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# Updating the 2020 IBA Blueprint on Global Legal Education

## IBA Future of Legal Services Commission

Law Schools Global League

The International Bar Association (IBA), established in 1947, is the world's leading international organisation of legal practitioners, bar associations, law societies, law firms and in-house legal teams. The IBA influences the development of international law reform and shapes the future of the legal profession throughout the world. It has a membership of more than 80,000 lawyers, 190 bar associations and law societies, and 200 group member law firms, spanning over 170 countries. The IBA is headquartered in London, with offices in São Paulo, Seoul, The Hague and Washington, DC.

**About the Future of Legal Services Commission:** Formerly known as the IBA Task Force on the Future of Legal Services, the IBA Management Board agreed to formally establish a commission to coordinate the IBA's activities and projects around the future of legal services – one of the key areas of focus for the whole organisation.

The aim of the Future of Legal Services Commission will be to analyse and report on the state of the legal profession, specifically looking at changing client demands, new entrants to the legal industry, regulatory changes and education, and digitisation/technology. Once this step has been completed, the Commission will recommend how to respond to these challenges affecting the profession and design projects and programmes to prepare the legal profession for the future.

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# Updating the 2020 IBA Blueprint on Global Legal Education

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## Reference framework and background: The 2020 IBA Blueprint

### *Context and original problem statement*

In November 2020, the Commission on the Future of Legal Services of the International Bar Association (IBA), in collaboration with the Law Schools Global League (LSGL) and IE Law School, published the *Blueprint for Global Legal Education* (the '*Blueprint*'). This report was developed with the primary purpose of providing a framework and guidance for law schools worldwide to navigate the paradigm shift driven by globalisation and rapid technological advancement. Rather than imposing rigid, one-size-fits-all solutions, the objective was to identify locally sensitive solutions to address universal challenges.

The 2020 study was built upon a rigorous methodology that combined:

- **academic literature review:** an analysis of over 135 specialised articles that identified 39 initial trends;
- **desk research:** a qualitative and quantitative evaluation of the academic offerings across 420 law schools globally (60 from each of the seven analysed regions);
- **global surveys:** the collection of 369 valid responses from law schools, bar associations and legal institutions across more than 70 countries; and
- **qualitative interviews:** in-depth interviews with key deans and academic leaders by region.

### *Key drivers, structural challenges and transformative proposals in the 2020 Blueprint*

The 2020 *Blueprint* identified five interconnected drivers of change in legal education, each tied to critical structural challenges that law schools must overcome to modernise their offerings.

#### Internationalisation versus curricular rigidity

Globalisation emerges as the most prominent trend in the academic literature (37 per cent of mentions), reflecting the urgent need to align legal curricula, faculty and student bodies with transnational legal practice. However, this shift is severely constrained by the traditional, nationally focused orientation

* We gratefully acknowledge the Law Schools Global League (LSGL) member law schools for their contribution to the global survey and consultation process. We extend a special thanks to Esra Özcan, Secretary of LSGL, for her invaluable leadership in coordinating, collecting and compiling the global survey data across the LSGL network. We also express our sincere appreciation to our research assistant, Lorenzo Rodríguez (student at Universidad de los Andes), for his analytical rigour in processing empirical survey data, designing the visual representations and supporting the synthesis of the 2026 global trends.

of law schools, further exacerbated by language barriers and deeply rooted local traditions. To bridge this gap, the *Blueprint* advocates for a progressive escalation, transitioning from basic institutional open-mindedness towards cross-border student exchanges, comparative law methodologies, joint degree programmes and, ultimately, multijurisdictional qualifications that enable seamless cross-border practice.

### Practical skills and the employability gap

A second crucial dynamic involves the shift towards professional skills and employability (nine per cent of the literature), which challenges the historical over-reliance on rote memorisation and purely doctrinal teaching. Institutions face a persistent mismatch between traditional academia and the multidisciplinary demands of modern legal employers. Overcoming this gap requires embedding practical training, collaborative problem-solving, legal management and leadership skills into the core curriculum, transforming law schools from theoretical environments into lifelong professional development hubs.

### Technological integration as delivery and content

Technology and LegalTech (nine per cent of the literature) present a dual-front challenge: institutions must modernise their instructional delivery through online and hybrid models while simultaneously introducing emerging fields like cyberlaw, data analytics and LegalTech into the syllabus. Rather than treating technology as a passive tool, the *Blueprint* emphasises a curricular evolution where students learn digital law, legal coding and online dispute resolution, preparing them for an increasingly automated and technology-driven market.

