

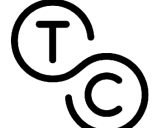
UNSW | UTS Trustworthy Digital Society Student Forum Insight Report

Version 1
7th October 2026



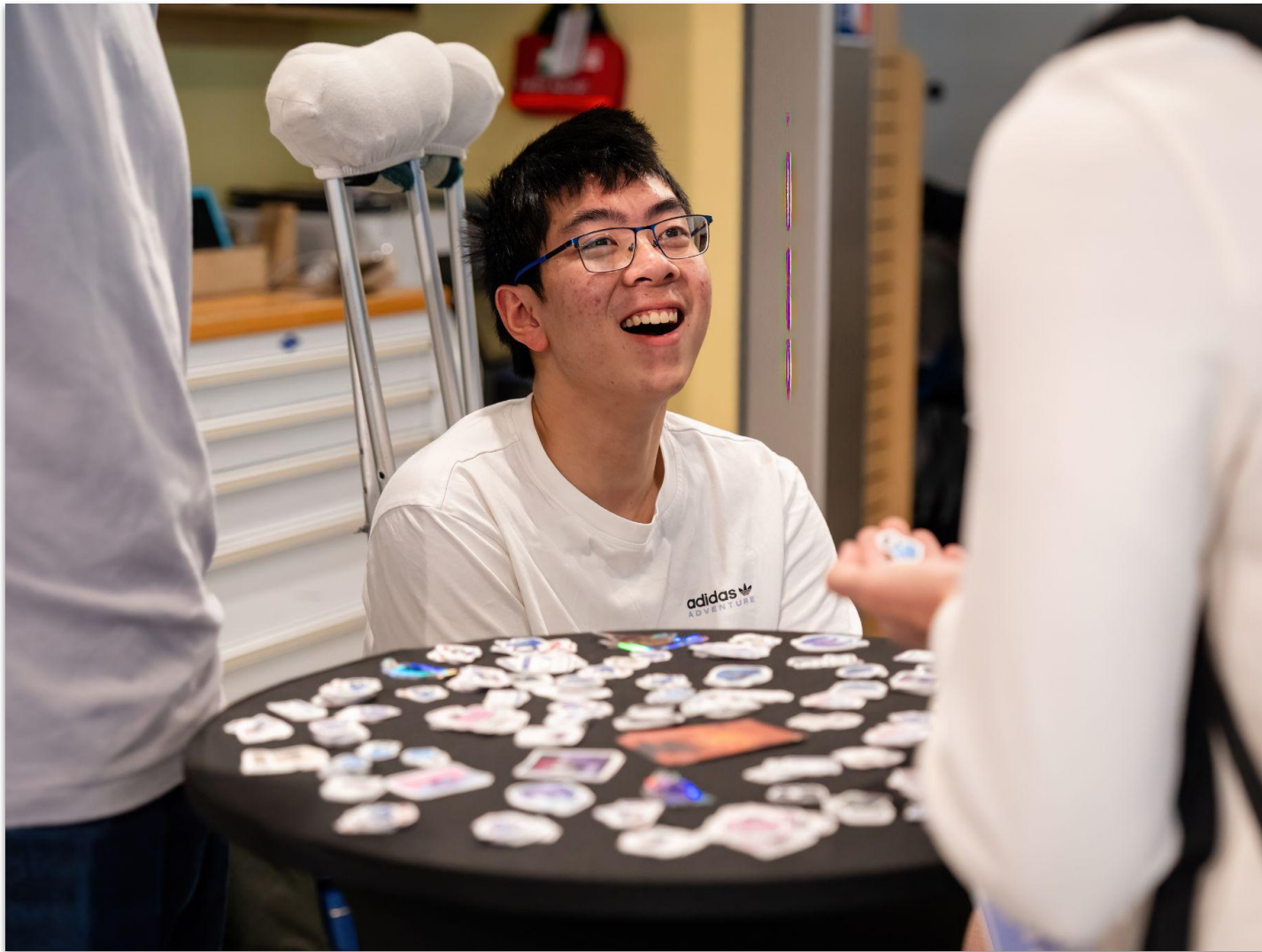
UNSW
SYDNEY

Trustworthy
Digital Society

 TwoCollaborate

Index

Executive Summary	3
Workshop Scribe	4
Opening & Context Setting	5
World Cafe	9
Panel Discussion	21
Closing	24
Appendix	26



Executive Summary

The UNSW–UTS Trustworthy Digital Society Student Forum, held on 7 October 2026, brought students together with representatives from academia, industry and government to explore how artificial intelligence (AI) is shaping education, future careers and everyday life, and what it means to build a trustworthy digital society.

Designed to place student perspectives at the centre of the conversation, the forum combined opening reflections from Professor Helen Paik and Victor Dominello, an interactive four-round World Café exploring eight topics, and a student-moderated panel discussion. The event provided a platform for participants to share experiences, challenge assumptions and explore opportunities for a more responsible and inclusive AI-enabled future.

Across the World Café discussions, six interconnected themes emerged, reflecting both the opportunities and challenges of AI adoption:

- Preserving human capabilities: Maintaining critical thinking, creativity and independent judgement as AI takes on more tasks.
- Rethinking learning and careers: Ensuring students and graduates continue to develop foundational skills and meaningful experience in an AI-enabled world.
- Strengthening accountability: Clarifying responsibilities and safeguards when AI systems produce harmful or unintended outcomes.
- Building digital trust: Addressing growing uncertainty around authentic information, manipulation and algorithmic influence.
- Maintaining choice and control: Ensuring people can understand, question and influence the AI systems shaping their experiences.
- Enabling equitable participation: Looking beyond access to AI tools to consider the skills, confidence and support needed to benefit from them.

The panel discussion extended these insights, highlighting the changing nature of work, the enduring importance of human capabilities and the need for individuals and organisations to remain accountable for how AI is developed and used.

The conversations pointed towards opportunities for further exploration across human capability and learning, accountable AI systems, trustworthy digital experiences and inclusive AI participation.

