety and responsibility must begin early, before harmful patterns become embedded.
- **AI fluency needs to be measured and benchmarked.** Without assessment and data, governments cannot know where capacity gaps exist or whether interventions are working.
- **Global standards can support local adaptation,** configured around regional priorities, industries and populations.
- **Credentials need to travel.** As explored throughout this report, **students and workers need evidence of capability that can be recognised by employers, institutions and governments beyond one course or provider.**
- **Implementation requires government-industry collaboration.** Education systems need structured dialogue with employers, while maintaining public responsibility for equity, ethics and learner development.

> **In a world where the kinds of things that are easy to teach and test have also become easy to digitise and automate, we need to pair the artificial intelligence of computers with the human capabilities that empower individuals to fully capitalise on new technologies. This makes the Coalition for Digital Intelligence so important.**
>
> *– Andreas Schleicher, Director for Education and Skills, OECD, speaking about DQ*

Note: quote taken from DQ materials

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Case Study:

Springpod, UK

Using virtual work experience to connect millions of students with employers

Overview

Sam Hyams launched his company, Springpod, in 2018, after realising that access to high-quality work experience remained the preserve of the privileged few.

Today, through its online platform, Springpod offers young people access to virtual employer-led work experience, micro-internships and career readiness programmes.

Springpod's programmes are employer-funded and free to access for 13 to 21-year-olds, and can be accessed online without minimum qualification requirements. To date, over 1 million students have enrolled in its programmes, which are co-designed with hundreds of enterprise employers including household names like Jaguar Land Rover, Amazon, Siemens and Barclays.

How Springpod works: Bringing the world of work to students and its measurable impact

Springpod builds each work-based learning programme, and these are then tested and quality-assured by the relevant employer. After completing a programme, students earn a certificate from the relevant company.

Programmes are built around interactive tasks and job simulations, and most are asynchronous. For example, on the Airbus programme, a student might work on designing a wing for a new aircraft. Springpod also offers healthcare programmes, where students can simulate responding to a patient presenting at a GP practice – giving students a clear chance to demonstrate their durable skills.



The Springpod model has three main formats:

Virtual Work Experience: These programmes typically last five to seven hours, and place students inside real employer environments, allowing them to complete simulated tasks, meet professionals and explore different roles.

Career Readiness Experiences: These programmes help students develop transferable skills for the workforce, and include employability and digital modules, as well as tools such as an AI Interview Coach, which gives students a lower-stakes environment to practice and receive personalised feedback.

Micro Internships: These are longer and more intensive programmes. At 40 hours or more, they move beyond awareness into deeper skill-building and career pathway development. Springpod's micro-internship model, developed with Accenture and the University of Liverpool, includes two weeks of problem-solving and solution design, one week focused on using AI to strengthen those skills, and a final week working on a real employer challenge.

All the programmes are designed to be **"stackable",** so that a student can complete several experiences across different employers and sectors and build a broader portfolio of evidence over time.

> Sam Hyams, co-founder and CEO of Springpod, said in his HP Futures 2026 interview: **"About one in five young people leave school with work experience at the moment. It's a tiny fraction. Our approach is: every young person deserves access to in-person work experience but the supply and demand makes this impossible for the majority. It is heavily tilted towards those with strong family and school networks, and comes with barriers of geography, cost of travel and flexibility. We aim to solve this at scale, democratising access to work experience. Why shouldn't every student have the opportunity to undertake 10 virtual experiences with the world's leading employers throughout their education, so they then pick something that's actually relevant to their career path?"**



Springpod's offering addresses several key themes that emerged in the HP Futures 2026 Council discussions. The company helps students gain durable skills, enables access to employers, and gives young people a chance to discover what skills and abilities employers are looking for in students, as well as the opportunity to credentialise some of their durable skills and experience.

Crucially, Springpod's model also removes barriers that make traditional work experience so unequal, including geography, travel costs and the confidence barrier that stops under-represented students putting themselves forward. Hyams said Springpod sees high proportions of students receiving free school meals taking part in its programmes.

The results are also measurable. Hyams said that before completing a Springpod programme, around half of participating students say they feel confident about finding a future job, which rises to over 90% post-programme completion. Springpod data also suggests tangible proof-of-impact. Its reports show that around a third of participants in its Amazon Future Engineer programme, which reaches around **15,000 students** a year, go on to go into technology careers.

A report from Airbus and Springpod published in 2024-25 found that, among young people who had enrolled in the programme and since left school, **43% had progressed into a STEM or aerospace-related university course or job.** The forecast suggested **2,038 participants would join an aerospace-aligned industry, with 148 joining Airbus directly.**

Revealed: The skills and attributes employers are looking for in young applicants today – and how Springpod is building and credentialising students' AI fluency

Hyams shared valuable insights into what skills and qualifications employers are looking for in student and graduate applicants today.

> He said: **"They're all largely saying: don't teach technical skills, apart from AI – do teach AI skills and AI fluency. But really what we need you to do is teach the soft skills, the employability skills, the future skills. Creativity, problem-solving, teamwork, communication... Far too commonly, young applicants turn up and cannot articulate their skills and their experiences in an interview setting."**

The CEO stressed that Springpod is not seeing employers pause all early-career hiring. In fact, he said Springpod is seeing employers **look for evidence of AI fluency, as well as durable skills,** and has seen them **ramping up hiring of talent able to prove they are AI-native.**

To help these young people prove they have the AI skills to succeed in a business context – such as **knowing how to use AI agents and tackle things like CRM challenges** – Springpod is now developing a **framework around three stages of AI use.** The framework, outlined below, aims to help students **build their AI fluency beyond familiarity with using tools like Claude and ChatGPT,** and prove they can use AI to produce useful work in a real context.



The Springpod AI fluency framework:

1. **Plan:** Using AI tools to research, structure ideas and think through a problem

2. **Build:** Creating something tangible, such as a prototype, website, 3D model, research output or digital artefact

3. **Automate:** Turning work into an agent or always-on process that can continue beyond a single prompt

Hyams said that Springpod has also seen employers actively hiring through its programmes. The company's data shows that **60% of Springpod's employer partners now use its virtual work experiences to headhunt for in-person roles,** treating 10 hours of engagement with a brand as a "meaningful signal of commitment".

The CEO also shared that, in the era of AI-written CVs, employers now want applicants to **"show not tell" their skillset.**

> Hyams said: **"Employers are asking: can you help young people build a portfolio of real work that evidences their creativity, their problem-solving, their ability to use AI, and helps them stand out? Because CVs are obviously all AI-generated and all look the same now."**



A call to action

Based on his experiences Hyams called on education systems to recognise that **"the opportunity to bring the world of work into the classroom has never been stronger"**. He said that **"employers need to be baked in through technology, AI, from day one"** to help students succeed in proving their durable and AI skills in an increasingly competitive job market.

> He said: **"There's now no excuse or reason not to be able to do that."**

Springpod in numbers

1.5m
fully onboarded students all-time

490,484
programme enrolments in the rolling 12 months to April 2026

4,000
employer, university, school and public sector partners

£325m
social value generated in 2025

£508m
all-time social value generated since 2022

45:1
social return on investment

Transferable lessons for policymakers and education leaders from the Springpod case study:

- In 2026, employers want to hire graduates with **AI fluency and durable skills,** primarily creativity, problem-solving, teamwork, and the ability to communicate well.
- In an AI-generated CV world, students need to **"show rather than tell"** more than ever, making work experience opportunities even more important.
- Completing virtual programmes can help students demonstrate their skills and get jobs: Springpod data shows that **60% of its employer partners** now use virtual work experiences to headhunt for in-person roles and treat **10 hours of engagement with a brand as a "meaningful selection signal".**



Case Study:

JA Worldwide

Insights from a century helping build durable skills and generations of entrepreneurs

Overview

JA (Junior Achievement) Worldwide is one of the largest and longest-standing youth-serving NGOs in the world. Founded in **1919** with the aim to help young people build businesses, today JA creates, develops and implements **hands-on educational programmes and experiences** on everything from workforce readiness and entrepreneurship to financial literacy.

