

AI Essentials

A short online course for legal services professionals, delivered exclusively to closed cohorts from within the same organisation. The foundational knowledge every legal professional needs, but rarely has. Understand why AI works the way it does and how far you can really trust it in practice in just 4 hours over 4 weeks.

What is the course about?

AI Essentials is the best-in-class online course on the computer science foundations of modern Artificial Intelligence (AI) and their relevance for AI-enabled practice of the law as regards regulatory constraints, data risks, responsible AI use, de/skilling, and performance monitoring on legal tasks. It is intended to give participants technically accurate mental models and genuine understanding of what's inside modern AI systems so they will deploy such systems with insight and confidence. The course, led by University of Oxford experts, will help you better understand when and why trust in AI systems (including GenAI) can be justified and when it cannot.

Over the course of 4 weeks, all participants will complete these stages:

- **Course Orientation (10 min).** Get to know the lecturers, the aims of the course, and how to complete it successfully.
- **Unit 1: AI Basics in Clear Focus (20 min).** A clear introduction to the key terms and concepts of AI, designed to give you the essential grounding for the deeper, technology-focused lectures that follow. And why this knowledge matters.
- **Unit 2: The Lawyer's AI Primer (2 hours).** An accessible introduction to the computer science foundations of modern AI tailored specifically for legal services professionals or those with interest in legal issues relating to AI.
- **Unit 3: AI Regulation Digest (5 min).** Reviews the current state of AI (non)regulation in the context of legal services provision.
- **Unit 4: The Data Elephant in the Room (20 min).** Explores three distinct ways how data (incl. confidential client data) are processed in GenAI tools, highlighting new opportunities for knowledge sharing as well as counter-intuitive data privacy risks.
- **Unit 5: GenAI in Legal Practice (20 min).** Shows what technically informed critical application of GenAI in legal practice looks like, examining the potential risks and benefits of GenAI and how professional obligations can help to optimise its use.
- **Certificate of Completion (15 min).** Gain a personal certificate by completing a short Capstone Exercise during a 10-day window towards the end of the course.



- **Consolidation & Evaluation Session (30 min).** The closing live session will synthesise what you've learned, evaluate the Capstone Exercise submissions, and summarise how others in your organisation think about AI deployment. Q&A included.

What will you gain?

On completing this course, all participants will:

- have developed a foundational understanding of how artificial intelligence works and an awareness of its strengths, limitations, and challenges,
- have a better, technically informed understanding of key issues in AI regulation, data privacy and responsible AI use in the practice of the law,
- have gained applicable insights into the robustness and capacity for misuse of GenAI for legal practice and legal support,
- be able to answer advanced client queries about AI deployment on their matters and to reassure them through knowledge and insight,
- have had the opportunity to learn from your colleagues' experiences via the final exercise,
- have exclusive access to the Oxford LawTech Education Programme (OLTEP) alumni network,
- have earned a personal certificate from the course that highlights your understanding of the topic.

Who is this course for?

'AI Essentials' has been designed for all legal services professionals who deploy or lead the deployment of AI tools as part of their daily role. It is intended to give participants technically accurate mental models and genuine understanding of what's inside modern AI systems so they will deploy such systems with insight and confidence. The course, led by University of Oxford experts, will help you better understand when and why trust in AI systems (including GenAI) can be justified and when it cannot.

The course is suited for professionals at all levels of experience or seniority who want to deepen their knowledge in the field of AI. No prior technical or legal knowledge of artificial intelligence is required.

The course—delivered exclusively to closed cohorts from within the same organisation—will be of particular interest to members of your innovation networks, professional services lawyers, librarians/information services professionals, and business services professionals.

How does the module work?

AI Essentials is delivered over 4 weeks (exact course dates are always agreed with the client) to a closed cohort of participants from the client organisation, with limited numbers to ensure a high-quality learning experience for everyone. The course is delivered entirely online, with two live sessions (recorded): one at the very beginning of the course and one at the end. Once the course finishes, you will have 30 days during which you can still access all materials.

The course comprises 5 units, with the gravity of the course being in Unit 2: The Lawyer's AI Primer (approximately 2 hours of learning) by Professor Tom Melham from the Oxford University's Department of Computer Science.

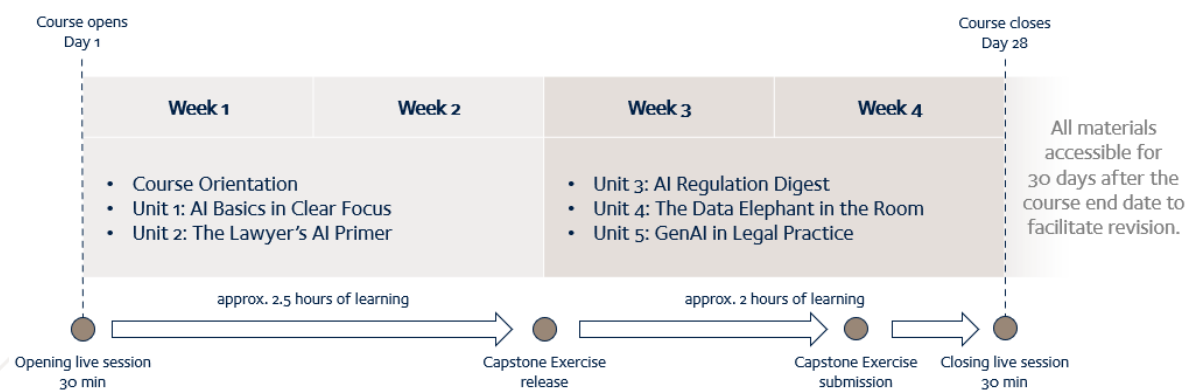
Each learning unit includes on-demand video lectures, a downloadable copy of the lecture materials designed for effective notetaking, core and further readings, key takeaways, and self-assessments. All these can be studied at any convenient time, so that participants can schedule time to progress their learning when it suits them, alongside a busy professional life. All core reading materials are open access, so that you can study them at no extra cost and retain them for future reference.