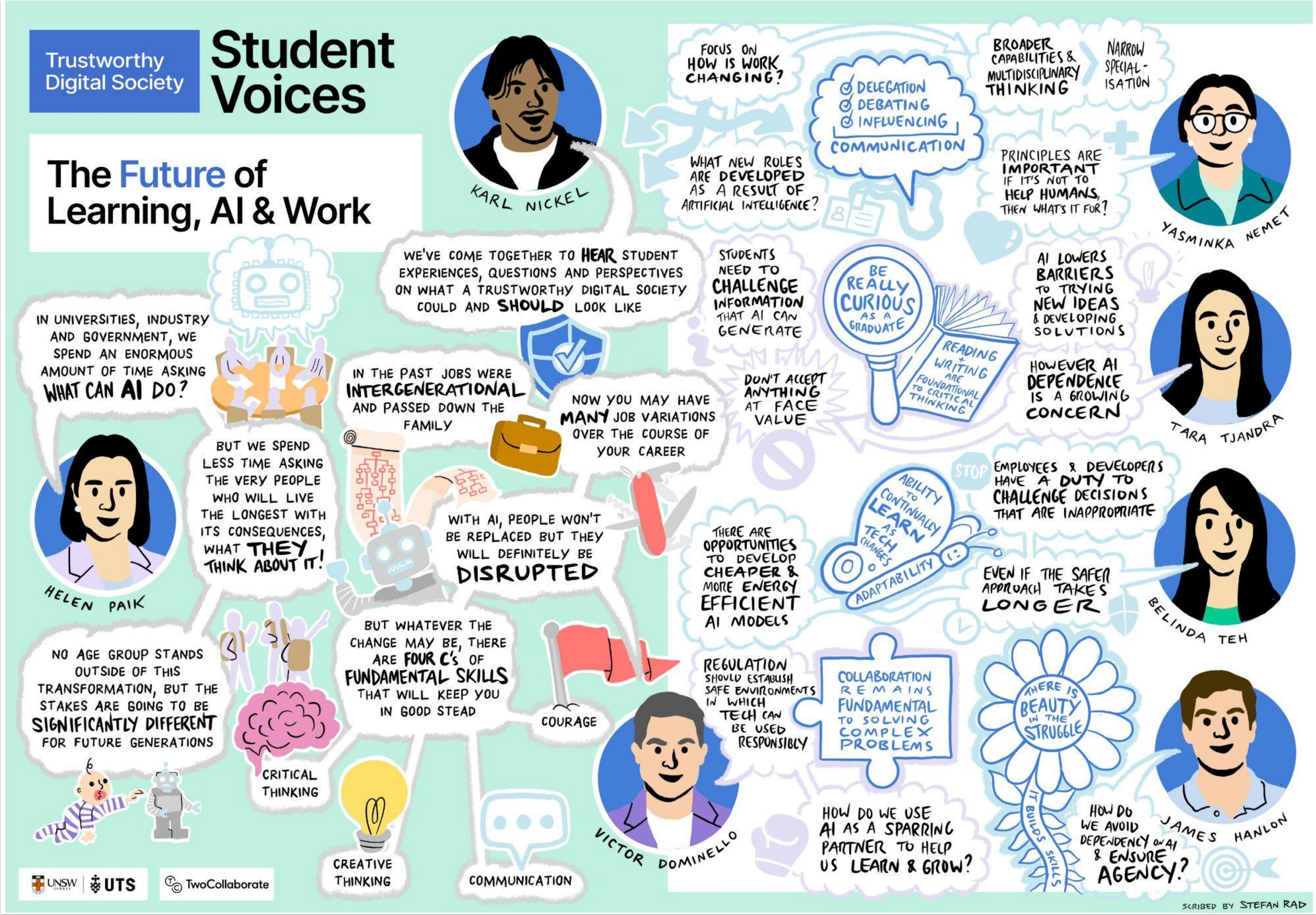
Together, the forum reinforced that building a trustworthy digital society requires more than technological advancement. It requires continued dialogue and collaboration between students, universities, industry and government, with student voices playing an active role in shaping the future of AI.

Event Parameters

Attendance:
40 participants including students, academics and professional staff

Date:
7 October 2026

Location:
Michael Crouch Innovation Centre, UNSW Kensington Campus



Opening & Context Setting



Setting the scene for student-led conversations on AI, its impact on society and the importance of building a trustworthy digital future.



Event opening

The forum opened with a welcome and Acknowledgement of Country led by student MC Karl, who guided participants through the event and set the tone for an open, participatory conversation.

As a fellow student, Karl helped establish the forum as a space where students could share their experiences, raise questions and contribute their perspectives on the future of AI.

The opening introduced the day's interactive format, encouraging participants to approach the conversations with curiosity, openness and a willingness to engage with different viewpoints.

Professor Helen Paik and Victor Dominello then provided broader context for the discussions, reflecting on the importance of student voices and the principles needed to build trust in an increasingly digital society.



Why student voices matter

Helen Paik, Research Director, the Trustworthy Digital Society, opened the scene by challenging the tendency for universities, industry and government to focus on what AI can do, without sufficiently consulting those who will live with its longer-term consequences.

Key insights

- Students will experience AI differently. Career stages and generational perspectives shape how people experience AI's risks and opportunities, with students facing particular uncertainty around entry-level careers and skills development.
- Technological possibility is not the same as desirability. Conversations about AI need to consider what it should and should not do, rather than focusing solely on its capabilities.
- Students' lived experiences are essential evidence. Understanding where AI helps, undermines skills, limits opportunities or influences choices is critical to informing future decisions.
- Constructive disagreement is valuable. Contrasting perspectives, tensions and challenges to existing assumptions may offer the most meaningful insights.

"We spend an enormous amount of time asking what AI can do. But we spend rather less time asking the very people who will live the longest with its consequences what they think it should do, and what they think it should not do."



Building trust in a digital society

Victor Dominello, Director, Trustworthy Digital Society; former NSW Minister for Customer Service and Digital, set the scene by drawing on his experience leading digital transformation in the NSW government.

Key insights

- Trust must be deliberately designed. Security, privacy, resilience, inclusion, transparency and ethics are fundamental to trustworthy digital systems.
- Failure is part of innovation. The capacity to recover, learn and adapt is essential when delivering new digital technologies and services.
- Transparency is increasingly critical. As AI systems become more complex, understanding how information and decisions are generated becomes an important foundation for trust.
- Digital inclusion requires choice. Not everyone wants to, or can, engage with AI and digital services in the same way.
- AI will disrupt career pathways. While the exact impacts remain uncertain, students should anticipate changing roles and skills requirements throughout their working lives.

The Six principles of digital trust

Victor introduced six interconnected principles informed by his experiences delivering public digital services:

1. **Security** - protecting systems and users
2. **Privacy** - safeguarding personal information
3. **Resilience** - recovering and adapting to failure
4. **Inclusion** - ensuring no one is left behind
5. **Transparency** - making systems and decisions understandable
6. **Ethics** - acting with a moral compass



World Cafe



Bringing diverse perspectives together to explore students' experiences, concerns and aspirations for an AI-enabled future.



Activity Overview

The World Café was designed as an interactive, student-centred conversation to explore the opportunities, challenges and implications of AI in shaping a trustworthy digital society. Participants moved between facilitated table discussions, sharing personal experiences, challenging perspectives and exploring what a more trustworthy AI-enabled future could look like.

How the activity worked

The activity consisted of four 20-minute discussion rounds, with participants moving between tables to engage with different topics and perspectives.

Eight discussion topics were explored across the four rounds, covering AI in education, future careers, workplace readiness, accountability, algorithmic influence, digital authenticity, equitable access and reliance on AI. AI in Education continued across all four rounds, allowing participants to explore the topic in greater depth.

Table posters provided guiding questions, while an optional collection of real-world AI case studies offered additional context and examples for discussion.

Activity output

The conversations provided qualitative insights into participants' lived experiences, concerns, aspirations and ideas. These were synthesised into eight topic summaries and six cross-cutting themes, highlighting emerging opportunities for further research, collaboration and exploration.