The NGO now operates in 120 countries and delivered more than 23 million learning experiences to five- to 25-year-olds in 2025. Its core aim is to **prepare young people to build the skills and confidence** that will help them thrive in the economies of the future. JA represents **long-standing proof that durability and adaptability skills** – what the organisation calls a **"self-efficacy skill set"** – can be imparted at scale, and that programmes can generate impressive outcomes in terms of employment, entrepreneurship and long-term resilience.

For this HP Futures 2026 report, **Caroline Jenner,** Chief Operating Officer of JA Worldwide, and **Tere Stouffer,** JA Worldwide's Chief Marketing Officer, shared insights based on experience working with young people, employers and enterprises.

Junior Achievement Worldwide
Founded 1919

120 countries
Where JA operates today

23M+
Learning experiences delivered in 2025

Ages 5–25
Target audience



Caroline Jenner, COO of JA Worldwide, said: **"The skill sets employers want haven't changed. They want entrepreneurial thinkers, they want creativity, they want collaboration, they want proactive people. Then you complement that with digital and AI. But the core capabilities have never changed."**

The JA Company Program and Entrepreneurial Skills Pass: How JA is building and credentialising durable and AI skills

JA shared a visual it uses to outline what the organisation calls the **self-efficacy skill set** – also referred to as an **adaptability and durable skills** set – taught in its programmes. Jenner said that the organisation believes that **"a combination of self-efficacy and AI competence is what will make today's students future-ready** – as was true of other digital transformation skills in the past".

Stouffer described self-efficacy as the knowledge that **"you will succeed, even if it takes you 100 tries".** As explored by the HP Futures 2026 Council in Core Sections 1-3 of this report, this is the type of **resilient mindset and essential adaptability** students will need to succeed in future workplaces, where **their roles will change frequently and require continuous upskilling.** Stouffer said JA alumni often show a **"quiet confidence"** in their ability to master new technology, learn new skills and be ready to adapt to job market change.



Jenner said JA believes that in the AI era students will need to wield a **"winning combination"** of the overlapping self-efficacy and AI skills below:

AI and data literacy | **AI ethics** | **Prompt engineering** | **Critical thinking** | **Collaboration** | **Creativity** | **Problem solving**

The leader explained how the **JA Company Program,** JA's constantly evolving immersive **12-20 week** real-world entrepreneurship experience for students **aged 15-25,** is an example of a learning experience that teaches a **combination of self-efficacy and AI skills.**

The programme is JA's oldest and **most global offering and more than 540,000 young people participate each year.** Students work in teams to **create real companies,** including **developing a business concept, financing it and producing or marketing a service.** Recent developments have been made to the programme to **build AI fluency and overlapping durable skills.** This includes adding master tracks supported by short videos in:

1. Innovation and Technology
2. Digital Media and Creation
3. Circular Economy and Sustainability
4. Artificial Intelligence
5. Renewable Energy
6. Fintech



As explored earlier in this report, students will likely need to **credentialise such durable and AI fluency skills in more formal ways** in future. JA is also working on helping young people do this through initiatives including its **Entrepreneurial Skills Pass (ESP).**

The Entrepreneurial Skills Pass was **developed in Europe and now used more widely across the JA network.** Jenner described it as a credential that can help **"open a door"** to new opportunities and give students a way to **evidence the skills they have developed. Around 75,000 young people have earned the ESP over the past five years,** and Jenner said holding the pass is starting to **help students secure jobs and university places faster.**

> Tere Stouffer, Chief Marketing Officer, JA Worldwide, said: **"Our theory of change is that the learning experiences we offer build self-efficacy – the knowledge that you will succeed, even if it takes you a hundred tries. I think of self-efficacy as self-confidence without the ego... They have the confidence to figure out whatever new tool is in front of them, and that's what companies are looking for. We're serving our seventh generation at JA, and we're retooled for every generation's needs. For this generation, it's AI, and we're helping them figure that out, too.**

What employers are telling JA – and why students with entrepreneurial experience can stand out in a crowded job market

Jenner and Stouffer reported finding that JA's employer partners are continuing to look for **the same core capabilities in new recruits,** just now with what Jenner termed "the salt and pepper" of AI fluency on top of a deeper skill base.

> She said: **"The skill sets employers want haven't changed. They want entrepreneurial thinkers, they want creativity, they want collaboration, they want proactive people. Then you complement that with digital and AI. But the core capabilities have never changed."**

Jenner said companies continue to ask JA to help **"bridge the gap"** between students and the world of work, including helping students understand **how organisations work, what different sectors do, and how they might fit into those environments.**

Stouffer explained how young people who go through JA programmes – people who have spent years **building businesses, solving problems and working in teams** – often **arrive in the labour market having bridged that gap.** For example, Stouffer said, if companies say they need people who can **manage a team of AI agents,** a young person who has spent three years running a JA business may be able to say: **"I may be only 20 years old, but I've been running a business for three years."**

"Open schools up to the wider world to help students build future skills"

Based on JA's experiences and findings, Jenner said this HP Futures 2026 report should call on education systems to **do more to help schools open up to the wider world.**

Through JA programmes, business owners and corporate executives act as **mentors, presenters, facilitators and role models,** sharing their own experience and helping students understand the world of work. This means students can **build skills and networks earlier** and make themselves **more resilient and attractive to employers long-term, even as AI takes entry-level roles.**

> **"One of the things that you have to do is take the walls down and the roof off of the school, metaphorically speaking, of course,"** Jenner said. "That means truly engaging the community outside and deeply involving the business community. The [skills] osmosis you get when students are out in the world, and exposing students to role models, is so powerful."

Transferable lessons for policymakers and education leaders from the JA case study

Employer feedback to JA suggests the core skills they are looking for in young people today have not changed. Enterprises still want entrepreneurial thinking, creativity, collaboration and proactivity – now with AI capability layered on top.

Durable skills can and should be built by doing in the real world through building businesses in a safe context where students can fail and learn from experience.

Initiatives such as JA's Entrepreneurial Skills Pass are starting to address the expected need for students to prove their durable skills to future employers.



Case Study:

HP, Global

Insights from a global future-facing enterprise on hiring, durable skills and AI fluency

Overview

This HP case study gives this report direct insight into **what a global technology company is now looking for in early-career talent,** how AI is changing early-career work in technology-first workplaces, and a view on **what schools and universities need to teach and credentialise** if students are to be ready to succeed in workplaces in the years to come. It also explores why HP believes **companies must continue to invest in young talent** – both for the sake of society and for the long-term health of its business.

The case study is built on contributions from **Martin Stier,** HP's Senior Vice President for Recruiting, Inclusion and Culture and **Kymberly Flaigg,** HP's Global Director of University Recruiting and Programmes, whose team surfaces, hires and develops interns and graduates.

As Stier explained during an HP Futures 2026 report interview, technology-enabled employers like HP are currently evolving on several fronts. They are **updating their own processes to embed and fully take advantage of AI,** at the same time as **updating hiring processes to ensure they hire in a way that will future-proof the enterprise.**

Stier and Flaigg shared that, across the business, HP is looking to hire talent that can demonstrate **core durable skills, including communication, interaction, social skills, interpersonal skills, strategic thinking, and the adaptable thinking needed to connect projects to business outcomes. AI fluency is also becoming a baseline workplace capability for HP.**

Flaigg said that, going forward, **low-level task orientation will matter less overall in business functions, while higher-level reasoning and the ability to work through complex thought will matter more.** This message is clear, and it echoes this report's central findings from the employer side of the equation. As AI absorbs routine, task-level work, the premium on durable human skills is rising sharply.

