

Artificial Intelligence survey of branches

UCU launched its Future of Work in Post-16 Education project in January 2024, with a webinar and an open call to members to join a working group of UCU members from across the sectors, regions and nations of the union and representing the different equality strands, to undertake the following work:

1. identify threats and opportunities to UCU members of AI and datafication in the HE and FE sectors, including prison and adult education
2. consider what data we have collected already, and how we might collect data on the current and future intended uses of AI in colleges and universities
3. make recommendations to the NEC on what should be in UCU's policy on AI
4. consider and advise on guidance for branches on negotiating on AI and datafication
5. agree a description for the role of Data Rep
6. advise on the content for an AI policy for negotiation with HE and FE employers which takes a rights-based approach to the issues.

The working group was tasked with informing the policy making process of Congress 2025.

As part of the project, the working group undertook two surveys over the Summer and early Autumn of 2024. One was a survey of branches to understand how much branches were talking to their employers about issues related to AI in particular the introduction of new technologies, data retention and recording of teaching sessions and lectures.

Key survey findings

Branches who responded to our survey told us:

- Higher Education employers are engaging with UCU branches more on the introduction of new technologies and data retention than Further Education employers, but generally employers are not talking to branches about these issues.
- Over 55% of responding branches had a policy on the recording of teaching sessions/lectures, and more than half of those policies had been negotiated with the branch.
- Branches wanted training on how to negotiate an agreement on AI; how AI is impacting workplaces and on the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). Branches wanted education specific training which considered reasonable adjustments; threats to jobs; legal frameworks and how to get information from the employer about the technologies.

Respondents to the survey

67 branches responded to the survey that the working group conducted. This was made up of 44 higher education; 21 further education; 1 prison education and 1 retired members branches.

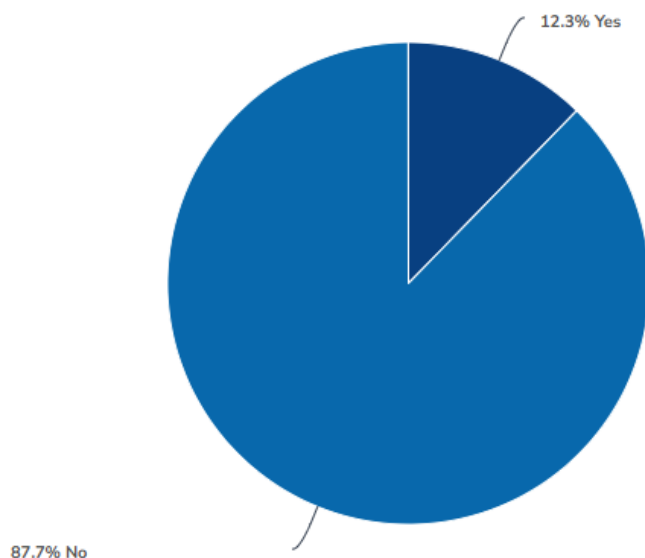
Requesting information from employers

Of those branches, 6 had submitted a TULRCA requested to employer as suggested by the FE Branch Action Note BANFE23 -

<https://www.ucu.org.uk/circ/pdf/UCUBANFE23.pdf>

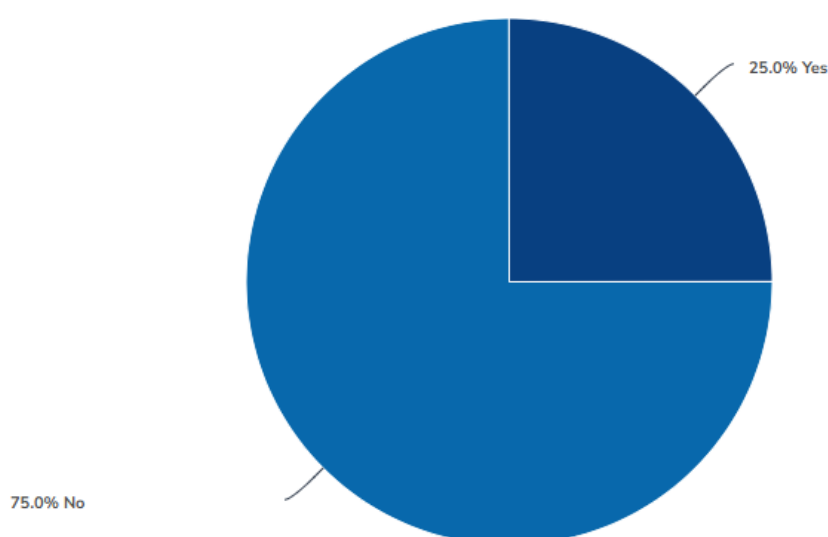
Negotiations with employers

4. Has your branch been approached by your employer to negotiate on the introduction of any technology such as a new system or platform?



Only 9 branches (13.4% of responding branches) had been approached by their employer to negotiate on the introduction of any technology such as a new system or platform, and 7 of those were HE branches.

6. Have you had discussions with your employer (either initiated by your branch or the employer) about staff personal data being retained by the systems/platforms used?

