Report: Recent Student Voice on AI in Education at the University of Bristol

Aisling Tierney, BILT, February 2026

Purpose

The Student Voice on AI in Education report is a short paper summarising recent feedback from Bristol students about how they use and experience AI in their learning. The analysis collates current student data to highlight expectations, uncertainties, and concerns surrounding AI in education. The report provides an evidence base to inform institutional guidance, curriculum design, and support.

Summary of findings

- Many students feel positive about the inclusion of AI in their learning. Many students desire more AI guidance and more AI content in their education.
- Student understanding and application of AI is highly variable, with some confusion about what they can or should be doing in their studies, particularly regarding assessments.
- Many students raise ethical concerns with AI and may reject any AI use in their education. There are emerging concerns regarding: other students' inappropriately use of AI; dissatisfaction with the use of AI in learning activities and staff-created content; dissatisfaction with the use of AI for feedback and marking; dissatisfaction with UoB's pro-AI stance.
- Significantly more international students than home students rely on AI to support their learning, but there is negligible difference between their requirement for support and training.

Recommendations

Suggestions, adapted from Oldfield et al. (2025) and Ng (2025), offer the following recommendations in relation to student support, teaching and policy development:

- Students should have opportunities to develop a critical understanding of how AI technologies are produced and how they relate to learning. Both staff and students need to be equipped to engage with AI responsibly. Students demand AI literacy skills as relevant to their studies and their future careers.
- University guidance on AI should be widely shared with staff and students. Students should have balanced, non-judgmental opportunities to learn about and discuss AI that are not tied to course outcomes. They want multiple ways to access support or information, including within courses, wider programme activities, university services and online resources.

- There should be greater transparency around AI tools embedded within university platforms, course activities and staff use of AI.
- Opportunities to learn about or use AI should acknowledge that some students avoid AI due to ethical, environmental or intellectual concerns. Courses should not assume AI use or require it necessarily; instead, students should have choices.
- Students should be included in discussions about AI in education, as their experiences are essential for shaping ethical and inclusive approaches.
- Ensuring an equitable institutional approach to accessible tools is vital to engagement with AI.

Data sources

Oldfield et al.'s (2025) survey of students use, views, concerns and support needs in relation to AI for a BILT project is the most relevant and holistic institutional dataset referenced in this report. The *DEO Digital Insights Survey* contains two question prompts that are relevant to AI. All other institutional survey data included in this report are not directly designed to capture AI-related information, but incidentally do so due to the inclusion of free-text responses in the surveys. Collectively, the institutional survey results closely align. The survey results also echo findings from two BILT-led qualitative efforts to understand student views on AI in Education, the Student AI Hackathon (Ng, 2025), and Tierney, Peasey & Gould 2025 (excluded from this summary due to dated nature of data).

BILT Project Survey 2025 (Oldfield et al. 2025)

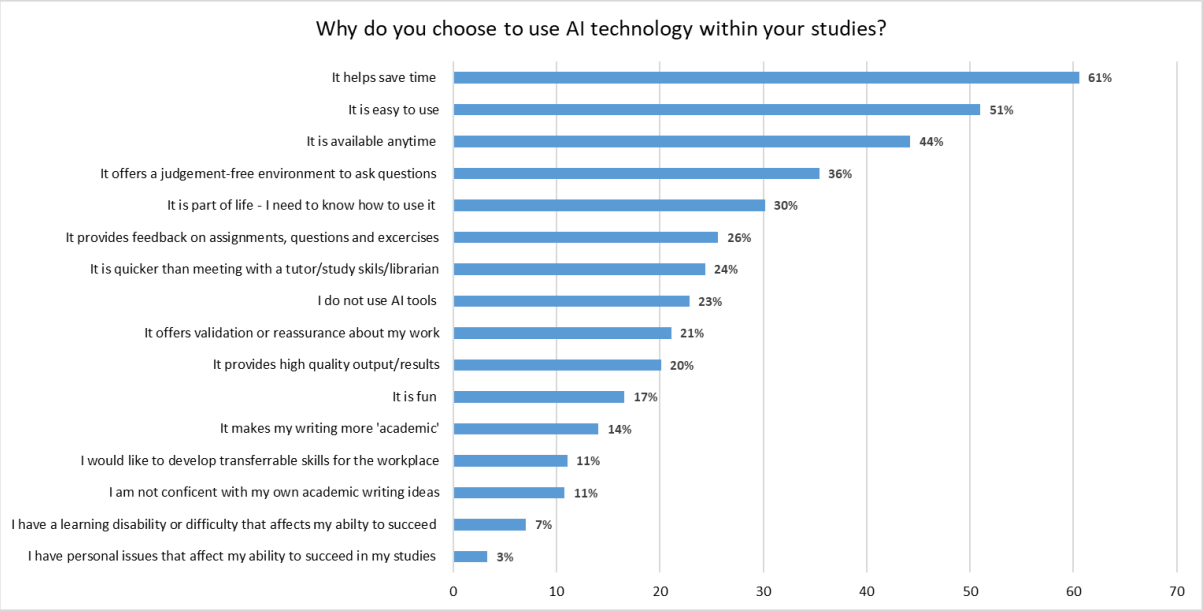
Details on data: total number of responses n.402 (ALSS n.169; HLS n.74; SciEng n.146); Level 1 n.107, Level 2 n.60, Level 3 n.72, Masters n. 109, PhD n. 38, other .16; Home n.258, International n.143; English as a second language n.110 (27%); Disability n.129 (32%); Female n.205, Male n.171, Other n.25.