### Socio-economic inequalities and resource allocation

Gaps in legal education and resources (seven per cent of the literature) highlight widening socio-economic inequalities, rising operational costs and unequal access to quality legal training across regions. These financial constraints severely limit the capacity of under-resourced institutions to innovate. Addressing these disparities demands a redefinition of institutional financial models, the expansion of equitable access, and the integration of student and faculty wellbeing initiatives into academic policy.

### Regulatory frameworks and access to the profession

Regulatory rigidity and restrictive access mechanisms (five per cent of the literature) represent one of the most formidable structural roadblocks to global innovation. Conservative accreditation standards and rigid licensing mechanisms often isolate the legal profession from international shifts. The *Blueprint* stresses the necessity for regulatory liberalisation, encouraging flexible accreditation standards and consumer-centric frameworks that foster interdisciplinary degrees, such as law combined with data science, business or technology, and prioritise broader access to justice over protectionist barriers.

## The need for an update in 2026: transitioning from the post-Covid context to the era of artificial intelligence (AI) (2020–2026)

### *The Covid-19 disruption as a technological accelerator*

Although the 2020 *Blueprint* was conceived before the pandemic, Covid-19 immediately accelerated one of its central dynamics: technology moved from a strategic option to an operational necessity as law schools shifted to virtual instruction. The transition also exposed structural weaknesses, including unequal access to devices and connectivity, limitations in remote assessment and academic integrity, and new pressures on student and faculty wellbeing, while mobility restrictions temporarily constrained physical internationalisation and reordered institutional priorities.

### *The rise of AI in legal practice and education*

By 2026, the rise of AI, and particularly generative AI, represented a second transformation of a different order. Unlike the pandemic-driven shift to online delivery, AI affects not only how law is taught but also how legal work is produced, assessed and supervised. The central question for the 2026 update is therefore no longer whether legal institutions must evolve, but whether they can adapt at the pace of technological change.

### *Critical assessment areas for the updated Blueprint 2026*

The re-evaluation led by the LSGL outlines that the 2026 update must focus on six key dimensions of AI's impact:

1. **teaching and learning methodologies:** the extent of AI tool adoption by students, faculty and administrative staff;
2. **curriculum design:** the integration of AI competencies, data analytics and tech literacy into study plans;
3. **assessment methods and academic integrity:** the overhaul of traditional assessment methods (such as take-home exams or essays) considering AI's capability to draft legal texts;
4. **skills for the future lawyer:** redefining the professional profile to shift value towards high-level critical thinking, ethics, empathy and the supervision of automated systems;
5. **institutional and policy responses:** the degree of internal regulation or guidelines issued by law schools to govern the ethical and responsible use of AI; and
6. **validity of 2020 findings:** determining which trends from the original *Blueprint* remain valid, which have become obsolete and which require urgent revision.

### *Why the LSGL member schools?*

The LSGL serves as an international network of 33 leading law schools spanning 25 countries and five continents, representing diverse legal systems, traditions and jurisdictions across both developed and emerging economies.

Beyond this global geographic diversity, the choice of LSGL member institutions as the primary empirical benchmark is fundamentally rooted in the LSGL's core mission: to build a globally connected, innovative and socially responsible law school ecosystem that empowers its members to co-create the future of legal education, research and impact together. As early adopters of global dual-degree initiatives, cross-border comparative methodologies and educational technology integration, LSGL members provide an ideal testing ground for evaluating how transformative shifts, most notably generative AI, are operationalised in real time. Furthermore, having co-authored the original 2020 *Blueprint* alongside the IBA and IE Law School, the network offers the historical continuity necessary to measure institutional progress and evaluate long-term shifts against a reliable baseline.

This global assessment is directly embedded within the LSGL Strategic Action Plan 2026–2030 ('*Build on the Built*'). Within this strategic roadmap, the project '*Updating the IBA Blueprint on Global Legal Education – A Rapid Global Assessment in the Age of AI*' stands as the flagship initiative under the Innovation pillar while directly intersecting with the Digitalisation pillar. By leading this global evaluation, the LSGL operationalises its mandate to position member law schools as global leaders in legal education and high-value knowledge creation, actively shaping educational policy rather than merely reacting to industry shifts. Simultaneously, the initiative advances the Digitalisation agenda by examining how law schools foster technological innovation, ensure digital inclusion and build practical tech competencies. Ultimately, leveraging the shared commitment of LSGL member institutions ensures that the 2026 update delivers actionable, globally informed benchmark data to guide law deans, academic leadership and legal regulators worldwide to 2030.

## Methodology and empirical framework of the 2026 report

### *Methodological approach*

To evaluate the institutional, pedagogical and regulatory shifts in legal education since the publication of the 2020 *Blueprint*, this study adopts a mixed-methods empirical framework centred on a rapid global assessment. While traditional educational research often relies on long longitudinal cycles, the unprecedented speed of AI deployment requires an agile diagnostic approach capable of capturing real-time institutional adaptations.