In addition, you can put questions directly to the lecturers—and engage in discussion with other members of the cohort—at any time, on our online discussion forum. These interactions are visible to all participants in the cohort, ensuring that everyone learns from the discussion and the questions that are asked and answered.

The course concludes with a written capstone exercise, the successful submission of which leads to a certificate of completion. It is a 300-word reflection exercise that will take you around 15 minutes to complete.

We recommend that you set aside 5 hours to complete the course.

Here is the course timeline:



The minimum expected time commitment is 4.5 hours spread over the duration of the whole course (4 weeks) or, on average, just over 1 hour weekly. This includes 3 hours of video lectures, 1 hour of live sessions (recorded), and 0.5 hour spent on quizzes and the final written exercise.



Of course, you may choose to dedicate more time to your learning if, for example, you wish to revise the computer science lectures multiple times, make detailed notes on the provided handouts, engage in the asynchronous discussion fora, or study other resources we recommend for those who want to dig deeper. In such cases, your learning time can rise to 10 hours in total.

Upon registration to the course, you will receive a calendar placeholder for the two live events. While all parts of the course can be completed asynchronously, you will have the opportunity to participate in two live online sessions:

- **Opening live session on Day 1 of the course:** Course orientation; Unit 1 lecture
- **Closing live session on Day 28 of the course:** Consolidation & Evaluation; Open Q&A

These live sessions are held in the AM and PM, typically from **8.30am to 9.00am** and from **6.00pm to 6.30pm** UK time (UTC+1), in order to allow participants to connect from any part of the globe. You would be expected to attend only one of these sessions on each date. For the benefit of those who may not be able to attend live, the sessions are recorded and made available to participants on our Virtual Learning Environment.

Once the course begins, you will receive a handbook that will guide you through the module and provides advice on scheduling your studies, to make your learning as successful as possible. You will receive regular email signposts on the recommended progression journey.

Can I get a certificate from the Oxford LawTech Education Programme?

Yes, if you complete all parts of our virtual learning environment and produce a successful capstone exercise submission, you will get a personal certificate of completion.

OLTEP certificates are issued as both a PDF file that you can download and an online certificate that anyone can access via a unique URL. We automatically verify all online certificates for 365 days from the date they are issued, thereby attesting to your up-to-date knowledge in the field. You can, of course, download the PDF certificate and use it as permanent evidence of your professional development.

Participants whose exercise submission falls substantially short of the required standard are given one opportunity to revise and resubmit the exercise, within 10 days. The feedback provided for the first submission will give clear guidance on what needs to be improved.

How much will it cost and when is the next cohort?

Dates are always agreed with the client. If you want this course to be run for your organisation, please contact info@oltep.ox.ac.uk and we will get back to you with more details, including pricing options. Prices start from £30,000 excl. VAT. Cohorts are typically



up to 100 participants from the same organisation to maintain exclusivity and to facilitate productive exchange of ideas, but cohort size variations and composition are possible.



COURSE INSTRUCTORS

Tom Melham

Unit 1: AI Basics in Clear Focus & Unit 2: The Lawyer's AI Primer



Tom Melham is a Professor of Computer Science at the University of Oxford and a Fellow of Balliol College, where he is Tutor in Computation. During 2012–15, he was Associate Head of Oxford's Mathematical, Physical and Life Sciences Division. He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh in 2002 and a Fellow of the British Computer Society in 2015 and is a Chartered Engineer. His research interests include AI and technology for legal services and the justice system, and testing and evaluation of AI-based systems.

Rebecca Williams

Unit 3: AI Regulation Digest & Unit 5: GenAI in Legal Practice

Rebecca Williams is a Professor of Public Law and Criminal Law at the University of Oxford, in association with Pembroke College. Rebecca's principal teaching interests are criminal law and public law. Her work includes examining optimum methods of decision-making and the use of criminal law as a form of regulation. Increasingly her work also focuses on the relationship of law and technology and the ways in which the law will need to develop to keep pace with technological developments. Her work has been cited by courts in the UK, EU and Australia.



Václav Janeček

Unit 4: The Data Elephant in the Room



Václav Janeček is a Senior Lecturer in Law at the University of Bristol and an Associate Member of the Oxford University's Department of Computer Science. In 2025/26, Václav is hosted by the Italian national research Institute of Legal Informatics and Judicial Systems, where he explores the opportunities and limits of Large Language Models in relation to legal interpretation. His expertise includes data privacy, professional liability, and methodologies for AI-enabled legal tasks. Václav's work has won numerous awards for research excellence.



About OLTEP

The [Oxford LawTech Education Programme](#) (OLTEP) was founded as a joint initiative between the Oxford Law Faculty the Oxford Department of Computer Science. Our mission is simple. We educate future leaders in the legal market: adept providers of tech-enhanced legal services and confident advisers who can spot, analyse and utilise trends in digital technology.

[Read an article about us](#) on the University of Oxford Social Sciences Division website.

Over 1,300 participants from private, public and third sector organisations (including the Government Legal Department, Slaughter and May, BUPA, Burges Salmon, the Law Commission, and the Office for AI) have successfully completed our education programme.

Our approach is research-driven and builds on our world-leading expertise in digital technologies and relevant issues regarding both substantive law and the practice of law. To see examples of our work, visit the [Unlocking the Potential of Artificial Intelligence for English Law](#) project webpage.

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