

Thriving in uncertain times - Student wellbeing and AI | a 'Students First' Symposium

studiosity.com/studentsfirst

Transcript

- Attribution: The speakers and the Symposium must be credited or referenced:

For example:

Speaker Name/s, (2026, May 8). *Studiosity Students First Symposium: Thriving in uncertain times - Student wellbeing and AI*, [Webinar]. Studiosity. <https://www.studiosity.com/studentsfirst>

- Non Commercial: The conversation can be used for non-commercial purposes only.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:00:10] Good morning everybody. My name is Judyth Sachs and I'm Chief Academic Officer from Studiosity. I'd like to welcome you to our first webinar for 2026. Sadly, it's the middle of the year. As you know, life gets away from you. Before we begin, I wish to acknowledge that I'm sitting on the lands of the Gadigal people and I wish to pay my respects past and present. So today, our webinar is Thriving in Uncertain Times: Student Wellbeing and AI. We are indeed living in uncertain times because apparently Canvas has had an international breach, so I was wondering if we would be able to progress with our webinar, but we can. So what I'd like to do, I'd ask the members of the panel to introduce themselves and what they bring to the table in talking about 'thriving in uncertain times'. And if I could start with our student member, Ivana, from the University of Newcastle, given that this is students first, I'm asking you to be this first student to speak. So, Ivana, can you just introduce yourselves and what you bring to the table?

Ivana Pedruco Aniceto [00:01:22] Of course. Thank you so much for that, Professor Sachs. So, hi everybody, my name is Ivana. I'm currently in my third year of a double degree of Law and Criminology. Primarily, I'm not as accomplished as everyone else here, but my job here is to give the student voice. So I'm very privileged to be here to do my best to give a little bit about the student perspective between wellbeing and AI. I sit as a student ambassador within my university. I absolutely love everything about my university and I'm fortunate to also be the elected member on the University Council, as the student representative. So I'm very fortunate to be here today and hopefully I

can provide a very big student perspective and student voice to this topic. But thank you so much.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:02:03] Adeeba, may I invite you please to introduce yourself and what you bring to the table.

Prof Adeeba Kamarulzaman [00:02:08] Thanks Judyth. I'm Adeeba Kamarulzaman, the President and Pro-Vice-Chancellor of Monash University Malaysia. Coincidentally, this is my third year anniversary of joining Monash University Malaysia and I oversee the campus in all three academic, education, research and engagement. So I lead the campus, but I'm a physician by training.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:02:38] Megan.

Megan Pozzi [00:02:42] Thanks Judyth. My name is Megan Pozzi. I'm coming from Turrbal and Jagera country here today in beautiful Meanjin, Brisbane. I'm currently the Director of Student Life at the University of Southern Queensland. So I don't directly lead our wellbeing team here, but at UniSQ we think about wellbeing in its totality. So, I lead a lot of the student facing functions around enrichment and engagement. And I think when we talk about wellbeing, we often think about being unwell and I think about those functions as contributing to overall student wellbeing. I've been interested in students and technology for a really long time. My thesis, which I wrote back in 2012 was about grade eight girls on Facebook. And then since then I've done a lot of work around digital literacy, embedding digital literacy skills across the curriculum and information and academic literacy as well.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:03:39] Thank you, Megan. And Georgina.

Dr Georgina Maddox [00:03:42] Hi everyone, I'm joining from the lands of the Kaurna people in South Australia. I'm from Flinders University and I teach in psychology as a teaching specialist in our undergraduate programme. So large student numbers, I often talk to students firsthand about their experiences with AI through our undergraduate courses. I am also the college student success lead, so I look after different disciplines, if you will, in the student success space. I also do a bit of research and subtle work around the use of generative AI and its effects on wellbeing in student cohorts as well. Yeah, so that's sort of what I, hopefully we'll be able to contribute through those lenses.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:04:25] Thanks very much, everybody. For those people who are watching from far away, if you have a question, can you put it in the chat, please? And then by putting it in a chat, I can look at the various questions and I can make a sense of what questions I can put to the panel. But look, let me start off with the first general question. And once again, I'll ask Ivana the question. To what extent is AI impacting on students' wellbeing in your institution?

Ivana Pedruco Aniceto [00:05:00] I think wellbeing as a whole is important and is the crux of what a university is made up of. So I think ensuring that student wellbeing is the priority and should always be. At least with the use of AI, I think it works kind of like a pendulum. So a lot of students are using this as a tool for augmenting efficiency, ensuring that we have some sort of structure in assessments or just providing some clarity and guidance. But on the other flip side, there are sometimes students that are unsure when that line between appropriate use and misconduct where that line does blur. So it is seen as a level of a source that can be used for uncertainty, but also something that can use for efficiency. But in regards to wellbeing, there is that significant, a little bit of a level of anxiety that has been heightened in recent years about whether or not what you are using is appropriate. And if you aren't using it and you've been flagged for it, what is the process for that? So I do think it's really important that is addressed. And I think that's such an important topic. So thank you.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:05:57] And just if I could follow up, how would you describe the sort of student, the level of wellbeing felt by your peers, but also you're seeing the whole university in terms of the roles you play in the university, but also, you're seeing your cohort of really very accomplished students in law and criminology.