The methodology combines quantitative diagnostics with qualitative contextual insights collected across the global network of the LSGL. This dual approach allows the study to measure the structural prevalence of AI adoption while capturing the nuanced institutional challenges faced by law school leadership. By deploying a standardised empirical protocol across 33 member institutions spanning 25 countries, the study establishes a comparative baseline that evaluates both the continued validity of the 2020 findings and the emerging paradigms driven by generative technology.

### *Survey structure and key dimensions*

The primary data collection instrument was a structured global questionnaire specifically designed to evaluate the operationalisation of AI and digital transformation within legal academia. The survey was divided into six strategic dimensions, directly reflecting the critical assessment areas identified by the LSGL:

1. **institutional AI adoption and pedagogical practices:** measures the depth and asymmetry of AI tool integration across three key academic stakeholder groups: students, faculty and administrative staff;

2. **curriculum modernisation and digital skill integration:** evaluates the structural delivery of technological training, distinguishing between mandatory courses, elective offerings, cross-disciplinary subject integration and a complete absence of tech-related modules;

3. **assessment methods, ethics and academic integrity:** examines institutional pressure points regarding student over-reliance on generative AI, the preservation of academic integrity and the structural reliability of traditional evaluation mechanisms;

4. **redefining the profile and human skills of the future lawyer:** analyses shifting competency priorities, weighing the rising imperative of human-centric capabilities, such as critical thinking, ethical judgement and complex reasoning, against technical literacy and traditional legal tasks;

5. **institutional policy and governance models:** maps the current state of internal regulations, ranging from ad hoc operational guidelines to comprehensive, institution-wide governance frameworks addressing privacy, evaluation and faculty support; and

6. **re-evaluation of the 2020 *Blueprint* trends:** directly benchmarks the empirical findings of the original report against present conditions, measuring both the continued validity of its foundational pillars and the perceived urgency of their structural revision.

### *Data collection, sample characterisation and visualisation*

Data collection was conducted during early 2026, targeting senior academic leadership within the LSGL network, including law deans, associate deans of academic affairs and directors of legal innovation. This targeted sampling strategy ensured that responses reflected strategic, institution-level decision-making rather than isolated individual perspectives.

A total of 26 comprehensive institutional responses were retrieved, representing a high response rate across the 33 member schools. The resulting sample provides a rich, cross-jurisdictional cross-section encompassing diverse legal traditions (civil law, common law and hybrid systems) across North America, Latin America, Europe, Africa, Asia and the Asia Pacific region.

To process and visualise the empirical findings, quantitative survey data was structured and analysed using statistical techniques to generate comparative frequency distributions, proportion analyses and validity–urgency matrices. Likert-scale metrics (ranging from 1 = Low to 5 = High) were aggregated into standardised category tiers (Low, Moderate, High) to highlight structural asymmetries, such as the gap between student AI usage and faculty adoption, and to illustrate the precise areas where the 2020 *Blueprint* requires urgent revision. The resulting visualisations, presented in the next section, serve as the empirical foundation for the strategic roadmap outlined in this update.

