# Book Review of Sabbaghan, Soroush (Ed., 2025). Navigating Generative AI in Higher Education: Ethical, Theoretical and Practical Perspectives. Edward Elgar Publishing.

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## Introduction

*Navigating Generative AI in Higher Education: Ethical, Theoretical and Practical Perspectives* is a 278-page scholarly collection published in 2025, bringing together fifteen chapters written by international experts who explore how generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) is reshaping teaching, research, assessment, and governance across higher education. The book balances technical, ethical, and pedagogical insights, examining both the promises and perils of GenAI. It addresses bias, transparency, academic integrity, authorship, and human agency while offering frameworks for personalized learning and human-centered assessment.

Sabbaghan, Associate Professor at the Werklund School of Education, University of Calgary, curates the volume with remarkable coherence. His role as Generative AI Educational Leader in Residence at the Taylor Institute for Teaching and Learning and Chair of the Language and Literacy Specialization Area is reflected in the book's synthesis of conceptual depth and pedagogical practicality. The volume speaks to educators, instructional designers, researchers, and policymakers seeking responsible and inclusive pathways for AI integration. As a researcher observing higher education's rapid negotiation with generative AI, this collection offers a rare balance of urgency and reflection. It neither romanticizes technology nor fears it; instead, it urges academia to slow down, think deeply, and design ethically.

## Framing the future of AI in academia

In Chapter 1 of *Navigating Generative AI in Higher Education*, Sabbaghan (2025a) opens with "Introduction to Artificial Intelligence and Its Relevance to Academia," establishing the intellectual and ethical foundation for the entire collection. He positions GenAI as more than a productivity tool, rather, as a collaborator in academic life that transforms how knowledge is produced, mediated, and evaluated. The chapter's clear structure, including definitions, historical trajectory, typologies of GenAI technologies, and ethical-pedagogical implications, provides a conceptual scaffold for readers new to AI. Using vivid metaphors and concrete case studies, Sabbaghan presents GenAI as both technological innovation and philosophical disruption, inviting educators to engage critically and reflectively with this emerging partner in scholarship.

Building on that foundation, Keyhani and Mohaghegh-Neyshabouri (2025) extend the discussion in "The Rise of Generative AI: Capabilities and Potential for Higher Education." They treat large-language models (LLMs) as cognitive partners capable of reasoning, creativity, and adaptive learning through retrieval-augmented generation (RAG) and few-shot prompting. Their analysis situates GenAI within a broader socio-ethical context, warning that training-data
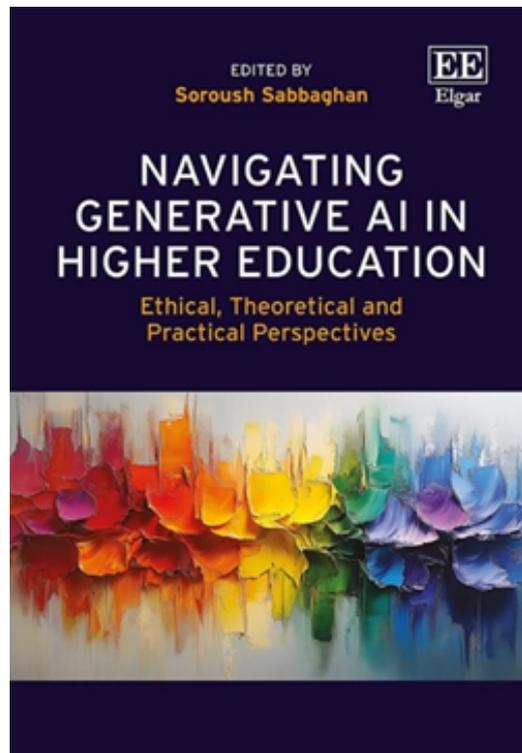
Figure 1: Book cover of Sabbaghan, Soroush (Ed., 2025).

bias can reproduce inequality while also highlighting inclusive possibilities such as adaptive tutoring and multilingual accessibility. They envision institutions where GenAI streamlines administration, strengthens research collaboration, and enables "citizen developers." By linking pedagogy, scholarship, and leadership, the authors call for systemic adaptation grounded in ethics and foresight.

Together, these two opening chapters establish the dual vision that drives the book: GenAI as an epistemic revolution and as a call for reflective stewardship within academia. What resonates with me here is the subtle insistence that stewardship is not a passive stance. It is an intellectual responsibility to reimagine academic authorship, pedagogy, and inquiry through partnership rather than dependence on AI.

