



AI Readiness: Building the Bridge from Higher Education to Work in Brazil

How institutions and employers can reduce friction and deliver AI-ready graduates

AUGUST 2026

Contents

03 Foreword

04 Introduction

07 **Chapter 1:** The landscape of AI-driven education-to-work transformation

15 **Chapter 2:** Progress toward institutional AI readiness: investment, faculty capability, graduate confidence, and governance

21 **Chapter 3:** A framework for a shared direction

26 **Conclusion:** Bridging the AI readiness divide, from insight to execution

29 Supporting information

Foreword

The transition from higher education to the workforce is a defining moment in the lives of learners and in the competitiveness of economies. In Brazil, that transition now sits at the center of a much larger national opportunity. Artificial intelligence is changing the skills employers need, the ways graduates will contribute, and the role higher education must play in preparing people for work that is evolving at speed.

This research is the product of deliberate collaboration between Pearson and Amazon Web Services (AWS). Pearson brings decades of experience in learning science, curriculum design, assessment, and credentialing. AWS brings direct insight into how AI is being built, deployed, and governed inside the organizations graduates are entering, and the capabilities those organizations now require. Together, we set out to understand how higher education and the workforce are aligning in an AI-driven world.

Across six countries, we listened to learners, higher education leaders, and employers. Brazil reveals a distinctive picture. It is a market of strong ambition, active employer demand, and clear belief in the continued value of university education. Learners and employers alike see higher education as more essential in the age of AI, not less. Employers also recognize important strengths in Brazilian graduates, particularly their adaptability, continuous learning mindset, and technical capabilities. These strengths provide solid footing for developing the strategic, ethical, and applied skills that AI-enabled workplaces increasingly require. That conviction matters.

Brazil now has the opportunity to build on this strong foundation and give more graduates the chance to develop and demonstrate the skills AI-enabled workplaces expect.

The challenge is not adoption alone. Institutions, employers, and learners recognize the urgency of AI-driven change. Brazil is not starting from zero either. Promising models of innovation, employer connection, faculty capability, and applied learning are already in place.

Closing the gap will also require governance that builds trust and helps learners develop responsible, ethical, and confident AI habits.

Brazil can be confident it already has many of the foundations needed for progress: talented graduates, ambitious institutions, engaged employers, and visible examples of innovation. The opportunity now is to connect those strengths more consistently across the system, so responsible and practical AI readiness can be realized at scale.

Cinthia Nespoli

General Counsel and Brazil
Country Ambassador for Pearson

Valerie Singer

General Manager, Global Education
Amazon Web Services



Reduce friction. Build the bridge.

AI readiness is not owned by higher education or industry alone. It is built — or broken — in the transition between them.

Read the full report: pearson.com/ai-readiness

Introduction

The social contract between higher education and the workforce has long rested on a powerful premise: higher education institutions equip graduates with workforce readiness. Across the globe, the rapid integration of AI into workplaces is outpacing the adaptive capacity of higher education, presenting institutions with a critical choice. They must either accelerate the cadence of curriculum transformation or risk graduating cohorts of students who are not properly equipped for the AI-enabled workforce. The distance between institutional intent and graduate outcomes remains one of the most consequential challenges in education today.

For Brazil, this challenge is one of immediate urgency. Brazil is Latin America's largest economy and one of its most dynamic technology markets. The country is home to some of the region's most recognizable AI-powered organizations. Major technology companies and platforms operating at scale in Brazil include Nubank, iFood, Mercado Libre, and TOTVS alongside a growing cluster of AI infrastructure and Portuguese LLM startups. The IT sector attracted 58.6 billion USD in 2024, and Brazil's AI market is projected to grow from approximately \$3 billion in 2023 to \$11.6 billion by 2030.¹ In 2024, as G20 host, Brazil positioned itself as a global voice on responsible AI governance. In July 2024, the Ministry of Science, Technology, and Innovation launched the Brazilian AI Plan (Plano Brasileiro de Inteligência Artificial, PBI 2024–2028), titled “AI for the Good of All,” which outlines a comprehensive national strategy to establish Brazil as a global leader through investment, workforce development, and ethical governance.² The Ministry of Education published its own AI in Education recommendations under the PBI framework shortly thereafter, with an emphasis on personalized learning, assessment, and the importance of teacher training in digital and AI competencies.

While the National Education Council has advanced sector guidance, the Chamber of Deputies' regulatory framework to govern AI in educational settings (Bill 2.338/2023) remains pending.³ The gap between national ambition and institutional realities emerges as one of the defining frictions of Brazil's AI readiness. There is no mandatory national curriculum framework for AI in the sector and no systematic professional development for educators. Brazil's central and immediate challenge is a shortage of people to meet its AI ambitions. Brasscom estimates that the country was training about 53,000 tech professionals annually against a need for roughly 159,000, resulting in a shortfall of more than 100,000 workers each year and an accumulated deficit of 530,000 by 2025. In practical terms, Brazil will not be able to fully realize its AI agenda without expanding the supply of AI-ready graduates.⁴

In this study, Brazil, alongside Malaysia, represents a cluster of markets that reflect the characteristics of a Fragmented Adaptive market. These markets have high demand for AI readiness from both students and employers; in fact, stakeholders in Brazil are distinctive in this study because of their shared conviction that a university education remains essential. But currently, the country has inconsistent national frameworks and limited institutional infrastructure. Progress is uneven across the system. While some institutions have developed strong employer connections, faculty capability, and AI integration, readiness remains inconsistent across the broader ecosystem. The opportunity now is to build on the momentum that already exists, extending the governance frameworks, applied learning models, and industry partnership infrastructure that Brazil's leading institutions have already proven work.

¹ UNESCO Global AI Ethics and Governance Observatory (2024) Brazil: Country Profile. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.unesco.org/ethics-ai/en/brazil> [Accessed: 29 July 2026].

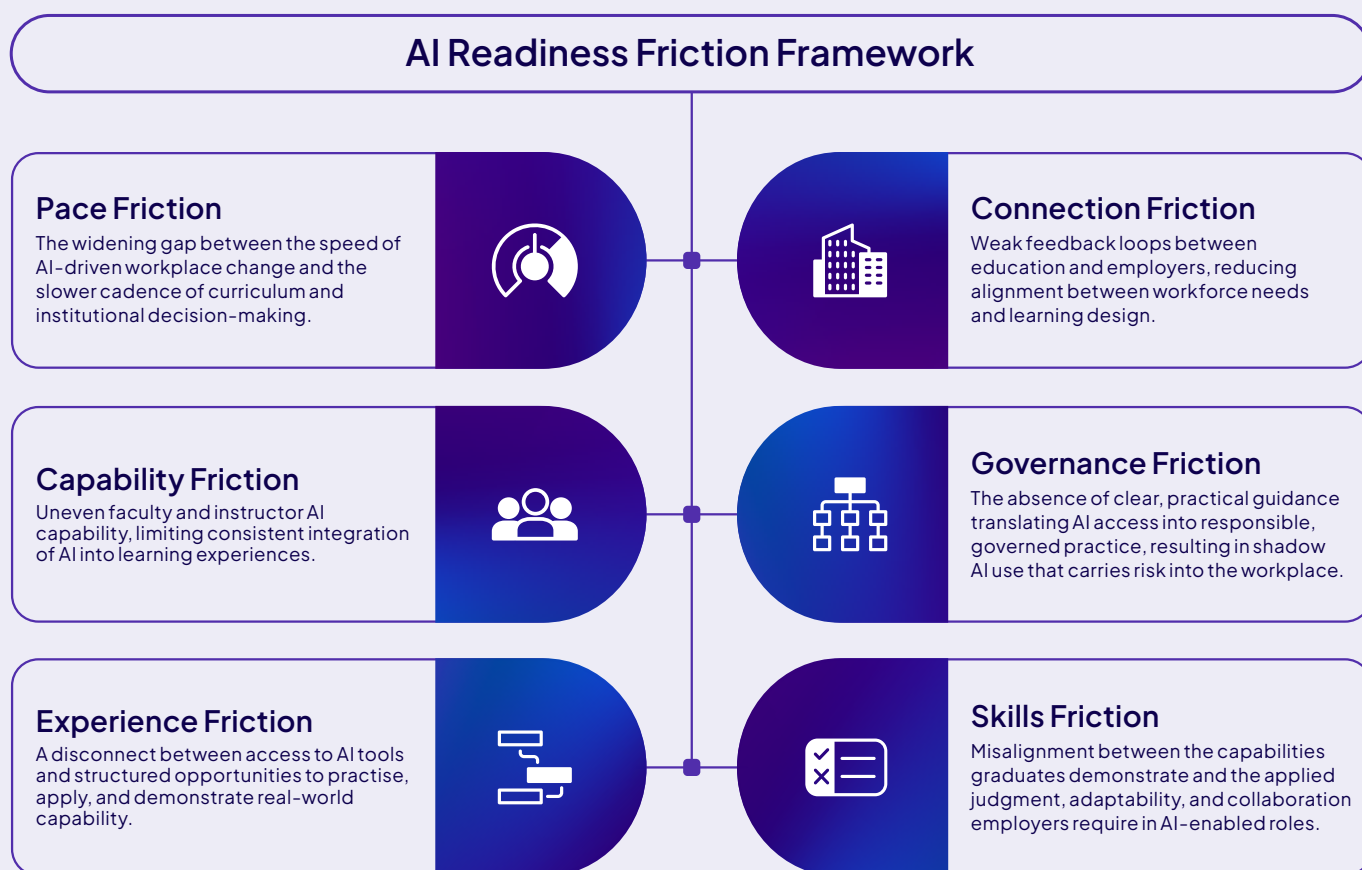
² Ministério da Ciência, Tecnologia e Inovação (MCTI) (2024) Plano Brasileiro de Inteligência Artificial. Available at: <https://www.gov.br/mcti/pt-br/acompanhe-o-mcti/transformacaodigital/plano-brasileiro-de-inteligencia-artificial> (Accessed: 29 July 2026).