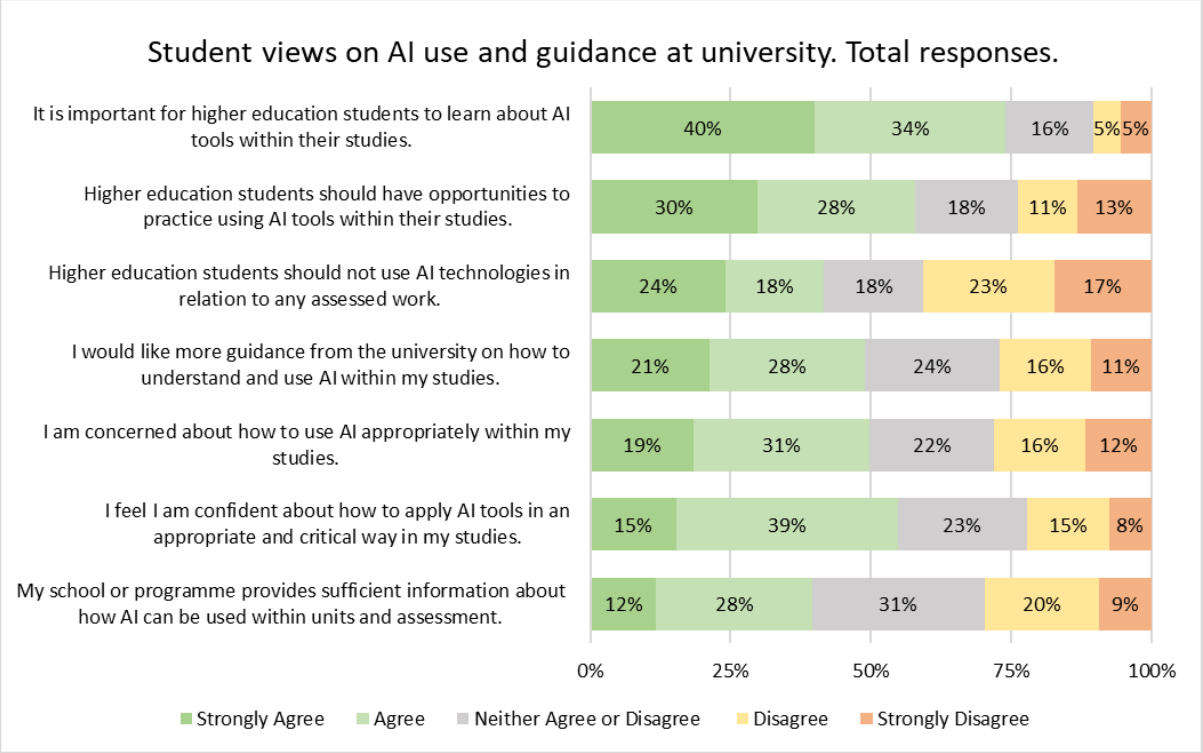
Summary findings

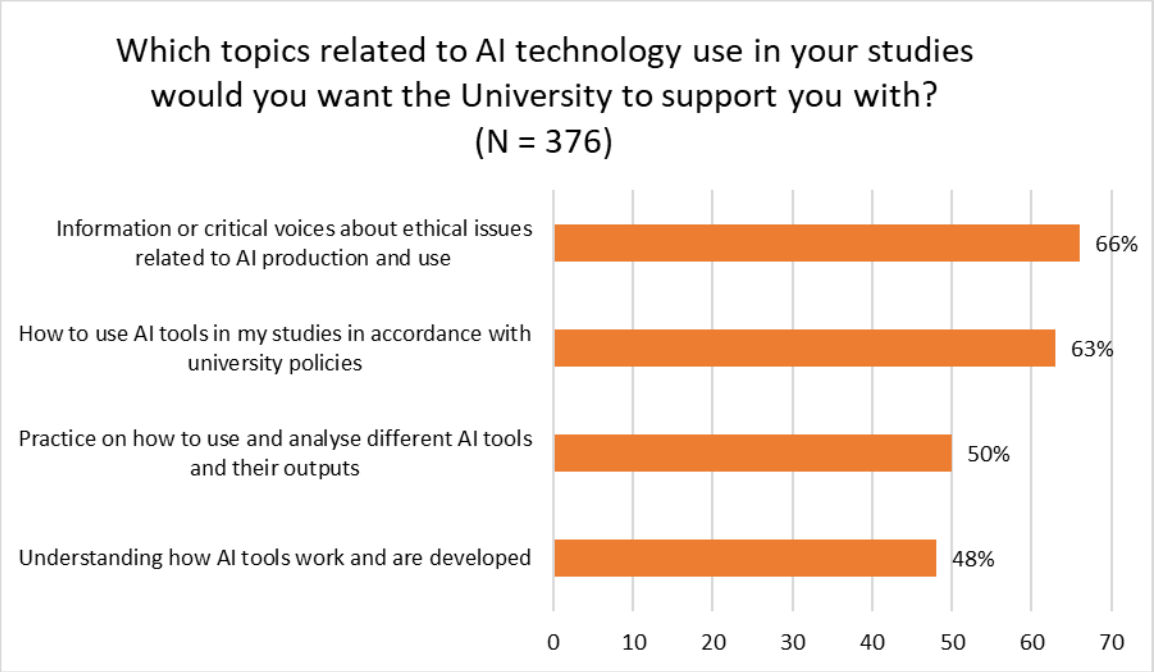
- 335 students (83%) indicated that they had used at least one of the listed AI tools in their studies. The most commonly used tools included ChatGPT (77% of responding students reported using this within their studies), Google Translate (41% of students); and Grammarly (39% of students). We also asked students which tools they had used outside of their studies, and it was notable that a much higher percentage of students reported using Google Translate outside of their studies (77%) than within their studies (41%).
- Many students are using AI technologies but understanding of AI, use and purpose of use varies.
- Students report wide variation in understanding and confidence in how to use AI technologies in their studies.

- Students report concerns with AI use in relation to their assessments and course outcomes.
- Many students have significant concerns about AI's production, use and role in their education and wider society, and some report actively choosing not to use AI for value-based or ethical reasons.
- Students seek support and guidance from the university on understanding and participating in AI technologies.

Highlights from the study are copied below.





