



A career in AI

It's time to bust some myths

We recently partnered with Yonder Consulting to look at Artificial Intelligence. The topic? AI Careers.

AI: motivation and AI career myths debunked dives into the detail of all things AI. How do you successfully grow and retain talent in the AI space? What's stopping businesses and employees currently? And what can we do to encourage new waves of AI professionals?

Why did we create it?

There's a bit of a misconception when it comes to AI. Our research found that 38% of higher education students think a career in AI is boring.

We want to dispel the myths. AI isn't boring – and it's so important to show younger generations how interesting and enjoyable it can be. And we want to show the wealth and diversity a career in AI can offer. So we can start to open the door to people – no matter their background.

42% think AI qualifications won't give them the career they're looking for.

59% were unaware of AI courses at the time of choosing their course.

51% would consider AI-focused studies in future when told about the courses out there.





What have we learnt?

The world as it is – AI professionals

The UK has AI talent but employers could do far more to offer attractive AI careers, not just jobs

- Job titles not clearly defining roles and responsibilities
- Descriptions lacking enthusiasm, clarity, or purpose around a business' AI vision
- Focusing too much on qualifications instead of potential
- Difficult application processes
- An emphasis on the coding side which can deter some applicants

“You can easily come into a role thinking you’ll be doing an area of AI you’re interested in, then do something totally different.” Ryan, Software Engineer

AI professionals are more interested in their mission over a high salary. Plus, they’re attracted to workplaces that offer rapid upskilling through mentorship and creative freedom.

“I know the money will come later. My plan for the first few years is to take everything I can out of each role. I’m laying the foundations so I can move to a larger tech company when I’m older.” Rishi, Software Engineer

The Future is Bright: AI Students

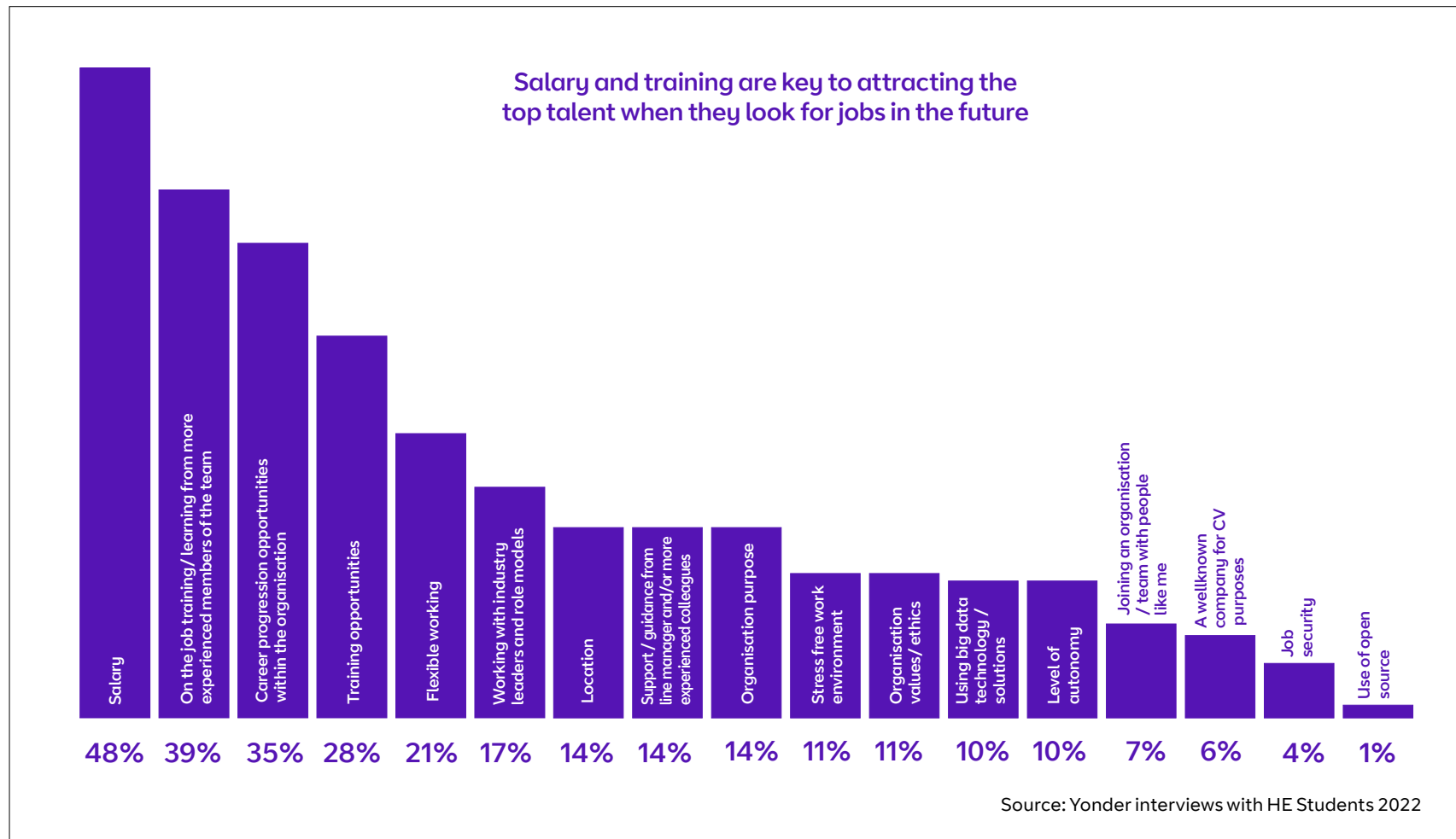
The UK has students already studying AI who are hugely promising. This is in part thanks to the efforts of the UK government, universities and businesses to offer bursaries and conversion courses.

