AI University Foundations

Online Learning Module for Legal Professionals

Master AI in just 9 weeks and get a firm grasp of the technical, legal and ethical aspects of artificial intelligence, including the EU AI Act and AI regulation globally. Stay ahead of the curve and become the go-to AI expert.

What is the module about?

AI University Foundations is the best-in-class education module on the computer science, legal, and ethical foundations of modern Artificial Intelligence (AI). The module, led by University of Oxford experts, is aimed at legal professionals, regardless of experience.

Over 9 weeks, you will complete three learning units. 'The Lawyer's AI Primer' (Unit 1) will give you a foundational understanding of the 'science' behind modern AI. 'Mastering the AI Regulatory Landscape' (Unit 2) will then explore, in detail, the regulation of AI across the globe—focussing on its challenges, the drivers for development of regulation, and the principles underlying the different regulatory approaches. Finally, 'Digital Ethics' (Unit 3) brings participants up to speed with the central positions and trends in digital ethics that underpin and complement AI regulation and that are essential for the deployment of AI in practice. A detailed outline of each learning unit can be found below.

What will you gain?

On completing this module, participants will:

- have developed a foundational understanding of how artificial intelligence works and an awareness of strengths, limitations, and challenges,
- have a detailed understanding the regulatory landscape for AI across the globe (including the EU AI Act), and the fundamental principles, stakeholder positions, and drivers for AI regulation,
- have gained applicable insights into the central positions and trends in digital ethics,
- be able to identify the challenges and opportunities of AI and gain the ability to assist clients through knowledge and insight,
- have had the opportunity and gained the confidence to engage with other professionals working in the field of AI,
- have exclusive access to the Oxford LawTech Education Programme (OLTEP) alumni network,
- have earned a personal certificate from the module that highlights their understanding of the topic.

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Who is this module for?

The AI University Foundations module is designed for all professionals—individuals as well as groups—working in law and law-adjacent fields who will engage with legal issues relating to AI development, deployment and distribution.

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

If you are working in the public sector, you may want to participate in the AI University Public Sector module.

How does the module work?

AI University Foundations is delivered over 9 weeks to a cohort of enrolled participants, with limited numbers to ensure a high-quality learning experience for everyone. This enables us to host live tutorial discussion sessions, conducted personally by our expert lecturers, and provides an opportunity for professional networking. Participants can enrol individually or join through a group booking that has been made by their organization.

The module is delivered entirely online, with elements of synchronous and asynchronous learning. 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.

You will also have the opportunity to join cohort-wide, live online discussions with our expert lecturers. These are hosted by live videoconferencing in four 60-minute sessions, scheduled regularly during the module. Each session is run twice on each occasion, at different times of the day, giving the best opportunity for our participants across the globe to attend. Participants can also make use of these sessions to raise specific issues relating to their professional needs in order to better understand how the AI Foundations they learn apply to their day-to-day work.

The module concludes with an optional, hands-on capstone exercise, the successful submission of which leads to a certificate of completion.

The minimum expected time commitment is around 16 hours spread over the duration of the whole module or, on average, 1.75 hours weekly. This includes 6.5 hours of video

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lectures and 4.5 hours of live sessions. That said, many participants choose to dedicate 20 hours in total to their learning (or around 2.25 hours weekly).

Once the module 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.

What does the capstone exercise involve?

The capstone exercise is a short, hands-on written assignment that participants can complete after they have studied all the learning units in the module and submit to the OLTEP Team for review and feedback. Its pedagogical function is to reinforce your learning across all units of the AI University Foundations module. We find, in our professional teaching at Oxford, that when our students produce something written and test how to apply the newly gained knowledge, this greatly consolidates and deepens their learning.

Participants who do the exercise will spend no more than 1.5 to 2 hours completing it during the last three weeks of the module. They will submit a write-up of three pages to us by the end of the module. We review these and provide feedback, though not a numerical grade. Successful completion of the exercise, along with successfully passing all the self-assessment components in the module, allows us to issue a 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 three weeks. 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?

We run the AI University Foundations module regularly throughout the year. For the latest information on dates and prices, see the OLTEP website. We also send email announcements to all those who have registered their interest by signing up to our mailing list on the OLTEP website.

We offer a 10% discount for group bookings of at least 10 places. We also offer a 15% discount for participants working in public-sector or non-commercial organizations,

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a 10% discount for OLTEP alumni, and a 5% discount for the University of Oxford alumni. Only one of these discounts can apply for any booking.

If you wish to enquire about an exclusive run of the module for your group or company, please contact us at info@oltep.ox.ac.uk.

Testimonials – AI University Foundations

"I highly value the clarity of the materials, the structure of the modules, and the expertise of the instructors, and I believe this program provides a strong foundation for legal professionals seeking to future-proof their practice." – Cohort of April 2025

"The delivery methods are appropriate, and time commitments are very manageable, alongside a full workload." – Cohort of September 2024

"I was genuinely impressed by the AI Foundations module. The content was clear, relevant, and well structured. What stood out most was the direct engagement from the tutors themselves, which made the learning experience feel serious and personal." – Cohort of April 2025

"OLTEP is very well organised getting non-technical lawyers up to speed not only to understand what AI is and what it can do but positioning it in the legal framework and how various regions, not just the EU, are approaching AI and what that may mean for the UK." – Cohort of April 2025

"I thoroughly enjoyed this course. I learnt a significant amount of practical information that supports my day to day role. The Professors were hugely knowledgeable, approachable, and generous with their time. The course content was varied and engaging. I would highly recommend!" – Cohort of April 2024

