Introduction

About the workshop

Artificial intelligence (AI) brings opportunities and uncertainties for the future of work. There is a widely acknowledged digital skills gap in the UK. Enabling and upskilling the workforce to take full advantage of AI will be vital in both a post-Brexit and post-COVID-19 world. However, there

The impact of artificial intelligence on work

In 2017, the Royal Society convened a series of public dialogues on AI and the future of work. In these dialogues, two visions of AI and the future of work emerged, each occupying an extreme: AI will either be the end of employment, or it will enable a utopian society in which work problems are solved. In 2018, the Royal Society and the British Academy commissioned an evidence review to test the strength of the evidence behind these two extreme predictions.

The resulting publications, the impact of artificial intelligence on work, found that the evidence suggests that neither prediction is likely. Instead, it is much more likely that AI will have a disruptive effect on work – some jobs will be lost, some will be created

- As AI gets more complex, the barriers to entry into an AI-related career may increase. There may be significant limits on how meaningful shorter upskilling and retraining opportunities can be, and AI-related careers may become even more exclusive.

- What are the differences between retraining or upskilling later in life for individuals with less and more digital skills and competence? How will this be different for 'digital natives'?

- What exactly are the skills gaps in the UK economy? Where are they located – by both sector and geography? What skills are most in demand now, and which are most likely to be in demand in the future?

- What are the impacts of the increasing presence of 'ed tech' companies in public education systems?

- What 'no code' and 'low code' jobs will be needed as AI technology develops? What skills will be needed for roles which understand the application of technologies, but do not work directly on development?

- What do we know about how adaptable different job types and sectors are, or might be, through retraining and upskilling?

- How will public trust in developing technologies and data change?

- What will the impacts of COVID-19 and exiting the EU be?

Quality and equity

What do we know?

What do we know about how AI might impact the quality, equity and suitability of work?

- The digital skills gap is a significant problem, and there is a deep gap between people who are comfortable with technology and/or who are digitally fluent, and people who do not use or have access to infrastructure like computers and broadband internet connections.

- There may be opportunities to close some parts of the digital skills gap because changing AI technologies require lots of different skills. For example, there are many roles that digital

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What don't we know?

What don't we know about how AI might impact the quality, equity and suitability of work?

- What kind of society do we want to live in? If we do not articulate this, we may find that inappropriate targets are set, for example based purely on GDP. A wide range of perspectives, including from the humanities and social sciences, should be engaged in the discussions about the kind of society and economy that advancing AI can be pointed towards.
- How much do we know about what people think constitutes 'good work'?
- How can we best communicate the benefits of AI? How can we accurately communicate the risks and limitations, and stimulate informed public debate about the trade-offs?
- What is the role for government in coordinating, communicating and intervening?
- How can we involve people with very little interest or skill in technology with conversations about technology policy? These people risk being significantly impacted by advancing technology, but rarely have a seat at the table.
- What will the impacts of COVID-19 and exiting the EU be?

Part 2: What should we do?

Context

Summary of Part 1 and purpose of Part 2

The first part of the workshop focused on the questions of what we know and what we don't know about AI and the future of work

The role of education

Policy and employers

What might be the responsibility of different groups in advancing action on AI and the future of work related to employers?

- Most businesses want to innovate, but the diversity of businesses means that policy should play an enabling role, not a prescriptive one. Larger businesses and larger employers have much more capability to upskill their workforces than SMEs. Strategies for supporting SMEs will need to look very different, with consideration for differences across sectors.
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UCL and the British Academy will take all of the discussion over this workshop to start to flesh out a larger project that, we hope, will begin to do these things, and to answer some of the fascinating questions we have raised. Thank you.

Attendees

Professor Rose Luckin	UCL Knowledge Lab
Dr Jack Stilgoe	Department of Science and Technology Studies, UCL

Giulia Cuccato	Government Office for Science (GO-Science)
Jordan Cummins	CBI: Confederation of British Industry
Sherif Elsayed-Ali	Element AI London
Carly Kind	Ada Lovelace Institute
Professor Alison Littlejohn	UCL Institute of Education
Cheryl Lloyd	

Safia Mizon Thioune	The British Academy
Siobhan Morris	UCL Grand Challenges
Liz Ogilvie	The Collective (Facilitation)
Dr James Paskins	UCL Grand Challenges
Dr Olivia Stevenson	UCL Public Policy
Katherine Welch	UCL Public Policy