



By Seb Murray Published Aug 29, 2024

Law Schools Integrate Artificial Intelligence into Curricula

In response to the burgeoning demand for expertise in artificial intelligence (AI) and its applications in the legal field, law schools across the world are increasingly incorporating AI-focused courses and degree programs into their curricula.

This trend aligns with the growing influence of Al in legal services, where there is a pressing need for professionals equipped with both legal acumen and technological proficiency.

A recent survey conducted by the American Bar Association (ABA) underscores this shift, revealing that over half of the nation's law schools now offer classes related to AI.

Meeting employer demand

Law firms, corporate legal departments and governmental agencies are all looking for professionals who can navigate the complexities of Al-driven tools and applications, law schools say. These include predictive analytics, automated document review and intelligent contract-management systems, which can boost efficiency and accuracy in legal work.

"Legal technology, as an industry, was expanding before the advent of generative AI, and now interest in the sector has exploded," says Matthew D'amore, a professor of practice at Cornell Law School and Cornell Tech, both in New York.

"Like Lexis and Westlaw disrupted legal research, gen Al has the potential to disrupt legal drafting and many other aspects of practice, and new lawyers need to be ready to adapt to this changing environment," he continues.

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The AI industry itself is experiencing exponential growth, with advancements being made across various sectors including healthcare, finance and transportation. This rapid development has created a multitude of opportunities for legal professionals who can advise on regulatory compliance, intellectual property rights and the broader legal implications of technologies.

Law schools are positioning their graduates to capitalize on these opportunities. By offering specialized degree programs and certifications in AI and law, they can provide LL.M. candidates with a competitive edge in the job market.

"Law schools are incorporating AI into their curricula to keep pace with the evolving legal landscape," says Oleg Kobelev, the associate dean for international studies at Duke University School of Law in North Carolina. "AI is increasingly relevant across various subjects, from privacy and data governance to regulatory compliance. Even courses without 'AI' in their title integrate discussions on AI."

He says employers seek LL.M. graduates with a combination of legal expertise and an understanding of Al. Firms are particularly interested, he says, in candidates who can anticipate future developments in Al and contribute to areas like data privacy and governance.

Several leading law schools have pioneered the integration of AI into their curricula. For instance, Stanford Law School offers a course on "AI and Law," which explores the intersection of AI technologies and legal practice. Similarly, Harvard Law School's Berkman Klein Center for Internet & Society provides LL.M. students with the opportunity to engage in cutting-edge research on AI and its societal impacts.

Moreover, institutions like New York University School of Law and the University of California, Berkeley School of Law have developed niche programs and clinics that focus on technology and law, providing hands-on experience with Al applications in legal contexts.

"The benefits are: the ability to be a better legal or business professional overall, to provide better, more client-centric service, to communicate in a way that people that don't have law degrees can understand, and to make better predictions," notes Michele DeStefano, professor of law at the University of Miami and guest faculty at Harvard Law and IE Law School in Spain.

"The challenges of integrating AI into law school curriculums is that professors do not really have an incentive to do it and there isn't really a way to force professors to include AI in their current courses, which means that AI will be taught in entirely new courses," says DeStefano.

Nevertheless, as AI continues to enter into the legal profession, the importance of equipping future lawyers with the necessary skills and knowledge cannot be overstated. LL.M. programs are evolving with the times.

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