Both Stier and Flaigg see **developing young talent as a duty for global enterprises like HP.**



As Stier said: **"As companies, we must help talent develop both AI-related capabilities and the fundamental human skills that should not be replaced."**



This is a pivotal moment for employers as the first AI-native graduates are entering the workforce

Flaigg, who leads on HP's global graduate recruitment, said that the HP Futures 2026 report is coming out at a **"pivotal moment",** because **the first set of AI-native graduates are now entering the workforce.**

These students have had access to tools such as ChatGPT **since 2022,** and have spent much of their higher education **learning how to use AI to complete work, research, write and build projects.**

Flaigg shared that in reality this means that graduates arrive at HP and other companies **operating at a higher level of capability,** and now **expect work to match that ability.**

> She said: **"AI has moved their education from an undergraduate perspective almost into a master's level, where AI can be the teaching assistant to a researcher... They're now coming into the workforce with: 'give me a project'. And if that project is not complex enough, then they're either not going to learn, or they're not going to be utilised to the full impact that the business could use them."**

Expectations for entry-level hires are changing fast

Just as graduates are starting with different expectations of task-level, employers are also adapting the way they approach task-assignment for graduates completing internships, and for early-stage hires.

Flaigg explained that the level of complexity HP expects from interns has increased dramatically as they have started to hire AI-native talent. Previously, an intern might be asked to **build a better spreadsheet or consolidate data. Now, HP increasingly expects early-career talent to build systems that connect multiple data sources, trigger actions, automate workflows, notify suppliers and anticipate risks.** Interns increasingly **work in small pods rather than on solo tasks,** and design processes, pressure-test processes through sprints and ROI analysis, and **build in controls so their work can be replicated after they leave.**



> Flaigg said: **"It's not just counting anymore. It's actioning past the counting."**

To enable this further, **from the start of the company's 2027 financial year, every HP employee – including every intern – will have an AI Copilot license."**

The three emerging categories of AI-enabled talent HP is seeking out

Against this backdrop, Flaigg and her team have developed a framework that maps the AI-era talent HP needs into three distinct categories. They are:

> **Foundational AI/ML talent:** These hires are the technical specialists. They often hold advanced degrees in computer science, data science, AI or machine learning backgrounds and are able to build AI systems. This is the category universities already teach, and where hiring focus has historically sat.

> **Applied AI talent:** These are "bridge-builders" who understand business processes and can use AI to optimise or automate real processes and systems. "They understand how things work within, say, finance or supply chain... they understand the tools, and then they can overlay that strategic AI element and tell you: you should optimise here, you can automate this, you need a tool here - a human shouldn't be doing that," Flaigg explained. **"They are almost like consultants."**

> AI-fluent talent: These are daily AI "power users" who know how to prompt, script, choose between AI tools, reason with AI systems and use them to strengthen their own work. Flaigg explained that, at HP, these are people using AI as a genuine thinking partner. She said: **"They're not just using AI as a toy. They're actually working with it to mimic their own brains. And with that, they're able to be the smartest person in the room, always."**

Flaigg noted that the second and third categories are now **"emerging on their own",** because young people are developing these capabilities **independently, rather than as part of their formal education.** This is leading to complexities, as explored in the section below.

Flaigg also explained why businesses are looking to hire new talent with both durable and AI skills. She said that it is in part because **every business now needs human stewards of deployed AI.** By this, Flaigg means that once any system is built, rolled out and learning, **"it has to be continuously babysat and educated to ensure that whatever is built is still functioning as the human with the higher-level reasoning wants it to...** No CEO or leader wants AI to run their business. **They just want it to give them time back so they can do their higher-level thinking."**

Employers urgently need education systems to standardise teaching, assessment and credentialising of durable skills and AI fluency

Being able to recruit AI-enabled talent is an asset for employers. However, Flaigg shared that **the vast majority of graduates HP encounters have picked up AI skills around their formal education,** rather than as part of their training and degrees. Flaigg explained that due to the current lack of standardised teaching, assessment or credentialising of durable skills and AI fluency in schools and universities – an issue highlighted throughout this report – HP therefore has to work to **identify the best talent through its own systems and hiring methodologies.**

Flaigg stressed that education systems **need to evolve quickly to enable standardised credentialising of durable skills and AI fluency** to help students secure jobs in five to ten years. Employers – especially less technology-focused companies than HP, who maybe do not have their fingers on the pulse of AI – need to be able to use **consistent benchmarks for what is being taught, who is teaching it, and whether learners are developing the skills companies need going forward.**



> **"There is no standardisation around what's being taught or how it's being taught,"** she said.
>
> **"If the schools don't start actually formalising and teaching AI fluency and durable skills in a way that graduates can jump in right away – and it's not just ad hoc, where 'I figured this out on my own' – the labour market will be in trouble, because employers will need these skills [evidenced] by then."**

Both Stier and Flaigg suggested that **education systems have a window of three to four years** to achieve this goal – the time period during which the AI systems now being built will move into full operation, and **the demand for applied and AI-fluent talent – underpinned by durable human skills – will outstrip the supply that self-teaching alone can produce.**

HP is updating its recruitment processes to reflect the new skills environment

As AI takes on more task-level work, HP now needs early career hires to **operate at a higher level of reasoning from day one,** which changes what skills recruiters are looking for in entry-level hires.



> **"Basically, you need smarter people - but not from the perspective of what they know and what they learned in school,"** Flaigg said. **"It's: how do they reason? How do they think? Can they take big, complex things and distil them down? All of a sudden, emotional intelligence becomes really important. Influence becomes important."**

Stier explained that he and the HP team assess these skills whenever they meet students.

> He said: **"Whether we are at a college fair or a job fair, we interview them and talk to them, and we can see how they communicate, how they interact – their social skills, interpersonal skills, their strategic thinking, their ability to connect with the projects."**

These skills sit alongside technical capability. For an AI builder, HP needs to know **what systems they have built, which platforms they have used and what outcomes they achieved.** For applied AI talent, it may ask **how they have used AI to improve a process, automate a workflow or support a business function.** For AI-fluent candidates, the questions may focus on **which tools they know, how they prompt, how they compare platforms, and how they validate their work.**

Stier said interviewers may ask candidates which AI tools they use, what differences they have found between tools such as Claude, ChatGPT, Gemini or Copilot, and why they chose one over another. **The point is not to catch students out. It is to understand whether they have genuinely used the tools, tested them, learned from them and thought critically about their outputs.**

HP has already made several changes to how it conducts university hiring interviews.

Flaigg said **all virtual interviews in university recruitment now require video,** so recruiters and managers can better assess authenticity and communication. Her team also provides managers with **pre-screening tools and STAR-method questions** to help assess core competencies beyond technical skills. These include **how candidates interact, how they reason, how they collaborate, how they lead, and how they communicate their experience.**

HP has recently adapted its hiring process in several concrete ways:



All virtual interviews must now be on camera: This policy has been in place since 2025, and recruiters have been trained to recognise cues that a candidate's responses are not authentic, including AI-assisted answers.



Pre-screens probe candidates' real project experience: This involves asking unpredictable questions about what students have built and why they want to work at HP, in order to test genuine reasoning.



Structured STAR-method interviews assess five to six core competency categories: These assess skills like leadership, collaboration and reasoning separately from technical skills, with recruiters and managers given prompt questions for each category.



AI fluency is tested through depth, not tick-boxes: Interviewers ask which tools candidates use and why, what differences they have found between platforms, and how they validate and audit AI-generated work. "You want them to give you examples of things they have actually tried," Flaigg said. "Through their reasoning you can better tell whether they have really built those skills."



“It would be a huge mistake”:

Why HP leaders believe employers should not cut early-career hiring

The news is full of dire warnings about the state of the job market for early-career talent as businesses look to adopt AI in ways that can take many entry-level roles.

However, Flaigg warned that she believes companies **scrapping hiring graduates and early-career talent would be a “huge mistake”.** Flaigg explained that companies doing this would be incredibly short-sighted, because **AI-native graduates will be needed to help build, run and own the next generation of AI-enabled work inside companies.**

She said: “We're going to make a huge mistake if we eliminate early career hiring or lower those numbers, because they are the fluency... If we don't bring them into our workforce, we'll create the next generation of AI for HP, but we won't have the people we need to help us build it the best we can, nor the people to take over and own it once we've built it.”

Stier agreed, and explained how early-career talent can actually become “infusers” and reverse mentors inside organisations, helping existing teams understand and use new AI and other skills capabilities.

