AI-QA LEADERSHIP IN EDUCATION

Strategic Leadership Briefing

For Boards, Senior Leaders, Executives & Governors

ASIC Standards for Growth Series: Webinar 1 - Post-Webinar Resource | Document 2 of 2

This briefing is intended to be read alongside the accompanying Executive Summary Brief.

Audience	Boards of Governors, Senior Leadership Teams, Executive Directors, Risk & Audit Committees
Purpose	Strategic oversight, risk literacy, ethical stewardship, and governance of AI in your institution
How to use	Read the Summary Brief first. Use this full document for deeper engagement, committee discussions, and self-assessment.
Series	ASIC Standards for Growth - Webinar 1 | 24th March 2026 Strategic Leadership Briefing | Document 2 of 2

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Foreword: Why This Matters Now

Artificial intelligence is already shaping the daily experience of students and staff across the education sector. It is becoming embedded in the tools learners use to study, the platforms institutions use to teach, and the systems used to make decisions about student progress, resource allocation, and institutional risk.

For institutional leaders this is no longer a technology question to be delegated. It is a leadership question that sits at the heart of your duties: to students, to staff, to stakeholders, and to the public.

This briefing has been designed to support you at whatever stage your institution has reached. Whether you are just beginning to think about AI policy, or whether you already have frameworks in place and want to strengthen your assurance processes, you will find practical, straightforward guidance here.

How to use this document

- If you are **new to this topic: read Sections 1–3 first** to build your strategic understanding.
- If you **already have AI policies in place: use Section 4** (the Self-Assessment Maturity Grid) to identify gaps.
- If you are **preparing for inspection or review: focus on Section 5** (Evidence & Audit Readiness).

Note: This document is not exhaustive and exists as a starting point to provide guidance and support. It does not constitute an inspection requirement.

The Annex contains:

- Ready-to-use templates
- Question prompts for board meetings
- A plain-English glossary (see Appendices)

Section 1: Understanding AI as a Leadership Issue

Many institutions initially respond to AI as a technology or IT matter, i.e. something to manage through acceptable use policies and IT procurement. This framing, while understandable, is insufficient. AI will touch every area that governance and leadership exists to protect.

1.1 Five Governance and Leadership Domains Affected by AI

Leaders should be aware that AI creates specific risks and opportunities across five core leadership domains:

Leadership Domain	What AI Changes	Leadership Responsibility
Academic Integrity & Assessment	AI tools can generate student work, assist with assessments, and blur authorship. This reshapes what 'original work' means.	Ensure assessment design and academic conduct policies keep pace with AI capability
Safeguarding & Student Welfare	AI chatbots, mental health tools, and learning analytics make decisions or offer advice that affects vulnerable students.	Ensure safeguarding routes exist and human oversight is built into all welfare-adjacent AI tools
Data, Privacy & Procurement	AI tools process large volumes of student and staff data, often through opaque third-party systems.	*UK:* Require Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIAs) before any new AI deployment *International:* In-country and/or best-practice equivalent
Operational Resilience	Over-reliance on AI-powered platforms creates single points of failure. Outages affect learning and assessment continuity.	Ensure continuity plans cover AI platform failures
Reputation & Public Accountability	Marketing claims about AI-enhanced learning are increasingly scrutinised. Biased or inaccurate AI outputs can cause reputational damage.	Require quality assurance sign-off on any public AI claims; log and respond to AI-related complaints

1.2 A Shift in How We Think About Responsibility

Traditional governance frameworks assume a relatively stable set of institutional processes. AI introduces dynamic, sometimes opaque, and continuously changing systems into those processes. This creates a new kind of leadership challenge: how do you govern something you cannot fully see, predict, or control?

The answer is not to avoid AI. The answer is to govern AI with the same rigour you would apply to any other high-stakes institutional activity. That means:

- Asking questions, even (and especially) when you are not a technical expert
- Requiring assurance evidence, not just policy documents

- Treating AI-related incidents as learning opportunities, not failures to hide
- Building AI literacy across your workforce, including the leadership team

A note on expertise

You do not need to understand how large language models work to govern AI effectively.

You do need to **ask good questions**, require **honest answers**, and ensure the **right expertise is available** to inform your decisions.

This briefing is designed to give you the language and frameworks to do exactly that.

Section 2: Areas of Strategic Oversight

Effective leadership and governance of AI in education rests on interdependent areas of practice. Weakness in any one area undermines the others. This section explains what each area means in practice and "what good looks like" at each stage.