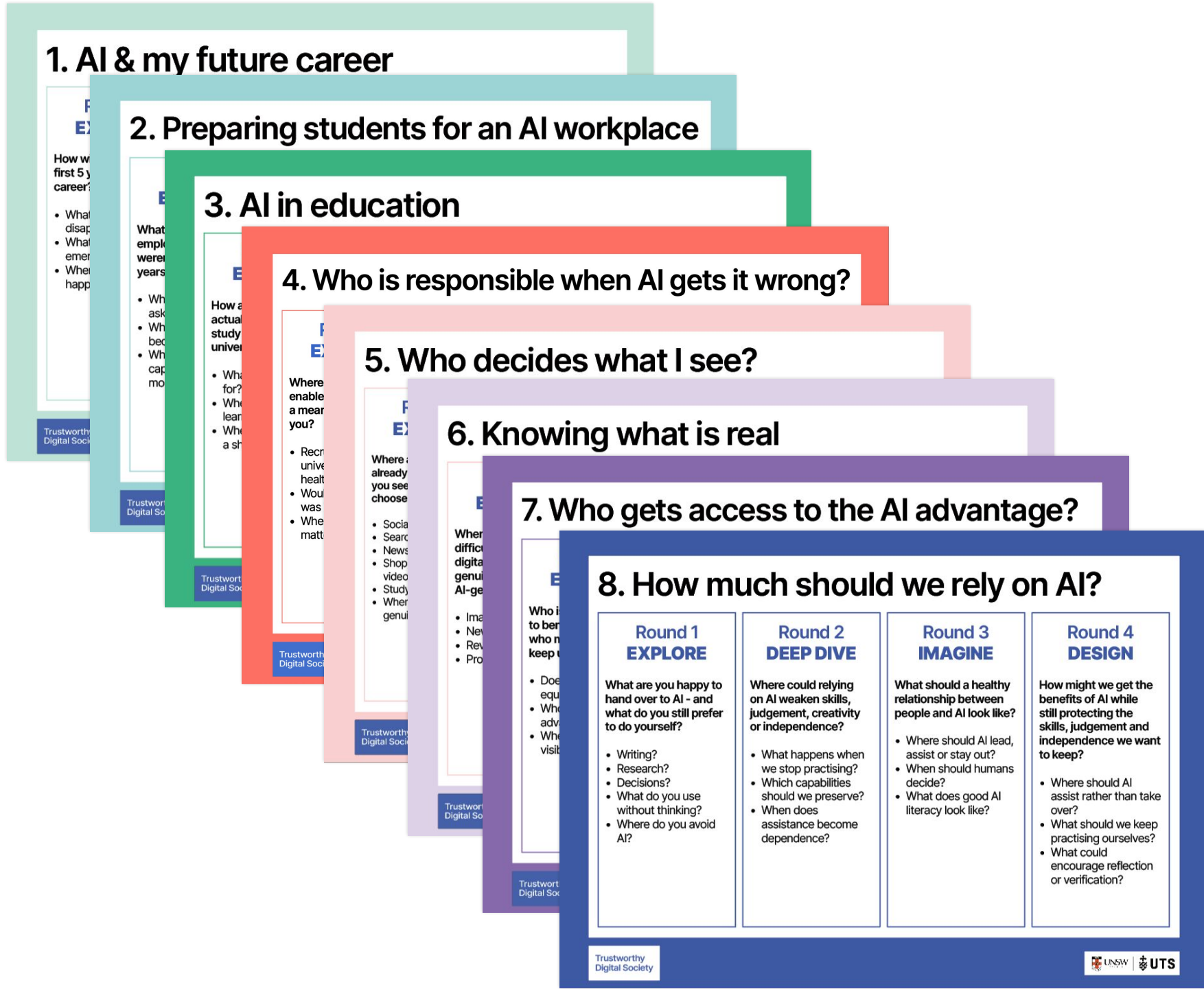
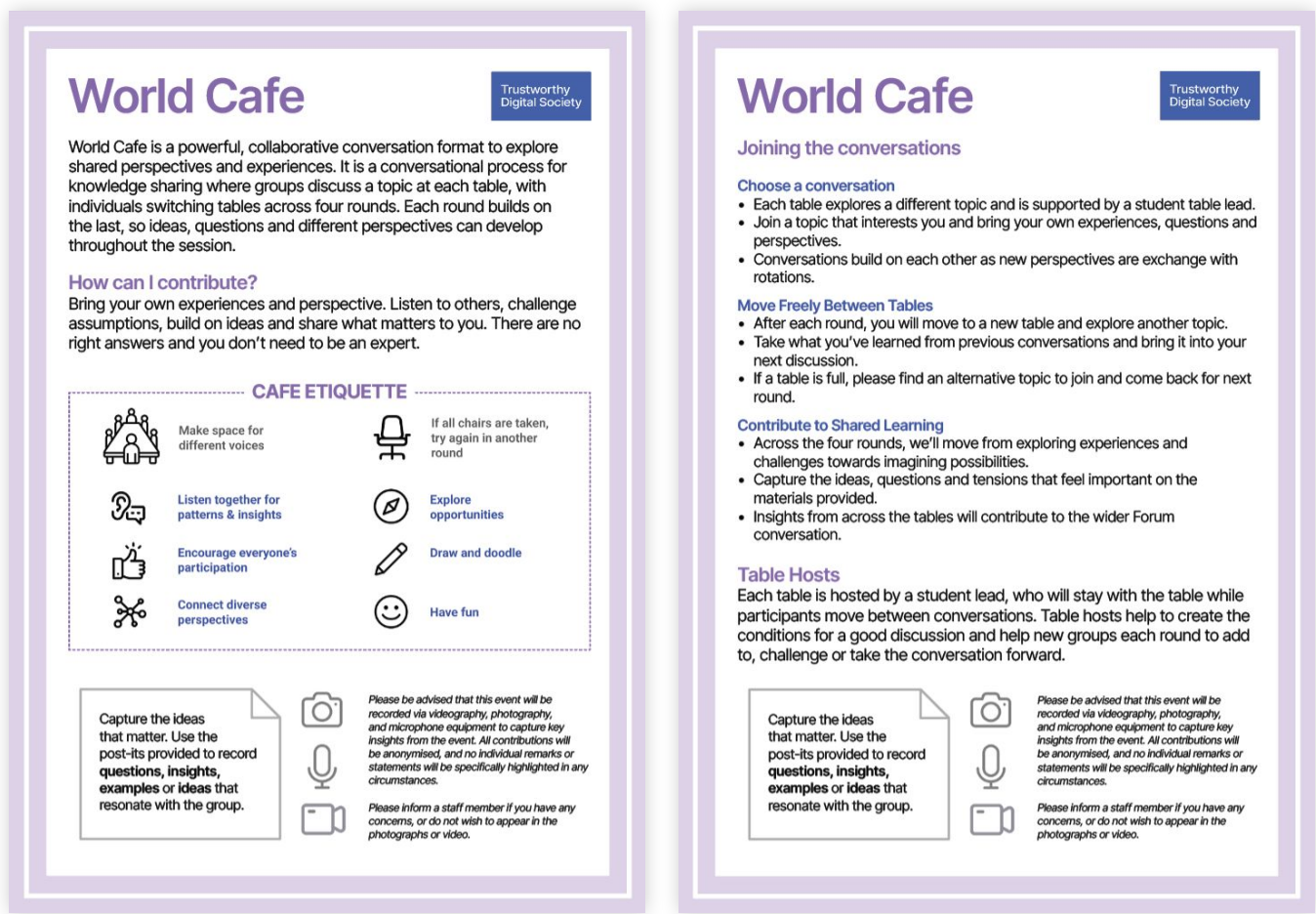


Table topics and guiding questions



World Cafe menu

Six themes shaping a trustworthy digital future

Across the eight World Café topics, participants explored AI as both an opportunity and a source of uncertainty. Conversations ranged from everyday experiences of studying and working with AI to broader questions about accountability, digital trust, inclusion and human independence.

An emerging thread is that **trustworthy AI is about more than the technology itself**. Participants repeatedly returned to the skills people need, the choices they should retain and the responsibilities of the organisations developing and deploying AI.

Together, these six themes capture the interconnected issues that emerged across the discussions.

1. Protecting human capability in an AI-enabled world

As AI takes on more tasks, participants questioned how people can continue to develop the foundational knowledge, critical thinking and independent judgement needed to use it well. The concern extended beyond education into careers, creativity and everyday decision-making.

2. Rethinking how people learn, work and become experts

Participants questioned whether existing education, assessment and graduate development pathways are keeping pace with AI adoption. While automation offers efficiency, it also changes the experiences through which students and early-career professionals build competence and progress.

3. Making accountability meaningful when AI gets it wrong

Participants recognised that AI outcomes reflect decisions made by developers, organisations and users. Their discussions highlighted the challenge of defining responsibility, maintaining human oversight and ensuring that safeguards and remedies are available when systems cause harm.

4. Rebuilding confidence in what people see and trust

As AI-generated content becomes more convincing and algorithms increasingly shape digital experiences, participants raised concerns about authenticity, manipulation and the reliability of information. They also recognised that the consequences depend on context, with greater concern around high-stakes information and decisions.