Ivana Pedruco Aniceto [00:06:16] Oh, it is definitely. I think with all the external factors going on internationally with the conflict and the cost of living crisis happening here in Australia, wellbeing has of course been something that's either that's started to be impacted by students in various aspects of the university. And I do know at least in the University in Newcastle that we're doing everything that we can to ensure that student wellbeing is prioritised. And I think that's something I'm very proud of. So I can see that there's a lot of activities and a lot of things put in place, to ensure that student wellbeing is considered at the crux of all university decisions.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:06:49] Adeeba, you sit at the very top of the apex and the pyramid of managing student wellbeing at Monash Malaysia. What's your view about the extent that AI is impacting on student wellbeing?

Prof Adeeba Kamarulzaman [00:07:04] Yeah, I think similar to what's just been said. On the one hand, the tools help with efficiency and helping students with their immediate needs. But on the other, the same issues around, are we learning from this? Are we going to be policed for excessive use of AI? I think all this are playing in students' minds. And so as an institution, it's extremely important that we support students through this, not just students, I must add, the staff themselves, because for many of us, I can only speak for myself, we're... All these tools are also very new and it's important that academic staff, tutors and etc. feel confident in using these tools so that, you know, that teaching and that support provided to students are optimised and I can talk about what we're doing about this later.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:08:28] Georgina, you see students day-to-day, face-to-face, in the classroom. What are your observations both about students' use of AI, but more importantly about the climate of wellbeing, and what's happening in your institution that both concerns you, but also sees opportunities to change?

Dr Georgina Maddox [00:08:51] I mean, I agree with everything that's been said as well. I think one of the things that's happening is just going to what Adeeba was saying, staff are often having conversations and making decisions and talking about things that perhaps they're not on top of themselves in terms of their own generative AI use and that sort of thing. So I think having a thorough understanding from their point of view is really important. I think from the student's perspective, life's tough. I often say I'm so, so grateful that I got my qualifications before generative AI came along. I think as staff, it's really important we perspective take. It is arguably much tougher out there right now, which is what Ivana was pointing to, than it's ever been before. I think we really need to understand there's a cost of living crisis, for example, where I am, there's a housing affordability crisis, things are tough. To think that students are gonna dedicate full time to studies and not have to work double jobs or have caring responsibilities and all that sort of stuff is really quite a privileged position. We know when people are under time pressure and constraints, they're gonna use the tools available to them and Generative AI is one of them. It's quite impressive. It looks like it's doing things pretty well. I can often ask it questions and be like, oh, look at that, like it just produced all this text. The problem though is we don't know what we don't know. So if you don't have the knowledge to be able to critically engage with it, prompt it effectively, read the responses and those sorts of things. Now we fall into this issue of using it ineffectively and it's going to be a pre-professional skill. We need people to know that. We need to be open and honest with students because yeah, they're quite stressed out about it, as you would be. Nobody comes to university and pays a lot of money to go to university, and get a degree to cheat their way through it. That's just not realistic, and so taking that approach is obviously not a great one, and it's just going to exacerbate some of the stress that we might be seeing our students under. So it's like a complex issue and I think I'm sort of seeing all of those things coming together at the same time. Um, yeah.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:10:50] And Megan, you have a perspective of the student body, both student success and student wellbeing. So Megan, what are your observations?

Megan Pozzi [00:10:59] Yeah, thanks Judyth. And I'm just picking up on what Georgina was talking about about pre-professional skills and students' skill development. I think there's a lot of focus around the assessment and learning piece, but where I think we need to potentially put some more focus is on student graduate employment outcomes. So one of the teams that I run at UniSQ is the Student Success Advising Team or the Student Retention Team. And we survey all students on commencement around their readiness for study

and expectations about study. So we've got about 7,000 student responses over the last few years. About 75% of those students, when they commence study, they have a very clear idea of what career they are hoping to embark on at the end of their study. So they're starting with the end in mind. And just recently we've seen... In Australia, the Senate Education and Employment References Committee, they've established an inquiry into Australian university graduate employment outcomes and the perceived role of AI and the impact on graduate employment. So I think for students coming in, you know, they've got a clear sense of where they wanna go, but then at the other end, they're seeing all these graduate employment opportunities changing, disappearing. And I think that's a source of anxiety of like, well, where's my degree leading to? What am I doing this for? What's the point? Am I being prepared for the future after this? Will I get a job? To your point, Georgina, about cost of living crisis, putting food on the table. So I think, that's really important part of the conversation around AI and wellbeing for students as well.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:12:42] So the next question is for all of you again, and it's about, this is research that we had done through Studiosity. Only four in 10 students globally, 41% feel very or extremely confident that they are learning while using AI tools. In Malaysia, despite having 97% AI adoption, only 27% of students report strong confidence in actual learning, pointing to a significant confidence gap. Adeeba, let's start with you then. What do you make of these data and why is there such a gap between the confidence and the learning?

