

# 06 ASEF HIGHER EDUCATION innoLab



## Universities' Role in Developing Skills for an AI-Powered Future

### OPEN CALL OVERVIEW

#### Background

Established in 2021, the [ASEF Higher Education Innovation Laboratory](#) (ASEFInnoLab) creates opportunities for higher education stakeholders from Asia and Europe to expand their professional network, exchange knowledge, and collaboratively build their capacity to address common global challenges. Guided by its overarching theme of “Universities' Role in AI Innovation Ecosystems,” ASEFInnoLab stands as a unique platform for higher education stakeholders to exchange good practices and co-create new ideas at the intersection of education, research, and innovation.

In its sixth edition, the project will bring together outstanding experts and scholars to explore universities' role in developing skills for an AI-powered future.

#### Programme Objectives

[ASEFInnoLab6](#) continues its mission of providing opportunities for academics and higher education managers from Asia and Europe to learn, network, and collaborate in the area where AI and higher education intersect. This project series serves as a groundbreaking platform for participants to:



##### Learn

*Exchange and build knowledge among representatives from higher education institutions*



##### Network

*Facilitate sustainable networking and support funding opportunities*



##### Collaborate

*Create individual or joint outputs in a collaborative, supportive setting*

#### Thematic Focus

This edition, ASEFInnoLab places the spotlight on the critical role that universities play in developing skills for an AI-powered future. This includes anticipating emerging needs, designing inclusive and accessible learning pathways, and building interdisciplinary bridges that align academic knowledge with real-world applications. By centring its work on AI skills foresight and literacy, ASEFInnoLab6 responds to the urgent global need for academic institutions to keep pace with—and help define—the trajectory of AI development.

With the theme “Universities' Role in Developing Skills for an AI-Powered Future”, ASEFInnoLab6 will focus its work in two main outputs:

##### MICRO-CREDENTIAL PROGRAMMES

Participants who will work on designing **micro-credential programme outlines** will contribute to building skills literacy in AI across disciplines in alignment with academic and industry needs. Programmes created within the project's framework will bridge knowledge gaps, enabling more professionals and students to acquire critical AI competencies in flexible and accessible ways.

## ACADEMIC PAPERS

Participants will work on **academic papers** that examine how universities are responding to the evolving demand for skills in the AI era—not only technical, but also ethical, creative, and socio-emotional. Placing the spotlight on emerging skill requirements and strategic approaches, they will explore methodologies for anticipating AI-driven workforce demands, as well as strategies, pedagogies, partnerships, and institutional transformations that enable universities to cultivate future-ready talent. Through this, participants will contribute to shaping long-term visions and policies that ensure the talent needs for innovation and progress are met, while also addressing complex societal challenges.

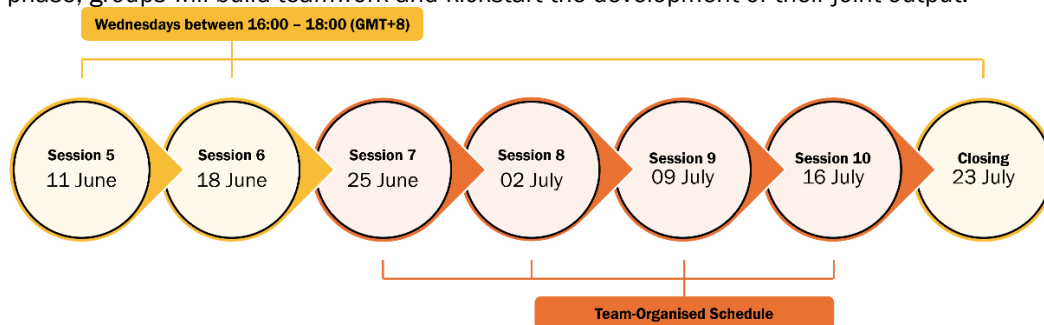
## Programme Design

We are aiming to deliver a full programme with virtual and in-person elements, mapped below, which will begin with this [Open Call for Applications](#) that will last until late April 2025.

- **Participants invited through the Open Call screening process will join an 11-week Online Phase**, which will be divided into the following sub-phases:
  - **The Self-Learning Phase will run for four (4) weeks from May to June.** This sub-phase will feature expert speakers and moderated discussions on specific topics related to the theme with the aim of building a common understanding and appreciation of the topic.