³ G1 (2026) 'Conselho Nacional de Educação marca data para votar regras para o uso de inteligência artificial nas escolas', G1, 23 February. Available at: <https://g1.globo.com/educacao/noticia/2026/02/23/conselho-nacional-de-educacao-marca-data-para-votar-regras-para-o-uso-de-inteligencia-artificial-nas-escolas.ghtml> [Accessed: 17 July 2026].

⁴ G1 (2023) 'Brasil terá déficit de 530 mil profissionais de tecnologia até 2025, mostra estudo do Google', G1, 31 May. Available at: <https://g1.globo.com/trabalho-e-carreira/noticia/2023/05/31/brasil-tera-deficit-de-530-mil-profissionais-de-tecnologia-ate-2025-mostra-estudo-do-google.ghtml> [Accessed: 17 July 2026].

Brazil's AI readiness profile is one of ambition moving faster than execution at scale. HE leaders feel the urgency of AI-driven change more acutely than almost any other group in the study. Learners believe in the value of a university education and are engaging with AI tools. Employers are investing in AI at scale and expecting graduates who have applied knowledge. But readiness remains uneven because governance, faculty capability, and applied learning are not yet consistently available. The challenge is to turn strong adoption into consistent, responsible, and workforce-ready capabilities while scaling the models that are already working to the institutions and stakeholders who have not yet benefited from them.

This research examines what this means across the full ecosystem from higher education to work in Brazil. A synthesis of survey and interview data, along with secondary research, provides the evidence for an AI Readiness Friction Framework.* The data shows that success is not random, but it clusters around six compounding friction points that impede progress precisely when speed matters most:



*The findings in the report are based on a survey of 2711 respondents, including 500 stakeholders in Brazil, comprising learners (n=350), HE leaders (n=100), and employers (n=50). Given the sample sizes involved, the data should be read as directional patterns across the market. Where cross-market comparisons are provided, these draw on the total sample across all six markets.

These frictions reinforce one another across education and workplace systems. Rather than prescribing one-size-fits-all solutions, this framework enables leaders to diagnose where friction is most acute in their context and target intervention at root causes rather than symptoms.

What follows is a snapshot of contemporary indicators in Brazil, with guidance to support every university, regardless of its current status, to synchronize its AI readiness pathway with speed.

Chapter 1

examines how fast AI is transforming the education-to-work pathway in Brazil, where the most consequential misalignments are between university priorities and employer expectations of a graduate's experience and skills. It concludes with a consolidated portrait of the AI-ready graduate.

Chapter 2

shifts the analysis to four dimensions of the AI readiness divide: the scale and focus of university investment in AI; faculty capability as the primary vehicle for graduate AI readiness; the relationship between institutional behavior and student confidence; and the governance challenges created when rules and practice are misaligned.

Chapter 3

details the AI Readiness Friction Framework, consisting of six points at which the education-to-work transition most consistently breaks down. This includes a friction-based analysis of the Brazilian market's specific readiness profile.

Taken together, the dataset illustrates the conditions in Brazil that have led to progress in delivering AI-ready graduates, while also highlighting the specific challenges hindering full realization of this ambition. This report is for HE leaders and employers who are navigating the intersection of AI and higher education in Brazil and who are looking for evidence-based guidance on closing the AI skills gap, strengthening workforce readiness, and building the industry partnerships that will shape the next generation of AI-enabled graduates.

Chapter 1: The landscape of AI-driven education-to-work transformation

The accelerating pace of AI-driven change and institutional response

“

AI readiness is not only about having gone to an engineering or a computer science school. It's someone with a curious mind who acknowledges the tools that are there, who is fluent in reading contextual business processes, and who can start thinking in innovative terms about how what exists may be adapted to make better decisions. Someone who can build bridges between the more technological fields and their day-to-day contexts.”

Prof. Mateus Canniatti Ponchio, Head of Technology and Data Science, Fundação Getulio Vargas (FGV)

Across markets, there is strong consensus that AI development is moving at a breakneck speed, with two-thirds of stakeholders describing it as “extremely fast” (23%) or “fast” (44%). The urgency of AI-driven change is felt acutely in Brazil, particularly among HE leaders. Eighty percent of Brazilian HE leaders describe the pace of this change as extremely fast (25%) or fast (55%). Brazilian learners (63%) and employers (62%) describe the pace similarly, with both stakeholder groups broadly in line with or slightly above their respective cross-market peers.

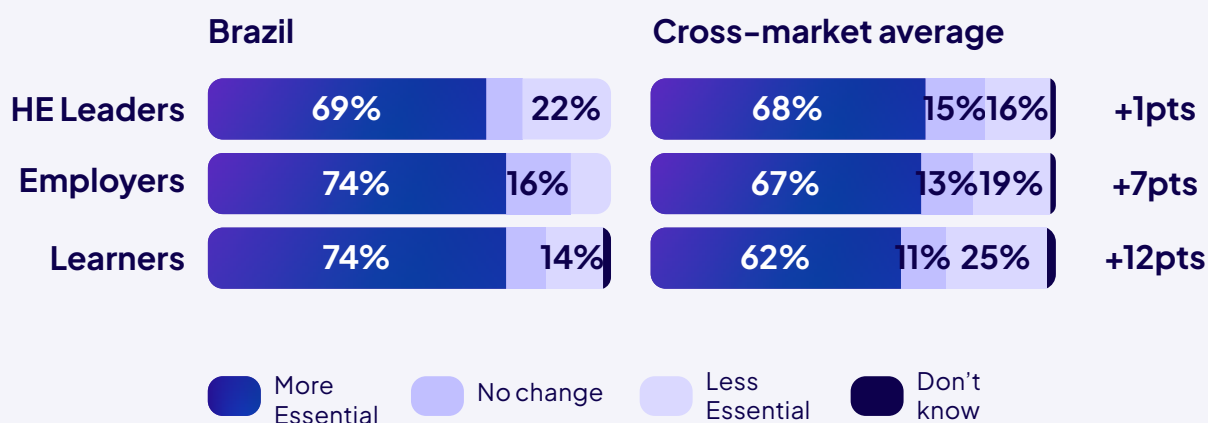
The expectation of further acceleration, however, is most intense among employers. Seventy-six percent of Brazilian employers expect the pace of AI-driven change to increase over the next two years, making them the most likely group in this study to expect the challenge to grow significantly. HE leaders (63%) and learners (57%) also expect the pace to accelerate, but with less certainty. Nevertheless, the most urgency is felt by employers who will absorb the consequences of this future challenge most directly.

The confidence that stakeholders have in HE institutions to meet this challenge is moderate and distributed unevenly across the groups surveyed. Only 17% of Brazilian learners believe their universities are keeping pace with most or all AI developments, below the cross-market learner average of 21%. HE leaders, by contrast, are relatively confident and above the cross-market average (38% vs 32%) and substantially higher than leaders in the US or the UK. However, employers are more measured at 26%. The distance between HE leader confidence and learner confidence is a recurring pattern in the Brazilian data where learners perceive the system with less certainty than the leaders of those institutions.

The evolving value of higher education

In a world where AI is rapidly transforming the nature of work, issues such as the transfer of university influence to AI systems and the emergence of alternative models for skill development places universities under significant pressure.⁵ Stakeholders in Brazil, however, are distinctive in this study because of their shared conviction that a university education remains essential. In fact, 74% of both learners and employers believe that AI makes education more essential, which is among the highest rates for both groups in this study and above the cross-market average for both groups. Brazilian HE leaders share this belief at 69%, just below their cross-market peers. Looking forward, HE leaders are the most optimistic of any group in the study, with 57% expecting that a university degree will be even more important in five years' time. Employers and learners are more cautious in predicting an increase in a university education's future value (36% and 34%, respectively). Arguably, these expectations of future value are derived from what employers and learners are witnessing today.