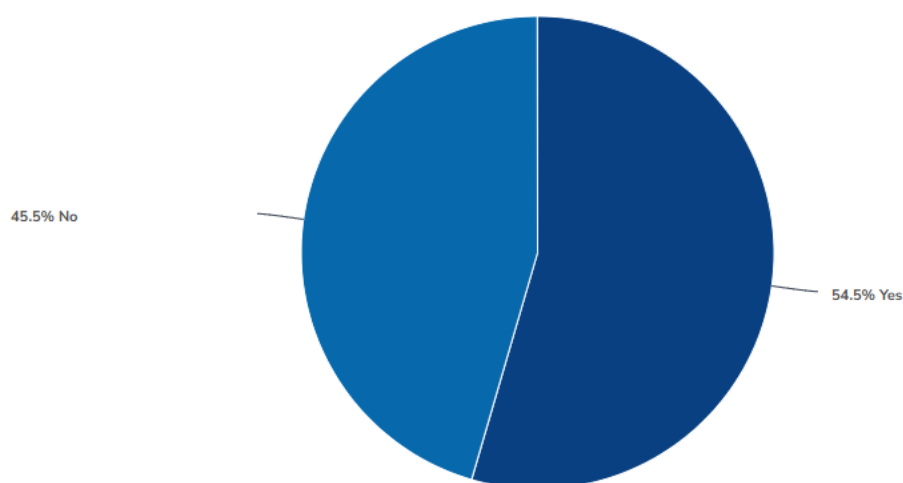


17 branches (25.4% of responding branches) had discussed staff personal data being retained by systems/platforms used in the institution and only 2 of these branches were in FE/ACE/Prison education.

12 branches (17.9% of responding branches) had discussed student personal data being retaining by systems/platforms used in the institution. Again, the majority of these were HE branches (8 of the total).

Policies on recording of teaching sessions/lectures

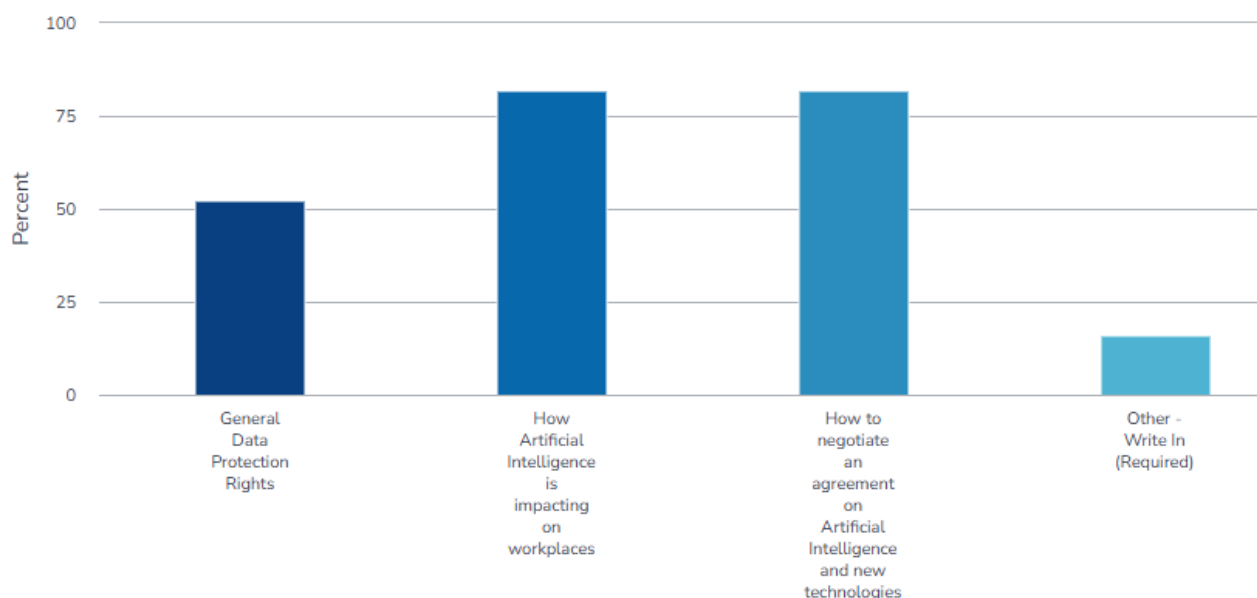
8. Do you have a policy on recording of teaching sessions/lectures?



37 branches (55.2% of responding branches), of which 30 were in HE, 7 in FE/ACE/Prison Education, had a policy on the recording of teaching sessions/lectures, and 20 of those policies had been negotiated with the branch (17 of those were HE branches). Of those policies, 21 contained a clause about the licensing of staff performance rights, the majority (20) in HE branches; and 22 policies (or related ones) restricted how the employer could use staff personal data.

Training for branches

12. Would your branch value training on the following... (please select all that would be relevant)



We also asked branches about what training they would value to support them in tackling the issues raised by new technologies in their workplaces. 51 branches wanted training on how to negotiate an agreement on AI, and 50 on how AI is impacting workplaces. 32 wanted training on the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). Branches wanted any training to be education specific; consider reasonable adjustments; threats to jobs; legal frameworks and how to get information from the employer about the technologies.

There were also suggestions that we provide training on minimising or resisting the use of AI and securing good Lecture Capture/recording policies.

Conclusions

The response rate to the branch survey shows that UCU has a lot more work to do to ensure that branches engage with technology, Artificial Intelligence specifically and data retention as collective issues. We also need to support those branches to make that case to employers.

UCU branches have told us that we need to put education and training at the forefront of this work, as well as providing the resources and guidance they need to support this work.