Strategic Oversight Area A: Academic Integrity & Assessment Validity

Assessment is the mechanism by which your institution certifies learning. AI fundamentally changes the conditions under which assessment takes place. If your assessment design has not been reviewed with AI in mind, your awards may not be certifying what you believe they are.

What leaders need to know:

- Generative AI tools can now produce credible academic writing, code, data analysis, and creative work across most disciplines
- Students use these tools in a wide range of ways - from legitimate support to full substitution of their own effort
- Blanket prohibition policies are difficult to enforce and may disadvantage students who need AI for accessibility reasons
- The sector is moving toward task design that assesses what AI cannot easily replicate: reflection, oral examination, contextualised application, and process documentation

What good looks like:

✓ An institution-wide AI Acceptable Use and Authorship Disclosure Framework exists, alongside a review schedule
✓ Assessment regulations explicitly address AI-generated content; not just as a disciplinary matter, but as a design principle
✓ Programme teams have been supported to redesign assessments that remain valid in an AI-enabled environment
✓ Students receive clear, consistent guidance on what AI use is and is not permitted in each module/programme
✓ External examiners and moderators are briefed on AI-related considerations

Questions your board should be asking

- When were our assessment regulations last reviewed in light of AI capabilities?
- Do we have a consistent, institution-wide position on AI disclosure, or does it vary by department?
- How are we supporting academic staff to redesign assessments? What resources are allocated to this?
- Have any academic integrity cases involved AI? What were the outcomes and what have we learnt?

Strategic Oversight Area B: Ethical Operations & Data Governance

Every AI tool your institution uses processes data. Some of that data belongs to students and some of it about their learning behaviours, wellbeing indicators, or predicted outcomes. As a data controller/non-UK equivalent, your institution has both legal and ethical responsibilities for how that data is used.

What leaders need to know:

- Many AI tools are provided by third-party vendors who may use student data to train their own models
- Algorithmic systems used to predict student success or allocate support can encode and amplify existing inequalities
- Data Protection:
  - *In the UK*, a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) is a legal requirement before deploying high-risk data processing.
  - *Internationally*, institutions should carry out the legal equivalent and/or recommended best-practice
- 'Ethical' AI is not just about legality: it includes questions of fairness, transparency, and student trust

What good looks like:

- ✓ A DPIA/equivalent is completed before any new AI tool is deployed, with DPO/equivalent sign-off
- ✓ Vendor contracts include clear data processing clauses, prohibiting use of institutional data for model training without consent
- ✓ Learning analytics systems should be reviewed for demographic bias e.g., are they less accurate for certain student groups?
- ✓ Students are informed in plain language how AI tools and analytics are used in their learning experience
- ✓ An AI Incident and Escalation Log is maintained and reviewed quarterly by a relevant committee

Questions your board should be asking

- Can we confirm that a DPIA/equivalent has been completed for every AI tool currently in use?
- Who is our DPO/equivalent, and are they involved in AI procurement decisions?
- Have we reviewed our learning analytics systems for fairness across student demographics?
- If an AI tool produced biased or harmful output tomorrow, do we have a clear process for logging, responding, and escalating it?

Strategic Oversight Area C: Workforce Capability

Governance frameworks are only as strong as the people responsible for enacting them. If staff do not understand AI and its possibilities, its limitations, and its risks, no policy document will be effective.

What leaders need to know:

- AI literacy varies enormously across education workforces from highly confident early adopters to staff who are anxious or resistant
- Both extremes carry risk: over-confident use without critical evaluation can become extremely problematic, and total non-engagement leaves students without adequate support or guidance
- CPD provision on AI needs to be differentiated: what a data analyst needs to know is different from what a student welfare officer needs to know
- AI literacy for leadership is itself a distinct need; *this briefing is part of meeting that need*

What good looks like:

- ✓ An AI Literacy and Professional Skills Framework exists, defining what different staff roles need to understand and be able to do
- ✓ AI-related CPD is tracked, evaluated, and linked to appraisal and performance systems
- ✓ Staff can articulate your institution's AI policies and apply them confidently in their practice
- ✓ Leadership team members have received at least orientation-level AI literacy input
- ✓ Staff feel psychologically safe to raise concerns about AI tools or practices without fear of being seen as obstructive

Questions your board should be asking

- Do we know what proportion of staff have received AI-related CPD in the last twelve months?
- Is AI literacy included in our appraisal or development frameworks?
- Are there staff groups who are currently unsupported - for example, part-time staff, associate lecturers, or professional services staff?
- When did the senior leadership team last discuss AI as a substantive agenda item?