> He said: **“Many students arrive with limited formal work experience, but they often have deep project-based experience. HP’s challenge is to help transfer that project-based learning into the workplace.”**

The employer role in developing durable skills

Both Stier and Flaigg believe that companies **have a responsibility to keep investing in human skills** as AI advances.

Stier warned that because **AI is advancing so quickly and is so easy to embrace,** companies that fail to keep investing in fundamental human skills **risk seeing those skills “atrophy” across both their workforce and society.**

> He said: **“We have a responsibility – educators, public policymakers, companies like HP – to move fast in bringing this [upskilling in durable skills and AI fluency] to the education ecosystem worldwide... The exclusion will be much more evident if we don't move fast.”**

Key learnings from the HP case study:

Hiring methods are moving away from task completion and towards higher-level reasoning, emotional intelligence and strategic influence.

HP verifies AI capability through tool-specific questions and project detail. Video interviews and STAR questions are also used to help test authenticity, soft skills and leadership.

HP identifies three broad talent categories in graduate hires:

- AI/ML experts
- Applied AI talent bridging business processes and technology
- AI-fluent everyday users who can script, prompt and use tools effectively

HP is giving employees and interns CoPilot licences from FY27 to further build company-wide fluency.

Intern projects are shifting from simple tasks to complex systems work: connecting data sources, automating workflows and managing logic.

HP sees recruiting early-career AI-native talent as strategically important, in part because reducing early-career hiring would remove AI-native “infusers” from the organisation long-term.





Employers will benefit from continuing to invest in early-career talent: Young employees can bring enterprises vital AI fluency, experimentation and reverse mentoring into organisational structures.

Early-career talent needs to be able to assess reasoning, not just outputs: Employers need candidates who can explain how they think, what tools they used and how they validated results.

Education systems must protect human skills-building: Collaboration, influence, emotional intelligence and ethical reasoning become more important as low-level tasks are automated.

Education systems have to move quickly: Without stronger AI fluency and durable skills pathways, students will struggle to prove they have the requisite skillsets in five years' time.

HP believes enterprises have a corporate responsibility to protect human skills from atrophy as AI spreads through workplaces and daily life.

Case Study:

Arizona State University, USA

Building "master learners" set up to succeed in future workplaces

Overview

In the Age of Intelligent Machines, universities are under pressure to do several things at once, in addition to teaching traditional courses. Universities now need to **prepare students for changing workplaces, integrate AI responsibly and effectively, and support lifelong learning and durable skills-building** – all while maintaining their academic foundations.

Arizona State University represents a **key example of a higher education model achieving this goal,** and delivering programming designed to help students **build durable skills.** ASU has developed a **forward-thinking approach to AI, immersive learning and upskilling** in recent years that aims to prepare students for careers of the future.

How ASU is building "master learners"

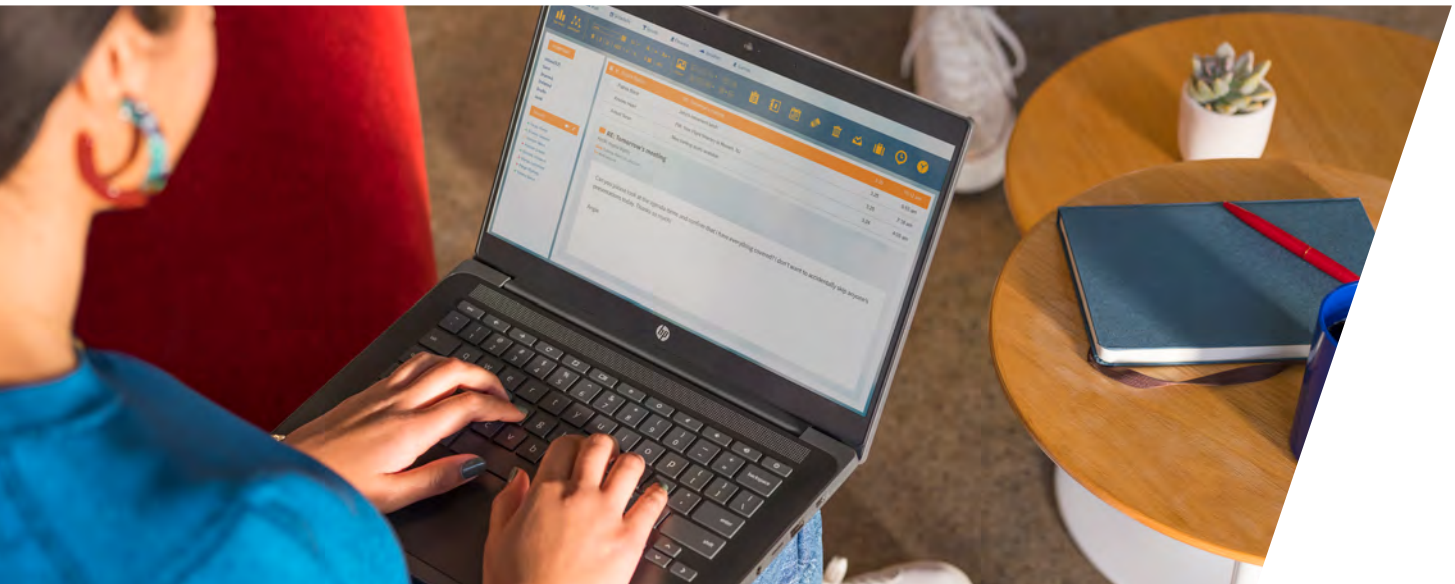
ASU has won the title of **most innovative university in America for 11 years running, with 100,000 online students and around half a million more upskilling or reskilling** through its programmes. It is also part of the **Association of American Universities,** placing it among the leading research universities in the United States.

University Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, Chris Howard, explained that ASU aims to build **"master learners"** – students who graduate equipped with durable skills including **curiosity, competence and lifelong adaptability.**

> Howard said: **"We want people to be master learners, which means competent learners that are curious, that are competent as they move through their life, that are rooted in the human condition. And they need to have a level of AI acumen to be able to do that."**

ASU has made several updates to help achieve this goal, as explored below.

One key factor underpinning these developments has been Howard's view of AI as **"augmented intelligence".** Through this framing, he aimed to ensure ASU always views and uses the technology as **a means to help students improve their cognition, rather than as a vehicle for cognitive offloading.**

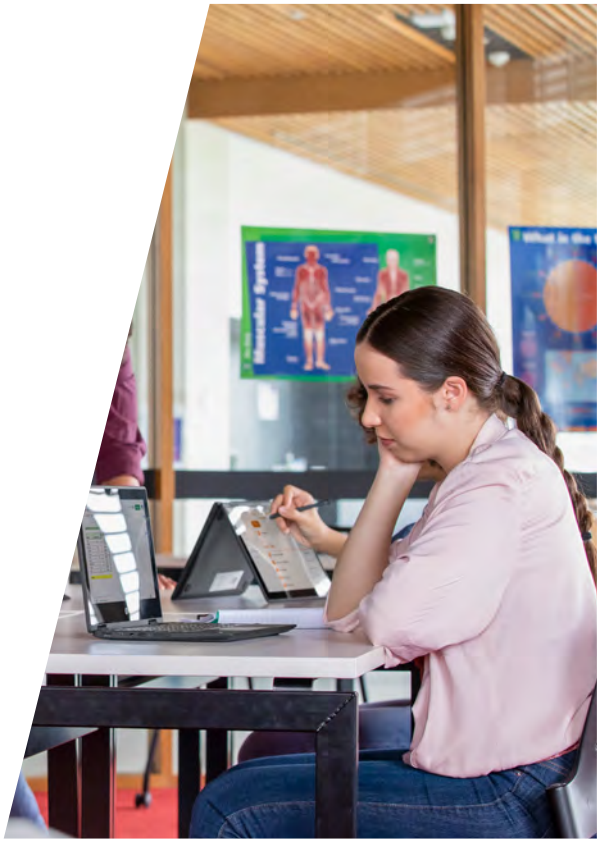


ASU has made several decisions that are helping it create future-proof graduates. These include:

- **The university has taken a "yes, and" approach to integrating AI and durable-skills building into its courses,** an approach Howard believes will help set students up for success in a world where they will need to **prove multiple competencies.** This tallies with the recommendations in the core section of the report for students to be taught **"AI + X"** – that AI fluency should not sit only in specialist programmes, but alongside foundational learning. This is already happening at ASU, and will increasingly be embedded across student journeys, coursework and lifelong learning pathways.