Views on the current importance of university education

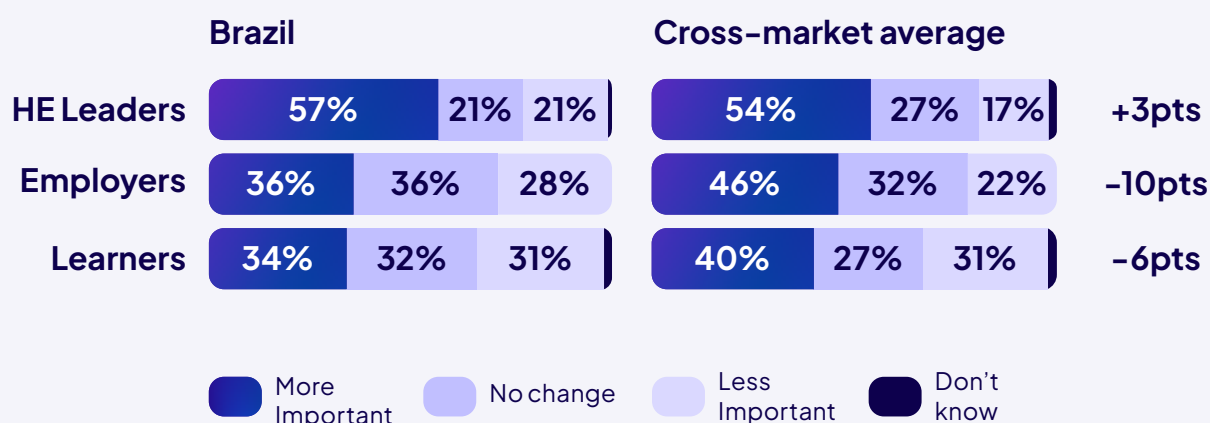


Q. Which of the following statements is closest to your view about higher education in the context of AI:

- AI developments make university education **MORE** essential – graduates need the deep knowledge and human skills that higher education provides
- AI developments make university education **LESS** essential – practical skills and experience matter more than formal degrees
- AI developments haven't changed the importance of university education

⁵Beard, S.J., Roehrick, K., Beadle, J., Brinkworth, G., Compton, M., Crawford, K., Ennion, M., Gharavi, L., Gordon, C. and Hillman, V. (2026) A Horizon Scan of AI and Higher Education: Fourteen Issues That May Transform the Sector. SSRN Working Paper Series, ID 6257318. Available at: https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=6257318 [Accessed 21 June 2026].

Views on the future importance of university education



Q. Thinking about the next 5 years...if AI continues to develop and change the workforce, do you believe university degrees will become... [asked on a 5 point scale from more to less important, with a neutral mid point (the value of a degree won't change) and a don't know option]

Brazilian students remain confident in the value of a university education, but share a degree of uncertainty about what it is designed to deliver. The appetite for a hybrid model of education, where both formal education and practical experience are integrated, is strongest among learners at 53%, with both employers (52%) and HE leaders (49%) nearly aligned. Across groups, there is demand that a degree provide demonstrable applied capability rather than purely theoretical knowledge. This expectation shifts the burden for institutions from graduating students who have purely theoretical knowledge to students who have had the opportunity to learn from authentic experiences. Ultimately, the demand is for an evolution of the degree framework, rather than an alternative to it. At the same time, the university continues to be seen as the institution best placed to develop the compound skill set that an AI-enabled economy demands.

What is changing in Brazil is not whether a degree is valued but what the degree must prove. The belief that HE is essential is nuanced with the recognition that institutions are not yet fully delivering on their promise today. Slightly more than half of Brazilian learners (52%) feel their university is preparing them well or moderately well for an AI-enabled workplace (below the 61% cross-market average). When asked what would most increase the value of their education, Brazilian learners are the most likely group to call for more practical experience with workplace tools alongside more hands-on problem solving with AI and access to better tools and technologies. The concern these students share is that a university education is not yet delivering the applied experience that is needed for an AI-enabled world. While Brazilian learners have identified the problems they face, it is for institutions and employers to act on a solution.

Connecting the AI-ready Brazilian graduate with the workforce

Although university remains a vital foundation for career readiness, the perception of why it is valuable is shifting. The current moment presents higher education in Brazil with a historic opportunity to lead in equipping graduates with the compound skill set that employers value. Delivering on that role requires clarity about what employers need. In Brazil, employers expect a distinctive graduate skills profile that sets them apart from most other markets in the study. Unlike their counterparts in the US and the UK, where communication and collaboration top employer hiring priorities, Brazilian employers place AI tool use (44%) and understanding AI limitations and risks (44%) as their joint top priorities. These joint priorities indicate that employers want graduates who can use AI effectively while understanding the implications of its usage. The critical human skills of adaptability (38%) and communication and collaboration (38%) cluster closely behind these functional and strategic capabilities.

In a market with a growing cluster of AI-driven high-growth startups, tech pioneers, and major tech-driven enterprises, employers are competing for AI-ready talent and cannot wait for graduates to develop functional proficiency on the job. They need graduates who arrive ready to use AI tools effectively, strategically, and ethically. Most importantly, they need graduates who understand the limitations of the technology and where it can deliver the most value. The data suggests that Brazilian learners are aware of this expectation, with a nearly equal distribution of learners who see that a blended skill set combining technical AI literacy with critical human skills—as opposed to a purely technical or a purely human skill set—is what the workforce demands.

Importantly, the challenge is not disagreement about the importance of AI. Employers, institutions, and learners all recognize its significance. The friction arises because each group prioritizes different dimensions of readiness. HE leaders are reading employer demand partially, but not fully. They correctly identify AI tool use as the top employer priority. But they overestimate the importance employers place on combining human judgment with AI while underestimating the demand for communication and collaboration skills. Indeed, the data reveals HE leaders underestimate this priority by 10 points, emerging as a key area of future focus for HE leaders. In a fragmented ecosystem where employer engagement is relationship-based rather than systematically embedded, HE leaders are developing students' skill sets without the accurate input that would deliver optimal AI-ready graduates. Building the bridge between education and work therefore depends not only on capability development, but on stronger alignment of expectations.

The theory-practice gap noted earlier by learners is reinforced by employer hiring experience. The top barriers that employers have faced when hiring recent graduates are attributed to the gap between academic knowledge and workplace application (42%) and the lack of practical experience with workplace AI tools (42%). The most frequently cited graduate challenges are professional maturity (44% vs. cross-market average 36%) and weak strategic and ethical AI skills, such as over-trusting outputs (34%, above the cross-market average). These challenges are, in part, associated with limitations in academic governance and formative opportunities for real experience.

Key competencies for AI-ready graduates: employer vs educator views

AI skills Human skills

Market	Perspective	Priority 1	Priority 2	Priority 3
Overall	HE Leaders	AI tool use	Human judgment + AI capabilities	Adaptability
	Employers	Communication and collaboration skills	Adaptability	Human judgment + AI capabilities

Brazil	HE Leaders	AI tool use	Human judgment + AI capabilities	Critical AI evaluation
	Employers	AI tool use	AI risk awareness	Communication and collaboration skills

Q. HE Leaders: Based on your understanding, which THREE of the following are MOST IMPORTANT to employers hiring graduates today?

Q. Employers: Which THREE of the following are MOST IMPORTANT when hiring graduates into your organization today?

Question asked among HE Leaders & Employers

At the same time, employers recognize the strengths of these graduates as agile and adaptable learners (58%) who are often equipped with foundational AI and digital tool use (52%). Unlike most other markets, an audit of eight skill competencies reveals that Brazilian employers rate recent graduates at or above cross-market average on five dimensions. These skill ratings are explained, at least in part, by what is being formally taught and where investment and faculty capability is currently contributing to successful readiness.

Across the competencies measured, one dimension that stands out as an area for development is creativity and innovative thinking, rated excellent by just 18% of employers versus the cross-market average of 27%. This is a notable shortcoming and may be in part due to the current usage of AI that is prevalent among students, where task execution eclipses working alongside AI as a thought partner through guided exploratory practice. In fact, Brazilian learners consistently report below-average course coverage on key skills required for professional practice. Students who can explain how AI works, but who have not been provided with structured opportunities to apply it in a professional context, critically evaluate its outputs, or integrate it into authentic workstreams, may be theoretically prepared but less experienced in applying those skills in professional settings.

Employer ratings on graduate skill competencies

Skill competencies	% of Employers rating graduates as “excellent” on each competency	
	Brazil	Cross-market average
Continuous learning mindset	32%	29%
Communication and collaboration	30%	25%
Technical knowledge	28%	27%
Adaptability	28%	30%
Applying academic knowledge to real work	28%	22%
AI tool use	26%	27%
Critical evaluation of AI outputs	26%	20%
Creativity and innovation	18%	27%

Q. Thinking about the recent university graduates your organization has hired in the past 2 years, how would you rate their capabilities in each of the following areas? By ‘recent’ we mean those that have graduated in the past 2 years.

Question asked among Employers

Sample Size: Brazil Employers – 50, All Employers – 304

Nevertheless, Brazilian employers are generally positive about graduate strengths. More than half (54%) say recent graduates are better prepared than those hired five years ago, while 16% say they are worse prepared, in line with their cross-market peers. The trajectory overall is positive, but given the intensity of the pace of change, maintaining the status quo will not be sufficient to bridge the transition from education to work effectively. Employers cite learning agility and adaptability as the primary value graduates bring to their organizations, above the cross-market average for this strength (58% vs. 54%). This is coupled with their ability to use AI and digital tools (52% vs. 50%) and their enthusiasm and motivation, which is notably above the cross-market average (44% vs. 36%). Brazilian employers also see creative potential in graduates that their capability ratings do not fully reflect. Forty percent cite creative and innovative thinking as a graduate strength, even as only 18% rate it as excellent. This capability exists but has not yet aligned with a professional context for its effective expression.

Aggregated data from across markets indicates that educators and administrators within and across institutions frequently report different views of what employers need. Where this internal divide is unresolved, institutions risk operationalizing a skills profile that fails to reflect employer demand. The specific capabilities that employers rank most highly are the kind of relational, strategic, and ethical skills that are prioritized in their view of the optimal AI-ready graduate. Addressing this skills gap is essential to translating workforce demands into full graduate AI readiness.