5. Giving people meaningful choice and control

Across discussions of algorithmic feeds, AI-assisted work and autonomous systems, participants questioned how much control people retain over technologies they use. Transparency was important, but so was the practical ability to question outputs, adjust experiences and intervene when necessary.

6. Ensuring the benefits of AI are shared more equitably

Participants highlighted that AI access, literacy and confidence vary between individuals and communities. They questioned whether AI could widen existing inequalities, particularly when people lack the skills, resources or human support needed to benefit from it safely.

From student perspectives to future opportunities

The World Café conversations revealed more than differing views on AI's benefits and risks. They highlighted the tensions people are navigating as AI becomes part of everyday learning, work and digital life, and pointed towards opportunities for further research, collaboration and exploration.

What the conversations revealed

- 1. The opportunity and the risk often sit side by side.** Participants recognised AI's potential to improve efficiency, accessibility and creativity, while questioning its impact on learning, independent judgement and human connection. The challenge is not simply whether to adopt AI, but how to realise its benefits without compromising what matters.
- 2. Trust requires more than individual responsibility.** AI literacy and critical thinking were seen as essential, but participants also questioned how much responsibility should fall on individuals. Trustworthy AI requires organisations, technology providers and institutions to provide meaningful safeguards, transparency and accountability.
- 3. The conversation is shifting from what AI can do to what it should enable.** Beyond technological capabilities, participants questioned how AI should support learning, career development, informed choices and equitable participation. These discussions point towards a broader consideration of the human outcomes AI should serve.

Where opportunities could emerge

- **Human capability and learning**
Exploring how education and employment can preserve critical thinking, independent judgement and meaningful pathways to professional expertise.
- **Accountable AI systems**
Strengthening approaches to human oversight, organisational responsibility and meaningful recourse when AI systems produce harmful outcomes.
- **Trustworthy digital experiences**
Exploring how people can better understand, verify and control the information and AI-enabled systems shaping their decisions.
- **Inclusive AI participation**
Looking beyond access to technology to address the skills, confidence and support needed for people to benefit equitably from AI.

These opportunity areas are interpretations of the discussions, intended to inform future exploration rather than represent formally agreed participant recommendations.

Topic 1: AI & My future career

Discussion on this table explored how AI is reshaping the early stages of students' careers, from changing job roles and recruitment expectations to the skills and experiences needed for long-term career development.

Participants reflected on the opportunities and uncertainties emerging as AI takes on more technical and routine tasks, and what this could mean for their future employability and professional growth.

Core insight

AI is transforming early-career opportunities, raising questions about how graduates will develop the skills and experience needed to become future experts.

While participants recognised AI's potential to improve productivity and create new opportunities, they were concerned that automating entry-level tasks could remove important opportunities for learning, practising and developing professional judgement.

What this could mean

- An opportunity to rethink early-career pathways. A growing need to explore how graduates can continue to gain meaningful experience, develop foundational skills and progress towards expertise.
- A shift in how graduate potential is recognised. Recognising critical thinking, adaptability and professional judgement alongside technical capabilities.
- New possibilities for career development and entrepreneurship. Exploring how AI can enable emerging roles, entrepreneurship and alternative career pathways

What we heard

- **Foundational skills still matter.** As AI takes on more technical tasks, students emphasised the importance of understanding the underlying work to evaluate outputs, recognise errors and make informed decisions.
- **Traditional pathways to expertise are at risk.** Routine tasks may be automated, but these have historically helped graduates build confidence, technical proficiency and professional judgement. Students questioned how this learning would happen in the future.
- **Human capabilities are becoming more valuable.** Critical thinking, creativity, communication and adaptability were seen as essential capabilities that complement AI and help graduates remain relevant as roles evolve.
- **New career pathways are emerging.** Some participants saw AI as an opportunity to pursue entrepreneurship and develop new businesses, although others emphasised that technology alone cannot replace commercial judgement and collaboration.
- **Recruitment practices may need to evolve.** Participants questioned whether conventional technical assessments and multi-stage recruitment processes adequately reflect the capabilities required in AI-enabled workplaces.

"I feel like there's a possibility for me to not be relevant if I'm not focusing on the correct things in my career."

"I think what's important is a hybrid approach, not like full reliance..."

Quotes are extracted from World Café discussions and lightly edited for clarity.

Topic 2: Preparing students for an AI workplace

This discussion focused on how universities and industry can better prepare students for the realities of an AI-enabled workplace. Drawing on their experiences of university learning and emerging workplace practices, participants explored the capabilities graduates will need, the gaps between education and industry expectations, and opportunities to make learning more practical, relevant and future-focused.

Core insight

Preparing graduates for an AI-enabled workplace requires more than AI literacy. Students need practical experience, discipline-specific knowledge and clearer expectations from industry.

Participants described a gap between learning about AI and knowing how to apply it responsibly in professional settings, highlighting opportunities for universities and employers to work more closely together.

What this could mean

- An opportunity to strengthen applied AI learning. Bridging the gap between technical knowledge and workplace practice through discipline-specific experiences.
- Stronger connections between universities and industry. Aligning learning opportunities with evolving workplace expectations and responsible AI practices.
- A need to reconsider graduate development in AI-enabled workplaces. Exploring how graduates can gain meaningful experience and build expertise as AI reshapes entry-level work.

What we heard

- **Workplace AI adoption is uneven.** Participants shared contrasting experiences, from organisations actively automating workflows to workplaces restricting AI use, creating uncertainty about what graduates will be expected to know and do.
- **Practical application is a priority.** Students valued courses that connect AI capabilities with real-world problems, particularly through applied projects, industry mentorship and opportunities to work with emerging technologies.
- **Responsible AI use requires clearer guidance.** Students wanted greater clarity on workplace expectations, including what information can be shared with AI tools, when AI assistance is appropriate and where independent judgement remains essential.
- **Domain expertise remains fundamental.** Participants highlighted that knowing how to use an AI tool is not enough. Graduates also need sufficient technical and disciplinary understanding to guide, evaluate and improve its outputs.
- **Graduate roles and expectations are changing.** As AI takes on tasks traditionally assigned to junior employees, participants questioned how graduates will gain experience. AI-enabled efficiency may also increase expectations around workload and productivity.
- **University–industry alignment needs strengthening.** Students suggested closer collaboration to clarify changing workplace requirements and ensure learning experiences remain relevant to emerging professional roles.

“I don't just want to get hired for a job ... I [want to] actually apply that stuff to a real problem.”

Quotes are extracted from World Café discussions and lightly edited for clarity.

Topic 3: AI in education

This table explored how AI is changing the way students learn, complete assessments and demonstrate their knowledge. Across all four rounds, participants reflected on their own AI usage, the boundaries between assistance and dependence, and how universities might rethink learning and assessment in an AI-enabled environment.

Core insight

The challenge is no longer whether students use AI, but how to ensure they continue to learn and demonstrate genuine understanding.

Participants recognised AI's value as a learning assistant while questioning whether convenient access to answers could weaken critical thinking and foundational skills. Discussions pointed towards assessment models that accommodate AI while maintaining accountability for individual learning.

What this could mean

- An opportunity to rethink assessment for an AI-enabled world. Exploring approaches that assess reasoning, decision-making and genuine understanding while recognising AI as part of contemporary learning and work.
- A more developmental approach to AI in education. Considering how AI use and assessment expectations could evolve throughout a degree, balancing foundational learning with increasing independence.
- New possibilities for AI-supported learning. Exploring how AI can provide feedback, explanation and personalised support without replacing the intellectual effort required to develop lasting skills.

"I think a lot of times if you're just relying on AI, not enough people [are] taking pride in the fact that you're human."