"ASU has always tried to be a **'yes, and' university,"** Howard said. "People say, 'We're a big STEM school... and we also have **the largest humanities school in America.**

"It's the same 'yes, and' approach when it comes to AI. We see AI as **'augmented intelligence'.** We call it that specifically because **it is there to augment our intelligence, not take over,** when it comes to learning. We see AI as helping people learn, grow, and become their best selves."





- **ASU has built upskilling and reskilling into its wider institutional model through its Learning Enterprise and Career Catalyst programmes.** These programmes are designed to give learners direct pathways to keep pace with changing skills demand. Howard said these programmes traditionally tended to attract mid-career professionals, but now ASU is seeing growing interest from current students who want AI credentials alongside their main degree. He compared these certifications to **"the new minors"**: shorter, stackable credentials that signal capability in a labour market increasingly shaped by AI and digital tools. Students equipped with these additional qualifications can use them to help prove their AI and durable skills capabilities when applying for roles. These credentials may also **travel more easily across platforms such as LinkedIn or through automated recruitment systems.**

- **ASU has an evolving, fluid setup – another important element highlighted by Council Members.** ASU has created an Action Lab, which tests whether new learning tools are producing the outcomes the university expects, and acting accordingly.

Deploying innovative models to help students build Future of Work skills

ASU is embracing innovative learning models in its programmes to help students build durable skills. For example, the university is now teaching its introductory biology courses using **Dreamscape Learn** built with Hollywood producer **Walter Parkes.**

Students explore an immersive **"Alien Zoo"** and **become scientists in virtual reality from day one** rather than in traditional wet labs. Students enter an immersive environment where they investigate biological problems through **narrative, exploration and evidence.** They might encounter alien animals on a fictional planet, investigate why one is unwell, and learn core biological principles through the process.

More than 60,000 students have used Dreamscape Learn, and the university is now developing immersive learning in areas including **chemistry, astronomy, business, and art history.** Howard said the **least-prepared students are the ones seeing the biggest gains.** To date, students have seen their grades **rise by a full letter-grade** – a notable demonstration of how technology-enabled courses can **help narrow achievement gaps, rather than exacerbate them.**

Key takeaways from the ASU case study include:

Frame AI as augmentation: AI should extend human capability, not replace human judgement or learning

Build master learners: Students and workers need curiosity, competence and the ability to keep learning across life

Balance STEM and the humanities: Technical capability must sit alongside design, ethics, communication and understanding of the human condition

Make credentials more flexible: AI certificates and shorter credentials can complement degrees and help learners signal emerging skills

Use technology to improve outcomes: Immersive tools should be evaluated against learning gains, not adopted for novelty

Prioritise equity in innovation: Technology-enabled learning should help less-prepared students, not only accelerate those already ahead

Invest in evidence: Universities need to test what works, track outcomes and scale only what improves learning

Case Study:

Talisis, Mexico

Enabling teachers and restructuring a university and curricula around durable skills and AI fluency-building

Overview

Dionisio Garza Sada is Founder and CEO of Talisis, a Mexican education group with over 160 campuses spanning early childhood learning, higher education and professional training. The group was founded in 2013 with the acquisition of a university in Monterrey, Mexico, and **expanded through further acquisitions and organic growth,** including a national university platform and an English-as-a-second-language platform.

Talisis is an example of a **pioneering education institution experimenting with implementing AI fluency and wider durable-skills building in order to make higher-quality, work-relevant education more affordable and scalable for middle- and lower-income learners.** Talisis was built around a **"double bottom line":** democratising quality education for middle and lower-income segments of the population while running a sustainable business, with all profits so far reinvested into the group.

Talisis is trialling many of the principles explored in this report, including teaching **"AI + X"** to students, and **overhauling curricula and systems to centre them around building durable skills.** For example, Garza Sada said Talisis is encouraging students, teachers and staff to use AI in "everything they do", rather than only teaching it in standalone AI courses. Then, from later this year, Talisis plans to embed an AI teacher or AI coach into all its courses through D2L, its learning management system, and OpenAI. Later, broader curriculum redesign will see courses rebuilt around future workforce skills, human skills and "survival skills".

Garza Sada strongly believes that **higher education is approaching a structural turning point,** because the traditional university model was designed for an era when **knowledge, expert guidance and personalised instruction were scarce.** AI changes those conditions by making **explanations, feedback, reasoning support and intellectual assistance available instantly and at scale.** In reaction, he strongly believes that universities need to **rethink their learning architecture, faculty roles, cost structures, credentials, community, employer connections and the development of human skills.** This belief underpins the work Talisis is doing to evolve as an education institution.

Here, the leader shares his insights on how to approach AI integration and overhauling operations to build future-facing skills-based curricula in higher education institutions.

Talisis' core employability-focused model

Talisis is first a case study in **educating for employability and future skills-building.**

Students in its larger university system complete **company placements,** usually spending **at least two quarters and sometimes up to four quarters** in a workplace. Other students complete **real-life projects or internships,** always with a teacher following up and guiding them. Garza Sada said that employers locally value these students **already having work experience when they graduate.** He said Talisis reaches **close to 90% employability at graduation, which he described as comparable to high-tier universities in Mexico despite Talisis serving a lower-cost market.**

Talisis is now working with **workforce-skills mapping in Mexico,** to help students see what capabilities different companies and roles require, and to help Talisis build pathways towards them. Garza Sada believes this will eventually feed into **genuine lifelong learning,** where graduates return to Talisis when they need new skills after technology or labour market changes.



> He said: **"Part of what we intend to do in our curriculum is actually have the skills of the workforce that you need, and students build their own curriculum going forward."**

Building AI into an education institution: How Talisis is overhauling operations

Talisis' current strategy has three main elements:

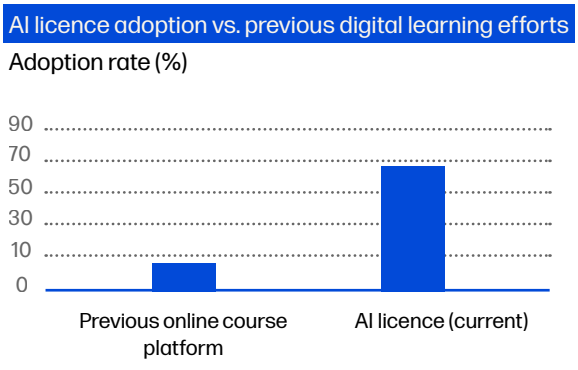
1. **Training teachers:** Garza Sada said Talisis has **centred teacher training in all reforms, as without teacher buy-in they will fail.** So far, Talisis has trained **nearly 6,000 teachers** in how to use AI, and framed the project as the **"future of teaching",** rather than as a technical AI programme. Garza Sada knew that **one of the biggest barriers to AI adoption in education has traditionally been fear and mistrust,** so made sure to make everything **clear, open and inclusive.**

   > He said: **"We didn't frame it as AI. We framed it as teaching tools and the future of teaching."**

2. **Embedding AI throughout operations:** **"Power users"** across Talisis have started using AI for **analysis, decisions, data, presentations and internal agents.** Garza Sada said employees have even been **building agents to automate processes including payments and student records.**

3. **Giving students access to ChatGPT licences:** The group has signed an agreement with OpenAI for **25,000 licences,** and also partnered with **Amazon Web Services** to train staff, teachers and some students.

Before receiving access to an AI licence, users have to complete an **internal two-module course** – a move that Garza Sada said has helped **embed knowledge and buy-in across the organisation.** He said adoption has already been far higher than previous digital learning efforts, with AI licence take-up at **around 70%,** up from **around 10%** take-up when Talisis previously offered students access to online courses through another platform.