Section 3: AI Leadership & Governance Maturity - Where Is Your Institution?

The grid below is designed to help you honestly assess where your institution currently sits, and to identify your most productive next steps.

There is no expectation that all institutions will be at the same stage. **What matters is that you know where you are, have a plan to develop, and are making progress.**

Use this grid as a starting point for a board or senior leadership conversation - not as a pass/fail judgement.

Area	**Emerging** (Getting started)	**Developing (**Policy in place, partial practice)	**Embedded** (Consistent, evidenced, reviewed)
AI Policy & Governance	No institution-wide AI policy. Responses are ad hoc and vary by department.	A policy exists but is inconsistently applied. Some areas lack awareness.	A clear, current policy is known by all staff, applied consistently, and reviewed annually.
Assessment Integrity	Assessment regulations have not been reviewed for AI. No AI disclosure process.	Some programmes have updated assessments. Disclosure guidance exists but is inconsistent.	All programmes reviewed. Disclosure is standardised. External examiners are briefed.
Data Protection & Ethics	No DPIAs/equivalent completed for AI tools. Vendor contracts not reviewed.	DPIAs/equivalent completed for major tools. Some contracts reviewed but gaps exist.	All AI tools have current DPIAs/equivalent. DPO/equivalent involved in procurement. Bias audits completed.
Incident Management	No AI-specific incident log. Complaints handled informally.	A log exists but is inconsistently used. Trends are not analysed.	Active log maintained. Quarterly review by committee. Trend analysis informs policy.
Staff Capability (CPD)	No structured AI CPD. Uptake is patchy and self-directed.	CPD available but not mandatory or tracked. No framework.	Framework in place. CPD tracked and linked to appraisal. Differentiated by role.
Student Communication	Students have unclear or no guidance on AI use.	Module-level guidance exists but varies in quality and clarity.	Consistent, clear guidance at induction and module level. Declarations in use.
Operational Resilience	No contingency for AI platform failure.	Continuity plan mentions digital	AI-specific continuity plans exist, tested

Area	**Emerging** (Getting started)	**Developing (**Policy in place, partial practice)	**Embedded** (Consistent, evidenced, reviewed)
		systems but not AI-specific scenarios.	annually, with staff and student comms ready.

How to use this grid

Step 1: Circulate to senior leaders individually. Ask each to rate the institution honestly against each row.

Step 2: Collate responses and identify where there is consensus, and where there is disagreement (remember that disagreement is in itself informative).

Step 3: Use the results to set 2–3 priority development areas for the next 12 months.

Step 4: Revisit the grid annually to track progress.

Section 4: Evidence, Audit Readiness & Inspection Expectations

Quality assurance bodies and inspectorates are increasingly attentive to how institutions govern AI. This does not mean they expect perfection. The field is moving quickly, and everyone is learning. What they do expect is that institutions are thinking carefully, acting with integrity, and building evidence of their decisions and their impact.

4.1 What Auditors and Inspectors Will Look For

When inspectors or quality reviewers consider AI governance, they are likely to explore the following areas. This list is based on current emerging practice across sector quality bodies and is likely to evolve as AI governance frameworks mature.

Note: This document is for guidance only and provides sensible suggestions of areas which may be subject to review. It is not a formalised part of the current ASIC inspection process.

Evidence Area	What This Means in Practice	Likely Source of Evidence
Policy Currency	AI-related policies are recent, clearly written, and accessible to staff and students.	Policy repository, date of last review, staff survey.
Assessment Validity	Institutions can demonstrate that assessments remain valid in an AI-enabled environment.	Programme review minutes, external examiner reports, moderation records.
Incident Log	A functioning AI Incident Log with trend analysis and committee oversight.	Log itself, committee minutes, actions arising.
Data Protection	DPIAs/equivalent completed for all AI tools; vendor contracts reviewed.	DPIA register/equivalent, DPO/equivalent records, procurement documentation.
Staff Development	Evidence of structured, tracked AI CPD aligned to institutional need.	CPD records, appraisal documentation, training feedback.
Student Experience	Students can articulate the AI guidance they have received and feel it is fair and clear.	Student survey data, focus group notes, module handbook extracts.
Leadership Engagement	Boards and senior leaders can demonstrate active oversight - not just delegation.	Board minutes, committee terms of reference, leadership development records.