## Empirical findings: law schools and legal profession in the era of AI

### *Institutional AI adoption and pedagogical practices*

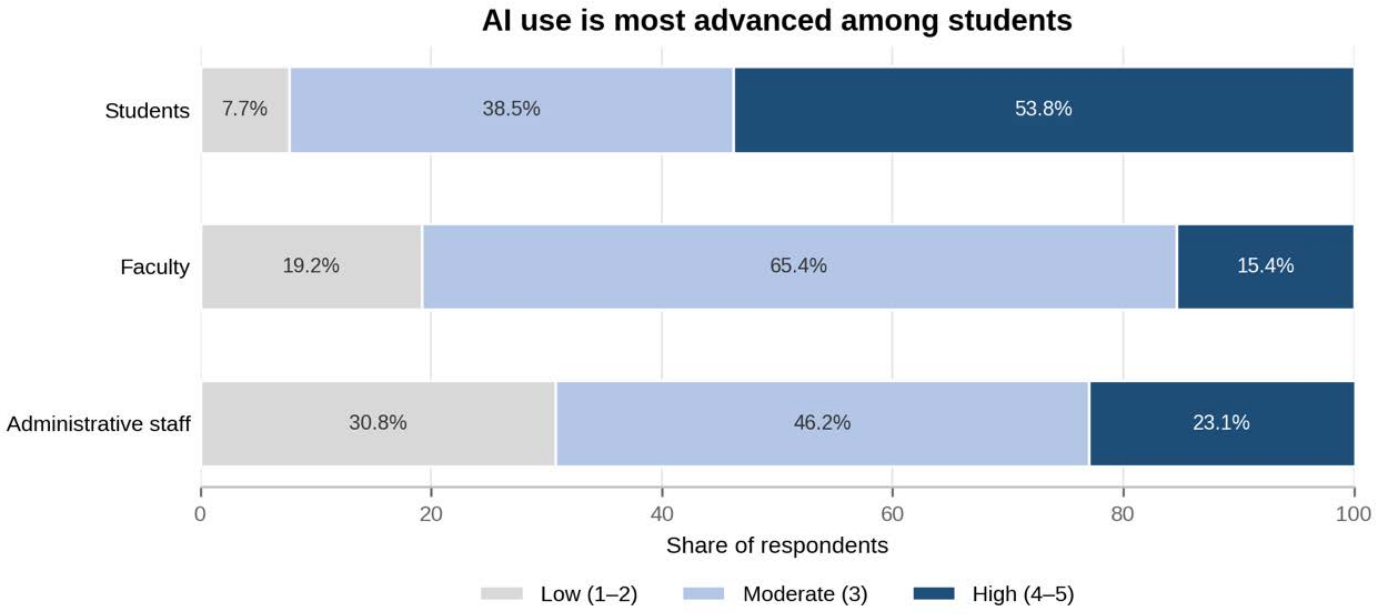



Figure 1: reported AI use by stakeholder group

AI use is already widespread across LSGL institutions, but it is not advancing at the same pace across the academic community. Students are clearly at the forefront: 53.8 per cent of respondents report high student use, compared with 15.4 per cent for faculty and 23.1 per cent for administrative staff, while faculty use is concentrated at the moderate level (65.4 per cent). The relevant finding is therefore not simply that AI has entered legal education, but that adoption is asymmetrical: student practices appear to be evolving faster than teaching and institutional deployment, creating a gap between how the technology is being used and how law schools are prepared to incorporate it into the learning process.

## *Curriculum modernisation and digital skill integration*

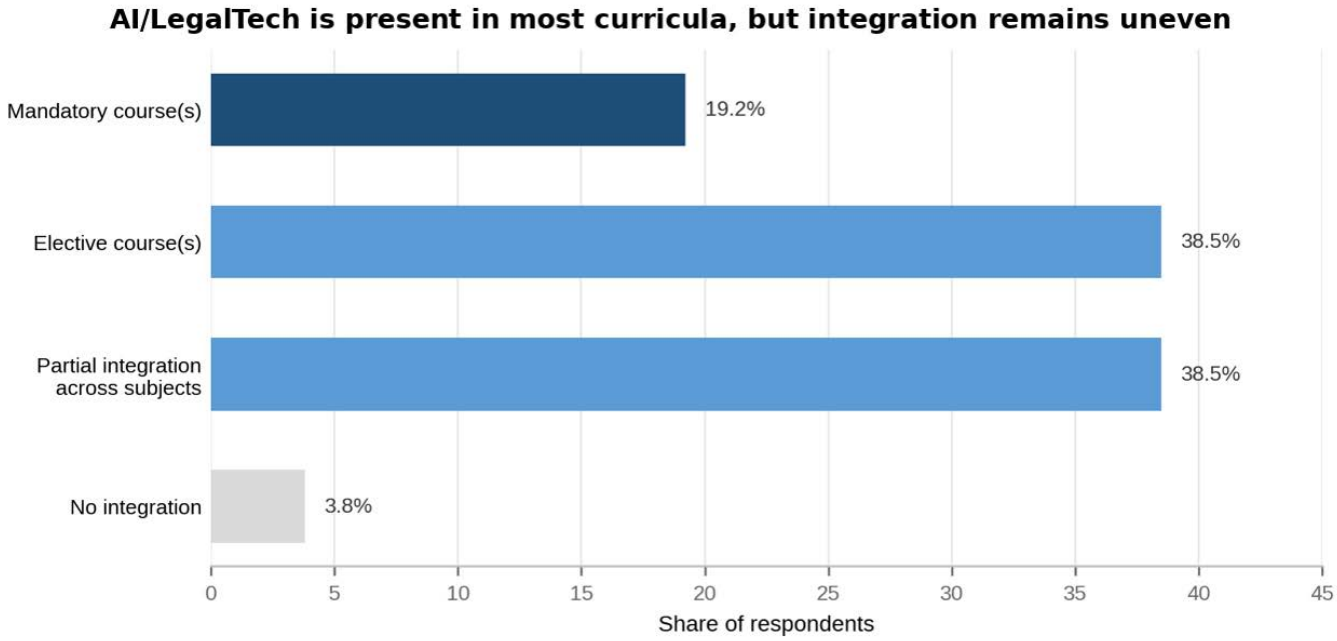



Figure 2: current integration of AI and LegalTech into the curriculum

The curricular response is already broad: 96.2 per cent of respondents report some formal presence of AI or LegalTech, yet the form of that integration remains uneven. Only 19.2 per cent report mandatory courses, while 38.5 per cent rely on electives and another 38.5 per cent describe partial integration across subjects. The transition has therefore moved beyond experimentation, but has not yet produced a common model of curricular integration. The question is increasingly less about whether AI belongs in the curriculum and more about how deeply it should be embedded in core legal training and connected to the competencies expected from future lawyers.