## Generative AI as transformative practice: Research, teaching, and design

In "Generative AI in Higher Education: Transformative Tools for Research, Teaching, and Assessment," Farrokhnia et al. (2025) position GenAI as a mediator between human cognition and machine intelligence. They show how AI tools support statistical analysis, qualitative coding, visualization, and writing assistance, easing researchers' cognitive load while accelerating inquiry. Yet they stress that automation requires informed oversight, since GenAI's capacity for statistical testing or coding interviews remains fallible without human validation. Their continuum of adoption, framed through the AI-TPACK (Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge for AI) model, emphasizes a gradual integration that keeps pedagogy at the center. For educators, this chapter provides an operational map for moving from experimentation toward ethical normalization of AI in teaching and research.

Brown and Roberts (2025) advance the conversation in "Responsive Instructional Design Using GenAI and Digital Skill Development Framework." Drawing on Canadian post-secondary practice, they weave together experiential learning, open educational practices (OEP), and the Digital Skill Development (DSD) Framework to show how GenAI can enrich authentic learning. Six facets, Explore & Clarify, Select & Use, Evaluate & Reflect, Organize & Manage, Synthesize & Create, and Collaborate & Communicate, serve as design anchors. Through case-based examples such as the PEARL (Persona Emulating Adaptive Research and Learning Bot) simulation, the authors demonstrate how students can experiment with GenAI responsibly, reflecting on ethics and comfort levels. The integration of reflection and feedback in their design foregrounds agency and inclusivity rather than substitution.

Together, the chapters by Farrokhnia et al. (2025) and Brown and Roberts (2025) move the discussion from conceptual frameworks to lived pedagogy. I see in this framing a quiet provocation: if AI can extend human creativity, then teaching itself becomes an act of co-design. The educator is no longer the gatekeeper of knowledge but the architect of interaction learning alongside both students and algorithms. They portray GenAI as a co-designer that extends, rather than eclipses, the educator's creative role. This vision of human–AI collaboration is echoed in recent empirical research on learner trust and agency. Wang et al. (2025) found that students' willingness to engage with GenAI tools depends not only on usability or accuracy but also on perceived transparency, fairness, and pedagogical support. Their mixed-methods study reveals that when learners perceive GenAI as a trustworthy partner, supported by ethical framing and reflective dialogue, they are more likely to adopt it as a co-designer in learning processes. Such evidence underscores the book's argument that GenAI's educational promise rests on cultivating agency and calibrated trust, not automation.

## Assessment and authorship in the age of AI

Assessment emerges as a focal point across the middle of the volume. Baidoo-Anu et al. (2025) conduct a sweeping scoping review in "Innovative Applications of Generative Artificial Intelligence in Classroom Assessment." Synthesizing 37 studies, they illustrate how ChatGPT and similar tools can generate inclusive, differentiated tasks, produce immediate feedback, and assist students in designing their own quizzes and rubrics. The chapter's framework connects formative, summative, and adaptive assessment, positioning GenAI as an engine of personalization. Yet they emphasize that human feedback remains superior in empathy and contextual sensitivity; therefore, AI must operate under informed supervision. This evidence-based synthesis gives the collection its empirical backbone. From my perspective, this raises an uncomfortable but necessary question for higher education: if we welcome AI into assessment, we also inherit the ethical responsibility to protect the parts of evaluation that are still profoundly human, such as care, trust, and recognition of student voice.

Lee (2025), in "The Double-Edged Sword of Generative AI for Assessment: Efficiency versus Homogenization," offers a philosophical counterpoint. He argues that while GenAI brings efficiency, it risks flattening originality by promoting standardized responses. His concept of retuning assessment invites educators to adapt existing models toward creativity, collaboration, and lifelong learning. Case studies in history, science, and literature classrooms illustrate retuned strategies such as hybrid presentations, portfolios, and multi-party projects. Lee's analysis underscores that the integrity of assessment lies not in resisting AI but in redesigning evaluation to capture the complexity of human thought. Lee emphasizes that retuning does not mean abandoning traditional assessments but rather enhancing them to better reflect diverse learning styles and higher-order thinking. He also highlights implementation challenges such as resource constraints, academic integrity concerns, and the need for institutional support. Ultimately, Lee underscores that assessment integrity lies not in resisting AI but in redesigning evaluation to capture the complexity of human thought.