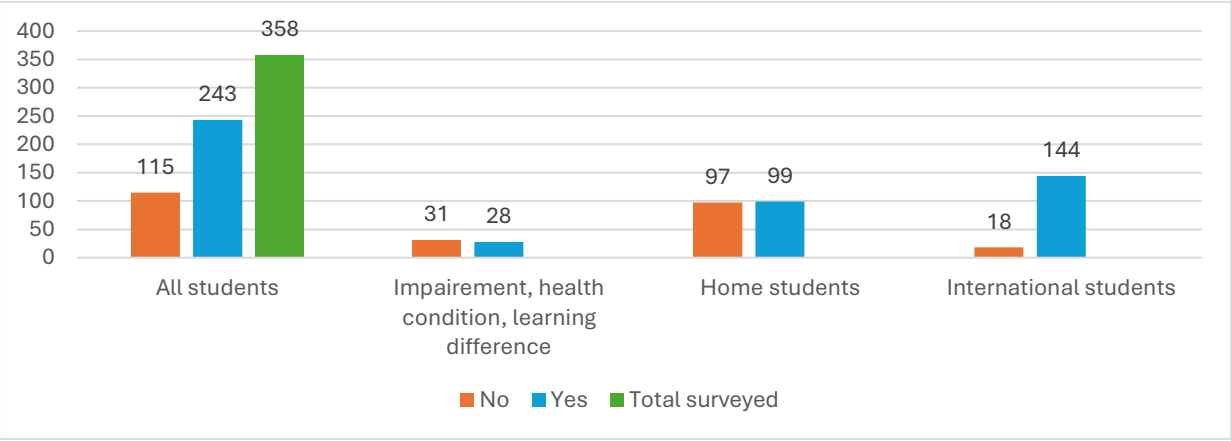


Digital Insights Survey, January 2026

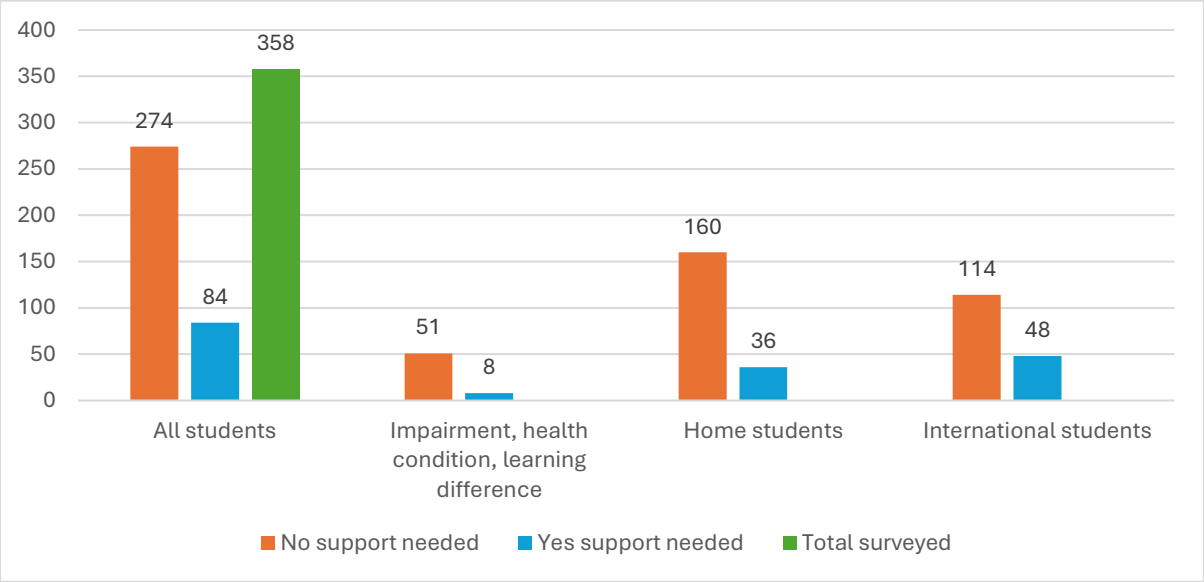
Key observations:

- Significantly more international students than home students rely on AI to support their learning.
- Students in Social Sciences and Law needed more support and training (9%) than other faculties (1-5%). By percentage, international and home students need approximately the same