

AI ethics at the crossroads

Lessons from Kurdistan's universities

What academic staff and university leaders tell us about AI, ethics and skills, and how micro-credentials can help

Bareen Haval Sadiq

Duhok Polytechnic University, Kurdistan Region of Iraq

AI arrived before the rules

64.6%

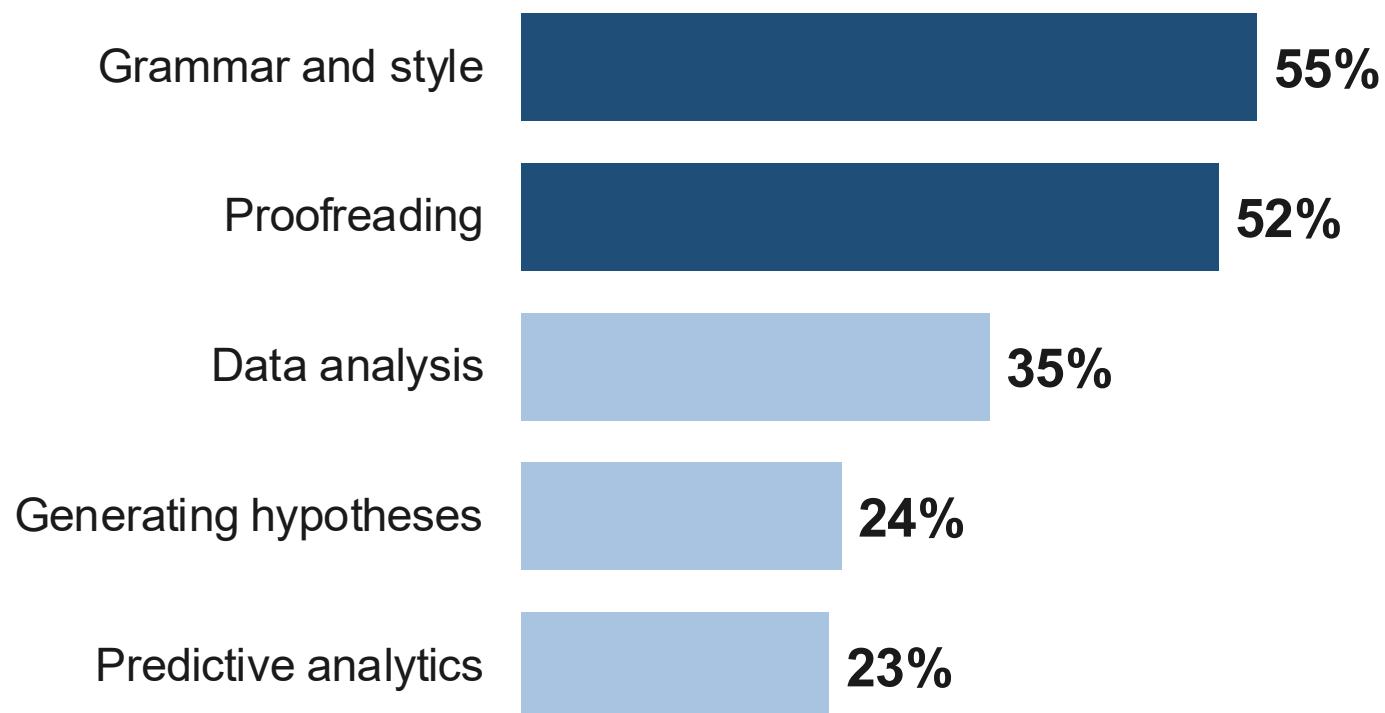
of academic staff already use AI in their research

What we found

- We asked 377 academic staff and 13 university leaders
- Most staff already use AI in their work
- Yet universities have no AI policy and give no training

No training. No policy. They just started.