What we heard

- **Students are already integrating AI into everyday learning.** Participants described using AI to explain concepts, review drafts, summarise literature, improve grammar and check answers. Some deliberately complete work independently before seeking AI feedback to preserve their own thinking.
- **AI assistance can become a shortcut to understanding.** Participants raised concerns about students using AI to complete assignments without developing the knowledge needed to perform independently. Examples of strong assignment results followed by poor examination performance illustrated this tension.
- **Not everyone agrees on which skills students must retain.** Some argued that independent mastery remains essential, while others questioned whether traditional assessments still make sense when AI will remain available in professional environments.
- **Assessment needs to demonstrate thinking, not just outputs.** Students discussed oral examinations, live demonstrations, project walkthroughs and questions that require explaining or modifying submitted work as ways to verify genuine understanding.
- **AI expectations may need to evolve across a degree.** Participants considered whether students in earlier years should have tighter boundaries to develop foundational skills, with greater flexibility in later years when they can use AI more critically and independently.
- **Unclear expectations can discourage honest AI use.** Participants suggested that even where AI is permitted, uncertainty about what is acceptable can make students reluctant to disclose how they have used it.

Quotes are extracted from World Café discussions and lightly edited for clarity.

Topic 4: Who is responsible when AI gets it wrong?

This discussion examined responsibility and accountability when AI systems produce incorrect, biased or harmful outcomes. Participants explored examples from recruitment, autonomous vehicles, security and other high-stakes settings, considering the roles of technology developers, organisations, users and governments in preventing harm and responding when things go wrong.

Core insight

Accountability for AI cannot rest with a single individual or system. Responsibility needs to be shared, but clearly defined across those who develop, deploy and use it.

Participants recognised that AI-enabled outcomes are shaped by multiple decisions, from training and design to deployment and human oversight. They questioned whether existing safeguards and regulations are sufficient, particularly when mistakes have serious consequences.

What this could mean

- An opportunity to clarify shared accountability for AI. Exploring how responsibility can be distributed across developers, organisations, users and regulators without leaving gaps when harm occurs.
- A stronger focus on safeguards and human oversight. Considering how testing, transparency and intervention mechanisms could better protect people in high-stakes AI applications.
- New directions for AI governance and regulation. Exploring regulatory approaches that reflect the potential consequences of AI systems and create meaningful accountability for organisations deploying them.

What we heard

- **Responsibility extends across the AI lifecycle.** Participants identified roles for developers, organisations, users and those responsible for reviewing AI outputs. There was broad recognition that accountability depends on who controls the system and the decisions being made.
- **AI providers should anticipate misuse and error.** Participants argued that developers and organisations have a responsibility to implement safeguards, test systems and address foreseeable risks.
- **High-stakes applications require stronger oversight.** Discussions about autonomous vehicles, recruitment and military systems highlighted concerns about allowing AI to make consequential decisions without sufficient human control or intervention.
- **Existing regulation may not match the scale of AI deployment.** Participants compared AI with industries such as aviation, healthcare and automotive manufacturing, questioning why technologies with significant potential impacts can be released without equivalent scrutiny.
- **Organisational accountability matters as much as individual responsibility.** Participants questioned whether accountability should fall on individual engineers or extend to organisational leadership, policies and decisions about how AI is developed and deployed.
- **Accountability must include meaningful consequences.** The discussion moved beyond assigning blame to whether financial penalties, liability and other measures provide sufficient incentives for organisations to prevent harm.

"I think both, to be honest ... they should have safety measures ... but also the user should still be held accountable."

Quotes are extracted from World Café discussions and lightly edited for clarity.

Topic 5: Who decides what I see

This discussion explored how algorithms shape the information, products and perspectives people encounter online. Participants drew on experiences with social media, shopping, news and entertainment platforms to examine the benefits and limitations of personalisation, and what meaningful transparency and user control could look like.

Core insight

Personalisation can make digital experiences more convenient, but it can also narrow people's choices and influence their perspectives without their awareness.

Participants valued recommendations that help them discover relevant content, but questioned how much control they genuinely have over what appears in their feeds. The discussion highlighted a need for greater transparency, choice and awareness of how algorithms shape digital experiences.

What this could mean

- A shift towards more meaningful algorithmic transparency. Making it easier for people to understand why content is shown and how their behaviour influences what they see.
- There should be a balance that the recommendation system should be relevance with exposure to different ideas, products and perspectives.

“Even though I was open to the idea of shopping, it kind of closed down my field and I got less to choose from.”

You just think, oh, the whole world thinks like [me] ... but actually it's just ... the comments.”

What we heard

- **Personalisation is useful, but its value depends on context.** Participants generally welcomed relevant recommendations for music, gaming and shopping. However, they were more cautious when algorithms shaped news, political information or exposure to differing opinions.
- **Recommendation systems can limit discovery.** Participants described algorithms repeatedly presenting similar products or content based on previous interactions, sometimes narrowing their options when they wanted to explore something different.
- **Personalisation can reinforce existing beliefs.** Discussions highlighted how social media feeds, and potentially even comment rankings, may present users with content that reflects their existing interests or viewpoints, creating a misleading impression of what others think.
- **Users have limited visibility into how algorithms work.** Participants questioned why particular content appeared and how platforms collect or interpret their data. Some shared concerns about targeted advertising and tracking, although the mechanisms behind individual experiences were uncertain.
- **Existing controls may not offer meaningful choice.** Participants discussed features that allow users to adjust interests, reset recommendations or indicate what they do not want to see. While these were seen as useful, they still operate within parameters defined by the platform.
- **Transparency needs to be understandable and useful.** The discussion raised questions about how much information users need to make informed choices, without overwhelming them with technical explanations or additional controls.

Quotes are extracted from World Café discussions and lightly edited for clarity.

Topic 6: Knowing what is real

This discussion examined the growing difficulty of distinguishing authentic digital content from AI-generated or manipulated material. Participants explored deepfakes, misinformation, online identities and digital fraud, considering where authenticity matters most and how different levels of digital awareness affect people's ability to recognise deception.

Core insight

As AI-generated content becomes harder to distinguish from reality, trust can no longer depend on people's ability to recognise what is fake.

Participants recognised both the creative possibilities of synthetic media and the risks of increasingly convincing deception. They highlighted the consequences for public information, personal relationships and vulnerable users, questioning whether individuals can realistically be expected to verify everything they encounter online.

What this could mean

- There is a need to establish more reliable ways to establish the origins and credibility of digital content as synthetic media becomes increasingly convincing.
- A greater focus on accessible digital literacy. Helping people with different levels of technical confidence recognise manipulation, question information and respond to potential deception.
- A shift towards shared responsibility for digital trust. Exploring how platforms, institutions and technology providers could support authenticity rather than leaving individuals to verify content alone.

"It would become really problematic ... for those who aren't aware of AI to actually differentiate between what is real and what's not."

What we heard

- **AI-generated content is becoming increasingly convincing.** Participants reflected on how rapidly synthetic images, video and audio have improved, making familiar visual clues less reliable for identifying manipulated content.
- **The consequences of deception vary significantly by context.** Some participants were relatively unconcerned about AI-generated entertainment, but saw much greater risks in legal evidence, political information, recruitment and other situations where authenticity affects consequential decisions.
- **Digital literacy shapes people's vulnerability.** Participants recognised that their own familiarity with AI may help them identify suspicious content, while people with less technical awareness, including older relatives, may be more exposed to impersonation and scams.
- **Deepfakes threaten trust in personal relationships.** Participants discussed how cloned voices and convincing online identities could exploit people's trust in family members, friends or colleagues, particularly when messages create urgency or emotional pressure.
- **Misinformation interacts with existing beliefs.** Discussions explored how people may be more willing to accept questionable content when it reinforces their opinions, especially where recommendation algorithms repeatedly expose them to similar perspectives.
- **Authenticity extends beyond identifying AI-generated media.** Participants also questioned the reliability of written information presented through apparently credible channels, and whether traditional assumptions about institutional verification still hold.