> Garza Sada said: **"The most important hurdle that we've seen with AI is mistrust. People are afraid to use it; they don't necessarily understand what the impact of it could be... We tried courses and that didn't work, so we said: let's just make everybody use it in their daily lives, in school, in projects. We're making them use it in everything they do."**

Moving from AI access to curriculum redesign

Now, after successfully managing to **integrate AI into its systems over the past few years,** Talisis is moving to full curriculum redesign. This makes Talisis a crucial case study for this report, as many organisations – especially in higher education – are hesitant or unsure of how to take this step.

Talisis will start **embedding an AI coach into all its courses** through its learning management system, D2L, and OpenAI.

Next, the longer-term goal is to **rebuild curriculum and pedagogy around future workforce skills,** human skills and what Garza Sada terms **"survival skills".** He said Talisis plans to stand out from competitors through **teaching students how to use AI tools well,** whilst simultaneously **strengthening the human capabilities that will become more important around them.**

> **"We will rebuild not only the pedagogy but also the curriculum, not around AI, but around the new skills of the future," he said. "More than ever, all the human skills – or survival skills – are more important than ever, plus how to use these skills with the AI tools."**



It is possible: Education leaders can now overhaul curricula faster, and at much lower cost

Garza Sada stressed that it is important for education leaders to know that **advances in AI have already dramatically changed the economics of curriculum development.**

Previously, embarking on such projects was costly. In recent years, software brought those costs down. For example, Garza Sada said Talisis had used a course builder around 18 months ago that reduced course-building costs by around 80%. Since then, **the quality of AI-enabled course production video and supporting content has improved dramatically again, while the cost has continued to fall.**

Talisis still uses **human curators and "power teachers"** to review, improve and adapt course content. But Garza Sada believes that, once **AI engines are connected to courses and enough student data is collected,** course updating could become **increasingly automated.**

This matters because many universities are keen to update curricula, but then struggle with the time, staffing and cost required to do so. The Talisis example suggests AI could reduce those barriers, provided institutions **maintain human oversight and a clear view of what students need to learn.**

Garza Sada said that he would encourage other institutions to experiment with redesigning new curricula at **low cost, as it is now a low-risk option with a large amount of potential upside.**



How Talisis brought 6,000 teachers on board with durable skills-focused changes

Garza Sada said that educators' response to his new AI integration and curriculum overhaul initiatives has been mixed.

Some teachers were excited by the change and technology, while others were **scared of what the overhaul might mean for their role.** Rather than **ignoring teachers' fear,** Talisis has looked to **build teacher confidence through practical tools.**

For example, Talisis provided teachers with **dashboards** that allow them to see how their classes are moving through a course, which students are struggling, and which topics need extra support. Garza Sada said that when this type of tool receives a positive reception, it is an important **"small success"** that makes AI integration feel useful rather than threatening.

Talisis has also created an **AI Centre of Excellence,** drawing on advice from OpenAI and examples of other universities implementing AI effectively. The centre gives the institution a dedicated point of expertise, led by someone with strong data experience who now supports AI implementation alongside teachers.

The teacher role shifts towards coaching, empathy, social-emotional support and human connection.

Talisis has:



25,000
OpenAI licences



6,000
Teachers trained



An AWS partnership



Mandatory training before licence access



Employee-built AI agents



AI coaches embedded into project-based courses



A skills-based curriculum overhaul project underway

Case Study:

The Wattle Vision and Higher Education initiatives across Australia & New Zealand

A CIO-driven, higher education collaboration exploring the role of people, relationships and technology in the university of the future

Overview

Where will higher education be in 20 years?
What should a university look like in 20 years?
What role should technology and AI play?
And, perhaps more importantly, what should remain fundamentally human?

These questions were at the heart of the Wattle Tour, a higher education study tour led by HP in late 2025/early 2026, together with alliance partners Intel, Microsoft and Adobe, bringing university technology leaders from across Australia and New Zealand to Silicon Valley.

The tour was co-led by Brett Salakas, HP Education Ambassador for Australia and New Zealand, and Daniel Coughran from HP Australia. They worked closely with CAUDIT, the professional body representing digital and technology leaders across higher education and research institutions in Australia and New Zealand, to bring together CIOs and technology leaders from multiple universities.

Conversations explored artificial intelligence, emerging technologies, the changing role of the university CIO, digital ecosystems, skills, trust and governance, and the increasingly important relationship between human capability and technology. What became clear was that there was no single answer.



HP Education Ambassador Brett Salakas said: **"We realised we didn't all agree on what universities may look like in 20 years. There is no single vision for how the sector will evolve alongside emerging technologies. That's why these debates, discussions and cross-pollination of ideas are so important."**

The Wattle Vision: A relationship-rich university and "Human + X"

Those conversations helped give rise to **the Wattle Vision,** named after Australia's national flower. It is **a grassroots statement shaped collaboratively by CIOs and technology leaders** from across the higher education community.

The Wattle Vision is **not a prediction of what universities will become. It is a collective statement about the principles that should guide higher education** as technology continues to evolve. At its heart is a simple but powerful aspiration: "Relationship-rich environments and experiences for students always."

The statement recognises universities as the skills domain and innovation engines of society and acknowledges that universities operate within a rapidly evolving world. It also recognises something fundamental: technology should not be the destination. Technology should be used to **advance human outcomes, strengthen learning and capability,** and support **the relationships at the heart of the university experience.**

The Wattle Vision commits to **using technology ethically, effectively stewarding data and digital ecosystems, protecting institutional integrity and cultivating trust.** It also recognises that the future of education technology is a shared responsibility, built through **trusted internal and external partnerships that empower capability, reduce inequity and deliver long-term benefit for learners, institutions and society.**

The Wattle Vision is underpinned by five guiding principles:

1. **Grounded in purpose** Universities exist to advance knowledge, expand opportunity, and serve the public good across generations.
2. **Recognition of a changed world** Universities operate within a rapidly evolving landscape where digital systems and artificial intelligence are foundational.
3. **Technology as an enabler of human outcomes** Technology extends access, supports lifelong learning, strengthens teaching and research, and augments human capability.
4. **Responsibility, governance and trust** Technology must be used ethically, stewarded carefully, and in service of institutional trust.
5. **Collective leadership, capability and inclusion** The future of education technology is shaped through shared leadership and collaboration to deliver long-term benefit for learners and society. Inclusion is central to this principle, with particular recognition of First Nations peoples and the importance of Indigenous voices, knowledge and perspectives in shaping the future of higher education.



One of the ideas that emerged through the Wattle Tour conversations was "Human + X".

This approach offers a simple way of thinking about technology in higher education: start with the human capability or outcome we want to develop, then consider how technology can strengthen it.

> Salakas explained: **"We can't get into a situation where we put the technology before the human. We need to enhance human skills first, and then ask how technology can add to them."**

This thinking is particularly important as universities consider the skills graduates will need in an AI-enabled world. Technical capability matters, but so too do communication, creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, judgement, adaptability and the ability to build meaningful human relationships.

The question is therefore not simply human versus AI. It is about what becomes possible through Human + X.

A grassroots collaboration

Perhaps one of the most important aspects of Wattle is **how it came together.** The Wattle Vision grew from collaboration between people across multiple universities and organisations rather than from a single institution or technology company. CAUDIT has been central to that collaboration, connecting the work with CIOs and digital leaders across higher education and research institutions throughout Australia and New Zealand.

HP helped lead and convene the original Wattle Tour, with Intel, Microsoft and Adobe as alliance partners, but the conversations and ideas that emerged were deliberately broader than any one organisation. Kimberley Burdett from Adobe has also played an important role in bringing this community together.

Her unparalleled connections across Australian higher education helped connect people and institutions, extend conversations beyond the tour and create further opportunities for collaboration. That cross-sector collaboration reflects the philosophy behind Wattle itself.

No single university, technology company or individual can confidently predict what higher education will look like in 20 years. But by bringing together different experiences, perspectives and ideas, the sector can help determine the principles it wants to carry into that future. And at the heart of the Wattle Vision is a deliberately human ambition: Relationship rich environments and experiences for students always.





