Call for Proposals
17th Annual University of Waterloo Teaching and Learning Conference

The Human Factor:
Shaping the Role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Higher Education

April 29, 2026 – Online | April 30, 2026 – In-person

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is rapidly transforming higher education. In this evolving landscape, educators are devising new learning activities and assessment strategies to ensure that our graduates are prepared to navigate the complex challenges they will face throughout their lifetimes. Against this backdrop of possibility and disruption, a crucial opportunity emerges: whether novices or experts, we have the power to shape AI's role in higher education, by asking questions, sharing insights, and creating meaningful learning experiences.

AI affords new possibilities for instructors and students: personalized learning, increased engagement, and enhanced focus on critical thinking skills. How best do we embed AI tools into our courses, and champion new approaches to teaching and assessments of learning to better address the learning needs of our students? When best do we prioritize foundational knowledge and skills versus higher-order learning outcomes? In what ways can we enhance student belonging and authentic emotional and intellectual connections? And how might we work together with AI to improve education?

At the same time, AI challenges higher education and our agency in the pedagogical process in fundamental and existential ways, leading many of us to question the very roles of learners and instructors. How do we maintain the integrity of assessments, given tools that can complete various assignments are almost undetectable? How do we design courses and programs to maintain students' engagement in their own learning? How do we best integrate AI to promote student learning? How do we ensure our learning environments remain ethical? How do we continue championing accessibility, equity, diversity, and inclusion with Large Language Models (LLMs) that are biased and exclude important voices?

For our 17th annual University of Waterloo Teaching and Learning Conference, we will focus on the role of AI in teaching and learning and our role in shaping its use at UW. We welcome proposals from AI enthusiasts, educators with reservations, and everyone in between. At a time when we are called upon to reimagine the future of our institutions and higher education more broadly, we ask you to share your choices, actions, strategies, and practical recommendations when navigating this new world of machine-mediated learning.

Key question areas to consider

Teaching and Learning Innovations
- What innovative teaching practices have emerged in response to AI?
- What approaches help students take ownership of their learning?
- How can we partner with our students and teaching assistants to leverage their expertise, as learners and AI users, to rethink teaching and assessment methods?

Assessment of Learning
- What assessment methodologies are emerging? What implications do these shifts have for learning outcomes and equity?
- How can assessment design uphold principles of academic integrity while avoiding reliance on punitive or surveillance-based measures?
- What assessment strategies effectively promote student autonomy and self-regulated learning?
- Do our current teaching and assessment methods adequately prepare students for the workplace and future careers?

Rethinking Course Content
- What are strategies for redesigning curricula to be more flexible and resilient in the face of AI?
- How can we design curricula to center student learning with support from emerging technologies?
- What knowledge, skills, and attitudes are most important to include in our courses and programs?

Rethinking Courses and Disciplines
- What is one thing in your discipline that will never be replaced by AI?
- What is important for students to continue to learn in your discipline even if/when AI can perform it faster and with more accuracy?
- What does AI make no longer relevant to teach in your discipline? What else do students need to learn?

Indigenization and Decolonization
- How can we reconcile Indigenous ways of knowing with AI?
- How do we use AI to amplify Indigenous ways of knowing and culturally sustaining pedagogies in courses and academic programs, ethically and non-extractively?
- How might AI afford us opportunities to decolonize our practices?

Equity and Inclusion
- How do we address access disparities that result from paid AI tools?

- How do we ensure that the introduction of a new technology does not negatively impact accessibility in our courses?
- How do we devise inclusive approaches to teaching and learning with AI?

Ethical considerations
- How do we foster a culture of academic integrity and trust between educators and learners?
- How do we mitigate the known ecological harms caused by AI?
- How do we integrate AI into our work in ways that do not undermine our credibility?
- What are other questions we should be grappling with?

New culture of teaching and learning
- How do we build institutional frameworks that support rapid adaptation in teaching and learning?
- How do we shape the future of teaching and learning?
- What does it mean to teach and learn in the AI era?

Artificial Intelligence Disclosure

Artificial Intelligence Tool: Microsoft Copilot (University of Waterloo institutional instance); ProWritingAid, Hemingway Editor;
Conceptualization: Microsoft Copilot (University of Waterloo institutional instance) was used to brainstorm theme and title ideas;
Writing – Review & Editing: ProWritingAid and Hemingway Editor were used for sentence-level editing and to highlight writing patterns.