They're inspired by the possibility of having a positive impact.

- 87% want to make a difference and be empowered in their career. However, 46% still believe that 'studying AI is out of their reach' – either through lack of experience, knowledge, or exposure.

Being in charge of their professional growth is a huge priority, just after salary, when looking at the start of their career.

1. On-the-job training from more experienced members of the team – 39%
2. Career progression opportunities within the organisation – 35%
3. Training opportunities – 28%



The bigger brighter future the UK needs: higher education students

UK Government found that the gap between the demand and supply of AI skills is significant and growing. We need to encourage many more talented students into AI to help plug that gap.

Despite the hype around AI in the media, AI educational paths aren't the most 'obvious' or 'appealing' for higher education students:

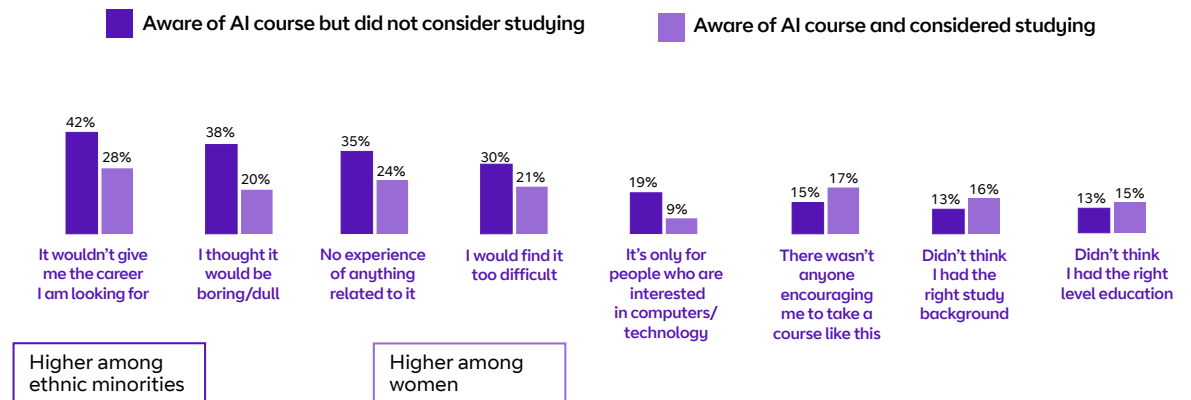
- Almost three in five (59%) didn't know about AI courses when it came to figuring out their future career options. Women and those from a non-STEM background are the least likely to be familiar with AI and aware of AI courses.

Creating and maintaining talent

The UK is currently missing so many opportunities to build a sustainable and diverse talent pipeline. It's our duty as a tech company to encourage, mould, and support these budding AI professionals.