Prof Adeeba Kamarulzaman [00:13:24] Yeah, Judyth, and I think you're a comparator country for this particular survey was Singapore, right? And, and underlying this, I think, is in how we teach students at the primary and secondary level to start off with. I think there is still a lot of rote learning in schools in Malaysia. And of course, Malaysia has a very complicated education system. There's the public schools, there's private schools, there's the international schools, there's vernacular schools. And each, you know, has, has different curricula, some adopt the national curricula some don't. And, and so, you know, depending on your, your survey cohort, you're going at a mix of students, right? And so I think those who are those who've come from primary and secondary systems that are still very much the rote learning model are really going to struggle because they've you know, memorisation is a big part of it. And what AI has just done is swap that memorisation to the ease of obtaining that information rather than processing the information and critically thinking about the information before them. So even before AI, I think many students struggle coming into the higher education environment because of you know, the need to think more critically. So on the one hand, it's good that the students have an insight and that we have these results from you, Judyth, that it is very, very concerning that the student themselves feel like they're not learning.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:15:44] What about, specifically, Monash Malaysia? Because you're in a very interesting position there. You've got feet in two camps. You're the Malaysian campus of an Australian university that has to meet

Australian regulations, but meet the expectations of the Malaysian government and the community. So, what's happening at Monash Malaysia?

Prof Adeeba Kamarulzaman [00:16:08] So there are several things and obviously at the Monash University level and huge policies obviously around AI are adopted across the network not just Malaysia but Indonesia or China and India don't and Prato don't offer undergraduate degrees but the main thing is, number one, I think having a clear policy. And the message that Monash has for both students and staff is that we adopt AI. We're not afraid of AI. We're going to prohibit AI use, because that's the reality of the world now, right? So number one is we encourage it. But there are clear guidelines in terms of ethical use, when it can be used, when it cannot be used, when it can be used even during assessment, when it cannot. And obviously, it's going to depend from faculty to faculty, from school to school. But I think having that clear guideline is number one, clear policies and guidelines for all to know about what's permissible and what's not. Secondly, what we've adopted at Monash Malaysia is what we call "AI Change Champions. And this is what I was referring to in terms of how can we support students to use AI responsibly and effectively if we ourselves are not familiar with it, right? And so we pay a lot of attention to training our staff. And what we've done is have colleagues from each school, there are seven schools at Monash Malaysia become the 'Change Champion' so that they, I guess almost like train the trainers concept can disseminate new policies, new ideas, to fellow academics within that particular school on effective use of AI and policies or what have you. And then, you know, they themselves come up with ideas for innovation using AI and what we're doing is essentially building a community of practice around this to support students. The third thing that I think is really important is also ensuring that we provide the tools for students and not that they just go out there and find their own tools, right? So a set of tools that Monash expects students and staff, you know, to have at least the basic tools because one of the biggest problems with digital technologies, as all of you know is the inequity that's going to exist, right? Those who can afford these tools granted, many are available free, but you know we wanna ensure that everyone has access. So provision of the tools. And then, of course, thinking very, very deeply around assessment, which I can go on later parts of the webinar.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:19:41] Um, Ivana, uh, confidence and learning, what's the student experience of building confidence and then realising that in fact they've learned something?

Ivana Pedruco Aniceto [00:19:52] I think over time it has changed, and I'll echo those sentiments that were said earlier. I did not use or even know about AI until well and truly into my, I think halfway through my first year when it started becoming something that was emerging quite often. I mean, I was in rote learning, you had to have closed book exams, expected to understand the knowledge. So for me, that transition was so different. So for me, having consolidation, memory consolidation and understanding fundamental concepts of content was just something that came naturally because obviously you've

built that strong level of skills from kindergarten all the way to where you are now in university. So within that report, at least, I think it's evident that though a lot of students aren't using it now, and though a lot of students do have trepidation using it, it doesn't mean that students won't use it in the future. This is just a small shift over time. Students are starting to use it now because it's emerging now. I think if we have a similar report done in 10, 15 years time. The results will be entirely different. But memory consolidation and understanding and having confidence in learning is the very reason why students go into university. Students want to go into the university to learn, to be able to become academics like yourselves and understand their field. So having a tool like AI can be used, but I think we have to remember, AI doesn't create knowledge. It only uses what you prompt it to use. So exactly as Dr. Maddox said before: knowing how to use it, knowing what frameworks to work it around, what templates and what prompts to use will be the key to a successful use of AI in lieu of say, putting in a prompt and getting it to spit out 500 words of something that has no linking, no referencing, and is most likely going to get you into a whirlpool of trouble. But in saying that, at least at the University of Newcastle, in case anyone was interested, UON has academic integrity modules. We have strong assessment frameworks to align and work with the rise of AI. AI literacy, I think we can't underestimate the fact that AI literacy will be an imperative skill for graduates in the future. So at least within the University of Newcastle, we have the permitted use in certain courses under course outlines, and if you do use it, it must be referenced adequately. And there are also at least within certain courses I've studied in law, you have to have certain supervised assessments to ensure that you're attaining the outcomes that you're expected to learn within your course outlines and your learning. So ensuring that we have that balance of using AI to augment that efficiency, whilst also making sure that students are actually coming out with an outcome and understanding what they're learning because they are the future educators of the very sector that they are learning in is so important. And I think at least within my university, it's dealt with so well. And I've had a very positive experience with how it's been taught.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:22:47] So what I'm hearing both you and Adeeba say is the need for a strong policy framework, the need, for accountability; everybody has to be accountable, and that links in with the policy framework and then people need to be trained and that's students and academics. Yes. Georgina, is that sort of summary evident in the classes that you're teaching as well?