## *Assessment methods, ethics and academic integrity*

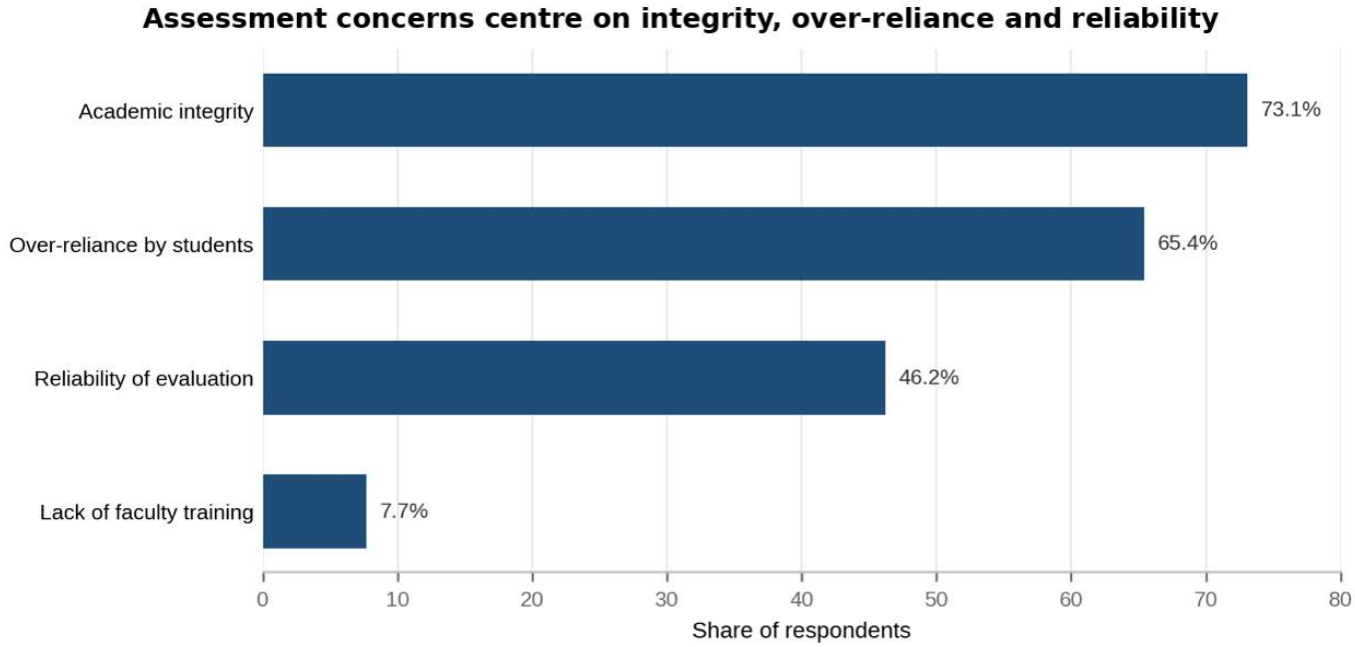



Figure 3: main concerns regarding AI in assessment

Assessment emerges as one of the most immediate pressure points created by generative AI. Academic integrity is the most frequently identified concern (73.1 per cent), but it is closely followed by over-reliance by students (65.4 per cent) and the reliability of evaluation itself (46.2 per cent). Taken together, these responses point to a problem that extends beyond detecting unauthorised AI use, which is that law schools must also determine whether traditional assignments still provide credible evidence of individual learning and independent reasoning. The challenge is therefore increasingly one of assessment design, not only academic misconduct.