Staff use AI mostly for language

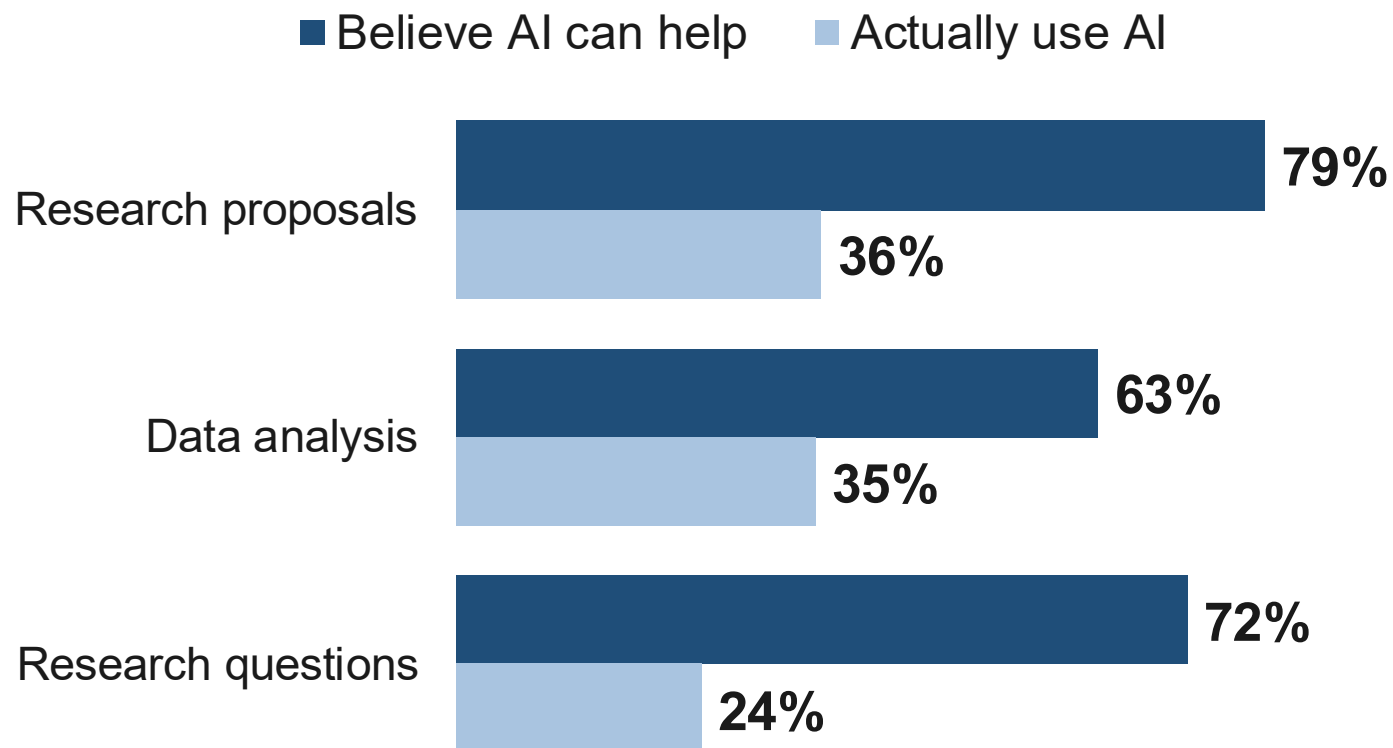


What this means

- AI helps staff write in English
- Few use it to design or analyse research
- ChatGPT is the main tool (used by 72%)

Easy tasks yes. Research thinking, rarely.

Staff believe in AI more than they use it



What this means

- Staff are open to AI and see its value
- They do not yet know how to use it well
- Training should close this gap

This gap is a skills need.

Leaders say: we are not ready

8 of 13

leaders report little or no AI use at their university

1 of 13

leaders say universities are very prepared

Why? Three barriers

- Not enough money
- Not enough expertise
- Staff resistance to change

"Our society is different." (university leader)

Two views of the same reality

62%

of leaders think staff
resist AI

vs

64.6%

of staff already use AI

What is happening

- Staff use AI quietly
- No rules say what is allowed
- No one checks quality or how data is used

This is shadow adoption: real use, no oversight.

Ethics: the top worry, but the last priority

7 of 13

leaders worry most about cheating and plagiarism

5 of 13

see ethics rules as a priority (last place)

Why it matters

- Leaders wait for the Ministry to set rules
- Meanwhile, staff rely on plagiarism software
- Ethics needs clear policy and human judgment

Ethics cannot wait for national rules.

