



# The Future of Adult and Lifelong Learning in the Age of AI

14 October 2026

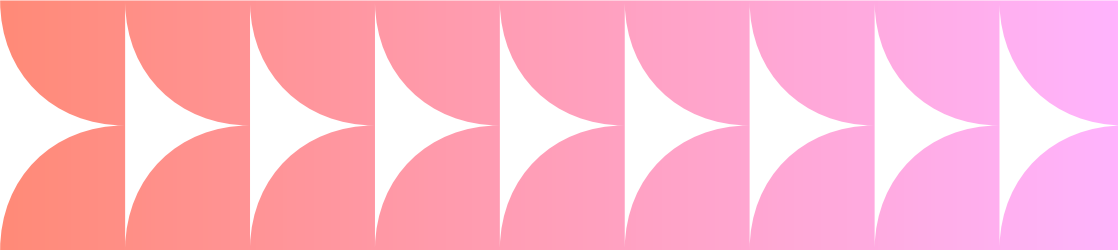


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# Welcome...

Welcome, and thank you for joining us for **The Future of Adult and Lifelong Learning in the Age of AI.**

Today brings together people from education, industry, government, research and technology to explore how we can learn, work and thrive in an AI-enabled world.

Throughout the day, you will hear different perspectives, discover practical examples and take part in conversations about the opportunities and challenges ahead. We hope the conference gives you space to exchange ideas, make new connections and consider what responsible, inclusive and human-centred AI means in practice.

We hope you enjoy the day.

**Professor John Domingue and Esther Spring**

Conference Chairs

The conference is hosted by [The Open University](#) as part of [Milton Keynes Tech Week 2026](#) and is kindly sponsored by [Infosys](#), a global leader in next-generation digital services and consulting.



# Programme

## Morning

**09:00 – 09:30**      **Arrival, registration and coffee**

### **Welcome and housekeeping**

**09:30 – 09:40**      Professor John Domingue and Esther Spring, Conference Chairs, welcome delegates and provide essential information for the day.

### **Introduction: Why Adult and Lifelong Learning Matter in the Age of AI**

*Professor Mark Brandon MBE, Professor Ian Pickup and Emily Darlington MP*

**09:40–10:30**      Drawing on perspectives from research, education and civic leadership, the speakers will set the scene for the day by considering why lifelong learning matters as AI reshapes work, skills and communities.

# Morning

## **The Future Isn't Waiting: How AI is Redefining Skills, Careers and Learning**

***Tom Way***

**10:30–11:00**

AI is changing the relationship between education and employment. Drawing on Hays' perspective on talent and workforce transformation, Tom will consider the growing importance of adaptability, continuous learning and human-centred skills, and the partnerships needed to create a skilled, inclusive and resilient workforce.

**11:00–11:15**

**Break**

## **The Artificial Intelligence Revolution in Education**

***Max Rangeley***

**11:15–12:00**

AI is poised to revolutionise education, from how we learn, to how we apply that knowledge and the nature of ongoing education throughout our careers. But what will this mean for the average person, for academics, for managers, for students? This talk will delve in to the different ways in which AI will affect all of us and how we will learn in the age of AI, for better and for worse (but mostly for better).

## **Purposeful AI in Practice: Innovation, Learning and Impact at The Open University**

***Professor John Domingue***

**12:00–12:30**

John will share how The Open University is using AI to support learning, teaching and organisational innovation. He will highlight emerging tools, research and initiatives that are shaping purposeful and responsible adoption, before inviting delegates to explore OU innovations in the lunchtime exhibition.

**12:30–14:00**

## **Networking lunch and Exhibitor Showcase**

***Jennie Lee Building***

## Afternoon

### **Afternoon welcome and Beyond the Technology: Helping People Thrive in the Age of AI**

*Esther Spring*

**14:00–14:30**

Esther will share The Open University's people-centred approach to AI adoption, including its strategic work, Digital & AI Confidence and Capability programme and OpenLearn Microsoft AI Hub. The session will consider what responsible adoption means for organisations, learners and communities.