- **The Team Learning Phase will run for seven (7) weeks from June to July.** Participants will choose which output they would like to work on—either a micro-credential programme or academic paper—and form multidisciplinary, intercultural teams of 3 to 5. Over the course of this sub-phase, groups will build teamwork and kickstart the development of their joint output.



- **Outstanding groups from the Online Phase will be invited to participate at one of the three Onsite Events** depending on their chosen track. These events, taking place in China, the Philippines, and Slovakia between October to December 2025, will be the venue to develop their outputs further.



## Key Outcomes

### What will our participants get out of ASEFINnoLab6?

*Knowledge, ideas, connections, and a project.*

#### UNDERSTANDING OF UNIVERSITIES' ROLE IN DEVELOPING SKILLS FOR AN AI-POWERED FUTURE

*Participants will acquire new knowledge and ideas on the role of higher education in anticipating AI skill needs, bridging knowledge gaps, and designing accessible, future-proof learning pathways.*

#### INCREASED PROFESSIONAL NETWORK ACROSS ASIA AND EUROPE

*Participants will interact and work with peers from different countries in Asia and Europe. Therefore, we fully expect new bilateral and multilateral partnerships to emerge.*

#### A PRACTICAL/ACADEMIC OUTPUT CREATED IN A COLLABORATIVE ENVIRONMENT

*Participants will work in different settings to create individual or joint outputs—from practical micro-credential programmes to insightful academic papers—in a collaborative, intercultural environment.*

## Application Process

### Eligibility Criteria

We will invite 150-200 higher education professionals, academics, and researchers from Asia and Europe who meet the following eligibility criteria:

- Is working with AI-related teaching, learning, research, management initiatives
- Holds citizenship and residency in eligible [ASEF partner countries](#)<sup>1</sup>
- Has excellent command of English (written and verbal)

Participants are **not required to have technical or coding skills**.

There will also be **no technological exchanges** in this programme as it primarily leans towards topics associated with the social sciences given its focus on the theoretical, managerial, and organisational aspects of AI in higher education.

### Selection Criteria

Interested applicants must exhibit the following main criteria for selection:

- Strong interest in AI, higher education, and addressing skill needs for innovation
- Experience in AI and/or skills-related projects in research, teaching, or administration
- Strong prospects for cascading learnings with community and networks

## FAQs

#### Q1: Are there any costs involved?

Participation is free. If invited to join an Onsite Event, ASEF will cover all expenses.

#### Q2: My nationality is not one of the ASEM Partner Countries. Am I eligible to apply?

Participation is only open applicants who hold citizenship and residency in [ASEM Partner Countries](#).

#### Q3: I'm not working at a university. Can I apply?

ASEFINnoLab prides itself as a collaborative, intercultural peer-to-peer learning experience. We primarily target higher education professionals, academics, and researchers, but as long as you have a profile that matches the programme, we welcome your application.

#### Q4: What is the duration of the programme?

ASEFINnoLab6 will have virtual and in-person programmes. There will be an 11-week Online Phase that will run from May to July 2025. Depending on a participant's engagement, they may also be invited to join one of the three week-long Onsite Events to be held in October, November, and December 2025.

#### Q5: Can I join all three ASEFINnoLab6 Onsite Events?

If your team gets invited to join onsite, you can only participate in one event that corresponds with your chosen output track.

<sup>1</sup> All ASEF projects are implemented in line with the decisions of the ASEF Board of Governors.

To demonstrate the foregoing, applicants must fill out this [Application Form](#) and submit through the form the following supporting requirements:

- Professional bio/note / profile
- A brief explanation of the applicant's motivation
- Details of relevant AI projects that the applicant has been involved in, whether in teaching, research, or administration
- A vision on how their participation could positively impact their work, partnerships, and/or community

The selection process will ensure a non-discriminative approach and will be based on factors such as motivation, relevant expertise, geographic distribution and gender balance. All ASEF projects are implemented in line with the decisions of the ASEF Board of Governors and as such, ASEF reserves the right to withdraw the invitation to our projects should any criteria for selection be violated.

### Expected Commitment

Invited participants are required to commit to the Online Phase which **entails full, active participation in 11 online sessions**. As output creation is also an integral part of the programme, participants are also **required to complete their initial output upon the closing of the Online Phase**.

If invited to join an Onsite Event, they must also **commit to attend and contribute to the full in-person programme and finalise their joint output**.