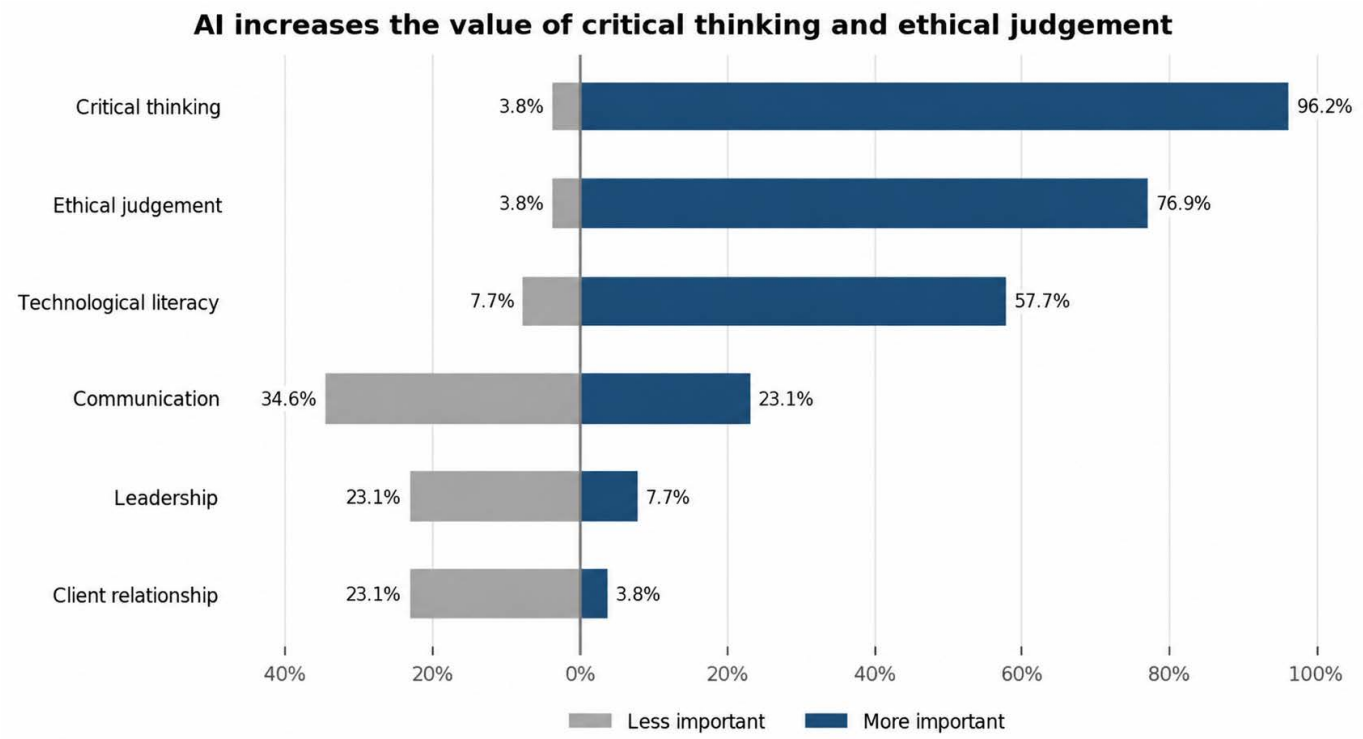



Figure 4: skills becoming more or less important due to AI

The survey does not suggest a simple substitution of human capabilities by technology. On the contrary, the strongest consensus concerns the skills needed to exercise judgement over technological outputs: 96.2 per cent identify critical thinking as becoming more important, followed by ethical judgement (76.9 per cent) and technological literacy (57.7 per cent). Responses are more divided on communication, leadership and client relationships, reflecting uncertainty about how professional roles will be redistributed as routine tasks become increasingly automated. The emerging profile therefore combines technological competence with the capacity to question, contextualise and take responsibility for AI-assisted work.