Dr Georgina Maddox [00:23:10] Yeah, absolutely. I think as well in terms of academic frameworks, and you know when students can and can't use AI, I think we need to move beyond when they can and they can't and become really explicit with the why, what's the ethics around it, because ultimately... We need students to be able to engage with it in that way. And I think that explicit messaging and getting them to think about the ethics of when they're using it, in what scenarios, when it would be appropriate and when it wouldn't, that's the thing that's going to create certainty for them, providing them with the confidence with not just you can't use it or you might get caught or any of those

sorts of things that can be quite uncertain and anxiety-producing, but rather, you know, here's how you can use it, think about ethics of when you do use it. Here's a very clear framework, here's some very clear instructions and guides and learning resources as well for how you can go about it. And also, I think like what Adeeba was saying, having the tools made available to them that are under enterprise agreements so that the data is protected and those sorts of things. But that also speaks to the ethics. When would you put your data into it? When wouldn't you? And that sort of thing as well. Yeah, those sorts of things will create confidence and certainty.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:24:27] Megan. What's your response?

Megan Pozzi [00:24:28] Yes, and, uh, to all the above. And I think to your point, Ivana, about the AI literacy, I mean, we need explicit teaching of skills, right? So these, you know, I'm glad no one said it yet, like this digital native myth. You know, it's not real. So you don't put a new technology in a young person's hands and they can just magically use it. So I'm a big advocate for embedding these skills in and across the curriculum. Quite often what you'll see is they're sort of add-on. So they're, you know, libraries or academic skills centres or, you know, career services are left to do that kind of more explicit skills teaching. And that is valuable, but it's part of the broader ecosystem of how we support and scaffold students' learning. And putting it into the curriculum, contextualises it to the discipline, to the learning, to future careers, to industry outcomes. And I think what we need to remember is these skills that are sort of often seen as like generic skills like critical thinking, or metacognition, or you know information literacy or whatever. I don't think that they're as readily transferable across context as, as we think they are, which is why I'm always an advocate for the contextualised approach. So the example I always use is, you know, tax, right? So I know how to do percentages. I understand how percentages work. You ask me to do my tax return, I've got no idea, you know, like, cause I don't understand like how percentages work relative to tax. So that's my sort of very simple example of why I think we need to make sure all of these skills and learnings are contextualised to discipline and embedded and scaffolded thoughtfully and carefully across curriculum.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:26:25] So in fact, an early question came in from your colleague, Lorelle Burton at UniSQ, and I don't mind who answers this.

Megan Pozzi [00:26:35] My colleague and my boss, so hi Lorelle if you're out there.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:26:40] So, and Lorelle asked, for students, how does GenAI in learning and assessment build confidence? So, in fact, they talk about it. So, I'm asking the question, how does it build confidence and where does it create anxiety and uncertainty? You've still got the screen, Megan, so why don't you respond to that? So, building confidence but also create anxiety and uncertainty.

Megan Pozzi [00:27:08] Well, I think, you know, if we take a step back and look, um, more broadly, I think we all have a degree of anxiety and uncertainty around AI, right? We don't understand it. We don't quite know how it works. It's moving at a pace of knots that we can't keep up with. Um, you know, universities are notoriously slow to pivot, change, move, um respond. And I don't think, you know, in my 15 years working in higher education. I don't think I've ever seen anything so disruptive. So like, I'm, you know, don't know if people remember MOOCs, you know, we all thought MOOCs were going to be the end of higher education and it just kind of was a flash of the, it's like, bring, bring back the... That was a nice conversation to be having. Um, so, and what I see happening just in that, that confidence paces. It's like, um, when we don't understand things and we don't trust things, we try to control things, right? We get really rigid in our thinking and we try and make things really black and white so you can do this or you can't do this. And what I think we need to do is, you know, maybe we need to be OK with not feeling confident about these things. Maybe we need just to sit in uncertainty and discomfort together with students, with teachers, with professional and academic staff, with industry, and go, actually, we don't quite understand this and we might not ever fully, but let's work it out together and sit in that discomfort instead of trying to be really rigid about what is and isn't allowed.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:28:52] So in fact, what I'm hearing you say is, in fact if we focus on learning, we all have a joint enterprise and a joint outcome. We're all learning something. If we focus something else, it's going to be that uncertainty. Adeeba, what do you think about building confidence and creating anxiety and uncertainty?

Prof Adeeba Kamarulzaman [00:29:12] I think exactly what Megan said. One is to accept that we're in a transition and we're all not going to know everything, but really focusing on how we transition into its use together by upskilling. I keep going back to the need to ensure that the educators themselves are confident in its use, the do's and don'ts and all of that, yeah.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:29:48] Ivana?

Ivana Pedruco Aniceto [00:29:54] I think I'll just echo those same sentiments. I think sitting in the discomfort, I think that's a great way of putting it, Megan, is so important. I think, that's, a real reflection of where we're at now in terms of navigating AI use, at least in, in the student capacity. I think. Sitting in discomfort is really important between staff and students when we're using AI, because we don't know what it's going to be like. I think arguably we can say that this is the worst version of AI so far. It's only going to get better from here. So I think being able to sit in that discomfort. And to be cognisant that things are changing and that we need to learn to be confident with the use of AI is going to be imperative for the job and future graduate employment or just for incoming students. So it's important. Thank you.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:30:37] Georgina.