about support and training, with a similar pattern observed for PGT and UG students (10% and 13% respectively) and a negligible requirement for PGR (1%). Disable students require less support and training (2%) than non-disabled students (19%).

Do students use AI to support their learning?



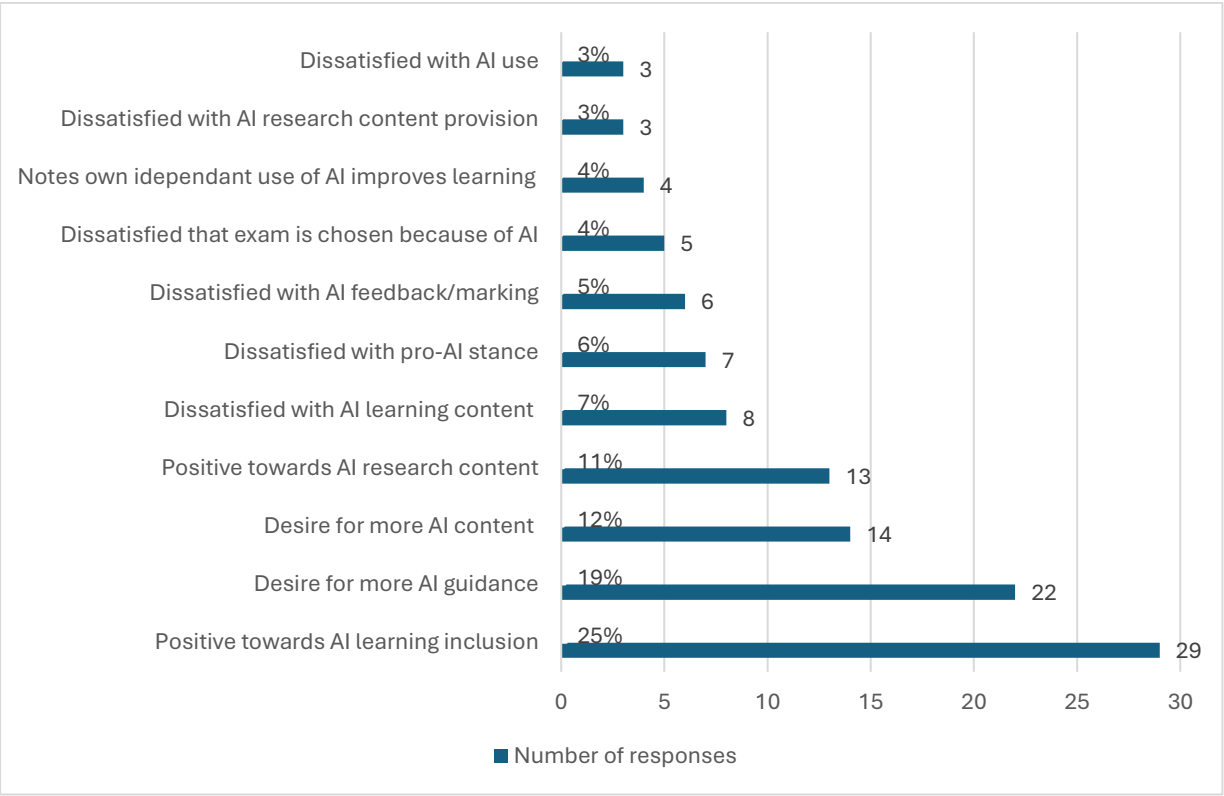
"Have you needed support or training for any of the following skills (in relation to AI)?"