Complementing these views, Tweedie and Sharmi (2025) tackle the long-standing opacity of grading in "Transparency, Assessment and the 'Black Box' Dilemma." They trace how unexplained grading has historically marginalized students and argue that GenAI, through Explainable AI (XAI) and contrastive explanations (CEs), can actually make assessment more transparent. Their fictional learner Maisha demonstrates how dialogic, human-centered AI can clarify reasoning behind evaluations, embodying a shift from "black box" to "glass box." This tension between opaque and explainable systems aligns with ongoing debates in AI governance. Gyevnar et al. (2023) argue that explainable AI (XAI) research often treats transparency as a technical end rather than a socio-legal means, creating a "transparency gap" between algorithmic design and regulatory accountability. Their analysis of the EU Artificial Intelligence Act underscores that meaningful transparency requires linking interpretability to human oversight and institutional responsibility, not merely algorithmic clarity.

The broader literature reinforces this multidimensional view of assessment transformation. In a scoping review of 32 empirical studies, Xia et al. (2024) demonstrate that generative AI reshapes assessment practices across student, educator, and institutional levels. At the student level, GenAI enables personalized and immediate feedback that fosters self-regulated learning. For educators, it calls for new forms of assessment literacy and authentic evaluation, while institutions face demands for policy redesign and AI-integrated quality assurance. Their findings echo the arguments advanced by Baidoo-Anu et al. (2025) and Tweedie and Sharmi (2025), illustrating that assessment innovation in the age of GenAI must balance personalization, transparency, and ethical accountability.

Meanwhile, Kumar (2025) in "Rethinking Authorship in a Generative AI-Driven Academic World" situates assessment ethics within the broader question of intellectual ownership. Building on Eaton's (2023) post-plagiarism model, Kumar reports survey data showing generational differences in openness toward AI-assisted writing and hybrid authorship. Younger academics tend to accept shared agency between human and machine, reflecting an evolving epistemology of creativity. The chapter calls for new conventions of citation and acknowledgement that sustain accountability without stifling innovation.

Collectively, these contributions redefine assessment and authorship as dynamic, participatory processes, an interplay of human insight, machine augmentation, and ethical awareness. From my perspective, this redefinition demands more than policy change; it requires a cultural shift in how we value intellectual effort. If authorship becomes distributed, then accountability, too, must become collaborative. The question is no longer who writes, but who takes responsibility for the meaning.

## Ethics, integrity, and human agency

Ethics is the philosophical backbone of the collection. In many ways, ethics here functions as the narrative heart of higher education itself. The chapters remind us that integrity is not merely compliance but an act of intellectual honesty just like a willingness to confront what we do not yet understand about our tools. Al-Zahrani (2025), in "The Future Landscape: Predictions and Prospects for Generative AI in Academia," offers a visionary projection of personalized learning, AI-enhanced research, and automated assessment within Responsible AI (RAI) frameworks. His proposals for institutional roles, such as Chief GenAI Officer and for international collaboration on ethical guidelines extend the discourse beyond classroom practice to global governance. The chapter's emphasis on human–AI synergy highlights the importance of training and inclusion to prevent displacement and ensure coexistence.

Eaton and Keyhani (2025) continue this ethical inquiry in "The Pedagogical Ethics: Navigating Learning in a Generative AI-Augmented Environment in a Post-Plagiarism Era." They critique punitive models of academic integrity and advance a transformative ethic centered on agency. Their RRUYO rule, Read and Revise Until You Own, encourages learners to iteratively engage with AI outputs until personal understanding is achieved. Drawing from Messick (1989) on assessment validity and Alicke (2000) on culpable control, they link ethical reasoning to reflective pedagogy, proposing project-based and peer-review assessments that preserve ownership in an AI-mediated context. These theoretical insights are reinforced by recent empirical evidence. Hsiao and Tang (2025) combined the Technology Acceptance Model and the Norm Activation Model to examine how ethical, social, and personal factors influence students' adoption of GenAI-supported learning. Their survey of 336 university students revealed that while perceived usefulness and enjoyment enhance intention to use GenAI tools, heightened ethical awareness, such as concerns about plagiarism or academic misconduct, decreases that intention. This paradox highlights the moral negotiation students experience between integrity and innovation. The authors argue that fostering ethical agency requires institutions to integrate moral reflection into AI literacy and curriculum design, a conclusion that resonates with Eaton and Keyhani's (2025) call for learning ethics grounded in ownership rather than prohibition.

At the institutional scale, Abbas (2025) in "Challenges and Misuses of Generative AI and the Quest for Mitigation" identifies pedagogical, infrastructural, and societal obstacles. Overreliance on AI, lack of policy clarity, and digital inequity threaten both integrity and access. Abbas recommends multi-level interventions, including critical-thinking curricula, faculty development, ethics committees, and public–private partnerships, to mitigate misuse. His global perspective broadens the ethical debate into questions of justice and inclusion. Extending these ethical debates into the realm of design, Maity and Deroy (2024) advance the framework of Human-Centric eXplainable AI (HCXAI), which redefines transparency as an ethical rather than purely technical construct. They argue that explainability must serve human understanding, trust, and fairness, particularly in educational environments where AI mediates learning and evaluation. Their model bridges pedagogy and ethics by calling for systems that make reasoning interpretable and feedback accountable, echoing the book's commitment to transparency and human agency.