### **Panel discussion: Preparing for What's Next: AI, Skills and Lifelong Learning**

*Chair: Professor John Domingue | Panellists: Sophie Lloyd, Peter Gill and Emma Stace*

**14:30–15:00**

Bringing together perspectives from education, industry and policy, the panel will explore the skills, capabilities and mindsets needed in an AI-enabled world, and how lifelong learning can support workforce transformation, organisational readiness and inclusive growth.

**15:00–15:15**

**Break**

### **AI and Young People: Where Are We Getting It Wrong?**

*Emma Darcy*

**15:15–16:00**

Emma will examine whether education is evolving quickly enough for the world young people are entering. Drawing on practice across the sector, she will consider learning, assessment, employability and student voice, challenging delegates to imagine a more relevant and responsive education system.

# Afternoon

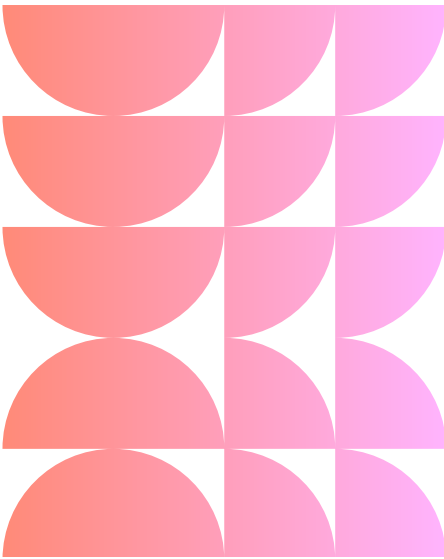
**The revolution in Higher Education: why everyone aged 25–100 should be affiliated to a university for the greatest ride in life**

**16:00–16:45** *Professor Sir Anthony Seldon*

AI is changing Higher Education more than anything in history. The conventional model is breaking down and needs a bold new vision.

**16:45–17:00** **Closing remarks**  
*Professor John Domingue and Esther Spring*

**17:00–18:00** **Networking and reception drinks**



# Chairs



**Professor John Domingue** is Professor of Computer Science at The Open University's Knowledge Media Institute and Vice President of the Semantic Web Science Association.

His work spans AI, knowledge graphs and technology-enhanced learning, with a current focus on responsible generative AI in higher education and tools that support learners and educators.



**Esther Spring** leads Digital & AI Confidence and Capability at The Open University. With experience across broadcasting, digital publishing and education, she specialises in organisational transformation, workforce capability and lifelong learning, helping people and organisations build the confidence, adaptability and skills needed for the future.

# Speakers



**Professor Mark Brandon MBE** is Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research and Innovation at The Open University. A polar oceanographer, he leads strategy for research, knowledge exchange and entrepreneurial growth, and has contributed scientific expertise to public understanding and policy.

He was awarded an MBE for services to polar science in 2021 and the Polar Medal in 2024.



**Professor Ian Pickup** is Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Learning, Teaching and Student Experience at The Open University. A first-generation student, he champions inclusive learning and ensures students' needs inform senior decision-making.

He is a National Teaching Fellow, Principal Fellow of the Higher Education Academy and Professor of the Student Experience in Higher Education.



**Emily Darlington MP** is the Labour MP for Milton Keynes Central and a member of the Science, Innovation and Technology Select Committee. A former Deputy Leader of Milton Keynes City Council, she has also held roles in higher education, public service innovation, trade unions, international development and government.

# Speakers



**Tom Way** is CEO of Hays UK & Ireland and a member of Hays' Global Executive Leadership Team. He brings more than 20 years of international recruitment and workforce solutions experience, helping organisations respond to changing talent and skills needs across sectors and regions.



**Max Rangeley** runs a think tank founded by a Member of Parliament and has served on the boards of think tanks in London and Brussels. His work focuses on emerging technologies, including organising and moderating AI roundtables in the European Parliament. He recently led the academic volume *The Artificial Intelligence Revolution*, bringing together leading international experts in AI, policy and defence.