Four challenges in our region

Why AI ethics is hard to start in Kurdistan, and what each challenge calls for

Money

Not every staff member can pay for AI tools

We need:
Shared tools and partnerships

Expertise

Few AI ethics experts; staff learn alone

We need:
Training for staff

Rules

No AI policy for universities yet

We need:
Simple university rules now

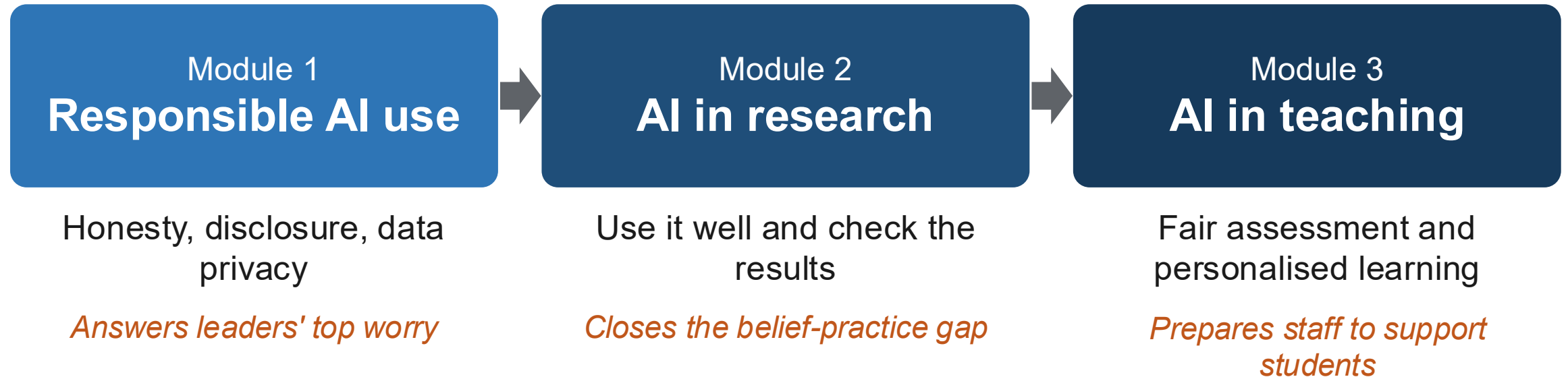
Language

AI tools work poorly in Kurdish

We need:
Solutions that fit our context

The solution: a short, stackable AI credential

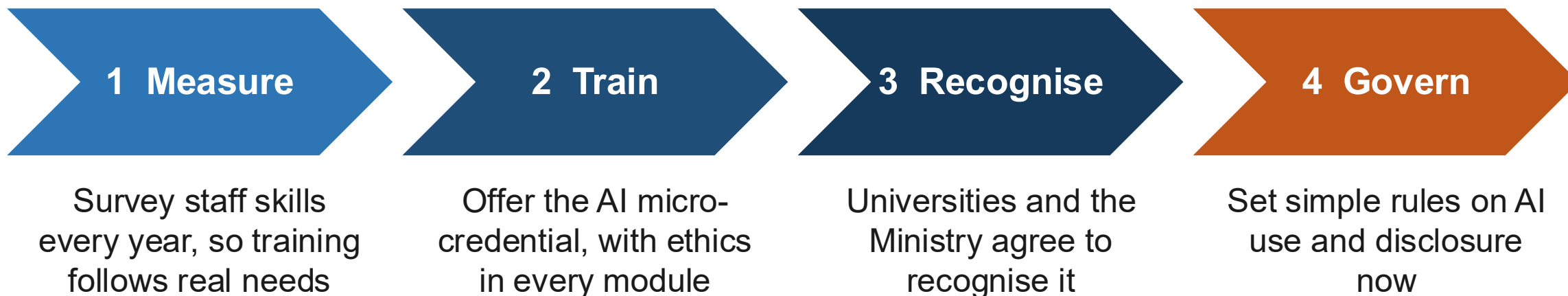
Short courses staff can take one at a time, and combine into one recognised credential



Ethics built into every module, with human oversight.

Four steps forward

From skills needs to learning pathways: what universities and policymakers can do



**Govern the AI use that already exists.
Certify the skills it needs.**

Bareen Haval Sadiq | Duhok Polytechnic University | Bareenhaval@gmail.com

Thank you.