Australian universities pioneering new approaches: New South Wales' TAFE and beyond

HP's Brett Salakas has spent years working on the ground with leading universities in Australia and New Zealand. He shared how he is seeing Australian universities beginning to experiment with **both AI integration and building wider durable skills-based integrations:**

1. **Australian Catholic University** has taken a notably open approach to technology partnerships. Each year, the university brings its technology partners together and shares its full digital strategy. Rather than asking vendors to respond to isolated tenders, the university explains where it is going, what it wants to achieve, and how partners might contribute to its three-year plan.

2. **Deakin University** is pioneering an "innovation garage" approach, where partners can work more transparently with the university on app development, AI development and digital initiatives that feed into the student experience.

3. **The University of New England** is trialling AI tutors, giving the sector an early view of what AI-supported teaching might look like in practice.

Salakas also said many Australian universities are watching Arizona State University closely.

» See earlier Case Study for more detail on ASU

The lesson he takes from ASU is **not one specific programme, but a method: run a large number of small, disciplined experiments, gather evidence, then scale what works.**

Case Study:

Torrens University and its in-house AI agent, Torrino

Torrens University is an Australian international private university and vocational registered training organisation, with campuses in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide, the Blue Mountains, and Auckland.

Nathan Scoular is the university's Director of Product Innovation, and has led on the rollout of its AI Agent, Torrino.

> Nathan Scoular said: **"As generative AI becomes increasingly present in student practice, there is an opportunity to intentionally integrate it into learning and assessment design as part of the broader learning ecosystem. This requires a shift towards supporting judgement and critical awareness through structured learning experiences, rather than treating AI as external or incidental to study."**



In response to this opportunity, a collaboration between the university's Faculty of Design and Product Innovation saw the co-design, integration and application of TUA's in-house AI agent, Torrino, which functions as a Socratic reflective mentor within a first year, foundational design subject.

Scoular explained that Torrino now complements a weekly reflective journal to support students in structuring, extending, and deepening their reflections while fostering ethical and transparent engagement with AI from the outset of their studies. It operates as a structured conversational mentor, and through guided dialogue, prompts students to **articulate decisions, examine their learning process, and refine ideas over time, positioning reflection as an active and iterative component of design thinking.**

Students engage with Torrino through iterative reflective cycles aligned with weekly learning activities, including:

- Generating and developing design ideas
- Evaluating decisions and approaches
- Refining thinking through feedback
- Developing a growth mindset through iterative learning and reflection
- Reflecting on both process and use of AI
- Developing strategies for managing academic demands

> **Scoular said that, through this process, students are supported to interpret, evaluate, and refine both their own thinking and AI-generated responses, reinforcing reflection as a disciplined practice rather than a retrospective activity.**



Case Study:

TAFE NSW: An interview with one of Australia's frontrunners in skills development and certification

Raf Marcellino is an Executive Director, Learning and Teaching at TAFE NSW, Australia's largest provider of vocational education and training. TAFE NSW delivers training and education to more than 400,000 students annually across vocational, higher education and short-course programmes.

Marcellino has played a leading role in TAFE NSW's approach to artificial intelligence in education and currently **chairs the TAFE NSW AI Steering Committee.** Through initiatives such as the **Institutes of Applied Technology and TAFE Centres of Excellence,** TAFE NSW works with industry, government and education partners to address emerging workforce needs and build the skills required for Australia's future economy.

Training is delivered across six faculty areas: **Agribusiness, Transport and Manufacturing; Construction and Energy; Creative, Cultural and Experience Services; Digital, Business and Finance; Health, Children's Education and Human Services; and Equity, Foundation Skills, Aboriginal Culture and Languages.**

Across all learning pathways, TAFE NSW places a strong emphasis on developing durable and transferable skills that help learners adapt to changing workforce needs. This includes specialised education and training through initiatives such as the Institute of Applied Technology Digital at Meadowbank, which brings together industry, government and education partners to deliver training in high-demand fields including artificial intelligence, cybersecurity and digital technologies.

TAFE NSW delivers vocational and practical education pathways across a broad range of industries, including construction, manufacturing, tourism, creative industries and human services. Working closely with industry, government and community partners, TAFE NSW develops training that responds to emerging workforce needs and supports learners to build both technical expertise and durable skills. This includes initiatives in areas such as sustainability, the circular economy, advanced manufacturing, renewable energy, digital technologies and supply chain capability, as well as specialised training delivered through the Institute of Applied Technology for Construction and the TAFE NSW Centres of Excellence.



Marcellino said: **"Vocational education plays a critical role in preparing learners for an increasingly dynamic workforce environment because it combines technical capability with the development of broader human skills. Through hands-on, real-world learning, vocational pathways help build adaptability, resilience, curiosity, agile thinking and systems-level problem solving. As people move between roles, industries and careers throughout their working lives, these durable capabilities become just as important as technical expertise, enabling them to remain flexible, creative and effective in changing environments."**

TAFE NSW is exploring a higher apprenticeship model

In partnership with industry, universities and government, TAFE NSW is helping shape **new tertiary education pathways that combine paid employment with advanced study.** These pathways are designed to **bridge the traditional divide between vocational education** and higher education, enabling learners to develop **technical expertise, workplace experience and advanced problem-solving and professional capabilities at the same time.** Through its Centres of Excellence and other collaborative initiatives, TAFE NSW is supporting qualification pathways that respond to skills shortages and workforce transformation across priority industries. As technology and artificial intelligence continue to reshape work, these pathways aim to develop **both technical expertise and the durable human skills required for long-term career adaptability.**

The TAFE NSW Centres of Excellence, established under the National Skills Agreement between the Australian and State Governments, deliver **tertiary Higher Apprenticeship pathways** that bridge traditional vocational training and higher education.

The pathways developed through the TAFE NSW Centres of Excellence are designed to **integrate academic learning, workplace experience and industry engagement.** Developed in partnership with employers, universities and government, they seek to provide learners with flexible and relevant qualification options while addressing workforce needs in areas experiencing skills shortages and rapid technological change. Key features of these pathways include:

Integrated qualifications: These pathways combine tertiary-level study with structured workplace learning, enabling learners to develop both technical knowledge and practical capability in real-world settings. Offerings may include higher apprenticeships, associate degrees, specialised diplomas and microcredentials, providing flexible options that support lifelong learning and career progression.

Industry, TAFE and university collaboration: These pathways are co-designed and delivered in partnership with employers, universities and government stakeholders to ensure learning outcomes remain aligned with current and emerging workforce needs. By bringing together educational expertise and industry insight, the model supports qualifications that are relevant, responsive and closely connected to workplace practice.

Priority industry sectors: The pathways focus on areas of strategic importance to Australia's future workforce, including digital technologies, advanced manufacturing, construction and the transition to a more sustainable economy. Through specialised hubs and industry partnerships, learners can access education and training aligned to emerging technologies, evolving business practices and areas of growing workforce demand. Key focus areas include artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, cloud computing, data analytics, advanced manufacturing, renewable energy, digital construction and modern project management.

An earn-and-learn model: These pathways enable learners to undertake paid employment while completing their studies, allowing them to apply their learning in authentic workplace settings from the outset. By integrating work and study, learners can build technical expertise, professional networks and broader capabilities such as communication, collaboration and problem-solving. The approach provides a flexible pathway to higher-level qualifications while helping employers develop the skilled workforce they need for the future.



Drawing on his experience leading learning innovation and educational transformation at TAFE NSW, Marcellino identified five priorities for education systems seeking to equip learners with the skills needed for a rapidly changing world.

He argued that building durable skills at scale requires a deliberate focus on both technical capability and the human attributes that enable people to adapt, collaborate and continue learning throughout their careers.

Marcellino said that building durable skills at scale requires education systems to focus on five priority areas:

1. **To elevate dispositional education:** Marcellino called for education policies and initiatives to explicitly teach, nurture, and assess foundational mindsets like adaptability, resilience, curiosity, and agile thinking as core educational outcomes alongside knowledge and technical skills.

2. **To embed vocational learning early with parity of esteem:** The expert said it is essential for systems to integrate hands-on, applied learning early in education to establish clear, high-status career pathways that give vocational professions equal prestige to traditional academic routes.