**Emma Darcy** is an AI and digital strategy consultant working with schools, trusts and education organisations in the UK and internationally. Formerly a technology-for-learning leader at Denbigh High School and Chiltern Learning Trust, she helps organisations develop practical approaches to digital transformation, AI strategy and educational innovation.



**Professor Sir Anthony Seldon** is an educator, historian and commentator on education, AI and public life. A former headteacher and university vice-chancellor, he founded AI in Education and originated The Times Education Commission. He is now Founding Director of Wellington College Education, focusing on how education should evolve for the mid-21st century.

# Panelists



**Sophie Lloyd** is Head of Economic Development at Milton Keynes City Council, leading Invest Milton Keynes and work on innovation, smart cities, inward investment, sustainability and economic growth.

She has extensive experience in place-based development, strategic policy and regional collaboration across Milton Keynes and the wider Oxford–Cambridge region.



**Peter Gill** is Assistant Vice President, and Head of Public Sector at Infosys, with more than 35 years' experience in IT, service delivery, sales and bids. He works with public sector organisations to transform services and supports initiatives that help people develop transferable, future and AI skills.



**Emma Stace** is Chief Digital and Information Officer at The Open University. A people-focused leader, she creates the trust and clarity teams need to test, learn and deliver meaningful outcomes. Her approach is grounded in the belief that change should be built with people, not done to them.



# Our Strategic Technology Partner and Sponsor:

## **Infosys**

### **Supporting responsible, people-centred AI adoption**

Infosys is a strategic technology partner of The Open University and has kindly sponsored our event for the past two years and again this year. We work closely together to support the OU's adoption of AI: from the technical opportunities and infrastructure through to the human considerations, including the skills and confidence colleagues need and the wider choices organisations must make to adopt AI responsibly and effectively.

Meet the Infosys team at their two exhibition stands to explore their AI-first services, solutions and platforms, discuss practical applications of generative AI and find out more about their work with the OU.



# Exhibiton

This event features exhibitors from:

## **Explore AI innovation in practice**

Visit the exhibition during lunch to discover how The Open University and its partners are exploring AI across student support, learning analytics, curriculum development and real-world applications.

Meet the teams, see their work in action and discuss what responsible, inclusive and human-centred innovation looks like in practice.

Many of today's showcases have been developed by colleagues from The Open University's **Knowledge Media Institute (KMi)** and **Institute of Educational Technology (IET)**, working alongside partners from across the University and beyond. The two institutes are internationally recognised for their research and innovation in artificial intelligence, learning technologies, digital education and emerging technologies.

## **Student Progress Tool**

### **Using learning analytics to support student success**

Discover how the Student Progress Tool uses machine learning to identify students who may benefit from additional support. Meet the team and explore how responsibly designed learning analytics can help tutors and student support teams take timely, informed action to support student retention and progression.

## **AIDA**

### **Exploring personalised AI support for students**

Meet AIDA, the Artificial Intelligence Digital Assistant developed at The Open University. Discover how this research-led initiative is exploring the use of generative AI to provide personalised and scalable support for students, including answering study questions and supporting confidence and engagement during the early stages of learning.

# Exhibiton

## AI and intelligent robotics

### Helping robots understand and respond to their surroundings

Explore how The Open University is combining robotics, computer vision and artificial intelligence to develop systems that can understand and respond to real-world environments. Discover research into robots that can identify hazards and support safety and routine activities in settings such as workplaces and healthcare.

## OU Analyse

Discover how the award-winning OU Analyse platform uses machine learning to support student success. Explore both the student- and staff-facing dashboards, see how insights can help students understand and engage with their learning, and discover how tutors and student support teams use responsible learning analytics to take timely, informed action and support student retention and progression

## Studio 41

### Shaping the future of curriculum development

Discover how Studio 41 brings together learning from OU initiatives including the AI Module Writing Assistant (AIMWA) and Scribe to explore how generative AI can support curriculum development.

Meet the teams and discover how AI could help colleagues design, draft and refine educational content in a secure and responsible way, while keeping human expertise, professional judgement and accessibility central.