"This is a truly excellent programme. It provides a highlights-tour of latest legal developments (updated as the programme progresses). Also, the multi-disciplinary approach exposes lawyers to new non-legal perspectives. I enjoyed the way in which the programme allows for flexibility in completion - both in terms of completing the modules online at a convenient time, and also flexibility to join either a morning or afternoon session - all very helpful for those with busy diaries. A great way to connect with like-minded thinkers in the AI community across the globe. Highly recommended." – Cohort of February 2025

"A great course which I would highly recommend. Clearly tailored to the needs of practicing lawyers." – Cohort of July 2024

"Any lawyer from any field should get up to speed on the basics of AI and this course definitely delivers and more. The three-pronged approach to the course (the technical, legal, and ethical) provide the basic tools to navigate the current situation and is a useful introduction when one is inclined to plunge into the subject. Finally, the capstone exercise is necessary to align concepts in one's head and open horizons on the subject. Congratulations to the team!" – Cohort of July 2024

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The Lawyer's AI Primer

This unit introduces law professionals to the computer science foundations of modern 'artificial intelligence' (AI). Using non-technical language and accessible examples, it explains Artificial General Intelligence (AGI) and Applied AI—the two principal aims of AI research, past and present. It introduces the two primary technical approaches to AI and the main kinds of machine learning, and it explains the technology of artificial neural networks. The unit then discusses how we evaluate the quality of AI machine learning models. It builds on these ideas to introduce the technology that underpins today's generative AI based on large language models, and their chatbot applications. It concludes by highlighting the main risks we have with using AI in the real world, elucidating their technical origins and the limits of technical solutions available today.

Lecturer: Tom Melham

Contact: tom.melham@cs.ox.ac.uk.

Lecturer bio: 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.

Learning outcomes:

- A foundational understanding of how AI works and an awareness of strengths, limitations, and challenges.
- Awareness of the differing aims and approaches of modern artificial intelligence.
- Acquaintance with the three main kinds of modern machine learning, a prominent branch of AI today.
- A non-technical grasp of machine learning models and their key characteristics.
- Knowledge of how we evaluate the quality of AI models.
- Understanding of the basic technology underpinning generative AI, such as GPT models, and what this technology can and cannot do.
- A technically informed and balanced understanding of key AI concepts such as prompting, reasoning models, and agentic AI.
- Awareness of the main pitfalls and challenges in deploying modern AI in practice, including problems of bias and explainability.

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Mastering the AI Regulatory Landscape

As we become increasingly aware of potential benefits and risks of AI, jurisdictions across the globe are deciding how best to respond. The interconnected and cross-border nature of AI systems, applications and supply chains make it particularly important for lawyers to master the AI regulatory landscape not only from a comparative viewpoint, but also normatively.

This unit critically examines existing and proposed legislation at a national and international level, with a particular focus on the EU, US (both federally and at state level), UK, China, Brazil, South Korea, Japan, the Council of Europe, and United Nations. You will understand incentives for AI regulation and potential future developments, with insight into both the best techniques for compliance and more broadly the inter-jurisdictional movement and development of different geopolitical regulatory techniques. From a practical viewpoint, you will clearly understand the challenges of AI regulation from the perspectives of different stakeholders in the AI supply and deployment chain, including developers, users, regulators, and public authorities.

Participants not yet fully versed in the EU AI Act will also be able to study a complimentary (free) learning unit that dissects this EU Regulation in detail.

Lecturer: Rebecca Williams

Contact: rebecca.williams@law.ox.ac.uk

Lecturer bio: 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.

Learning outcomes:

- An understanding of the drivers behind new AI regulation across the globe.
- An overview of the developing regulatory landscape, what is covered and where there may be gaps.
- An understanding of regulatory choices and the benefits and disadvantages of particular regulatory approaches.
- An appreciation of the perspectives on regulatory initiatives of both those subject to regulation and the regulators.
- An understanding of the challenges of top-down regulation and alternatives to it.

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DIGITAL ETHICS

The development and deployment of AI systems requires ethical judgment, especially when law does not answer relevant questions, or when it answers them unsatisfactorily. What should your client do? And why? Non-action and non-advice are not an option. The chief aim of this unit is to equip lawyers with the skills and conceptual toolbox to face difficult question around the practical applications of AI systems.

This unit introduces digital ethics as an academically rigorous yet profoundly practical discipline that gives you confidence to spot and solve ethical puzzles concerning simple as well as complex AI cases or scenarios. Participants gain an understanding of the 'methods of ethics' and familiarise themselves with major trends in digital ethics. They also learn three practical lessons that will help them deploy digital ethics in their daily work.

Lecturer: Václav Janeček

Contact : vaclav.janecek@cs.ox.ac.uk

Lecturer bio: 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. Having previously researched how lawyer and computer scientists can work together more efficiently, Václav is currently leading a new master's programme in Law, Innovation and Technology. In the past, Václav held principal research appointments at the Oxford Law Faculty, the Oxford Internet Institute's Digital Ethics Lab, and the Masaryk University's Institute for Law and Technology.

Learning outcomes:

- Understanding of the distinction between law and ethics and their relevance for the development, deployment, and maintenance of AI systems.
- A firm grasp of digital ethics as a practical and rigorous discipline.
- Familiarity with the basic trends and major debates in digital ethics.
- Understanding of the 'method of ethics', which includes how to spot an ethical issue and how to go about solving it.
- Knowledge, gained through three practical lessons, of how to deploy digital ethics in daily work as a legal advisor, policymaker and innovation champion.
- Ability to track developments in digital ethics and AI regulation.
- Awareness of strengths and weaknesses in AI regulatory approaches.

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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 1,000 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.

OLTEP is a non-degree programme of professional education operated by Oxford University Innovation Limited (Company No. 2199542), a wholly owned subsidiary of the University of Oxford, and directed by experienced Oxford academics. If you are looking for a formal qualification from Oxford University, please see the University's website.

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