## FAQs

### Q6: Will I receive a certificate?

For those who fully complete the requirements of the programme, a Certificate of Completion will be issued by the organising partners.

### Q7: Will I be notified on my application status?

Yes, all the applications will have to go through the screening process and participants will be shortlisted from the pool of applications.

All the applicants will receive an email on their application status.

### Q8: Is the programme inclusive?

We aim to make our projects as inclusive and accessible as possible. We do not discriminate any applicant or participant based on race, national origin (ancestry), colour, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, pregnancy, disability, religion (creed), marital status, or age. Do let us know of any special requirements you may have.

## APPLY NOW!

## Be part of a strong network of professionals working on the exciting, fast-evolving field of AI and higher education!

This Open Call for Applications will run **until 30 April (Wednesday), 23:59 SGT / 17:59 CEST!**  
Visit the [ASEFInnoLab6 Page](#) and the [Open Call Announcement Page](#) for more information.

### Implementing Partners



#### The Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF)

ASEF is an intergovernmental not-for-profit organisation located in Singapore. Founded in 1997, it is the only institution of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM). ASEF promotes understanding, strengthens relationships and facilitates cooperation among the people, institutions and organisations of Asia and Europe. ASEF enhances dialogue, enables exchanges and encourages collaboration across the thematic areas of culture, education, governance, sustainable development, economy, public health and media. For more information, please visit <https://asef.org/>.



#### Fudan University (FDU)

Fudan University is a major public research university in Shanghai, People's Republic of China. Founded in 1905, today it is widely considered as one of the most prestigious and selective universities in the country. The QS University Rankings 2021 ranked Fudan as the 7<sup>th</sup> most reputable university in Asia, while it is classified as a Double First Class University by the Ministry of Education in China. Fudan also actively incubates high-tech industries and encourages them to convert knowledge to power. In return, the multi-pattern development of the high-tech industries helps the University to industrialize the research outcomes. For more information, please visit <https://www.fudan.edu.cn/en>.



### **Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice (UPJS)**

Pavol Jozef Šafárik University was established in 1959 as the second classical university in Slovakia. The current structure of the institution includes five faculties: the Faculty of Medicine, Faculty of Science, Faculty of Law, Faculty of Public Administration, and Faculty of Arts. It provides education in three main cycles – bachelor's, master's, doctor's and PhD studies in different fields. Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice provides higher education based on the newest scientific findings in a wide international context and cooperates very closely with academic institutions all around the world. For more information, please visit <https://www.upjs.sk/en/>.

### **De La Salle University (DLSU)**

De La Salle University in Manila, Philippines is a Catholic coeducational institution founded in 1911 by the Brothers of the Christian Schools. It is a hub for higher education training renowned for its academic excellence, prolific and relevant research, and involved community service. For more information, please visit <https://www.dlsu.edu.ph/>.

## **Supporting Partners**



### **The ASEM Education Secretariat (AES)**

The AES was created by the ASEM Ministers of Education (ASEMME) in 2009 with the purpose of ensuring effective coordination of ASEM Education Process initiatives and activities. The Secretariat is hosted on a rotating basis, in which countries in Asia and Europe take turns to host on a voluntary basis. The current secretariat is hosted by Italy until end 2026. For more information, please visit <https://asem-education.org/>.



### **German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD)**

DAAD is a registered association comprised of German institutions of higher education and student bodies. It supports the internationalisation of German universities, promotes German studies and the German language abroad, supports countries in the Global South in building and improving their higher education systems and advises decision makers on education, foreign science and development policy. For more information, please visit <https://www.daad.de/en/>.



### **European Students' Union (ESU)**

The European Students' Union (ESU) is the umbrella organisation of 44 National Unions of Students from 40 countries. ESU aims to represent and promote the educational, social, economic and cultural interests of students at the European level towards all relevant bodies and in particular the European Union, Bologna Follow Up Group, Council of Europe and UNESCO. Through its members, ESU represents almost 20 million students in Europe. For more information, please visit: <https://esu-online.org/>.



### **Asia-Europe for Artificial Intelligence (AE4AI) Network**

The AE4AI Network was established by 20 academics and university managers from Asia and Europe in 2023 with the intent to enhance universities' role in AI innovation ecosystems and together pursue collaboration and actions on AI Governance, AI in Education, and AI for Sustainable Development. For more information, please visit <https://asef.org/projects/asia-europe-for-artificial-intelligence-ae4ai-network/>.