A portrait of the optimal AI-ready graduate

As universities struggle to keep pace with the changes driven by the AI-enabled workplace, the readiness of graduates to enter the workforce is at risk. The term **AI Readiness** is increasingly used but rarely defined with consistency across the education-to-workforce spectrum. Drawing on our understanding of the demands of employers, the strategic priorities of HE leaders, and the current behaviors of today's students, we have constructed a portrait of the ideal AI-ready graduate as a practical brief for what institutions in Brazil are expected to produce.⁶ For a contemporary graduate, AI readiness is a multifaceted construct that combines:

1. Functional Proficiency

This set of skills represents the type of human-in-the-lead aptitude that employers demand. From day one, graduates must arrive functionally fluent in workplace-specific tools. They are able to apply AI technologies directly to professional workflows in ways that enhance their contribution. In Brazil, where AI tool use is a joint top employer hiring priority alongside understanding AI limitations, this skill is the most explicitly demanded in the market. About one-quarter of Brazilian employers (26%) rate recent graduate hires as excellent in their AI tool use, which is on par with the cross-market average, indicating that a baseline is present but not a differentiator of newly trained Brazilian talent.

2. Strategic Intelligence

This set of skills represents a graduate's ability to move beyond being a tool user to a strategic operator. They understand precisely where AI adds value, deploying it as a driver of macro-level workflow transformation rather than a mere productivity shortcut.⁷ In Brazil, 26% of employers rate graduates' ability to critically evaluate AI outputs as excellent, above the cross-market average. Yet employer priorities indicate that understanding AI's limitations and risks remains a top hiring priority, tied with tool use. The ability to critically evaluate an output is not the same as the ability to judge risk or value in a professional context. The latter requires governed, ethical practice. Brazilian learners need further institutional support to fully develop this capability.

3. Ethical Stewardship

This set of skills involves a graduate's ability to serve as an ethical filter and a risk mitigation manager for employers, focusing on safety, integrity, and the ethical deployment of technology. This is the area of capability where Brazil faces its most acute challenge. With only 15% of learners definitely aware of any university AI guidance, and 30% preferring not to disclose their AI usage to teaching staff, the conditions for developing ethical stewardship during a university education are not optimal. Employers are already experiencing the consequences: 34% cite poor AI habits such as over-reliance on or uncritical acceptance of AI outputs as a graduate challenge, above the cross-market average.

4. Critical Human Skills

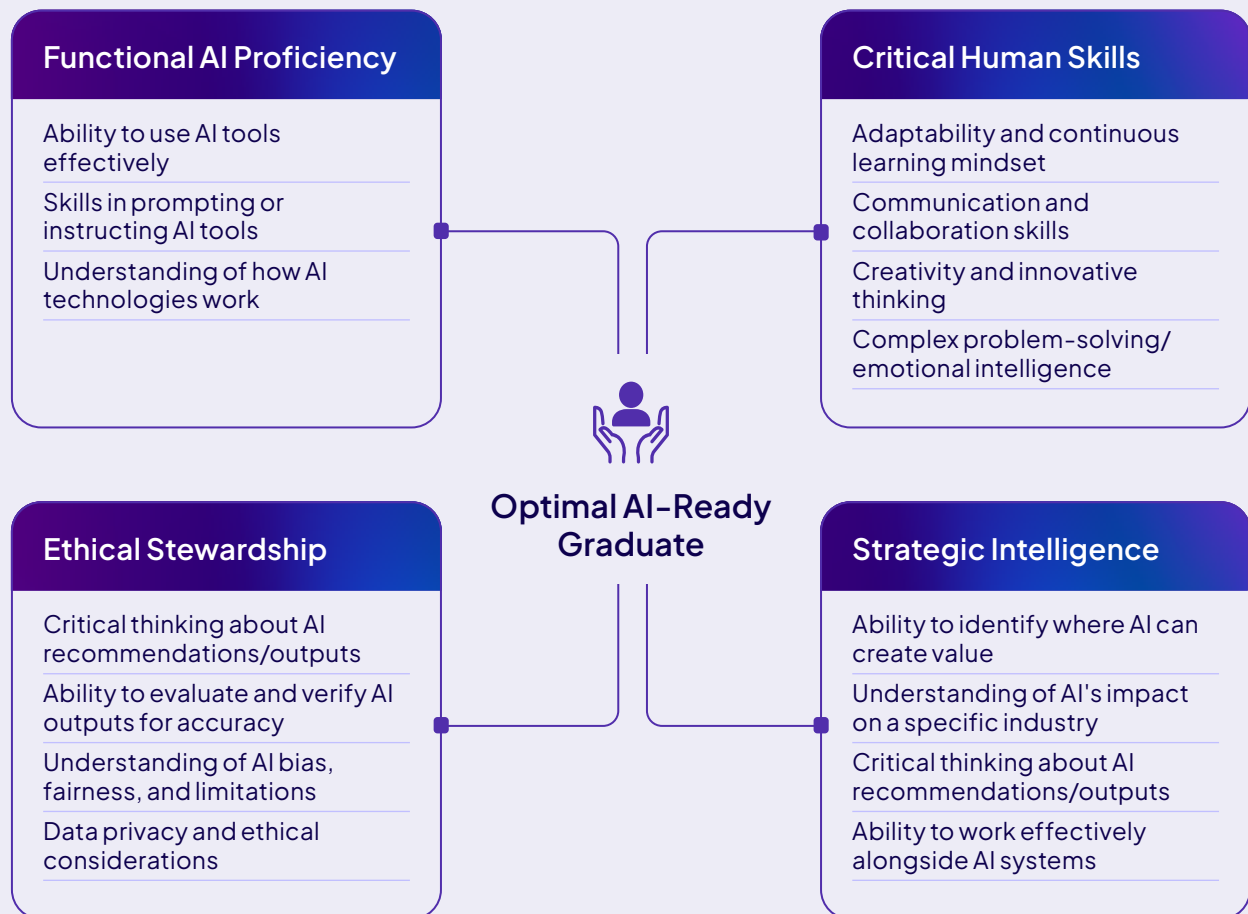
This set of skills represents a graduate's competency to provide what no AI model can: human judgment, creative thinking, and emotional intelligence. Whereas AI automates execution, the AI-ready graduate possesses the cognitive capabilities to bring purpose, direction, and adaptability as change accelerates. In Brazil, 28–30% of employers rate graduate adaptability, learning agility, and communication as excellent, near or above the cross-market average. Yet creative and innovative thinking remains the weakest dimension in the Brazilian profile, rated excellent by only 18% of employers versus 27% cross-market. In a rapidly innovating market, the demand for creative thinking is rising, but currently this is an area of underperformance given employer reviews of recent graduate hires.

⁶For a full discussion of the optimal AI-ready graduate framework, see Pearson and Amazon Web Services (2026), Chapter 1.

⁷Q3_8EMP: Which THREE of the following are MOST IMPORTANT when hiring graduates into your organization today?

The Optimal AI-Ready Graduate

Key capabilities and skill competencies⁸



This portrait represents a consolidated vision that runs from matriculated student to workforce-ready graduate. Building a more effective path from the classroom to the workplace requires alignment on these core skill competencies. Far from rendering university education obsolete, the advent of AI reaffirms its critical role in fostering the technical, strategic, ethical, and adaptable talent the workforce expects.

However, developing the AI-ready graduate is at risk due to compounding frictions across the education-to-work ecosystem. The Brazilian graduate portrait is more positive than a surface reading might suggest. Brazilian graduates are performing at or above the cross-market average on most capability dimensions and are valued especially for their adaptability and technical fluency. That said, there is a great opportunity to develop their creative and ethical competencies. The chapters that follow examine the institutional conditions that are leading to this outcome and where the most targeted and effective interventions can be made.

⁸N.B. Some key skill competencies are essential across more than one domain of capability. For example, critical thinking about AI recommendations/outputs is a core skill required to generate strategic intelligence as well as to perform as an ethical steward of AI technologies.

Chapter 2: Progress toward institutional AI readiness: investment, faculty capability, graduate confidence and governance

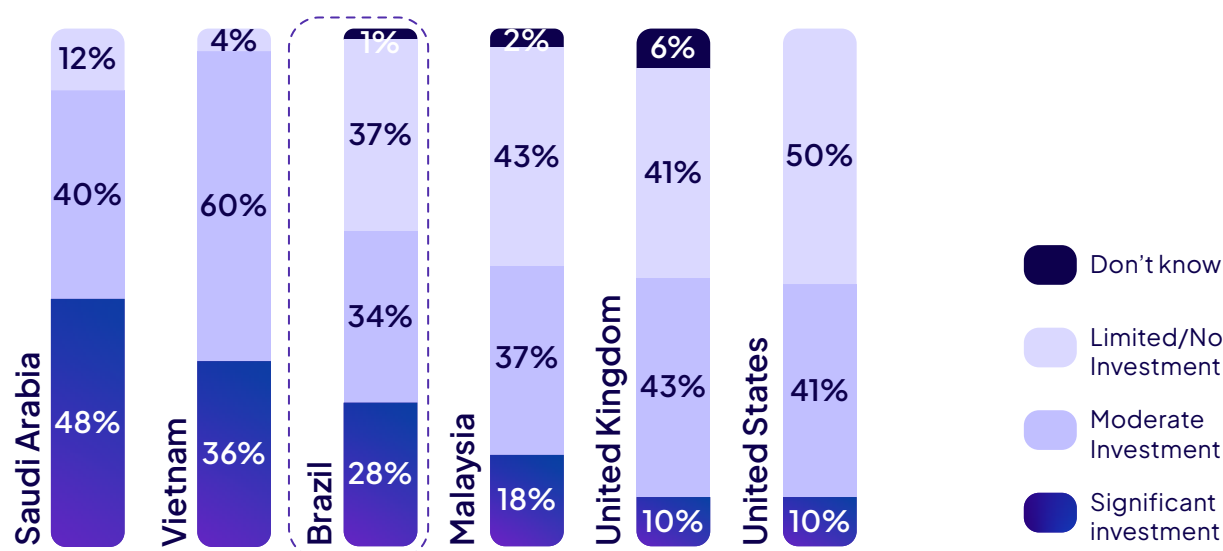
As Brazilian institutions and learners continue to adapt to a shifting technological landscape, the data reveals a picture defined by the same conditions that characterize the market as a whole: large-scale ambitions and meaningful progress at the leading edge, tempered by fragmented capability and limited governance across the broader ecosystem. The focus of our analysis in this chapter is on four dimensions of institutional readiness: the scale and focus of AI investment;⁹ the capability of faculty as the primary vehicle for graduate AI readiness; the relationship between institutional behavior and student confidence; and the challenge of AI governance even where there is awareness of policy.