Quotes are extracted from World Café discussions and lightly edited for clarity.

Topic 7: Who gets access to the AI advantage?

This discussion explored who is best positioned to benefit from AI and which individuals or communities risk being left behind. Participants considered differences in access, affordability, digital literacy, language and confidence, alongside the responsibilities of universities, employers and technology providers in making AI opportunities more inclusive.

Core insight

Equal access to AI does not guarantee equal opportunity to benefit from it. The greater divide may lie in people's ability, confidence and support to use it effectively.

Participants recognised that AI can expand access to knowledge and services, but questioned whether these benefits reach everyone equally. Discussions highlighted how existing inequalities, technological biases and differences in digital capability could shape who gains the greatest advantage.

What this could mean

- New directions for inclusive AI design and development. Considering how AI systems can better recognise diverse user needs, reduce embedded biases and support equitable outcomes.
- A greater focus on inclusive AI education and outreach. Exploring how universities, industry and technology providers can support communities facing digital, financial, geographic or educational barriers.

"Some people will come in and they'll ask AI and they think AI is like the source of truth."

"I'm worried that human connection and human effort is going to become a luxury."

What we heard

- **Access involves more than availability or affordability.** Participants distinguished between having access to AI tools and knowing how to use them meaningfully. Differences in technical knowledge, prompting skills and critical thinking were seen as important drivers of unequal outcomes.
- **Existing inequalities can carry into AI systems.** The discussion explored gender differences in AI adoption and concerns about racial and cultural biases in model outputs. Participants questioned how systems trained on existing information could reproduce or amplify social inequalities.
- **Older and less digitally confident users may face additional barriers.** Participants shared experiences of helping older customers and family members navigate technology, highlighting concerns about their ability to evaluate AI-generated information and avoid misleading content.
- **Geographic and technological restrictions influence access.** Participants discussed how access to different AI models varies across countries, potentially affecting the quality of tools available and the opportunities people can pursue.
- **AI could create new forms of educational inequality.** Some participants worried that inexpensive AI tutoring could become a substitute for human teaching and support, potentially making personal interaction a privilege for those who can afford it.
- **Education and support are essential to equitable participation.** Participants highlighted opportunities for universities and technology providers to extend AI education beyond current students, including outreach to younger learners, disadvantaged communities and older users.

Quotes are extracted from World Café discussions and lightly edited for clarity.

Topic 8: How much should we rely on AI?

This discussion explored how people can balance the convenience and capabilities of AI with the need to retain human skills, judgement and independence. Participants considered everyday AI use, creative ownership, autonomous systems and professional applications, questioning where AI should assist, where humans should remain in control and what safeguards are needed when reliance increases.

Core insight

The value of AI depends on knowing when to rely on it and when to retain human control, particularly where skills, judgement and accountability are at stake.

Participants recognised AI's potential to improve efficiency and reduce repetitive work, but expressed different views about acceptable levels of dependence. The discussion highlighted the importance of understanding tasks, maintaining critical judgement and establishing safeguards when AI systems act with greater autonomy.

What this could mean

- An opportunity to define healthy human–AI collaboration. Exploring how AI can support productivity and creativity while preserving the skills, judgement and independence people need.
- A stronger focus on purposeful AI use and literacy. Helping people recognise when AI assistance adds value, when independent thinking matters and how to critically evaluate automated outputs.

“We shouldn't have the expectation [that AI can be] 100%, because [humans aren't] 100%.”

“[On outsourcing unfamiliar tasks to AI] I lose the ability for me to learn that skill because I'm never learning it.”

What we heard

- **AI is most valuable when it complements existing capability.** Participants distinguished between delegating tasks they already understand and relying on AI to perform work they have never learned themselves. The latter raised concerns about losing opportunities to develop essential skills.
- **Over-reliance can weaken independent judgement.** Participants questioned whether regularly asking AI to generate solutions, ideas or code could reduce people's willingness or ability to think critically and solve problems independently.
- **Human oversight remains essential.** Discussions emphasised the importance of being able to evaluate AI outputs, identify errors and intervene when necessary, particularly in technical and professional settings.
- **Autonomous systems challenge traditional notions of control.** Using self-driving vehicles as an example, participants debated whether AI should be held to higher safety standards than humans and what responsibility manufacturers or users should carry when something goes wrong.
- **Trust in AI requires practical safeguards.** Participants explored the value of fail-safe mechanisms and human intervention, particularly when users have limited ability to control a system once it is operating.
- **AI reliance raises questions about ownership and privacy.** The conversation also considered whether AI-generated creative work reflects genuine human contribution and how workplace use of AI could expose confidential or sensitive information.

Quotes are extracted from World Café discussions and lightly edited for clarity.

Panel Discussion



Connecting student perspectives with insights from government, industry and technology to explore the challenges and opportunities ahead.



Perspectives from the panel: Navigating an AI-enabled future

Activity overview

Following the World Café, a 40-minute panel discussion brought together perspectives from government, industry and technology to reflect on the challenges and opportunities of AI. Moderated by UNSW student James Hanlon, the conversation explored the future of work, human capabilities, accountability and how individuals can maintain agency in an increasingly AI-enabled society.

Key perspectives from the panel

1. The future of work is changing, not simply disappearing.

Panellists encouraged students to look beyond job displacement headlines and focus on how tasks, roles and expectations are evolving. AI may remove repetitive work and create opportunities, but graduates will need to understand where human and AI capabilities can complement one another.

2. Human capabilities remain essential to future success.

Critical thinking, creativity, communication, collaboration and adaptability were repeatedly highlighted. Panellists cautioned against becoming overly dependent on AI, emphasising the importance of retaining foundational skills and the value of learning through personal effort and experience.

3. Accountability must remain with people and organisations.

The discussion emphasised that AI does not operate independently of human decisions. Organisations must remain responsible for the technologies they develop and deploy, supported by appropriate regulation, governance and safeguards. Individuals also have a role in questioning decisions and challenging inappropriate uses.

4. Agency and choice should shape how we use AI.

Panellists encouraged students to recognise their ability to question, challenge or choose not to use particular technologies. Maintaining control requires clear personal boundaries, informed decisions and systems designed to support rather than diminish human autonomy.

5. Curiosity and leadership will help students navigate uncertainty.

The panel concluded by encouraging students to stay curious, seek evidence, challenge assumptions and take initiative. Adaptability, humility and the willingness to explore new opportunities were positioned as enduring capabilities in a rapidly changing environment.

Panel



Victor Dominello
Director, Trustworthy Digital Society



Yasminka Nemet
Future Skills Lead,
Microsoft Australia & New



Tara Tjandra
Principal Software Engineer,
Atlassian (Former UNSW student)



Belinda Teh
Founding Engineer,
Reimagine Robotics
(Former UNSW student)



James Hanlon
President, BLUEsat UNSW |
Student Facilitator

The questions that matter for the future

The panel built on questions explored during the World Café, with James Hanlon inviting panellists to challenge assumptions and consider how students can actively shape their future with AI. Four exchanges stood out for their relevance to the broader forum discussions as below.

The panel reinforced a central message emerging from the forum: the future of trustworthy AI will depend not only on what technology can do, but on the choices people make about how it is developed, governed and used. For students, this means remaining active participants in that future, building the capabilities to work with AI while retaining the judgement, curiosity and agency to challenge it.

1. What should remain uniquely human as AI becomes more capable?

The discussion explored whether greater technological capability should automatically mean greater reliance on AI. Panellists reflected on the value of creativity, human connection, personal judgement and the experience of learning through effort, questioning what might be lost when convenience replaces participation.

"If it's not to help humans, what's it for?"

On the purpose of AI

3. How do we maintain our independence in an AI-dependent world?

The panel considered how AI can gradually become embedded in everyday decisions, sometimes replacing tasks people are capable of doing themselves. Panellists highlighted the need for personal boundaries and deliberate choices about when AI adds value and when independent thinking or human interaction matters more.