Dr Georgina Maddox [00:30:41] I agree with also the sitting in uncertainty. I think it's important to recognise that confidence and learning don't always go hand in hand. I mean if we talk about the traditional thing like the learning pit that we talk to students about, it is going to be uncertain because you're being challenged. It's new, it's unknown and those sorts of things. So recognising the difference between being really confident in our learning when it comes to that learning phase versus confidence to make ethical decisions, be explicit in the ways that you can and cannot adopt AI. Um how to you know have statements of declaration and things like that if you do choose to use it but equipping students with that confidence that I think is the really key part. Um but yeah confidence- we don't always feel confident when we're learning we very rarely feel confident when we learning we know about you know imposter syndrome and things like that the Dunning-Kruger effect um so yeah I think also letting students know that as well but that's okay that might just be part of the journey that we're on.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:31:40] So all of you seem to be saying something about we need to reframe and by reframing around learning it's okay to make mistakes, it's ok to fail, but in fact there's got to be some movement beyond okay I've failed, paralyse anxiety. I've failed, what do I do next? So it's creating some sort of agency? Ivana, I can't imagine that you've failed anything but you know when you've-

Ivana Pedruco Aniceto [00:32:09] Not with my parents, no, no.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:32:12] I failed mothercraft at school. It stayed with me my whole life.

Ivana Pedruco Aniceto [00:32:18] That's how I feel about PDHPE, Judyth, that's how I feel that PE, it's okay.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:32:22] Okay, so look, how do you actually see this as an opportunity, in fact, not being paralysed, but seeing it as a challenge to, I have to take control.

Ivana Pedruco Aniceto [00:32:35] Well, I think acting in the capacity of a luddite and being restrictive in our use of AI is not going to assist either with graduate employment or in enhancing our skills in any capacity. So I think using this to harness and champion student engagement, student learning is really important. So what I mean by that is in a certain capacity, AI can be used as a tool to ensure that students understand content and can use it to generate examples of content. In saying that, we also go to university to meet with academics who are at the top of their academic field. Those who are experienced and have knowledge in a field like myself in law, my law lecturers

are so vastly knowledgeable that AI can't replace that, at least not now. So for me, going there, attending lectures, going to my tutorials, we have mandatory attendance, so there's no option not to attend them. But going there, absorbing the knowledge and then using it as an additional tool, will allow an augment of efficiency, it's irrefutable. But using it as a complete replacement, which I know a number of students will use in times of particular stress or in demand during the assessment period. As it was said before, there are a lot of students now than ever that are juggling part-time study, parental responsibilities, care responsibilities, having to work multiple jobs because of the current external factors that are in our society. It is more than ever that this needs to be used as an additional tool. But it cannot replace the core learning that we have at universities. Universities are, I can't even put into words how important they are for student capacity and student learning. I think for me, it's very valuable that we understand the importance and the effort our academics go into putting the modules and the coursework and ensuring that their knowledge is transferred to the next generation. So I think if we can use AI as an additional tool, not as something to replace core framework which has already been established like a prestigious institution, like universities, I think that's really important.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:34:35] Megan, do you want to say something or Georgina?

Prof Adeeba Kamarulzaman [00:34:42] I'm happy to, you know, because we would, Judyth, jump in. I think we've been focusing a lot on specifically how to support students on AI, with AI use, but I think, and what to do, you know, the risk of failure, etc. But as you said, looking at it from the top, the overall support for student wellbeing is incredibly important, not just... Needless to say, not just in AI use. So the other initiative that we've done, and particularly because we have a large number of international students aside from the student life side, but for, we try and identify students at level one risk, you know, early. So there is a team of people who are supporting students at level one so that they don't, hopefully they don't progress to level two or worse level three. And this was introduced about two years ago and our evaluation shows that, you know, there's much less progression to level 2 and level 3 just by providing this kind of support. So it's not AI use specific, but generally level, you know academic and sort of counselling support in general for students at risk, but at a very, very early stage, yeah.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:36:18] So it's actually a case of being engaged with what students are actually doing and saying, rather than having a framework that is so rigid that in fact nobody benefits except the framework. So look, with the research that Studiosity did, the biggest cause for AI-related stress for students isn't necessarily about the technology itself, but the institutional response to it. And Philip brought this up in one of his comments as well. Um, so... I'm having problems with my technology. "Being accused of cheating when I did nothing wrong" was what over 52% ranked as in their top three. A quarter of them also

ranked it as first. Is a police or punish discourse an appropriate way to react? And if not, what's the alternative? And Megan, what about you? Because you're in a very different position because you have the oversight but not necessarily the compliance with policy.