Institutional investment: scale, focus, and friction

Brazilian HE leader perceptions of institutional-level investment provide a unique snapshot of the dynamics in the market. The largest group of these leaders characterizes institutional investment as moderate, with AI treated as an important priority. Another 28% describe their institutional investment as significant and a major institutional priority, which is triple the US rate and the third highest in the study, behind Saudi Arabia and Vietnam. Finally, a third group reports their institutional investment as limited, minimal, or none at all, combined for 37% of HE leaders in the market. What is notable about this distribution of investment levels when compared with the cross-market average is that the range of 28% significant and 16% minimal/none is the widest spread in the study and is evidence of uneven progress across institutions. Moreover, the rate of 16% of HE leaders who report minimal or no investment at all is the second highest absence of investment in the study, behind only Malaysia.

⁹ In this research, the term 'investment' is used broadly, referring to both the extent to which AI is an institutional priority, a pedagogical and curriculum priority, and the scale of the resources (e.g., financial, human) allocated.

Reported university AI investment levels



Q. How would you characterize your institution's current level of investment in AI?

Question asked among HE Leaders

Sample Size: HE Leaders – 452

Where investment exists, it is directed toward an inward-facing set of institutional priorities. Faculty training and professional development lead at 52%, followed by purchasing AI tools for students (51%) and computing infrastructure (50%). Industry partnerships rank fourth at 46%, which is above the cross-market average of 39%, suggestive of a relative strength that reflects the culture of leading institutions like Fundação Getulio Vargas (FGV), Universidade de São Paulo, and Universidade Estadual de Campinas, which have embedded employer connections into their operating models. However, there is a gap between investment intent and the systematic connection infrastructure that would make such partnerships effective across the whole ecosystem and benefit every stakeholder more or less equally. These are the priorities of a market that understands the challenge but has not yet built the delivery infrastructure required.

The barriers to curriculum adaptation reveal more of where the constraint lies. Limited budget is the most frequently cited obstacle (33%), which distinguishes Brazil from most other markets that cite faculty expertise as the dominant barrier. The lack of faculty AI expertise is the second most cited barrier (31%), followed by the challenges of a lengthy curriculum approval or accreditation process (28%). The barriers that Brazilian HE leaders cite reinforce the importance of supplementing internal capacity with industry partnerships, not just as an investment priority but as a practical resolution. This will require both additional investment and a systematic commitment to employer relationships that help shape the strategic direction of that investment. The above combination of constraints is characteristic of a fragmented adaptive market: institutions recognize the need to change but lack the capability, resources, and coordinating framework to act systematically.

The implication is one that is evident across all markets: investment does not automatically produce readiness. The institutions that most effectively translate investment into graduate outcomes are those where investment in tools is accompanied by investment in governance, where faculty training is paired with industry connection, and where employer partnerships are formalized into the curriculum design. Whether institutions move aggressively or cautiously, they remain challenged by a labor market that is innovating rapidly. The implication is not simply that more investment is needed, but that this investment needs to be more precisely triangulated for greater effectiveness in bridging the education-to-work transition. The critical question for Brazil is not simply how much institutions invest, but how effectively investment translates into faculty capability, responsible AI guidance, employer engagement, and applied learning opportunities. Investment becomes valuable when it improves learner outcomes and workforce readiness.

Faculty capability is a key determinant of graduate AI readiness

Investment in tools and infrastructure is undeniably important, but the primary driving force of graduate AI readiness is faculty capability. Faculty capability in Brazil tells a story of innovation alongside uneven reach. FGV demonstrates how industry-connected faculty, executive engagement, and immersive experiential learning can help students develop workplace-relevant capability. The challenge is expanding access to these models. Where faculty are industry-connected and actively developing, learners receive a substantially different education. The aggregate data reveals both this excellence and its limits. Forty-eight percent of HE leaders in Brazil rate faculty expertise as strong or very strong, above both the US and the UK. More than half (52%) report extensive or quite a lot of faculty development, with another 22% reporting very limited training and just 3% reporting no training at all. The 25% reporting very limited or no training represent a significant portion of educators in a fragmented system.

Learner satisfaction with elements of AI learning

	% of Learners “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with each element	
	Brazil	Cross-market average
Hands-on practice opportunities	57%	57%
Quality of AI teaching and instruction	57%	61%
Way AI is used by teaching staff	57%	63%
Access to AI tools and technologies	57%	68%
Guidance on appropriate AI use	56%	65%
Support for questions about AI	54%	65%
Amount of AI content in curriculum	47%	58%

Q. How satisfied are you with each of the following aspects of AI learning at your university?

Question asked among Learners

Sample Size: Brazil Learners – 350, All Learners – 1,955

The strongest Learner satisfaction rankings concern access to AI tools and technologies, although, again, this is below the cross-market average. Access without faculty-guided practice places students at risk of developing habits that will hinder their professional capabilities. Consequently, between 55% and 66% of learners report relying on independently sourced AI tools rather than those provided by their institution. This dynamic suggests that faculty are not effectively positioned as a key gateway to AI capability development. Without a systemic professional development framework, this will be difficult to overcome, and learner experience will be highly variable and dependent on which instructor at which institution a student encounters.

Institutional capability and graduate confidence

Despite the fragmented investment picture, learner confidence in Brazil is positive. More than one-quarter of Brazilian learners (29%) rate their personal AI readiness as high, close to the cross-market average of 32% and above both the US and the UK. However, when it comes to satisfaction with how their institution is preparing them, Brazilian learners are below the cross-market average and on par with the US and the UK, with 52% describing being prepared very or moderately well. As is the case in many markets, HE leaders are more optimistic than learners, with 81% very or somewhat confident that graduates meet or exceed employer expectations.

Confidence is an encouraging indicator of readiness, but it is not the same as proven capability. A more accurate measure of graduate capability is what employers are actually observing. Here, the dataset provides a finding that is promising. Brazilian employers rate recent graduates at or above the cross-market average on five of the eight skill dimensions measured; technical knowledge, critical evaluation of AI outputs, communication and collaboration, applying academic knowledge to real work, and their continuous learning mindset. These strengths are a reflection of what Brazilian HE institutions are cultivating in their students.

There are, of course, gaps. Earlier in this report, we cited creativity and innovative thinking as the most significant area of underperformance, alongside levels of professional maturity and challenges with applying academic knowledge in professional contexts. Notably, limited practical experience is only cited by 20% of Brazilian employers, which is well below the cross-market average of 33%. Ultimately, employers are indicating that the barriers they face with recent graduates are those that are attributable to the quality, governance, and relevance of the experience that learners are receiving.

An essential contributor to learner confidence is the degree to which AI instruction is integrated into the curriculum. Where faculty are most capable and most actively engaged with AI in their own teaching, learners are most confident and feel better prepared for an AI-enabled workforce. What students in Brazil seem to realize is that without practical experience, the transition to the workforce will be more of a challenge. **Brazilian learners express the highest demand for practical experience of any market in the study.** They understand that the theoretical knowledge that they have of AI will not measure up to how they will be expected to use it professionally. These findings indicate a strong associative chain running from institutional investment to faculty capability, then to learner experience and, ultimately, to graduate workplace readiness.

The governance challenge: shadow AI and the ungoverned student experience

In most markets, the governance challenge is obvious; rules do not exist, learner awareness is low, or policy has not kept pace with innovations and behaviors. The challenge is unique in Brazil. The data does not primarily describe a compliance failure. Instead, most learners are navigating AI without sufficient support on how to use it responsibly, critically, and effectively. Brazilian learners are forming professional habits in ungoverned settings which are shaping behaviors that employers are already experiencing downstream. Indeed, **only 15% of learners are definitively aware of any university guidance on AI; this is less than a third of the leading market in this study (UK: 55%) and the lowest figure in the study. Another 42% report no awareness of any institutional guidance whatsoever.**

Additionally, 30% of learners are not comfortable with teaching staff knowing anything about their AI usage, the highest rate of shadow AI usage in the study against a cross-market average of 18%. Only 15%, approximately 1 in 7 learners, are fully comfortable with complete disclosure to teaching staff. The impact of shadow AI usage is consequential and a long-term risk. The habits that students develop during their education will shape how they behave as ethical stewards in professional contexts.