"Use the bot to enhance your skills, but don't use it to diminish your interpersonal skills."

On balancing AI assistance with human capability

2. Who should be responsible for ensuring AI is used safely?

Panellists examined the roles of government, organisations and individuals in regulating AI and preventing harm. While recognising the need for stronger governance, the discussion reinforced that existing principles of organisational responsibility remain relevant as AI technologies evolve.

"I don't want to be in the loop as a human. I want AI in my loop."

On maintaining human control

4. What capabilities should students prioritise for their future?

In a rapid-fire exchange, panellists highlighted leadership, adaptability, curiosity, collaboration and communication alongside technical expertise. The emphasis was on developing the confidence to ask questions, challenge information and continue learning as technologies and careers evolve.

"Do your own research. Ask your own questions. And pursue your own answers and ideas about it."

Closing advice to students

Closing



Continuing the conversation through connections, shared interests and student-led initiatives shaping the future of technology.



Continuing the conversation

The forum concluded with a thank you to students and participants for their engagement, openness and contributions to the day's conversations.

The discussions continued into an informal networking session, bringing together students, researchers and industry representatives. Several UNSW and UTS student societies also showcased their activities and projects, highlighting the ways students are already exploring and contributing to the future of technology.

The session provided an opportunity to connect, exchange ideas and discover opportunities for further involvement, reinforcing the importance of student voices and collaboration in shaping a trustworthy digital society.

Student societies represented:

- UNSW Bioinformatics Society (BINFSOC)
- UNSW Competitive Programming Society (CPMSoc)
- UNSW Computer Science and Engineering Society (CESoc)
- UNSW CREATE
- UNSW Security Society (SecSoc)
- UNSW Software Development Society (DevSoc)
- UTS Cyber Security Society (CSEC)



Appendix



Icebreaker activity - Who's in the room

Who's in the room

Please find one or two people in the room that you don't know (or would like to know better) and populate this template on the other person's behalf.

Name

Sriram B

What are you studying? Degree/program + year of study

First year
Computer science and actuarial STD.

What brought you to the TDS Forum today?

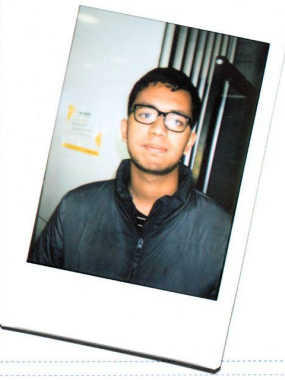
Exam - Interested in AI topic

What's one question you'd love to hear discussed today?

Is AI real

What's a fun fact about yourself, or a topic you're deeply passionate about, that people might not know?

I do Tae Kwon-do martial arts.



Trustworthy Digital Society

UNSW | UTS

Who's in the room

Please find one or two people in the room that you don't know (or would like to know better) and populate this template on the other person's behalf.

Name

Luming Xiao

What are you studying? Degree/program + year of study

Studied Bachelors
Masters of IT (2nd year) elsewhere

What brought you to the TDS Forum today?

Email - Interested in AI topics.

What's one question you'd love to hear discussed today?

About how AI changes careers.

What's a fun fact about yourself, or a topic you're deeply passionate about, that people might not know?

I'm interested in sports but a bit chubby.



Trustworthy Digital Society

UNSW | UTS

Who's in the room

Please find one or two people in the room that you don't know (or would like to know better) and populate this template on the other person's behalf.

Name

SADAT .

What are you studying? Degree/program + year of study

COMP. ENG .

What brought you to the TDS Forum today?

See thoughts on AI.

What's one question you'd love to hear discussed today?

Where should be fully ~~band~~ BAN!
it "automate."

What's a fun fact about yourself, or a topic you're deeply passionate about, that people might not know?

Brain Inspired Signal Processing.



Trustworthy Digital Society

UNSW | UTS

Who's in the room

Please find one or two people in the room that you don't know (or would like to know better) and populate this template on the other person's behalf.

Name

Junt

What are you studying? Degree/program + year of study

Master of IT , 1st

What brought you to the TDS Forum today?

Future of AI what should I do to prepare

What's one question you'd love to hear discussed today?

Quality + data for AI in the future.

What's a fun fact about yourself, or a topic you're deeply passionate about, that people might not know?

Basketball.



Trustworthy Digital Society

UNSW | UTS

Who's in the room

Please find one or two people in the room that you don't know (or would like to know better) and populate this template on the other person's behalf.

Name

Reyn

What are you studying? Degree/program + year of study

Master of IT

What brought you to the TDS Forum today?

Hear other people how to use AI in study
work

What's one question you'd love to hear discussed today?

What's a fun fact about yourself, or a topic you're deeply passionate about, that people might not know?



Trustworthy Digital Society

UNSW | UTS

Who's in the room

Please find one or two people in the room that you don't know (or would like to know better) and populate this template on the other person's behalf.

Name

Luke

What are you studying? Degree/program + year of study

Master of IT (Year 2)

What brought you to the TDS Forum today?

What's one question you'd love to hear discussed today?

AI in computer vision field

What's a fun fact about yourself, or a topic you're deeply passionate about, that people might not know?

Natural lang. process



Trustworthy Digital Society

UNSW | UTS

Who's in the room

Please find one or two people in the room that you don't know (or would like to know better) and populate this template on the other person's behalf.

Name

Rebecca

What are you studying? Degree/program + year of study

Computer science and art, started in 2026.

What brought you to the TDS Forum today?

Just saw the email.

What's one question you'd love to hear discussed today?

How AI impact our career

What's a fun fact about yourself, or a topic you're deeply passionate about, that people might not know?

video games



Trustworthy Digital Society

UNSW | UTS

Who's in the room

Please find one or two people in the room that you don't know (or would like to know better) and populate this template on the other person's behalf.

Name

Yusoo

What are you studying? Degree/program + year of study

Mechanical
Mechatronics Engineering

What brought you to the TDS Forum today?

Networking

What's one question you'd love to hear discussed today?

Learning AI and work

What's a fun fact about yourself, or a topic you're deeply passionate about, that people might not know?

I switched my major today



Trustworthy Digital Society

UNSW | UTS

Who's in the room

Please find one or two people in the room that you don't know (or would like to know better) and populate this template on the other person's behalf.

Name

Elliot Zhang

What are you studying? Degree/program + year of study

AI. Master 2 Years

What brought you to the TDS Forum today?

~~Exam~~

What's one question you'd love to hear discussed today?

How AI applied in recent industry?

What's a fun fact about yourself, or a topic you're deeply passionate about, that people might not know?

CS



Trustworthy Digital Society

UNSW | UTS

Who's in the room

Please find one or two people in the room that you don't know (or would like to know better) and populate this template on the other person's behalf.

Name

Dagwang Lang

What are you studying? Degree/program + year of study

AI Master 2 year

What brought you to the TDS Forum today?

Want to learn more about AI and job opportunities

What's one question you'd love to hear discussed today?

AI & work

What's a fun fact about yourself, or a topic you're deeply passionate about, that people might not know?

Read chinese novel



Trustworthy Digital Society

UNSW | UTS

Who's in the room

Please find one or two people in the room that you don't know (or would like to know better) and populate this template on the other person's behalf.

Name

~~Aditi~~ Aditri

What are you studying? Degree/program + year of study

3rd comp sci

What brought you to the TDS Forum today?

Networking

What's one question you'd love to hear discussed today?

Skills importance.

What's a fun fact about yourself, or a topic you're deeply passionate about, that people might not know?

Painting.



Trustworthy Digital Society

UNSW | UTS

Who's in the room

Please find one or two people in the room that you don't know (or would like to know better) and populate this template on the other person's behalf.