Megan Pozzi [00:37:34] Yeah, so I think, you know, my answer to this question is, is similar to the sentiments that I shared before around sitting in uncertainty. So when I hear police or punish, and when I hear, you, know, people, students being scared that they're going to be accused of something that they didn't do, all I hear is trust and mistrust. Trust in students, trust in learning, trust in technology, trust in each other, trust and trust or mistrust. Um, and so I think it's a, it's a trust question, that we're trying to solve through these rigid kind of structures, you know, police or punish, you sort of, you know, accusatory, investigation methods, those kinds of things. I think we should sit back and think about all the emotions that are wrapped around this and how those emotions are actually driving behaviours and decision making. And it's about that sitting in the discomfort and the uncertainty and working in partnership. And there's some really interesting work in the students as partners space coming out around AI and curriculum and learning and emotions. I'll put it in the chat, Kelly Matthews at UQ is doing some really interesting research and publication around this and sharing some key principles for how we might sort of move through this space with a bit more thought, care and sensitivity because we don't wanna do harm. Right. So we don't want to do so trauma-informed practice and trauma-informed pedagogy and learning is a really big part of the discourse at the moment. And that's really at its core about 'do no harm'. And when we talk about police and punish that to me sounds like harm so I'll put the link in the chat to Kelly's paper it's, she explains it a lot better than me.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:39:41] Georgina, that sense of trust that was just brought up, I think it's not just within universities, it's in the whole of society and it's about misinformation, it's about not trusting in people, not trusting in politics and not trusting in processes. What do you see as one way to remove that lack of trust and build a culture of inclusion, a culture of trust, and a culture of thriving?

Dr Georgina Maddox [00:40:09] It's a really interesting one because first of all, the idea of policing and punishment, it should never be that. No academic integrity concern should ever be that, generative AI or otherwise. It should be a learning opportunity. And the learning opportunity, and if it's framed like that, a student has a right to know, what is it? What is it about their work that had someone concerned? Having that conversation with an educator, working through why that was flagged for a particular reason I think is really important. But one assessment, and doing the right thing or the wrong thing, does not a degree make, right? There's not one moment or one particular thing you can do that's going to result in a really poor outcome. I think what I'm starting to see is more catastrophising than ever before, this idea that one assessment, if

something, if there's a bad outcome on that, I'm gonna fail the whole degree. So there's a lot of like going from zero to 100 with the consequences. So I think framing it as an educational opportunity. Certainly what I am seeing is not a lot of I'm like high distinction, 100 out of 100 type work with those academic integrity concerns that are coming from generative AI. Usually it's vague, it's unstructured, it is unclear, it is hallucinating references, there's excessive use of M dashes, things like that, which speak to the quality of the work. And that speaks to that idea of sort of advanced prompt engineering and that sort of thing and critical thinking and how to actually critique the response you're getting. They're all skills that can be supported and should be for those pre-professional skills that we're doing anyway. So I think a lot of that uncertainty, that anxiety, this idea of Again, we just need to be more. Honest and open with one another. I mean at university we're dealing with adult learners. They know. They want their degrees to mean something. They're here for a reason. Like Ivana was saying, we're all invested in that same thing. So I don't think that culture of trying to catch people out or assuming everyone's cheating is useful or helpful, that narrative. I think it's more being really open and honest with one another about why it matters that we point out when work doesn't look like it's meeting those quality standards that we want and also having a really student-focused way of explaining that as well and having conversations with our students around it.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:42:28] Ivana, do you want to make a comment about what Georgina has just said? Because I noticed you nodding your head.

Ivana Pedruco Aniceto [00:42:34] I think it's more so the idea. I think catastrophising the current situation, the current climate is the big thing behind why students are so distrusting of everything, whether it's punitive approaches to combating against AI. I do think that a purely punitive approach will increase nothing but fear and distress. It's not something that's conducive for any student whatsoever. In saying that there are ways that students can obviously attempt to combat the flagging of academic misconduct through AI. I have, I think in every assessment I've done, I have a Google doc that has every single change I've ever done from a comma all the way to a capital letter, that every single little change I have. So in the instance that academic misconduct is flagged for it, it isn't. I have attract change and version history there. And I think as time goes on, it's really important that we start to learn that whilst this rigidity is there, there are ways for us to combat it. Unfortunately, I've completely given up the use of M dashes and the Oxford comma just out of complete fear for AI use. I think I don't wanna risk it by any means. I do know and I have spoken to lecturers that the Turnitin framework, it doesn't necessarily just pick AI from the use an M dash, but because of the fear and the fear-mongering, arguably, I have also just omitted the use of it entirely. So, I think it's imperative that we have clear communication regarding the ethical use of AI and an assessment design that encourages authentic engagement with the content and the use of a AI if necessary, and if permissible. So that's just my two cents. The minute I saw, I

heard Dr. Maddox talk about the M-Dash. I was just like, there we go. That was it for me. So I just needed to put my two cents there. Thank you.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:44:18] Thanks. Do other members of the panel want to respond to what they've heard previously?

Prof Adeeba Kamarulzaman [00:44:23] Yeah, Judyth, if I may chime in here, I think the police and punish assumes that our students want to take the easy way out, doesn't it? But your own survey shows that they want to learn. In fact, the concern that they're not learning was very high. Am I right, from your own survey? So how do we help them navigate this without... Fear of being called a cheater. It's really it's incumbent upon upon us, the higher education provider to, in fact, change the way we assess. So it should no longer be about knowledge alone. It should be about the process of acquiring that knowledge. So we are embarking on a very, very large project over the next, it started last year, but it will probably finish next year of looking at all the faculties, all the courses in how we assess. A program called PAIR, Programmatic Assessment and AI Review? Response? So that we move from this do or die exams, which we've moved away from for a while anyway, to a much more continuous assessment, feedback and a mix of methods, I think, to to... Look at how knowledge is acquired more than what has been acquired. Process rather than, you know, the end game.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:46:11] Any other members of the panel want to respond to that before my next question? And it's to pick up on another big theme that's come through is the issue of critical thinking and communication. And, you know, it seems to me that unless you know what questions to ask, you're actually not going to optimise the benefits of AI, you're just going to get some sort of hallucination that somebody mentioned before. So what's what's the role of both university preparation, but also a university experience to build the confidence to students to be have the skills of critical thinking, to ask insightful questions, to be able to synthesise and all those higher order thinking skills. So what is the role of the university to offer that to students, to help them thrive and to help him be successful rather than have this constant state of anxiety? Ivana, you've lived it. Why don't we start with you and then I'll, Adeeba I'll pass to you and then I will pass to Georgina.