What makes these figures particularly important is what lies beneath them. Where guidance does exist and learners are aware of it, 73% report confidence in their compliance. The opportunity in Brazil is to scale governance frameworks to minimize the extent to which learners are developing their relationship with AI independently. Extending both the presence and the awareness of these frameworks more readily facilitates the critical thinking, ethical practices, and professional standards that a robust culture of AI governance is optimally designed for. Employers are already experiencing the consequences of existing challenges, citing poor habits, overreliance, and uncritical acceptance of AI outputs as key challenges at rates above the cross-market average.

Ultimately, the goal of institutional governance should be to build trust, not through rule awareness alone, but through behavioral change. When rules move from being formulaic or punitive boundaries to becoming integral to the development of ethical stewardship, universities can foster the conditions for students to engage with AI openly, critically, and with the confidence that will shape their professional lives in an AI-powered economy. The broader lesson is that institutional capability depends on alignment. Markets where investment, strategic priorities, faculty capability, curriculum, and governance are pulling in the same direction are more likely to produce graduates who are confident and prepared. Where there is friction (e.g., policies vs. experience, tools vs. training, ambition vs. ethics), learners bear the cost as they transition from education to work.

Chapter 3: A framework for a shared direction

The AI Readiness Friction Framework

The gap between higher education and work, from institutional intent to graduate AI readiness, is real and widening. The AI Readiness Friction Framework provides a tool for identifying where the most consequential interventions lie. It illustrates where the education-to-work transition most consistently breaks down. These frictions reinforce one another but are not fully dependent on one another. This report has outlined how the dynamics that underpin the six frictions operate in compounding procedural relationships that affect graduate AI readiness. This diagram illustrates a hierarchy that moves from macro-systemic drivers to institutional implementation and finally to individual learner outcomes.



Faculty capability defines the extent of a student's applied experience, while the pace of institutional investment and transformation informs the development of effective governance. The frequency and quality of employer engagement determine how well the curriculum and educational experience reflect workforce reality. Ultimately, high friction in any single area will result in bottlenecks elsewhere in the education-to-workforce ecosystem that begins with global technological shifts and concludes with a deficit in individual graduate AI readiness. But these frictions are also discrete and addressable. Reducing friction at any single point has the potential to generate benefits across the ecosystem.

Friction profile of Brazil

No market is friction free. As a Fragmented Adaptive market, Brazil has evident strengths in pace responsiveness, employer connection intent, and graduate capability. However, it also has the most acute governance friction in the study. Understanding this profile means resisting a simple narrative of deficits and instead focusing on converting large-scale ambitions and capability across the breadth of a fragmented system.

Pace Friction: urgency with limited agility

This friction reveals the structural misalignment between the exponential speed of AI innovation and the linear, multi-year cadence characteristic of institutional curriculum design and accreditation cycles. In Brazil, this friction has a character that is distinct from other markets. Brazilian HE leaders do not underestimate the pace of change, with 80% describing AI-driven change as extremely fast/fast and the second highest rate in the study. Among employers, the expectation of acceleration is the highest of any market.

The key source of friction lies in institutional capacity rather than awareness. While only 17% of Brazilian learners believe that their universities are keeping pace with most or all AI developments, 38% of HE leaders believe that their institutions are keeping pace. The gap between higher rates of HE leader confidence in institutional preparedness and lower rates of learner confidence points to uneven progress. The primary barriers to keeping pace cited by HE leaders are budget constraints and lengthy accreditation processes. Notably, uncertainty about direction is not a leading barrier, indicating that Brazilian institutions know what needs to change, but the challenge is developing institutional capacity at scale.

Connection Friction: active networks with insufficient mechanisms

This area of friction refers to the absence or underdevelopment of feedback loops and partnership infrastructure between industry and academia, leading to misaligned views on graduate AI readiness. The Brazilian connection infrastructure appears to be stronger than in other markets. Nearly two-thirds (63%) of Brazilian HE leaders report very frequent or frequent interaction with employers, one of the highest rates in the study. More than one-quarter (29%) have comprehensive formal mechanisms for gathering workplace intelligence, above the cross-market average.

The key limitation in Brazil is the uneven distribution of these advantages. For the institutions that have them, active employer connections provide timely curriculum intelligence. But for the majority of institutions across the wider system, these mechanisms appear inconsistent or relationship-dependent. The result is variance in quality and relevance. Brazilian HE leaders have the relationships; now they need to scale and systematize the formal mechanisms. Converting frequent interaction into systematic, co-designed curriculum intelligence requires building institutional infrastructure in the form of employer advisory boards, formalized needs assessments, and co-designed learning outcomes.

Capability Friction: scaling effective professional development across the ecosystem

Capability friction highlights the uneven distribution of AI knowledge and skills among faculty, which prevents the consistent integration of AI into the student learning experience. This is the internal bottleneck through which all institutional ambition must pass. This friction is a challenge of inconsistency across the ecosystem in Brazil. Nearly half of HE leaders (48%) rate faculty AI expertise as strong/very strong, above the cross-market average. More than half (52%) report extensive/quite a lot of opportunities for faculty development. But, another 25% report limited or no training at all. Additionally, only 23% of learners report observing faculty using AI extensively/quite a lot in their teaching with just under half of all learners satisfied with the amount of AI content in the curriculum (47%).

Brazil already has models for faculty capability and AI integration. The opportunity is to ensure that more learners benefit from those strengths, regardless of institution. Without a national professional development framework, faculty capability functions as a competitive differentiator between institutions rather than a shared baseline. Leading examples show the value of industry-connected faculty who are continuously benchmarking and producing AI-integrated teaching that is relevant and current for learners. Building faculty capability at scale in Brazil will require more than training programs. It requires the conditions in which training can take hold, including reduced workload constraints, recognition of professional development time, and embedded practitioner knowledge. Building this capability will require structural adjustments as well as a shift in culture.

Governance Friction: learner shadow AI usage is outpacing institutional policy

This friction is driven by limitations in translating AI tool access into governed, equitable infrastructure and guardrails that engender an environment of mutual trust. In Brazil, this is the most acute challenge. The governance challenge in Brazil is about lack of awareness of the guidance that would allow learners to engage with AI responsibly, critically, and ethically. Only 15% of Brazilian learners are definitely aware of institutional guidance on AI, the lowest figure in the study. Just under half of learners report having no awareness of any guidance whatsoever. And, nearly one-third of students are not comfortable with faculty knowing anything about their AI usage.

Where guidance does exist and learners are aware of it, confidence in responsible use is high. The next stage of Brazil's AI readiness journey is building visible, practical guidance that helps learners develop critical thinking, ethical judgment, and responsible AI habits. In this instance, governance should be approached as an enabler of employability and capability rather than a constraint on innovation. Building confidence at scale in Brazil means extending that model to the full breadth of the system, so that the responsible habits that they form during study are the habits they carry into the workforce.

Experience Friction: access is present, relevance is not

Experience friction is driven by a disconnect between access to AI tools and structured opportunities to apply them in professional contexts. In Brazil, this friction is less acute than in many other markets. Learner satisfaction with hands-on practice opportunities sits at 57%, precisely at the cross-market average, and substantially better than the US and the UK. Limited practical experience is only cited by 20% of Brazilian employers, below the cross-market average of 33%. Learners have access to tools and some structured practical opportunities, but they lack governed, relevant, and authentic workplace activities that would cultivate the professional maturity and applied judgment that employers expect.

The priority in Brazil is the development of high-quality, professional training that is credit-bearing, faculty-supervised, and employer co-designed. These opportunities also require explicit governance so that learners engage with AI not just as a tool, but as a professional responsibility. While there are models of successful programs in place in Brazil, such as Immersion Week at Fundação Getulio Vargas (see below), the challenge is extending these opportunities beyond the country's leading institutions.

Skills Friction: functional AI proficiency misaligned with broader capabilities

This area is the downstream manifestation of all preceding frictions. It reflects how systemic constraints ultimately surface as gaps in a graduate's applied capability at work. In Brazil, the picture is more positive than in most markets in the study. Brazilian graduates are recognized for their foundational strengths in functional proficiency, strategic intelligence, and critical human skills. But these strengths are not consistently developed for application to professional contexts.

Moreover, several skill competencies are notable for their underdevelopment, particularly creative and innovative thinking. In this environment, AI is used predominantly as a tool for task completion rather than as a tool for enriched thinking. In part, this deficit is a result of governance and experience frictions, where students are not provided with structured opportunities for exploratory and experimental AI engagement. The added challenges noted by employers of limited professional maturity and the difficulty graduates have applying academic knowledge in professional settings are both downstream consequences of the experience and governance frictions identified earlier in this report.

Like learners in other markets, Brazilian learners are not consistently preparing for the reality of today's workplace, with divergent views about the blended technical and human skillset that employers expect. The lack of robust AI integration into the curriculum shapes learner belief and behavior. These beliefs reduce the likelihood that students will pressure institutions to adapt, perpetuating a vicious cycle of skills friction. Resolving this friction will require a reorientation of the academic curriculum to include the strategic, ethical, and practical capabilities that employers demand alongside functional proficiency so that learners build professional-grade competencies.

Overcoming AI readiness frictions: case studies in action

Contributors to this report have provided useful case studies of how their institutions are overcoming AI readiness frictions. These innovative bright spots demonstrate that when institutions and employers embrace shared data, shared uncertainty, and shared accountability, the AI readiness gap begins to close.