Proposal Guidelines

Please consider the following when developing your proposal:

- We welcome proposals from faculty, staff, and students (undergraduate and graduate) from the University of Waterloo and beyond.
- The deadline to submit a proposal is **Monday, January 19, 2026, at 11:59 p.m**. There will be no extensions.
- Proposals must be between **200-300 words**.
- Proposals may be research-based, practice-based, or both:
  - **Research-based**: Individuals engaged in conducting research on teaching and learning (including recipients of <u>LITE grants</u>).
  - **Practice-based**: Instructors who seek to share practices, strategies, and examples from their own teaching experiences.
- **Number of proposals per person:** Each attendee may submit up to two proposals for conference sessions but may be the primary presenter for only one of these sessions. For the second session, they must be listed as co-presenter.
  - If you are submitting a poster, you may be the first author in up to two sessions.
  - If you submit more than one proposal as primary presenter, we'll only consider your first submission.
- Please anonymize your proposal, as the review process is double anonymous. Replace names of people and institutions with Xs in the title, abstract, and session description, and reference list.
- Ensure that your session will be relevant to people from a variety of disciplines.
- Please include two to three key takeaways from your session (if someone were unable to attend your session, what key research findings/practical experiences would you want them to know?)

Session Types

Online day	In-person day	Session Length
	Alternative session	60 minutes
Online panel	In-person panel	45 minutes followed by a 15-minute Q&A
Online workshop	In-person workshop	60 minutes
Innovation spotlight	Innovation spotlight	60 minutes: six to seven 5-minute showcases, followed by a 10-minute group Q&A session
Presentation	Presentation	60 minutes: three 15-minute sessions followed by a 15-minute Q&A session
	Poster Session	60 minutes

Online day (on Zoom) – April 29

Online workshop: 60 minutes. Take participants through the process of designing and implementing a strategy or approach that you have used, and the insights gained and/or the research and literature behind those strategies or approaches. Workshops should include participant activities and provide opportunities for participants to consider application to their own teaching or student learning.

Online panel discussion: 45 minutes followed by a 15-20-minute Q&A. With a panel of colleagues, address different topics related to the conference theme and/or its sub-questions. Topics may raise issues and include insights from practice, research, or both. Panels may relate to one discipline, several disciplines, or integrate insights gained from working in an interdisciplinary/multi-disciplinary way. Panels should involve three to five panelists and a moderator, and should include a discussion period of 15-20 minutes.

Online presentation: 20 minutes (15-minute presentation, plus 5-minute discussion period). Share an approach, present empirical findings, or examine theoretical or methodological issues.

Innovation Spotlight (5-7 min): 60 minutes (6 to 7 5-minute "spotlights," followed by a 10-minute group Q&A session. The Program Committee will group Spotlights into thematic areas.)

This session invites educators to present a concise overview of a pedagogical innovation—such as an assignment, rubric, resource, or activity—developed in response to challenges or opportunities posed by AI. Presenters will briefly describe the resource, articulate how it uses or circumvents AI, how it was received by students, and share lessons learned.

In-person day (Science Teaching Complex, Biology 2, and Federation Hall) – April 30

Technology provided for all sessions (except the poster session): Computer, clicker, projector, and microphones.

Innovation Spotlight (5-7 min): 60 minutes (6 to 7 5-minute "spotlights," followed by a 10-minute group Q&A session. The Program Committee will group Spotlights into thematic areas.)

This session invites educators to present a concise overview of a pedagogical innovation—such as an assignment, rubric, resource, or activity—developed in response to challenges or opportunities posed by AI. Presenters will briefly describe the resource, articulate how it uses or circumvents AI, how it was received by students, and share lessons learned.

Presentation: 20 minutes (15-minute presentation, plus 5-minute discussion period). Share an approach, present empirical findings, or examine theoretical or methodological issues.