Thematic analysis from survey data

BLUE Unit survey 2025-2026

Blue survey: 125 free-text comments (n.114 when outliers or unclear statements are excluded). Faculty representation: FALS n.81, FHLS n.17, FSEN 16. Level representation: Level 1 n. 12, Level 2 n. 19, Level 3 n. 17, Level 7 n.65. Data searches based on "AI" terminology.



By level, the strongest emerging sentiments are within Level 7 with positive sentiments towards AI learning inclusion (n.26) and AI research content (n.9), and a desire for more AI guidance (n.18) and more AI content (n.5). For Level 1, there is dissatisfaction with the use of AI for feedback and marking activities (n.6). For Level 2, there is a dissatisfaction with pro-AI stances (n.5) and a desire for more AI content (n.4). For Level 3, there is likewise a desire for more AI content (n.4).

The desire for more AI content is diffused across Schools at a low level. The desire for more AI guidance is similarly diffused across Schools, with a high concentration in Innovation (n.12). Dissatisfaction with AI feedback and marking is concentrated in PHPH (n.5). Dissatisfaction with pro-AI stances is concentrated in Arts and Humanities (n.6). Positivity towards AI learning inclusion is concentrated in Innovation (n.22) and diffused at a low level elsewhere.

Outlier data, not included in the above thematic analysis includes the following sentiments:

- Desire for premium AI licensed tools (n.2).
- Suggestions for staff to use AI to summarise slides or content (n.3).
- Overabundance of AI content (n.2).
- Concerns about how balanced AI adoption at the University is (n. 1).
- Concern about groupwork management re. AI (n.1).
- Concern about Turnitin use & accusations (n.1).

Additional data searches for the terms LLMs, ChatGPT, Claude, Grammarly, Gemini, and Copilot yielded a small number of data points (n.14). The most significant finding was the sentiment that students needed to use AI to support their learning due to insufficiencies or lack of clarity in teaching delivery (n.5), and three students noted concerns with staff use of AI leading to doubts of content accuracy.

Data from NSS 2025, & PTES 2025

Data searches included the following terms: AI, LLMs, ChatGPT, Claude, Grammarly, Gemini and Copilot.

Free-text responses relating to AI in the NSS data are limited (n.12). Two main themes emerge: concern that other students use AI inappropriately (n.3); and a desire for better adaption to AI in Education (n.3). The data included responses mostly from Arts, Law and Social Sciences and three responses from Science and Engineering.

Free-text responses relating to AI in the PTES data are even more limited (n.5). The main theme relates to accusations that other students misuse AI (language reliance, n.4; insufficient penalties for misuse, n.1). For context, the comments were negatively framed around students with English as an additional language, with some problematic racialised sentiments emerging.

BILT Student Hackathon 2025

The Student Hackathon and associated small-scale survey (n.50) focused on three principles; empowerment, exploration and inclusivity. A central goal was to investigate the potential of AI in transforming educational curriculums and exploring its role in enhancing learning experiences while championing the student voice from across faculties.

Two key areas of concern were identified: academic integrity and learning; decision making and autonomy.

A key finding was identifying what skills students want, as explained in the figure below, showing two categories of academic skills and professional skills.