A snapshot of each is presented below — full case studies are available in the global AI Readiness report.*



Pace

To close the gap between fast-moving markets and slow-moving curricula, **Fundação Getúlio Vargas (FGV)** replaces periodic curriculum reform with semester-based immersion weeks and executives-in-residence keeping course content market-current.



Connection

To close the feedback loop between employer needs and curriculum design, **University College London (UCL)** runs the Industry Exchange Network (IXN), matching live company challenges directly to students working under joint industry and academic supervision with 40 to 45 percent of participating students subsequently recruited by their industry partners.



Capability

To address uneven AI capability across the institution, faculty at the **University of Pittsburgh** run AI Across Disciplines to train colleagues across subjects and sustain PASTA, a cross-institutional peer network for sharing practical integration experience, building the consistent faculty capability that confident AI integration requires.

To build faculty AI capability across disciplines, **Prince Sultan University** addressed the human dimension before the technical one, treating emotional and behavioral readiness as a prerequisite and using low-code approaches to enable teaching staff from law, business, and the humanities to integrate AI into their own teaching and research.



Governance

To replace fragmented policy with practical guidance, **British University Vietnam's (BUV) AI Assessment Scale (AIS)** provides a tiered framework shifting focus from policing student behavior to deliberately designing assessments around AI.



Experience

To convert AI access into applied fluency, **Asia Pacific University of Technology and Innovation (APU)** provides frontier computing infrastructure including Malaysia's first NVIDIA-powered AI supercomputing lab, and designs assessment around authentic workplace tasks, creating structured conditions for students to practice with real tools on real problems.

To bridge the gap between AI access and applied competency in healthcare, **Illinois Institute of Technology** launched the Health Tech Talent Institute, partnering with Leap of Faith to place students directly on live health informatics challenges using industry-supplied AI tools.



Skills

To move graduates beyond technical proficiency toward applied judgment, **Illinois Institute of Technology** builds its curriculum around an explicit humans-in-the-lead philosophy, treating critical thinking, systems thinking, and ethical reasoning as equal priorities alongside technical and data skills – producing graduates with the adaptability and collaborative judgment employers require in AI-enabled roles.

*<https://www.pearson.com/power-of-learning/ai-readiness.html>

Conclusion: Bridging the AI readiness divide, from insight to execution

AI-ready graduates do not emerge by chance. They are deliberately built through an ecosystem designed to foster applied capability. The evidence provided in this report is a resource for determining what is required by institutions, employers, and learners.

What this means for Brazil as a fragmented adaptive market

The Brazil friction profile reflects the archetype of the fragmented adaptive market. Brazil enters the AI era with strength through ambitious institutions, engaged employers, strong learner demand, and examples of innovative practice across the sector. The country's challenge is scaling this success. The next stage of Brazil's AI readiness will be defined by how effectively institutions, employers, and policymakers work together to convert today's momentum into the consistent, responsible, and workforce-ready capabilities that every learner deserves access to.



What this means for HE institutional leaders

To deliver AI-ready graduates at the pace that the transforming workforce demands, action is required across all six friction points. Use the Friction Framework Self-Assessment Tool¹⁰ to diagnose where friction is most acute in your institution, then prioritize action accordingly.



Pace

Accelerate the cadence of curriculum and institutional decision-making through modular design, stackable credentials, and faster review cycles that keep learning aligned with workplace change. Industry advisory boards are a direct mechanism for keeping signals current. The pace that HE leaders recognize should be supported by addressing budgetary constraints and the cadence of accreditation processes.



Connection

Educator-employer interactions in Brazil are frequent, but they lack the intentional structure required to support effective curriculum design. Build formal advisory frameworks, conduct systematic employer skills analyses, and establish ongoing feedback loops with employers and industry bodies so workforce signals directly inform learning design, assessment standards, and graduate outcomes.



Capability

Faculty AI capability is unevenly distributed in Brazil. Invest in continuous, applied development. Faculty development should connect educators to live industry contexts through embedded partnerships, secondments, and employer-hosted professional development rather than one-off experimentation or theoretical training. Cross-institutional peer networks and practitioner-in-residence programs are scalable mechanisms to build consistency across institutions.



Governance

Governance is Brazil's most immediate opportunity to convert AI adoption into responsible readiness at scale. Effective governance is about creating the conditions for transparent, ethical, and confident AI use that students will carry into professional life. Consult accreditation bodies in professional fields for externally validated standards. Replace punitive or restrictive governance with a culture that positions AI use as an ethical, positive, shared practice modeled by faculty and integrated into assessments. Where Brazil has access to emerging frameworks through the CNE and PBIA, institutions should engage actively in their development rather than waiting for mandates.



Experience

The priority in Brazil is better-governed, employer co-designed, professionally contextualized practice. Move beyond access to tools by embedding structured, credit-bearing opportunities to practice, apply, and demonstrate AI capability in authentic workplace contexts. Co-design assignments, degree apprenticeships, and industry-sponsored micro-credentials. Where meaningful industry partnerships exist, these should be activated for this purpose.



Skills

The curricular priority is building out the other dimensions of the AI-ready graduate beyond functional proficiency: strategic intelligence, ethical stewardship, and critical human skills. Institutions that prioritize any single capability area at the expense of others are not producing the graduates the workforce needs. Explore the development of a Graduate AI Attribute Framework in active partnership with Brazilian employers.¹¹

¹⁰ <https://www.pearson.com/power-of-learning/ai-readiness/diagnostic.html>.

¹¹ See also the Optimal AI-Ready Graduate profiled in chapter 1 of this report.

What this means for business leaders

Brazilian employers understand well the challenges of an AI-enabled labor market. The graduate readiness needed for the AI-enabled workforce is not for HE institutions alone to determine. Leaders should prioritize actions that directly reduce friction, rather than adding new layers of strategy or policy. Start by diagnosing where friction is most acute in your context; then, prioritize action accordingly.



Pace

Move quickly to diagnose the AI capability needs your organization is facing now. Communicate them to university partners with specificity, regularity, and intentionality. The pace friction that you feel as an employer should be shared with institutions that build future talent. Industry Advisory Board participation is an efficient channel for this.



Connection

Build systematic, ongoing relationships with university partners that extend beyond graduate recruitment or career fairs. Provide clear, continuous signals to education partners about role-level expectations, validating assessments, and sharing feedback earlier and more often than annual cycles allow. Contribute to employer surveys and skills analyses. The connection friction that limits graduates' readiness is an opportunity for employer engagement.



Capability

Support universities in understanding the practical implications of AI for your sector by opening your organizations to educators. Faculty who are unfamiliar with the impact of AI in professional contexts cannot teach its application credibly. Embed practitioners, share case materials, and treat faculty development as a strategic investment in the pipeline of talent and opportunity your organization depends on.



Governance

Communicate what responsible AI governance looks like inside your organization and what will be expected of graduates from day one. Refer to accreditation bodies where available; contribute where no such body exists.



Experience

Purpose-built co-designed programs are the most effective way to address the shortage of practical experience. Work with universities to co-design and host authentic workplace scenarios. Sponsor degree apprenticeships. Publish case studies to support universities in their curricular development strategies.



Skills

Communicate the specific skills your sector needs directly to universities. The more precisely employers articulate what AI-ready skills competencies look like in practice, the better institutions can deliver them. Co-design Graduate AI Attribute Frameworks with institutions. Communicate hiring needs using common skills frameworks in job specs and postings.

Meeting this moment in Brazil requires educators and employers to work together with shared urgency. Brazil has established the foundations to build on with strong assets including graduate potential, institutional capacity, and employer knowledge. The task is now to connect them more deliberately to remove the remaining frictions to deliver AI-ready graduates.

Supporting information

Methodology

This report is based on a comprehensive multi-market study designed to capture a 360-degree view of the AI transition within the higher education ecosystem. Data was gathered through a mixed-methods approach, combining extensive quantitative surveying with targeted qualitative insights across six strategic markets: Brazil, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, the US, the UK, and Vietnam. All fieldwork was conducted by PSB Insights.

Quantitative survey

To ensure the findings reflect the complexities of the current labor market and academic landscape, the survey engaged three distinct stakeholder groups:

Learners: Undergraduates currently enrolled in higher education, representing a diverse range of institutional types and academic disciplines, from STEM to the humanities.

Higher Education Leaders: Comprising both Senior University Administrators and Educators. This includes faculty with 3+ years of experience and responsibility for curriculum development and/or wider strategic decisions for a department, faculty or institution and administrators with decision-making responsibility for budgets, strategy, and course design.

Employers: Business Leaders with responsibility for strategic decisions and talent strategy. To ensure relevant data, participating organizations must have hired graduate-level employees within the past two years.

Market	Learners	HE Leaders	Employers	Total
Overall	1,955	452	304	2,711
United States	351	101	51	503
United Kingdom	351	100	51	502
Brazil	350	100	50	500
Saudi Arabia	302	50	50	402
Vietnam	301	50	51	402
Malaysia	300	51	51	402

Fieldwork was conducted via online survey which ran between the 7th and 28th of January 2026.

Qualitative interviews

To contextualize the survey data, the research included a series of seven in-depth qualitative interviews with key leaders and innovators in AI adoption from the higher education sector. These sessions allowed for a more nuanced exploration of the friction points in the transition from education to work, how institutions are overcoming them, and the shifting value of the university degree.

