

A banner with a dark blue background featuring a network of glowing blue nodes and lines, representing a digital or AI theme. The text "AI Roundtable Meeting: Governance & Policy" is centered in a white, serif font.

AI Roundtable Meeting: Governance & Policy

Summary of breakout group activity

During our August 28th AI Roundtable meeting on Governance and Policy, we asked participants to fill out an interactive form to get a better understanding of how institutions were currently responding to the rise of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI), and where they would be focusing their efforts in the upcoming year.

More than 25 Canadian universities and 10 Canadian colleges/polytechnics took part in the discussions. Representatives from government bodies also took part.

We are happy to share the main takeaways from this activity.

There is a lot of disparities between institutions.

While most participating institutions indicated having either a working group, a committee or a taskforce focusing on GenAI, it was not the case at all institutions. Additionally, while some of these committees are university-wide, others were focused either at the faculty-level or within certain units (e.g., Teaching & Learning [T&L] centers).

A handful of institutions indicated having a formal, AI-dedicated policy under development. A few institutions had yet to release any formal statement on the matter. However, the majority found themselves in between, currently working on developing or updating guidelines and resources to best support faculty and students navigate the impacts of GenAI on T&L.

There appears to be a lack of clear, visible leadership on the topic.

Many participants mentioned being unaware of the work that was currently underway at their institution with respect to GenAI, and/or being unsure of the desired output for the work of their institutional committees focusing on GenAI. This might mean that little work is indeed happening or, on the contrary, that some progress is being made but in a quieter manner. In any event, it led to a perception of lack of visible leadership on the issue.

In addition, many participants indicated that the GenAI-related initiatives being led at their institution were scattered and lacked alignment or clear leadership. For instance, at many

institutions, the work was solely being led by T&L centers, without clear involvement from senior leadership. This led to a lack of resources, or limited buy-in within the institution.

Ultimately, decision-making power with respect to how to handle AI seems to reside mostly in each instructor to decide for their own courses.

Much of the thinking to date is with respect to T&L.

Most of the work currently underway in institutions seemed to revolve around T&L. This includes, notably, developing AI literacy amongst faculty and students, reflecting on ethical uses of AI, developing guidance for curricular changes and assessment design to prevent academic misconduct, developing ways to integrate GenAI in courses and assignments, and developing template statements to include in syllabi.

Some institutions' work went beyond T&L to also include issues such as data privacy and security. However, most participants reported their institution seemed to be lagging in their reflections on how to address the impacts of AI outside T&L, particularly with respect to research and business operations.

Staff and students are seldom involved in the work, and community engagement is limited.

Most of the existing committees involved some sort of representation from senior administration, academic integrity offices, faculty, and T&L centres. Although they were involved in certain institutions, staff and students appeared to be rarely invited around the table.

A few institutions mentioned also involving other positions, such as continuing studies, grad studies, accessible learning services, library, student support services, communications, IT and cybersecurity, risk management, finances and operations, and HR.

In general, there seemed to be limited broader community engagement outside the committees.

Institutions are facing roadblocks in their work related to AI.

When planning to respond to the impacts of AI in higher education, institutions must consider the risks of being faced with certain challenges, such as:

- An uncoordinated response at the institutional level;
- A rapid pace of change and a lack of familiarity with tools;
- Polarized views around AI;
- Competing needs of faculty, and lack of alignment across programs and academic departments;
- Limited capacity to develop policies and guidelines, or quickly adapt courses and assessments.

Looking ahead...

The majority of institutions plan to be focusing their efforts in the upcoming six months on:

- Continuing to build AI literacy and learning about best practices;
- Developing working groups or institutional committees;
- Developing institutional statements;
- Reviewing existing policies to include GenAI considerations;
- Developing guidelines to support faculty and students adapt T&L;
- Developing training for faculty;
- Creating resources hub;
- Engaging the community.

However, only a handful of institutions appeared further ahead and were already developing comprehensive policies, or looking into how to integrate AI into their strategic plan.



Higher Education Strategy Associates (HESA) is a Toronto-based firm providing strategic insight and guidance to governments, postsecondary institutions, and agencies through excellence and expertise in policy analysis, monitoring and evaluation, and strategic consulting services. Through these activities, HESA strives to improve the quality, efficacy, and fairness of higher education systems in Canada and worldwide.

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Any errors or omissions are the authors' alone.

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