4.2 The AI Incident Log: A Critical Piece of Infrastructure

If there is one practical action this briefing asks you to take, it is this: ensure your institution has an active, properly governed AI Incident and Escalation Log.

An incident log serves several purposes simultaneously:

- It enables you to learn from problems before they escalate
- It demonstrates to inspectors that you take AI risks seriously
- It protects students by ensuring concerns are not lost
- It provides data to improve policy and practice over time

The log should capture any instance where an AI tool produced incorrect, biased, harmful, or misleading output; any student or staff complaint related to AI; any assessment validity concern; and any situation where AI was used in a way that was not consistent with policy.

Minimum requirements for an effective AI Incident Log

- Date and nature of the incident
- AI tool or system involved
- Who was affected (students, staff, or both)
- Immediate action taken
- Escalation route followed
- Resolution or ongoing status
- Lessons identified and applied
- Reviewed by: a named committee or role, at a defined frequency

Section 5: Practical Next Steps for Leaders

This section translates the governance framework into a practical action sequence.

These are not listed in order of importance. Your institution's starting point will depend on your maturity grid results.

Focus on the areas where your institution has the most ground to cover.

Immediate Actions (within the next month)

1. Place AI governance on the next board or senior leadership agenda

Use the maturity grid in Section 3 as your discussion document. Agree 2–3 priority areas.

2. Establish (or review) your AI Incident Log

If it does not exist, create it. If it exists, check it is actively maintained and reviewed.

3. Commission a DPIA/equivalent audit

Ask your DPO/equivalent to provide a list of all AI tools in use and confirm whether each has a current DPIA/equivalent.

4. Review your AI acceptable use policy (or confirm one exists)

If there is no institution-wide policy, commission one. If there is, confirm it covers both staff and student use, and that it has been communicated.

Medium-Term Actions (within three to six months)

5. Commission an assessment validity review

Ask academic or programme teams to report on which assessments have been reviewed for AI validity, and which remain unchanged. Prioritise high-stakes assessments.

6. Establish an AI Literacy Framework

Work with HR and academic development to define what AI literacy means for different roles, and to align this with your CPD offer and appraisal framework.

7. Review vendor contracts and procurement process

Ensure AI tools are procured through a process that includes ethics review, DPIA/equivalent, and explicit data processing clauses.

8. Develop student-facing AI guidance

Ensure students receive clear, consistent guidance on AI at induction, in module handbooks, and at assessment submission points.

> **Longer-term ambition**
> As your governance matures, consider establishing a standing AI Ethics and Governance Group. This is a cross-institutional body that brings together academic, professional services, student, and leadership perspectives to review AI practice, advise on emerging issues, and provide assurance to the board.

The group does not need to be large or meet frequently. What matters is that it has clear terms of reference, a reporting line to the board or a committee, and genuine authority to make recommendations.

Appendix A: Board Meeting Agenda - Sample Standing Item

The following is a suggested standing agenda item for board or governors' meetings.

It is designed to ensure AI governance receives consistent oversight without requiring lengthy discussion at every meeting.

Standing Agenda Item: AI Governance Update

Suggested Frequency: Quarterly (or at each meeting if significant developments)

1. AI Incident Log: Summary of incidents logged since last meeting, actions taken, trends identified.
2. Policy updates: Any changes to AI-related policies or guidance since last meeting.
3. Assessment integrity: Any concerns or cases related to AI and academic conduct.
4. DPIA/equivalent and procurement: Any new AI tools approved or under consideration.
5. Staff development: Update on AI CPD uptake and any gaps identified.
6. Student experience: Any feedback or concerns from students relating to AI.
7. Emerging issues: Any sector-wide developments the board should be aware of.

Prepared by: [Senior Leader / AI Governance Lead]
Supported by: [DPO/Equivalent / Academic Registrar / Head of Quality]

Appendix B: Governance Questions - A Self-Prompting Tool

The questions below are not a formal audit instrument. They are offered as prompts to support honest and generative leadership conversations about AI governance.

You might use them in a board development session, a senior leadership away day, or as pre-reading before a governance discussion.

Strategic Direction

- Does our institution have a coherent, articulated position on AI or are we responding reactively to issues as they arise?
- Who owns AI governance in our institution? Is that ownership clear, resourced, and accountable?
- Have we engaged students in shaping our approach to AI? What did they tell us?