Ivana Pedruco Aniceto [00:47:16] Well, I think it also, it always comes down to the institution itself. So at least at the University of Newcastle, the content taught is taught so succinctly. And we have so many opportunities in order to expand our knowledge that at least from myself, I wouldn't have to use AI in order to feel comfortable with the content. Though I do understand why students do use it. I'm not a luddite by any means. I do understand that it's used as a means to insist in sharing a clear structured template, in saying that I think critical thinking is so important. And though AI, depending on how you use it, does have the potential to reduce that critical thinking if you're just using it to simply generate a whole assessment for you. But in saying that, I do think

universities do have a specific responsibility to ensure that if the ethical use of AI has been used and it needs to be clearly stated at the beginning of every course, whether or not it is permitted to use AI and whether or AI can be used to a certain capacity, at least in my degree and at least across a number of degrees here at UON, we have course outlines, and I'm assuming every university has a course outline, but within the course outline straight away, it will say in big bold writing, AI is not permitted in this course, or AI is permissively permitted alongside the framework and ethical guidelines of the university. And then we have strict guidelines. We do have opportunities, and I think it's really important that universities and institutions communicate with students. I think communication is the big key, and it's the big thing behind why so much distrust and reduction of critical thinking is occurring is because students are so fearful to use AI when it can be used to strengthen that critical thinking. AI is something that you can use to compare different viewpoints, to view different things, but you need to have the foundational knowledge with this, which is taught through universities in order to expand that knowledge, if that makes sense.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:49:05] Certainly does. Adeeba.

Prof Adeeba Kamarulzaman [00:49:07] Yeah, two things, Judyth. I think it's in how we teach, you know, and going, moving completely away from lecture base and the big professor in front of the 200 classroom going blah, blah, to do active learning and team-based learning and problem-based learning and all those things that will hopefully, you know create more critical thinking. The second is someone Stephen Warburton's put in the chat group is "in schools, studying philosophy is one approach widely used" and I tend to, I want to agree with that as well as I'd say literature, whether it's in Bahasa or English and I want to relate this to my own experience if I may Judyth and I, at the very beginning I said that the Malaysian school system is very much based on rote learning. You know, I was picked to go to Australia many hundred years ago to do HSC and subsequently into medicine. But in my first few weeks in HSC, this is how old I am. It's called HSC at the time. I was handed at Aldous Huxley's 'Brave New World'. And my English class teacher said, now, tell me what you think about chapter one? And I'm like, what do you mean what I think about chapter one? I'm paraphrasing this, even though I speak English fluently and English is almost my first language, but that component of how English is taught in Australia as compared to how English was taught in Malaysia at the time and truly understanding what the author is trying to tell you was missing. So that. So I think through that, that development of critical thinking through reading, through philosophies is very, very important in my view. So bring back the humanities and also in how we teach.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:51:22] Do you want to elaborate on how we teach?

Prof Adeeba Kamarulzaman [00:51:25] What I said before, you know, instead of, you know, the front of problem based learning and stuff, big professor saying,

you know, teaching, you know, that the great and good professors saying, you know that the whatever's, but more problem based and team based and active learning.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:51:46] It seems that, given that this is about thriving, this webinar is about thriving and AI, we're also starting to see a decline in mentorship. That, you know, students are feeling increasingly isolated, and that ability to learn from each other is diminishing. That has the impact of students don't feel that they belong in the institution, they don't fill that they're engaging with the institution. So they have a pretty transactional relationship. Megan, what's happening at UniSQ to actually support students through mentorship and to support them in thriving in this very, in this time of great flux, ambiguity and everybody feeling betwixt and between?

Megan Pozzi [00:52:35] Yeah, it's really interesting at UniSQ. Our context is such that 70% of our students are actually enrolled as online learners and about 70% of our student meet one or more equity categories. So there are a number of interesting kind of factors at play certainly in my context. I think one of the ideas that we're really interested in exploring is this idea of... Looking at addressing that skills gap, the cost of living gap, the connection gap through initiatives like student jobs on campus. So looking at how we can support students to engage meaningfully in employment that is sensitive to their learning and study needs that allows them to contribute meaningfully to the university and develop employability skills that they can take with them out into the workforce. So one of the initiatives that I lead is our university contact centre, like Student Central equivalent. I employ 60 current students, and they can work from home and they can work on campus and you know, but they're a little community in and amongst themselves from across the university. So we're looking at scaling that model and we see really good outcomes for those students. So they stay on, they like working with us so much, they enrol in post-grad degrees. Um, they get really, uh, most of them find graduate, um, employment because we structure the programme as such that they're getting those skills and explicit sort of, um coaching around what they're learning in their role at university. It's supportive so they can go off on prac for four weeks and then still have employment to come back to. So. That's one idea that we're exploring. I know colleagues at QUT have been looking at this idea of reverse mentorship, which is a really interesting idea around where students mentor staff. So traditional models have, you know, staff or industry mentoring students and looking at, well, what does staff and industry, what can they learn from the student experience? So that's an emerging model that I'm aware of elsewhere that I find really, really interesting and compelling.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:55:00] Georgina, what's happening at Flinders?