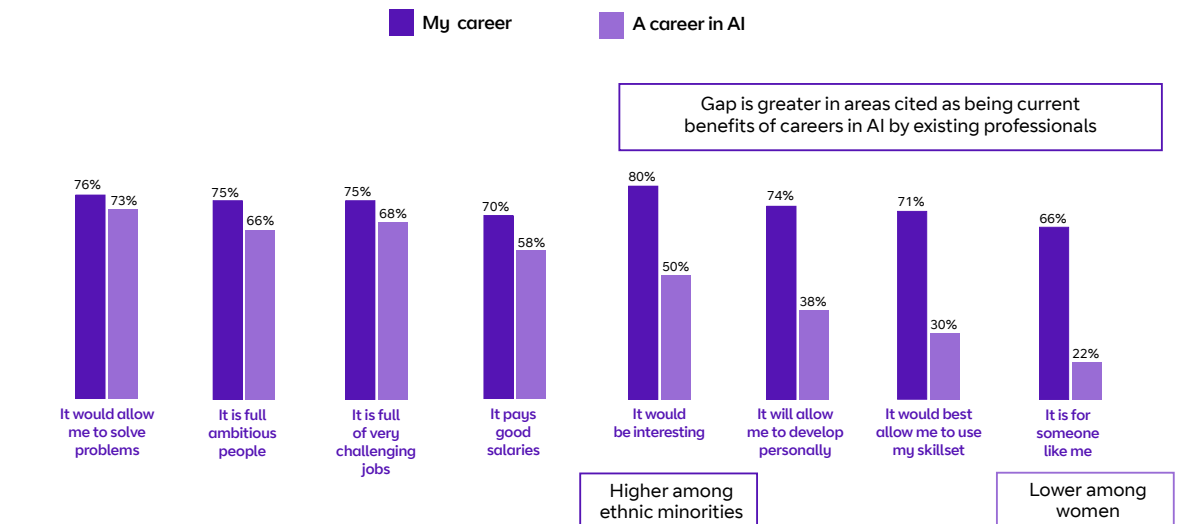
Luckily, 51% of students would consider studying AI after learning what the studies entail. And 67% of higher education students would be keen to participate in three-month intro courses to AI and data. So, things are looking up.

Current misconceptions around AI itself and what it could give HE students in the future lead many to discount it



Source: Yonder interviews with HE Students 2022

AI careers aren't ones HE students relate to despite knowing their benefits



Source: Yonder interviews with HE Students 2022

Let's hear from three people already working in AI.



Mary, Relationship Manager

I mainly worked for cancer charities before being approached to join an AI start-up. They wanted my expertise in healthcare to help fundraise and build partnerships with stakeholders. Since then, I've joined a government initiative helping businesses develop AI products that can improve healthcare systems within the NHS.

Barriers: AI terminology is complicated, but I don't need to understand it to perform my job. What's hard is changing the perception of AI to a point where people will be accepting of its role in healthcare.

Motivation: Traditional fundraising for cancer patients was limited – but AI can revolutionise treatment pathways. Plus, it was a great opportunity to change career.

Education: BSc: Theatre, Media and The Arts (University of Leeds)



Ryan, Software Engineer

I create analytical applications using open-source data, like social media, to predict customer behaviour and buying patterns. This then drives investment and business opportunities for small start-ups and larger businesses within the finance, automotive, and telecoms industries.

Barriers: There aren't that many mentors currently in the fintech AI industry. I'm still young and eager to learn, so looking for businesses that can offer me development opportunities is important.

Motivation: AI hadn't been implemented into cryptocurrency trading yet, so I was attracted by the impact it could have on the industry and the financial return on investment my models could achieve.

Education: BSc: Business Information Systems (Westminster University)



Jack, Data Analyst

I worked for a long time in the automotive industry and began to teach myself to code to improve the measurement and quality control processes at my factory. I was then approached to enrol in an apprenticeship program that allowed us to experience AI in different industries.

Barriers: I thought AI would be highly mathematical and need a high-computing ability. I thought I'd struggle in the position, but in reality, my role needs little maths understanding as there are many tools to help you.

Motivation: I'd already seen the benefits of basic AI principles in my old role. After being offered the apprenticeship scheme, I began researching AI and spoke to engineering colleagues who inspired me to see the future impact of AI across all industries.

Education: Foundation degree (Sheffield Hallam) (Integrated Engineering)



Methodology

Research was commissioned in conjunction with Yonder Consulting, surveying 514 Higher Education students online. This was supplemented by focus groups involving 83 AI Professionals and AI students, these took place online.

Views from AI Professionals during the focus groups are based on Professionals in the early stages of their careers. Views from AI students are not necessarily representative of all AI students. AI students who took part in research were from a select subset of universities that currently offer AI and related courses and may not represent the views of the full AI student cohort.

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