3. **To design dynamic, industry-aligned curricula:** Marcellino called for a shift from static qualifications to flexible, modular learning models co-designed with industry, ensuring training keeps pace with changing work environments.

4. **To recognise, assess and provide evidence of transferable human capabilities:** Marcellino argued for the establishment of formal frameworks to evaluate and certify transferable dispositional and durable skills alongside formal technical qualifications.

5. **To invest in educator capability:** The expert said that systems should provide continuous professional development and industry immersion for teachers, equipping them to foster future-focused mindsets and dispositions in their classrooms.





07

HP Futures 2026 Afterword

By Mayank Dhingra,
Director & Global Head – Education
Business and Strategy, HP

As HP's Global Head of Education Business and Strategy, I work with education leaders, policymakers and companies around the globe. Today, everyone I meet is working to deliver on one goal: **how to ensure education systems equip young people with the skills they will need to thrive in AI-powered workplaces of the future.**

This is not an easy task, especially in a fast-changing landscape where technology is moving at lightning speed, and education leaders must only make moves that they are certain will improve their students' learning and outcomes.

That is why we commissioned the **HP Futures 2026 report.** This report shares advice and insights on how to approach future skills-building from some of the top voices in education policy and leadership. Most importantly, it shares actionable case studies – proven examples of where education leaders, institutions and policymakers have innovated successfully from early years through to higher education, and demonstrated tangible progress in helping students build durable skills.

This report does not shy away from asking the hard questions, or from documenting the reality that education institution leaders **have been left by systems to innovate from the ground-up,** due to education department policymaking that does not keep pace with the rate of change in today's environment. The report shows how education institutions – particularly in higher education – are innovating at **very different paces, leading to discrepancies.** It also points to the **severe lack of standardised assessment and credentialising processes** for durable skills worldwide – a situation that, unless it is solved, will leave students struggling to prove their capabilities to employers in years to come.

Crucially, this report includes voices from across geographies. HP Futures 2026 features calls from experts based in **LMICs** for more equitable digitisation and digital tools access, while showcasing the world-class durable skills-building projects already succeeding on the ground, from **Escolas Criativas'** early years programmes in rural Brazil, to **Teach A Man To Fish** projects utilising ChatGPT and WhatsApp in low-resource contexts globally.

In writing this report, HP aimed to ensure that student voices were given a platform and amplified, and our **Student Survey** does just that. The survey featured in this report polled **over 6,000** students from **37 countries** answering in several languages. It gives a unique snapshot of global student perspective on what young people today think about the skills they need to own, and the impact AI is having on their thinking, their lives and their job prospects.

Most strikingly, these students warned that while they feel AI-confident and AI is helping them to work faster, **they are concerned that they are not learning material as deeply.** The quotes dotted throughout this report show just how aware these students are, and demonstrate why it is vital student voices are prominent in the conversation as education systems make decisions around the future of curricula and assessment models.

As always, this HP Futures report includes **Key Findings and Calls to Action** for leaders and policymakers around the world. **Here, our HP Futures 2026 Council members and expert interviewees were certain on one key factor: that the skills that will matter most in the age of intelligent machines are human, transferable and developmental. And they stressed that, when it comes to building, assessing and credentialising these skills, the time for action is now.**

In this report, experts explain why **assessment is currently the biggest bottleneck,** and the biggest lever, to widespread building and validating of these durable Future of Work skills. They call for new education models that take durable skills into account, and for students to be offered interoperable, transnational means to credentialise their durable skills so that higher education institutions and employers share a common benchmark for these crucial Future of Work abilities. Furthermore, the **experts called on policymakers to take action immediately to ensure AI-era readiness and durable skills ownership does not become another source of structural inequality.**

Our Council Members are at the forefront of guiding and implementing these changes around the world, and we are extremely grateful to each and every one of our contributors for their time in creating this HP Futures 2026 report. We urge policymakers and education leaders around the world to review their findings, and draw on them as they work to create education systems that will set students up for success in the brave new world we are entering.

With many thanks,



Mayank Dhingra

Director & Global Head - Education Business and Strategy, HP

08

Appendices

HP Futures 2026 Council Members & Interviewees

The HP Futures 2026 Council Members and expert contributors included :

Name	Title	Organisation	Country
Carlos Alonso	Education Lead	HP Spain	Spain
Felipe Arango	CEO & Co-Founder	Pharos Education	Colombia
Ronit Avni	CEO	Localized	USA
Brad Baumgartner	Chief Growth Officer	Edmentum	USA
Alejtin Berisha	CEO	Universum	Kosovo
Gabriella Bighetti	Executive Director	United Way	Brazil
Stacey Brewer	Chair	SPARK Schools	South Africa
Will Campbell	Principal	Franklin School	USA
Nick Chambers	CEO	Education & Employers Taskforce	UK
Guilherme Cintra	Director of Innovation and Technology	Fundação Lemann	Brazil
Komal Dadlani	CEO	Lab4U	Chile
Matt Davis	CEO	Etio Global	UK
José Luis Díez	HP Education Ambassador	HP Inc. by Pleiades	Spain
David Fitzgerald	CEO - Europe	Dukes Education	Spain
Kymberly Flaigg	Director, Global University Hiring	HP	USA
Dionisio Garza Sada	Founder & CEO	Talisis	Mexico
Adeesh Goel	CEO	InspiritAI	USA
David Harkin	CEO	8billionideas	UAE
Chris Howard	Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer	Arizona State University	USA
Sam Hyams	CEO	Springpod	UK
Caroline Jenner	COO	JA Worldwide	Belgium
Nik Kafka	CEO & Founder	Teach A Man To Fish	UK
Ali Ahmad Khan	COO	Beaconhouse Schools System	Pakistan
Yael Karakowsky	CEO	SER Education	Mexico
Laila Macharia	Vice President	Imaginable Futures	Kenya
Michael Magkov	CEO	Maximum Education	Russia
Mekin Maheshwari	Founder & CEO	Udhyam Learning Foundation	India
Michael Mapstone	CEO	Anglo American Foundation	UK

Name	Title	Organisation	Country
Raf Marcellino	Executive Director	TAFE NSW	Australia
Taniya Mishra	CEO	Sure Start	USA
Fanny Moral	Chief Growth Officer	Enko	South Africa
Dr Yuhyun Park	Founder	DQ Institute	Singapore
Rohan Pasari	Founder & CEO	Manifest Global	Singapore
Daniel Pedrino	CEO	Proz Educacao	Brazil
Anarkalee Perera	Director, AI and Digital Policy	HP	USA
Ricardo Phillips	CEO	Universidad Insurgentes	Mexico
Tom Ravernscroft	CEO	Skillsbuilder	UK
Jair Ribeiro	Founder & President	Parceros da Educacao	Brazil
Rodrigo Rocha	Head of External Relations	Instituto Escolas Criativas	Brazil
Faith Rose	Program Director, Education	BHP Foundation	UK
Saurabh Saxena	Founder & CEO	Power Club	USA
Nathan Scoular	Director of Product Innovation	Torrens University	Australia
Riaz Shah	Professor	Hult International Business School	UK
Rohit Sharma	CEO International	IU Group	UAE
Steffen Sommer	Director General	Misk Schools	Saudi Arabia
Martin Stier	SVP, Recruiting, Inclusion and Culture	HP	USA
Tere Stouffer	Chief Marketing Officer	JA Worldwide	USA
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Chin Hwee Tan	Chairman	SGTraDex	Singapore
Alison Tanker	Managing Director, International	Minerva Baccalaureate	India
Gemma Thornley	Principal	Arbor School	UAE
Alper Utku	CEO	Amsterdam Tech	Netherlands
Tom Vandenbosch	General Director	VVOB	Belgium
Ahmed Wahby	Group CEO	Egypt Education Platform	Saudi Arabia
Boris Walbaum	CEO	Forward College	France
Jeff Wetzler	Co-Founder and Board Member	Transcend	USA
Jerry Winata	CEO	Amyas Valora Foundation	Indonesia

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