These tensions are not confined to theory; they are already playing out across global higher education systems. In a mixed-methods study of 1,217 students and instructors in 76 countries, Yusuf et al. (2024) found both widespread

uptake of generative AI for information retrieval, paraphrasing, and writing support, and deep anxiety about plagiarism, academic misconduct, over-reliance, and erosion of intellectual development. Participants simultaneously framed GenAI as a source of personalized learning and accessibility and as a direct threat to academic integrity, and many explicitly called for institutional regulation. Crucially, perceptions of "cheating," acceptable use, and the need for policy varied by cultural dimensions such as uncertainty avoidance and long-term orientation, suggesting that any ethical framework for GenAI in higher education must be attentive to context rather than assuming a universal standard. Viewed collectively, the chapters by Al-Zahrani, Eaton and Keyhani, and Abbas establish the book's ethical foundation. Ethics is not a constraint but the condition for sustainable innovation. Sustainable AI integration will depend less on regulation and more on the cultivation of moral imagination, the courage to align technological progress with human flourishing.

## Policy, governance, and competency frameworks

Chiu (2025), in "From Student Artificial Intelligence (AI) Literacy to AI Competency," bridges the ethical and policy domains by focusing on learner capability. Through a co-design study with Hong Kong undergraduates, he develops an AI Competency Framework encompassing six interrelated aspects: AI knowledge and application, ethical principles, societal impact, learning with AI, AI for careers, and lifelong learning. Each unfolds across the cognitive continuum of understanding, applying, and creating, aligned with Bloom's taxonomy. Chiu's framework transforms static literacy into dynamic competency by including affective and behavioral components, such as confidence, self-regulation, and ethical judgment. His practical recommendations for institutional adoption, including foundation courses, interdisciplinary collaboration, and peer reflection, make the framework both scalable and inclusive.

Expanding the scope, Kowch (2025) in "An Innovation Policy Analysis of G10 Nations' Strategic Plans for Future AI Leaders and Researchers in Higher Education" analyzes the macro-policy environment shaping academic AI development. Drawing from innovation-systems and complex-adaptive-systems theory, he reviews national AI strategies across ten leading economies. Despite nearly one trillion USD in combined investment, he finds that most strategies privilege economic growth and industrial innovation over educational reform. Advisory bodies remain dominated by technologists, with minimal representation from humanities and education experts. Extending this macro-level analysis to a European context, Stracke et al. (2025) examine fifteen national and institutional AI policies across eight countries, identifying critical inconsistencies in how higher education systems address the ethical and pedagogical dimensions of AI. Their study reveals that while teachers and students are the most frequently targeted stakeholders, education managers and policymakers are often overlooked, resulting in fragmented implementation and limited alignment between institutional and national agendas. Few policies integrate "education about AI" (AI literacy) with "education through AI" (AI in teaching and learning), a gap the authors argue must be closed through harmonized, evidence-based frameworks grounded in the EU's Trustworthy AI principles, including human agency, transparency, fairness, and accountability. This European perspective reinforces the volume's call for coherent, multiliteracies-informed governance structures that link ethics, policy, and practice across educational levels. I would see this gap as more than administrative oversight — it reflects a deeper philosophical divide between knowing AI and living with AI. True competency will require universities to merge these dimensions into a single, human-centered literacy.

Kowch's comparative analysis reveals the urgent need for policy mixing, network governance, and inclusion of educational leadership in AI strategy formation. Read alongside Chiu (2025), this chapter situates micro-level competency development within the macro political economy of global AI.

## Collaboration and co-design

Collaboration emerges as the mechanism through which the ethical and policy visions of previous chapters can materialize. Detrick and Kim (2025) in "Collaborative Approaches: Bridging the Gap Between Generative AI Developers and Educators" argue that intersectoral cooperation, among educators, developers, researchers, and communities, is essential for responsible GenAI integration. Their Student-AI Collaboration (SAC) model identifies three spheres: curriculum, human-AI interaction, and learning environment. Through case studies such as the University of Florida–NVIDIA partnership and Canva's educator co-design initiatives, they illustrate how participatory

processes align AI capabilities with pedagogical intent. They also diagnose barriers, including communication gaps, resource inequities, and the relentless pace of technological change, and propose governance structures that institutionalize dialogue and iterative design. Collaboration, they contend, is not a supplementary practice but the condition of meaningful innovation.