## About The Open University

The Open University is the UK's largest provider of distance and supported open learning, helping people, organisations and communities learn, work and thrive. Through education, research, innovation and partnerships, we are committed to widening access to opportunity and creating positive social and economic impact across the UK and beyond.

## Educating Learners

We support hundreds of thousands of learners through flexible study, innovative learning technologies and specialist learner support, helping people develop knowledge, skills and confidence throughout their lives.

Alongside our qualifications, **OpenLearn** provides thousands of free courses, articles, videos and learning resources that are open to everyone. This includes the **Microsoft AI Hub**, developed in partnership with Microsoft, which offers practical guidance, learning pathways and resources to help people build confidence and capability in using AI responsibly and effectively.

## Find out more:

Web: <https://www.open.ac.uk/>

## Explore OpenLearn:

Web: <https://www.open.edu/openlearn/>

## Visit the Microsoft AI Hub:

Web: <https://www.open.edu/openlearn/digital-computing/ai-hub>

Email: [student-recruitment@open.ac.uk](mailto:student-recruitment@open.ac.uk)

## **Partnering with Organisations**

We work with employers, professional bodies, public sector organisations and governments to address skills challenges, support workforce development and help organisations adapt and thrive in a rapidly changing world.

### **Find out more:**

Web: <https://business.open.ac.uk/>

Email: [business-development@open.ac.uk](mailto:business-development@open.ac.uk)

## **Advancing Research and Innovation**

Our researchers, technologists and innovators are tackling some of society's biggest challenges, from artificial intelligence and educational technology to health, environmental sustainability and space science.

### **Find out more:**

Web: <https://research.open.ac.uk/>

Email: [research-and-innovation@open.ac.uk](mailto:research-and-innovation@open.ac.uk)

## **Supporting Communities and Careers**

As one of the largest employers in Milton Keynes, with colleagues based across all four nations of the UK, we contribute to skills, innovation and economic growth through a diverse workforce of educators, researchers, technologists and professional specialists.

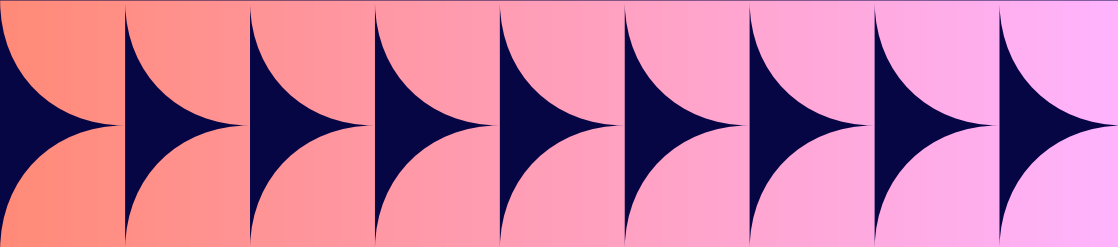
### **Find out more:**

Web: <https://jobs.open.ac.uk/>

Email: [careers@open.ac.uk](mailto:careers@open.ac.uk)







### **Thank you for joining us**

We hope today's discussions, insights and connections have sparked new ideas and fresh perspectives on how people, organisations and communities can learn, work and thrive in the age of AI.

The conversations do not end here. We encourage you to stay connected, continue sharing experiences and help shape a future in which AI is used responsibly, inclusively and for the benefit of all.

### **Stay connected**

#### **Follow The Open University on LinkedIn:**

<https://www.linkedin.com/school/theopenuniversity/>

### **Contact The Open University**

Telephone: 01908 274066

Web: <https://enrolment.open.ac.uk/contact/>

### **Conference enquiries**

Email: [AI-Events@open.ac.uk](mailto:AI-Events@open.ac.uk)

### **The Future of Adult and Lifelong Learning in the Age of AI Conference**

*Learning, Working and Thriving in the Age of AI*

Hosted by The Open University as part of Milton Keynes Tech Week 2026 and kindly sponsored by Infosys.

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Milton Keynes  
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