Panel discussion: 45 minutes followed by a 15-20-minute Q&A. With a panel of colleagues, address different topics related to the conference theme and/or its sub-questions. Topics may raise issues and include insights from practice, research, or both. Panels may relate to one discipline, several disciplines, or integrate insights gained from working in an interdisciplinary/multi-disciplinary way. Panels should involve three to five panelists and a moderator, and should include a discussion period of 15-20 minutes.

Workshop: 60 minutes. Take participants through the process of designing and implementing a strategy or approach that you have used, and the insights gained and/or the research and literature behind those strategies or approaches. Workshops should include participant activities and provide opportunities for participants to consider application to their own teaching or student learning.

Alternative session format: 60 minutes. We invite you to propose a format for your session that may better suit your outcomes than the session formats suggested here. When submitting your proposal, please describe the session format and why it better supports your session outcomes.

Poster: Share an approach (practice-based) or present empirical findings (research-based).

Once again this year, we will showcase posters at different points during the day. We want to recognize the work that goes into designing a poster and offer presenters multiple opportunities to highlight their research during the day.

- **Lunch screening** (projected on the big screen in Federation Hall). If poster presenters wish to have their posters projected they will need to send an electronic copy of their poster (in PDF format) to the organizing committee by April 27 at 12:00 p.m. (noon EST). Posters emailed after that date will not be included in the display. Presenters do not need to attend lunch to have their poster showcased.
- **Flash talk presentation (Concurrent Session 3, 3:00-4:00 p.m.)**: Participants will also be asked to deliver a 1-minute flash talk presentation in front of their display during the third series of concurrent sessions of the day. (Standing room only. Chairs can be accommodated.)
- **End-of-day reception** (4:45-5:30 p.m.): a more traditional poster session walk-around.

Technology provided: A large mobile board (dimensions = 48" x 60"), with clips/pushpins. Please ensure your poster is no larger than these dimensions. You may design your poster however you like.

Components of the Proposal

- **Session type:** Please review and select the session type best suited for your proposal and session goals**. Please be mindful that we have limited space for in-person and online alternative sessions, panels, and workshops (8-12 slots in person, 16 online); if you select these modalities ensure you provide a strong rationale that focuses on the interactive aspects of your proposal.**
- For in-person and online alternative sessions, panels, and workshops, you will be prompted to provide an outline of the session activities, including a description of the types of guiding questions and interactions planned. Be as detailed as possible.
- Research sessions proposals should describe methodology and results.
- Presenter information (include name, affiliation, and current contact information for the main presenter and all co-presenters).
- Session title.
- Session abstract (no more than 300 words).
- Learning outcomes, Goals, or Takeaways (one or two outcomes; one or two specific, actionable takeaways for participants).
- For in-person workshops: Accessibility strategies (about 250 words). What are you doing to design and deliver a barrier-free session?
- References (3-5).

Proposal review criteria

Proposals will be reviewed based on the following criteria:
- Relevance of proposal to the conference theme or previously funded Learning Innovation and Teaching Enhancement (LITE) grant project.*
- Innovation
- Demonstrated understanding of issues related to teaching and learning (not applicable to Innovation Spotlight).
- Extent to which proposal ideas are situated within the relevant literature or best practices (not applicable to Innovation Spotlight).
- Relevance across disciplines.
- Clarity of intended session objectives/learning outcomes.
- Appropriate engagement of conference participants (for workshops and panels only).
- Overall clarity of proposal.

*__Note__: <u>Learning Innovation and Teaching Enhancement (LITE)</u> grants demonstrate the range of pedagogical research across the institution. Hence, we strongly encourage LITE grant recipients to submit proposals; these submissions will be evaluated on all criteria except their relevance to the conference theme.

Important Submission, Review, and Schedule Release Dates

__Acceptance Notifications__: Notification about conference acceptances will be sent in early March to the email address used for your submission.

Submission dates
- November 11, 2025: Call for Proposals circulated.
- November 17, 2025: Proposal submission opens.
- January 19, 2026: Proposals submission closes at 11:59 p.m.

Reviewer dates
- January 28, 2026: Anonymized proposals sent to reviewers.
- February 20, 2026: Proposal reviews completed.

Schedule release dates
- Mid-March to early April: Preliminary schedule released for presenters to flag time conflicts; last opportunity to edit title and abstract.
- Mid-April: Final schedule and full program with abstracts released.