This emphasis on co-creation complements earlier pedagogical frameworks (Brown & Roberts, 2025; Chiu, 2025) by revealing that GenAI's success depends as much on social design as on technical architecture. The chapter stands as a blueprint for multi-stakeholder innovation cultures within universities.

## Human-centered futures

The closing chapter, Sabbaghan (2025b) "Charting a Human-Centered Path for Generative AI in Higher Education," synthesizes the insights of all contributors into a Human-Centered Design (HCD) framework. Four principles, inclusivity, contextual awareness, adaptive processes, and collaborative participation, define this model. Through illustrative examples such as a GenAI-assisted academic-writing platform co-developed with graduate students, Sabbaghan demonstrates how these principles translate into practice. His framework unites ethical reflection, instructional design, and policy vision, emphasizing that AI innovation must always circle back to human well-being.

Sabbaghan's recommendations span the educational ecosystem. Educators should employ GenAI to personalize learning and nurture critical thinking; institutions must craft equitable policies and invest in literacy training; policymakers should design transparent, flexible regulations; and developers ought to embed empathy and feedback loops into their design processes. The chapter's humanistic stance redefines GenAI not as a threat but as an opportunity to reaffirm education's moral and social purposes. To me, this is where the book's vision transcends utility. It invites a renewal of purpose, a reminder that technology, however advanced, must remain accountable to the human stories it shapes.

## Thematic integration across fifteen chapters

Read as a whole, the volume advances five interrelated themes that give it both coherence and cumulative power.

1. Epistemological and Pedagogical Transformation – Early chapters (Sabbaghan, Keyhani & Mohaghegh-Neyshabouri, Farrokhnia et al., Brown & Roberts) present GenAI as a cognitive and creative collaborator. They call for pedagogical redesign toward facilitation, reflection, and authentic practice.

2. Ethics, Integrity, and Human Agency – The middle chapters (Al-Zahrani, Eaton & Keyhani, Abbas, Kumar) construct an ethical infrastructure for AI in education, foregrounding transparency, responsibility, and the post-plagiarism ethos.

3. Assessment and Transparency – Chapters 5, 8, and 9 (Baidoo-Anu et al., Lee, Tweedie & Sharmi) collectively reimagine evaluation as dialogic, explainable, and creativity-driven.

4. Competency, Policy, and Governance – Chiu & Kowch bridge individual skill development and systemic reform, linking classroom literacy to national strategy.

5. Collaboration and Human-Centered Design – Detrick & Kim and Sabbaghan close the circle, demonstrating that ethical innovation ultimately depends on participatory, human-centered frameworks.

This progression, from micro-level classroom design to macro-level global policy, renders the collection both comprehensive and forward-looking. Rather than discrete essays, the chapters form a dynamic conversation that portrays GenAI as an evolving ecosystem in which ethics, pedagogy, and governance co-evolve.

## Conclusion: A transformative blueprint for the AI university

*Navigating Generative AI in Higher Education: Ethical, Theoretical and Practical Perspectives* (Sabbaghan, Ed., 2025) stands as a landmark in educational scholarship. Across fifteen carefully interlinked chapters, the contributors collectively argue that GenAI, when guided by ethical, inclusive, and human-centered principles, can deepen rather than diminish higher education's intellectual mission. The book's coherence stems from its dialogic architecture: conceptual essays lead to empirical studies, which in turn generate applied frameworks. Sabbaghan's concluding Human-Centered Design model encapsulates this trajectory, uniting philosophical insight with pedagogical pragmatism and policy foresight. The result is a volume that is simultaneously theoretical, practical, and moral, a rare combination in the rapidly expanding literature on AI and education.

For educators, researchers, and policymakers, the collection offers not merely analysis but a direction: a call to design learning environments where humans and machines collaborate to expand creativity, criticality, and justice. It shows that when technological innovation is governed by empathy, transparency, and collective wisdom, higher education can fulfill its most enduring promise, to cultivate knowledge in the service of humanity. In that sense, this volume does not merely navigate generative AI, but it challenges higher education to navigate itself.

Personally, I found the emphasis on ethics and co-design most compelling; it reframes AI not as a threat but as an opportunity to renew education's moral purpose. The book challenged me to think beyond compliance and toward cultivating moral imagination in AI integration. I strongly recommend this volume as an indispensable resource for anyone shaping the future of higher education.

## Disclosure statement

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