## *Institutional policies and governance*

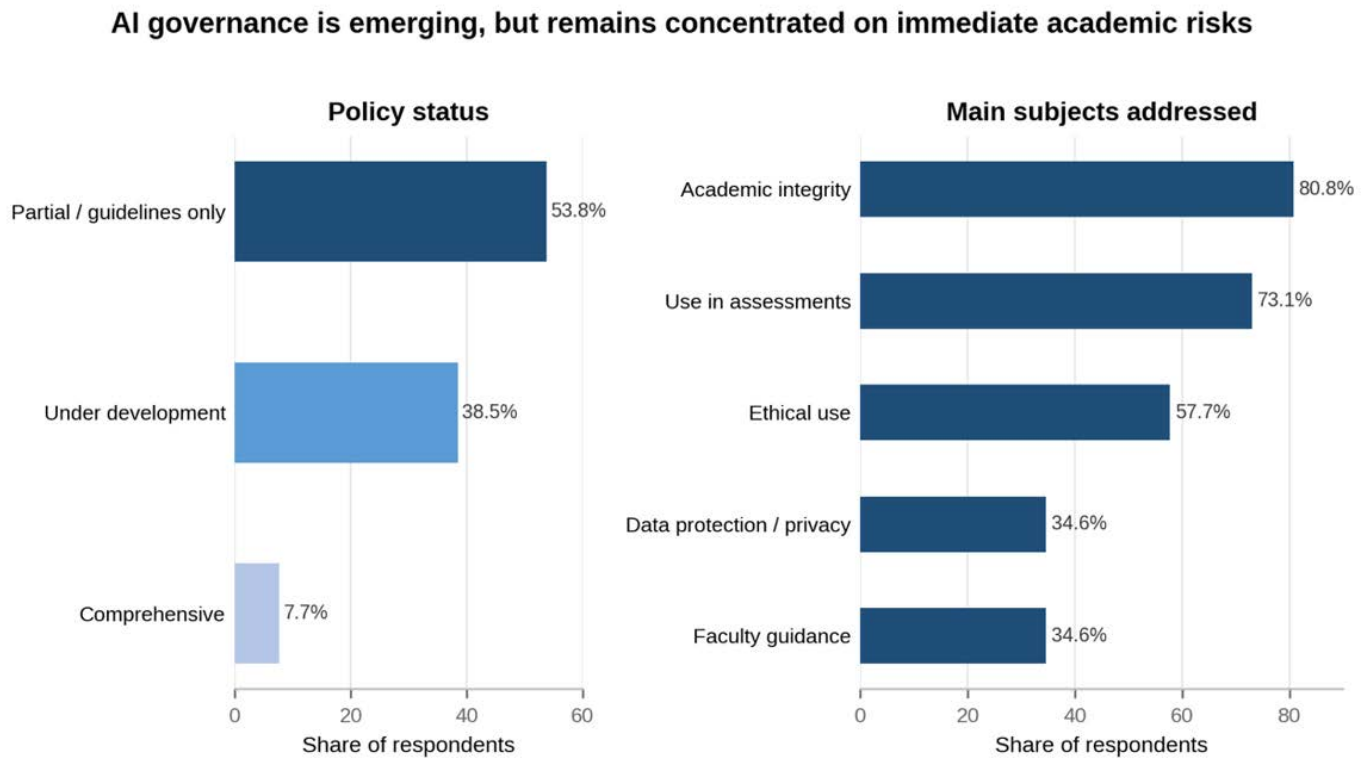



Figure 5: status and principal focus of institutional AI policies

Institutional governance is developing, but remains at an early stage. Only 7.7 per cent of respondents report a comprehensive AI policy; 53.8 per cent rely on partial rules or guidelines; and 38.5 per cent indicate that a policy is still under development. Where rules exist, attention is concentrated principally on academic integrity (80.8 per cent) and the use of AI in assessment (73.1 per cent), while privacy and faculty guidance receive substantially less attention. Governance therefore appears to be emerging in response to the academic risks that became visible first, while the wider institutional implications of AI are still being defined.