Name

Ayush

What are you studying? Degree/program + year of study

Computer Science 4 year

What brought you to the TDS Forum today?

People who use AI won't be replaced.

What's one question you'd love to hear discussed today?

Whether be replaced?

What's a fun fact about yourself, or a topic you're deeply passionate about, that people might not know?

Soccer Game



Trustworthy Digital Society

UNSW | UTS

Icebreaker activity - Who's in the room

Who's in the room

Please find one or two people in the room that you don't know (or would like to know better) and populate this template on the other person's behalf.

Name

Samar

What are you studying? Degree/program + year of study

PHD in CompSci , 4th year UTS

What brought you to the TDS Forum today?

Know about AI, networking

What's one question you'd love to hear discussed today?

How AI checking works.

What's a fun fact about yourself, or a topic you're deeply passionate about, that people might not know?

Like to attend various workshops



Trustworthy Digital Society

UNSW | UTS

Who's in the room

Please find one or two people in the room that you don't know (or would like to know better) and populate this template on the other person's behalf.

Name

Alinda

What are you studying? Degree/program + year of study

Chemical engineering . 1st year.

What brought you to the TDS Forum today?

Topic is very interesting in daily life

What's one question you'd love to hear discussed today?

How to use AI webding !

What's a fun fact about yourself, or a topic you're deeply passionate about, that people might not know?

I Like to connect to people.



Trustworthy Digital Society

UNSW | UTS

Who's in the room

Please find one or two people in the room that you don't know (or would like to know better) and populate this template on the other person's behalf.

Name

Matt

What are you studying? Degree/program + year of study

Arts Degree

What brought you to the TDS Forum today?

involved (Helen)

What's one question you'd love to hear discussed today?

What's Australia's role in AI future?

What's a fun fact about yourself, or a topic you're deeply passionate about, that people might not know?

football club



Trustworthy Digital Society

UNSW | UTS

Who's in the room

Please find one or two people in the room that you don't know (or would like to know better) and populate this template on the other person's behalf.

Name

John Son

What are you studying? Degree/program + year of study

Computer science (cyber)

What brought you to the TDS Forum today?

Passion for Ai

What's one question you'd love to hear discussed today?

How will Ai effect us

What's a fun fact about yourself, or a topic you're deeply passionate about, that people might not know?

I Have a wheel chair



Trustworthy Digital Society

UNSW | UTS

Who's in the room

Please find one or two people in the room that you don't know (or would like to know better) and populate this template on the other person's behalf.

Name

Daniel M

What are you studying? Degree/program + year of study

B of Cybersecurity

What brought you to the TDS Forum today?

Intrest in AI

What's one question you'd love to hear discussed today?

AI security implications

What's a fun fact about yourself, or a topic you're deeply passionate about, that people might not know?

I like doge dodgeball



Trustworthy Digital Society

UNSW | UTS

Who's in the room

Please find one or two people in the room that you don't know (or would like to know better) and populate this template on the other person's behalf.

Name

PALUCK DEEP

What are you studying? Degree/program + year of study

PhD Computer Science + 1st year

What brought you to the TDS Forum today?

Having conversation about AI & its implications

What's one question you'd love to hear discussed today?

Future of AI & effects in our career

What's a fun fact about yourself, or a topic you're deeply passionate about, that people might not know?

I love doing nail art



Trustworthy Digital Society

UNSW | UTS

Who's in the room

Please find one or two people in the room that you don't know (or would like to know better) and populate this template on the other person's behalf.

Name

Dr. Nada Alghammi

What are you studying? Degree/program + year of study

Phd. in UTS

What brought you to the TDS Forum today?

What's one question you'd love to hear discussed today?

What's a fun fact about yourself, or a topic you're deeply passionate about, that people might not know?



Trustworthy Digital Society

UNSW | UTS

Who's in the room

Please find one or two people in the room that you don't know (or would like to know better) and populate this template on the other person's behalf.

Name

Abby Bush

What are you studying? Degree/program + year of study

Mechatronic Eng

What brought you to the TDS Forum today?

Interest in AI in workplaces

What's one question you'd love to hear discussed today?

How to use AI responsibly

What's a fun fact about yourself, or a topic you're deeply passionate about, that people might not know?

Play too much Mario games



Trustworthy Digital Society

UNSW | UTS

Who's in the room

Please find one or two people in the room that you don't know (or would like to know better) and populate this template on the other person's behalf.

Name

Luke

What are you studying? Degree/program + year of study

Mechatronic Eng / CompSci

What brought you to the TDS Forum today?

Free Food

What's one question you'd love to hear discussed today?

How can I introduce AI into my work

What's a fun fact about yourself, or a topic you're deeply passionate about, that people might not know?

Worlds #1 parent better know



Trustworthy Digital Society

UNSW | UTS

Who's in the room

Please find one or two people in the room that you don't know (or would like to know better) and populate this template on the other person's behalf.

Name

IRENE

What are you studying? Degree/program + year of study

Mechanical Engineering

What brought you to the TDS Forum today?

Food

What's one question you'd love to hear discussed today?

What is this event

What's a fun fact about yourself, or a topic you're deeply passionate about, that people might not know?

I am scared of heights



Trustworthy Digital Society

UNSW | UTS

Who's in the room

Please find one or two people in the room that you don't know (or would like to know better) and populate this template on the other person's behalf.

Name

IRENE JA MAYTHAM

What are you studying? Degree/program + year of study

MINING ENG / ACTL

What brought you to the TDS Forum today?

HE HAS EYES

What's one question you'd love to hear discussed today?

AI

What's a fun fact about yourself, or a topic you're deeply passionate about, that people might not know?

AI



Trustworthy Digital Society

UNSW | UTS

Who's in the room

Please find one or two people in the room that you don't know (or would like to know better) and populate this template on the other person's behalf.

Name

Arijun

What are you studying? Degree/program + year of study

Elec Eng / phy

What brought you to the TDS Forum today?

Mystical Calling

What's one question you'd love to hear discussed today?

What stage should AI be integrated and why

What's a fun fact about yourself, or a topic you're deeply passionate about, that people might not know?

non concious
Turn on left arm



Trustworthy Digital Society

UNSW | UTS

Trustworthy
Digital Society

UNSW
SYDNEY

UTS

TC
Powered by
TwoCollaborate

28

Icebreaker activity - Who's in the room

Who's in the room

Please find one or two people in the room that you don't know (or would like to know better) and populate this template on the other person's behalf.

Name

RAMBO

What are you studying? Degree/program + year of study

ROBOTICS + MECHATRONICS ENG

What brought you to the TDS Forum today?

INCREASE FUNDING FOR RAMSOC

What's one question you'd love to hear discussed today?

WILL AI REPLACE RAMBO

What's a fun fact about yourself, or a topic you're deeply passionate about, that people might not know?

LOVES APPLYING FOR DIRECTORS



Trustworthy Digital Society

UNSW | UTS

Who's in the room

Please find one or two people in the room that you don't know (or would like to know better) and populate this template on the other person's behalf.

Name

Raj Thiagarajan

What are you studying? Degree/program + year of study

Ba CompSci + commerce

What brought you to the TDS Forum today?

desire to improve AI skills

What's one question you'd love to hear discussed today?

AI's role in future workplace

What's a fun fact about yourself, or a topic you're deeply passionate about, that people might not know?

climate activism



Trustworthy Digital Society

UNSW | UTS

Who's in the room

Please find one or two people in the room that you don't know (or would like to know better) and populate this template on the other person's behalf.

Name

Jake

What are you studying? Degree/program + year of study

Mechatronic Engineering

What brought you to the TDS Forum today?

Love the vibe / support these talks

What's one question you'd love to hear discussed today?

why is Irene here

What's a fun fact about yourself, or a topic you're deeply passionate about, that people might not know?

AI



Trustworthy Digital Society

UNSW | UTS