Dr Georgina Maddox [00:55:04] We have a really strong focus on mentorship. I mean, certainly in one of their undergraduate topics that I have in psychology, we have our third years and our first years get together within the actual topic

and curriculum for both of those year levels. And it's so incredibly important, it's incredibly important for all the things that Adeeba was saying earlier as well in terms of having a relational approach. It helps them become critical thinkers as well because they're actually now learning for the first time for a lot of our students. This is opportunity to meet people from all different walks of life with different perspectives and that just helps them sort of understand the nuance of the concepts that they're learning and obviously that's very relevant in spaces like psychology. We have a large online cohort as well but we provide spaces for them and the tools for them to get together as well and still do those online mentorship sessions. And it's just, yeah, mentorship, community, support, sense of belonging. It's all those sort of five senses that we know really, really matter when we look at things like Lizzio's framework for student success. So I think carving out those spaces is really important, especially for the online cohort, because like Megan was saying, we're reaching different students, often equity groups as well through those platforms. Yeah, so it's a big focus for us.

Prof Judyth Sachs [00:56:26] Ivana. What experience have you had of mentoring? I've had... And do you think it's important?

Ivana Pedruco Aniceto [00:56:31] Oh, it's imperative. I think I'm a first in family. So at the University of Newcastle, four in 10 students are actually the first in their family to ever attend university. So for me, I'm walking into a degree that I have no connections in. It's imperative that I get those connections early. So at least at the University of Newcastle, we have so many different opportunities, at least from I'll go from my personal and explain what's overarching. So I have a scholarship and very fortunate I have the Ma & Morley scholarship, which is a which is the flagship scholarship of the University, awarding me around \$75,000 for the duration of my degree. But what the most invaluable part of it is the community that's raised. We have over 120 scholars who either have already completed their degree, some in law, some of them are still doing studies. So you have that opportunity to connect with a tight-knit community of people who wanna change the world. Right, what I love. In saying that, I also got a mentor in my first year, a person who is a Ma & Morley mentor that in my year, on my first day of law school, actually met up with me to have a coffee and explained to me that law school wasn't as scary. Good thing, because I was terrified. But in saying that, I am cognisant that that is only a small portion of undergraduate students at the university. But we do have things for the wider range. We have something called PASS, which is Peer Assisted Study Sessions. So that, I don't know if you have that in other universities, but we have that here. Um, one hour lesson a week where a student who has previously completed the course has achieved either a distinction or a high distinction in the course. Um, will come in once a week and teach, um, a range of students. You can opt in or opt out. And that's a small opportunity for a bit of mentoring to occur there. It's also embedded throughout the whole, um of our degree. So in my first year in one of my law legal system and methods courses, we actually had the opportunity to meet up with a fifth year law student who already did the massive hurdle. So there are opportunities. Alongside saying that, Megan, I also

work in the Student Central Department. I work in future student support at UON. So I'm there during enrollment period. I understand and I think that there is such a great opportunity to meet, I love my division so much. They're so welcoming and meeting staff members, particularly seeing the people behind the names that you see in emails all the time is so important. And you meet with people who are final years and people who are just starting their degree. I got the job, I remember. I was in my first year and I had ambassador as well. And it's just, it's such a great place. But in terms of ensuring that there is a level of camaraderie within schooling, I think academic trauma and the stress of academic trauma is a bonding experience in itself. The idea of stressfully preparing for assessments, even though students are online, we do have a large online cohort and our postgraduate degrees for masters of secondary teaching, nurse prac. We still have opportunities, particularly through our UNSA, which is our student association, where you can come on campus if you would like. We have online Zoom events. There is literally, and that's why I love my university so much, and I get so much pride saying it, is there are so many opportunities to connect with each other. I think sometimes when I go to uni, it's a home away from home. I've met people and done things that I never thought I could do. Just because AI said yes, I do think it's also important. That students also, as fearful as it is, they do have to put themselves out there. You only receive as much as you give. So I think it's important to put yourself out there to the best of your ability. I'm Vice President of a society. When I first went into university, if you told me that I would be doing this webinar right now, I would have laughed in your face. So I do think that you would, growth is so important, but also there's a certain level of accountability and responsibility for you to put yourself out there. I'm not a public speaker, I never have been. And coming here and being able to do this is something that is well and truly out of my comfort zone, so I'm living proof that if you really want to reap the rewards of university and connect and have mentoring, you do have that opportunity. But yeah, that's me.

Prof Judyth Sachs [01:00:25] And we've completed our hour and how appropriate that the last word is had by a student. And can I thank all the members of the panel for their time but their thoughtful and their useful insights. And you Ivana, I wish you all the best in what I think will be a glittering career. And I'm so delighted that you're being supported by your university and you're taking advantage of it. For me, you're a pin-up girl for student success. Thank you, everybody, and I hope you all have a really good weekend.