Academic Standards

- Can we say with confidence that our current assessments test what we intend them to test, given AI capabilities?
- If an external examiner or inspector asked us today to show them our AI-related assessment guidance, what would we show them?
- Are our academic conduct processes equipped to handle AI-related cases fairly and consistently?

Ethics & Data

- Do we know what student data is being processed by AI tools, and how?
- Are we confident that our AI tools do not disadvantage particular groups of students?
- If a student asked us how their data was being used by AI systems, could we give them a clear, honest answer?

People & Culture

- Do staff feel confident, rather than anxious, about AI in their work?
- Is our CPD on AI reaching everyone who needs it, including part-time and associate staff?
- Are we learning from other institutions, and from the sector more broadly?

Appendix C: Plain English Glossary

This glossary explains key terms you may encounter when discussing AI governance. It is deliberately non-technical.

Term	Plain English Explanation
Generative AI	AI systems that can produce text, images, code, or other content in response to a prompt. Examples include ChatGPT, Microsoft Copilot, and Google Gemini.
Large Language Model (LLM)	The type of AI that powers most text-based AI tools. It has been trained on vast amounts of text and predicts what words or sentences should come next.
DPIA (Data Protection Impact Assessment)	A legal assessment UK institutions must complete before using any system that processes personal data in a high-risk way.
DPO (Data Protection Officer)	The person in a UK institution responsible for data protection compliance. They should be involved in all AI procurement decisions.
AI Incident Log	A record of instances where AI tools produced problematic outputs, caused complaints, or were used inconsistently with policy. A governance essential.
Learning Analytics	The use of data about student behaviour (logins, submissions, attendance) to identify patterns, predict outcomes, or target support. These systems carry fairness risks.
Algorithmic Bias	When an AI system produces systematically unfair outcomes for particular groups, for example, being less accurate for students from certain backgrounds.
Academic Integrity	The expectation that student work is their own, honestly presented. AI changes what this means in practice and requires policy to be updated.
Acceptable Use Policy	A document that defines how staff and/or students may use AI tools. It should cover both permitted and prohibited uses, and consequences for misuse.
Authorship Declaration	A statement that a student submits alongside assessed work, confirming whether AI was used and in what way. Increasingly common in higher and further education.
Hallucination	When an AI tool confidently produces incorrect information e.g., fabricating a reference or a statistic. A significant risk in educational contexts.
Open-source AI	AI models whose underlying code is publicly available. These may be deployed by institutions directly, which creates different governance responsibilities.
Agent / Agentic AI	An AI system that can take sequences of actions autonomously to complete a goal — not just responding to a single prompt —but

Term	Plain English Explanation
	planning steps, using tools, browsing the web, writing and executing code, or interacting with other systems with minimal human input. Unlike standard generative AI, agentic AI can initiate actions, not just produce content. *Note: This raises additional leadership and governance questions around oversight, accountability, and unintended consequences*.

Appendix D: Recommended Further Reading

The following resources are recommended for leaders wishing to deepen their understanding. This is by no means a full and exhaustive list.

- Department for Education: Generative AI in education: educator guidance (gov.uk)
- ICO: Guidance on AI and data protection (ico.org.uk)
- UNESCO: Guidance for generative AI in education and research (unesco.org)
- The Ada Lovelace Institute: AI governance resources (adalovelaceinstitute.org)
- Jisc: Artificial intelligence in tertiary education: a guide for leaders and governors (jisc.ac.uk)
- UNICEF: Recommendations for AI policies and systems that uphold child rights (unicef.org)
- World Bank: Global Trends in AI Governance - Evolving Country Approaches (worldbank.org)
- OECD: Digital Education Outlook 2026 - Exploring Effective Uses of Generative AI in Education (oecd.org/)

Stay current
AI capabilities and the policy landscape are changing faster than any single publication can reflect. We recommend designating a member of your leadership team to monitor sector guidance and bring relevant updates to governance meetings on a quarterly basis.

The **ASIC website news and events page** and **newsletter** will continue to inform you when we hold events or publish key sources of emerging guidance.

Get involved
We invite all ASIC Institutions to register their interest in contributing to best-practice resources on the subject which will then be released in various formats to the ASIC International Education Community throughout the year. This will cumulate in the Best-Practice Showcase (Webinar 10) in December 2026.

Please email your ASIC Point of Contact or **info@asic.org.uk** simply registering your interest and we will be in touch with next steps.