### *Re-evaluation of the 2020 Blueprint trends*

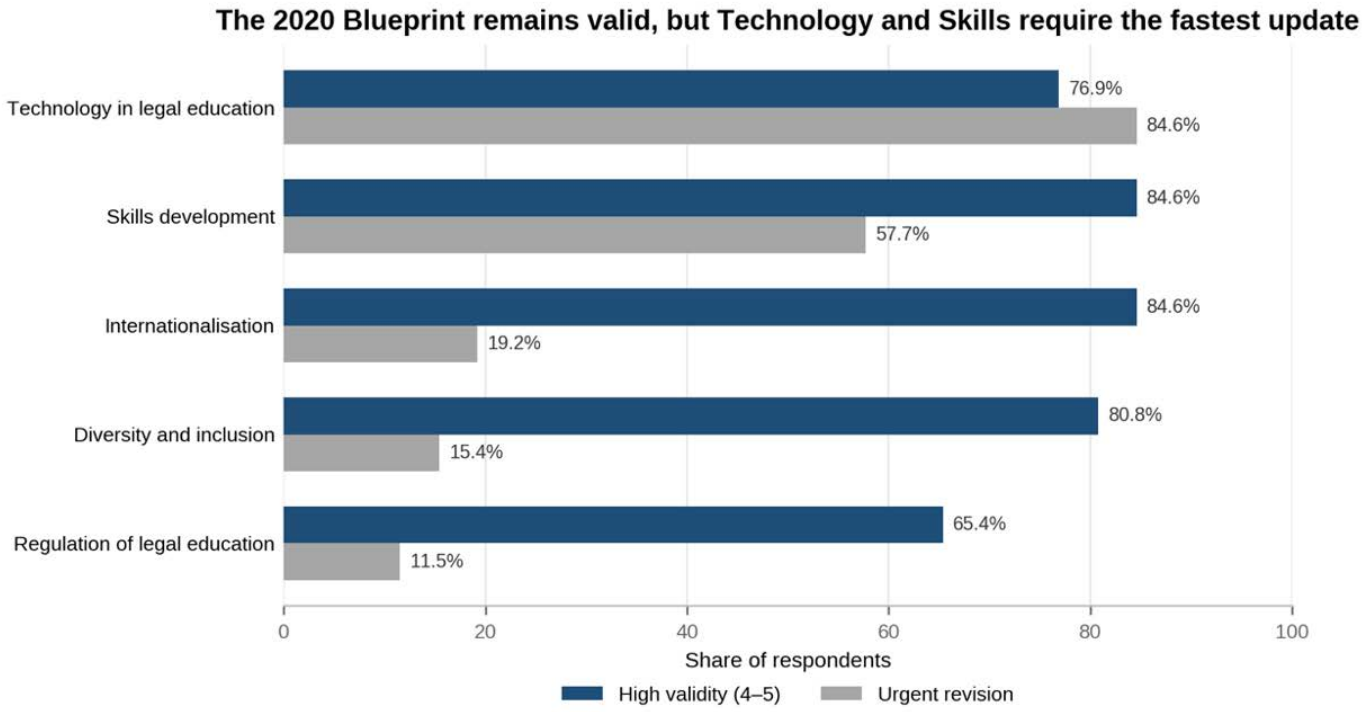



Figure 6: continued validity of the 2020 *Blueprint* pillars and perceived urgency of revision

The survey provides little evidence that the architecture of the 2020 *Blueprint* has become obsolete. All five areas continue to receive substantial support, but the pressure for revision is now concentrated on Technology and Skills Development. Technology is considered highly valid by 76.9 per cent of respondents, while 84.6 per cent select it for urgent revision; Skills Development combines 84.6 per cent high validity with 57.7 per cent calling for urgent revision. By contrast, Internationalisation and Diversity and Inclusion remain strongly validated, but attract much lower urgency. The 2026 update therefore appears to require a rebalancing of the existing framework rather than its replacement, with AI intensifying and connecting the original trends rather than displacing them.

## Strategic recommendations and roadmap for global legal education (2026–2030)

### *Actionable guidelines for law deans and academic leadership*

The empirical evidence calls for an immediate shift from reactive containment to proactive institutional transformation. Law deans and academic leadership must urgently address the adoption asymmetry between students and faculty by implementing structured, mandatory AI literacy and pedagogical training for professors.

Rather than relying on fragmented elective courses, academic leadership must integrate technological competencies and AI ethics directly into the core compulsory curriculum. Furthermore, the high concern surrounding academic integrity (73.1 per cent) and evaluation reliability requires a fundamental overhaul of assessment design. Institutions must pivot away from

traditional, easily automated take-home essays towards oral examinations, continuous in-person problem-solving and AI-supervised practical simulations.

Finally, law schools must move beyond basic academic integrity guidelines towards comprehensive governance frameworks that address data privacy, algorithmic bias and institutional faculty support.

### *Policy and regulatory recommendations for bar associations and regulators*

Legal regulators and bar associations must modernise accreditation standards to prevent statutory frameworks from becoming structural barriers to technological and professional evolution. Regulators must transition from rigid, input-based accreditation metrics towards outcome-focused competency models that recognise digital literacy, data analytics and ethical AI supervision as essential components of legal practice.

To foster interdisciplinary innovation, regulatory bodies should facilitate flexible pathways for dual degrees combining law with data science, business and technology.

Additionally, licensing examinations must be updated to evaluate high-level human judgement, critical thinking and complex risk management (identified by 96.2 per cent and 76.9 per cent of law schools as essential) rather than testing rote legal memorisation, which generative tools can now perform instantaneously.

### *Continuing the IBA–LSGL collaboration*

The 2020 *Blueprint* was itself the product of collaboration between the IBA, through its Commission on the Future of Legal Services, the LSGL and IE Law School. The 2026 update continues that institutional dialogue, bringing together the IBA's global convening role and close connection to the legal profession with the LSGL's cross-jurisdictional academic network and its capacity to generate comparative evidence from leading law schools.

As technological and professional change continues to accelerate, maintaining that collaboration could provide a practical mechanism for periodically revisiting the *Blueprint*, sharing emerging institutional practices, and connecting developments in legal education with shifts in professional regulation and legal services. This continuing exchange would help to keep future guidance globally informed and responsive, without treating the 2026 update as a definitive endpoint.

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## Declaration on the use of AI technologies

*During the preparation of this work, the authors used generative AI tools solely for English-language editing, stylistic refinement and text formatting. All conceptual frameworks, empirical interpretations, data analyses and strategic recommendations were developed, reviewed and finalised entirely by the human authors and research team.*




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