The views and opinions expressed by the interviewees during this project are their own and were shared in their capacity as individual professionals. These insights do not necessarily reflect the official policies, positions, or endorsements of their respective institutions.

Interviews were conducted in February 2026.

Acknowledgments

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to the following experts for contributing their time, expertise, and invaluable insights to this research. Their perspectives have been instrumental in shaping our understanding of the evolving landscape of AI in higher education.

Dr. Mateus Canniatti Ponchio – Doctor of Business Administration,
Head of Department of Technology and Data Science,
Fundação Getulio Vargas (FGV) (Brazil)

Graça Carvalho – Director,
UCL Centre for Digital Innovation, Office of the Vice Provost (Research, Innovation & Global Engagement),
University College London (UK)

Dr. Raj Echambadi – President,
Illinois Institute of Technology (US)

Evgeniya Efremova – Director of the Hilary Ballon Center for Teaching and Learning,
New York University – Abu Dhabi (UAE)

Prof. Dr. Ho Chin Kuan – Vice Chancellor,
Asia Pacific University of Technology and Innovation (Malaysia)

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mike Perkins – Head of the Centre for Research & Innovation,
British University Vietnam (Vietnam)

Prof. Tanzila Saba – Associate Director of Research & Initiative Center, Artificial Intelligence & Data Analytics (AIDA) Lab Leader
Prince Sultan University – Riyadh (KSA)

Dr. Annette Vee – Associate Professor and Faculty Liaison for AI Enablement,
University of Pittsburgh (US)

Dr. Joseph T. Yun – Director of AI Enablement, Pitt Digital; Research Professor, Electrical and Computer Engineering,
University of Pittsburgh (US)

This report would not exist without the partnership of AWS and Pearson—and the conviction, on both sides, that the solutions it seeks to inspire are worth pursuing. We are grateful to Maryclaire Abowd, Maysam Ali, Makeda Mesfin, and Imani Pope-Johns from AWS, and to Veronica Filgueira, Joseph Kimmelman, Vincent Liardi, and Sandy Smith at Pearson, for their vision and leadership, and for the coordination and commitment they brought to this project. We would also like to extend our thanks to the wider teams at both AWS and Pearson whose support made this work possible.

We are also grateful to the educators, employers, and learners across six markets who gave their time to share their experiences and perspectives.

The research design, analysis, interviews, and writing that gave shape to this report were the work of the team at PSB Insights: Issa Asfatoun, Rodney Collins, Katie Hamilton, Kirsty Harvey, and Michael Hodgkinson. We are grateful for the expertise, craft, and considerable effort they brought to each stage of the process.

References

Beard, S.J., Roehrick, K., Beadle, J., Brinkworth, G., Compton, M., Crawford, K., Ennion, M., Gharavi, L., Gordon, C. and Hillman, V. (2026) A Horizon Scan of AI and Higher Education: Fourteen Issues That May Transform the Sector. SSRN Working Paper Series, ID 6257318. Available at: https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=6257318 [Accessed 21 June 2026].

Bearman, M., Tai, J., Dawson, P., Boud, D. and Ajjawi, R. (2024) 'Developing evaluative judgement for a time of generative artificial intelligence', *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 10 April. DOI: 10.1080/02602938.2024.2335321.

BHEF (2025) The AI workforce moment is here: here is how business and higher education are leaning in together, 8 February. Available at: <https://www.bhef.com/article/blog/2025/the-ai-workforce-moment-is-here-here-is-how-business-and-higher-education-are> [Accessed: 8 February 2026].

Coursera (2025) WEF Future of Jobs Report 2025 reveals a net increase of 78 million jobs by 2030 and unprecedented demand for technology and GenAI skills, 8 February. Available at: <https://blog.coursera.org/wef-future-of-jobs-report-2025/> [Accessed: 8 February 2026].

G1 (2023) 'Brasil terá déficit de 530 mil profissionais de tecnologia até 2025, mostra estudo do Google', G1, 31 May. Available at: <https://g1.globo.com/trabalho-e-carreira/noticia/2023/05/31/brasil-tera-deficit-de-530-mil-profissionais-de-tecnologia-ate-2025-mostra-estudo-do-google.ghtml> [Accessed: 17 July 2026].

G1 (2026) 'Conselho Nacional de Educação marca data para votar regras para o uso de inteligência artificial nas escolas', G1, 23 February. Available at: <https://g1.globo.com/educacao/noticia/2026/02/23/conselho-nacional-de-educacao-marca-data-para-votar-regras-para-o-uso-de-inteligencia-artificial-nas-escolas.ghtml> [Accessed: 17 July 2026].

Legatt, A. (2026) 'Here's how college leaders can close the AI governance gap in 90 days', *Forbes*, 19 March. Available at: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/avivalegatt/2026/03/19/heres-how-college-leaders-can-close-the-ai-governance-gap-in-90-days/> [Accessed: 19 March 2026].

Levanon, G., Sigelman, M., Mamertino, M., de Zeeuw, M. and Guilford, G. (2025) No Country for Young Grads. Burning Glass Institute. [Accessed: 21 March 2026].

McKinsey & Company (2025) The State of AI 2025. Available at: <https://www.mckinsey.com> [Accessed: 4 June 2026].

McKinsey Global Institute (2024) Agents, robots, and us: Skill partnerships in the age of AI. Available at: <https://www.mckinsey.com/mgi/our-research/agents-robots-and-us-skill-partnerships-in-the-age-of-ai> [Accessed: 21 March 2026].

Microsoft AI Economy Institute (2025) Global AI Adoption 2025. Redmond, WA: Microsoft Corporation. Available at: <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/corporate-responsibility/topics/ai-economy-institute/reports/global-ai-adoption-2025/> [Accessed: 25 March 2026].

OECD (2025) OECD Skills Outlook 2025: Building the Skills of the 21st Century for All. Paris: OECD Publishing. DOI: 10.1787/26163cd3-en. [Accessed: 24 March 2026].

Pearson (2025) Lost in Transition: Fixing the “Learn to Earn” Skills Gap. London: Pearson. Available at: <https://www.pearson.com/en-gb/news-and-policy/reports/lost-in-transition.html> [Accessed: 21 March 2026].

Pearson (2026) Pearson and AWS announce collaboration to unlock AI-powered personalized learning for millions of people globally, 8 February. Available at: <https://plc.pearson.com/en-GB/news-and-insights/news/pearson-and-aws-announce-collaboration-unlock-ai-powered-personalized> [Accessed: 8 February 2026].

Pearson and Amazon Web Services (2026) AI Readiness: Building the Bridge from Higher Education to Work. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.pearson.com/power-of-learning/ai-readiness.html> [Accessed: June 4, 2026].

Rosowsky, D. (2026) ‘The 60-year degree: why universities must pivot from recruitment to perpetual partnership’, Forbes, 21 March. Available at: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/davidrosowsky/2026/03/21/the-60-year-degree-why-universities-must-pivot-from-recruitment-to-perpetual-partnership/> [Accessed: 21 March 2026].

Sand Technologies (2025) AI and the Future of Work: Insights from the World Economic Forum’s Future of Jobs Report 2025, 8 February. Available at: <https://www.sandtech.com/insight/ai-and-the-future-of-work/> [Accessed: 8 February 2026].

Saudi Vision 2030 (2025) Human capability development program. Available at: <https://www.vision2030.gov.sa/en/explore/programs/human-capability-development-program> [Accessed: 20 May 2026].

Stanford University Institute for Human-Centered AI (2024) Artificial Intelligence Index Report 2024. Stanford, CA: Stanford HAI. Available at: <https://hai.stanford.edu/ai-index/2024-ai-index-report> [Accessed: 24 March 2026].

Stanford University Institute for Human-Centered AI (2026) The 2026 AI Index Report, Research and Development. Available at: <https://hai.stanford.edu/ai-index/2026-ai-index-report/research-and-development> [Accessed: 4 June 2026].

Stanford University Institute for Human-Centered AI (2026) AI Index 2025: State of AI in 10 Charts, 12 March. Available at: <https://hai.stanford.edu/news/ai-index-2025-state-of-ai-in-10-charts> [Accessed: 12 March 2026].

UNESCO IESALC (2026) The challenges of AI in higher education and the imperative for competency frameworks, 12 March. Available at: <https://www.iesalc.unesco.org/en/articles/challenges-ai-higher-education-and-imperative-competency-frameworks> [Accessed: 12 March 2026].

Valentini, A. and Blancas, A. (2025) The challenges of AI in higher education and institutional responses: Is there room for competency frameworks?. Paris: UNESCO. Available at: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000394935> [Accessed: 1 March 2026].

World Economic Forum (2025) Responsible AI in higher education: Building skills, trust and integrity, 4 September. Available at: <https://www.weforum.org/stories/2025/09/responsible-ai-in-higher-education-building-skills-trust-and-integrity/> [Accessed: 24 March 2026].

World Economic Forum (2025) The Future of Jobs Report 2025. Geneva: World Economic Forum. Available at: <https://www.weforum.org/publications/the-future-of-jobs-report-2025/> [Accessed: 21 March 2026].

World Economic Forum (2025) Educating a future workforce that will match AI disruption, 8 February. Available at: <https://www.weforum.org/stories/2025/10/education-disruptive-ai-workforce-opportunities/> [Accessed: 8 February 2026].

