

AI+Us (Southampton Edition) Report – March 2026

The AI+Us Alliance is a nationwide initiative initiated by the Skills Pillar of Responsible AI UK (RAi UK). The AI+Us Alliance promotes education everyone urgently needs to understand how AI systems actually work (including their data requirements and decision-making processes), to question assumptions and biases embedded in AI tools, and to recognise the broader societal implications of AI implementation.

AI+Us Festivals aim to develop and pilot annual interactive hands-on, family-friendly, public events with a festival feel, dedicated to fostering and developing critical thinking, algorithmic and data literacy, and sociotechnical awareness of artificial intelligence's impact on lives and societies. The universities involved in designing and piloting AI+Us Festival events are part of a movement to help communities understand the real-world implications of AI, shaping a more responsible future. They are King's College London, the University of Nottingham (UoN), University of Glasgow, University of Southampton, and The University of Sheffield.

Target audience and advertising

This was an open event, for students and non-students alike. The event was advertised to:

- University of Southampton Student Community
- Student Union AI Society
- AI@Southampton Mailing list (Internal and external contacts interested in hearing more about AI@Southampton)
- WSI Mailing list (Internal and external contacts interested in hearing more about Web Science Institute)
- Civic Mailing list ((External contacts previously involved in University of Southampton civic partnership activity)
- Eventbrite

The Southampton edition of AI+Us was held Saturday 7 March 2026 in Building 16, Highfield Campus, University of Southampton, a collaborative workspace designed for a CS master's cohort. We had 70 advance registrations with another 69 on the waitlist, although on the day, there were 29 participants.

Programme

The programme was designed to be engaging to all levels of learner. In the morning skills session, participants were introduced to GenAI chat tools and prompt engineering, and responsible AI use and with time dedicated to exploring a variety of tools for themselves. During the afternoon, teams were formed who then tackled a variety of community focused, civic challenges facing the local region and drawn from the Web sites of local and regional authorities. The day culminated in a celebration of AI creativity and teamwork, with certificates being presented by the Deputy Mayor from a local authority.

Feedback

All participants were sent a feedback form, three responses were received.

Participants attended the AI+Us event to gain practical experience with artificial intelligence, work with real clients, and explore how AI can be applied to societal challenges, they were particularly motivated by the opportunity to deepen their understanding of AI in a hands-on context.

Overall satisfaction with the event was high, with participants rating it between 4 and 5 out of 5. The most valued components included the practical case study, the opportunity to present work to a diverse judging panel—including client and government representatives—and the AI learning sessions, which were considered informative and engaging.

Attendees found it difficult to identify elements that were least valuable. However, some noted that introductory content was less relevant for those already studying AI, while others found the problem statements too broad, making solution development challenging. A key suggestion was to extend activities to include practical implementation of AI tools, rather than focusing solely on conceptual solutions.

Participants reported varying increases in confidence using generative AI responsibly but indicated they were highly likely to apply the skills learned in future work. Event logistics—including venue, timing, and accessibility—were consistently praised. Facilitators and staff were rated highly for their support, and additional comments highlighted the clarity and quality of the workshop's delivery.

Reflections

The event experienced a higher-than-expected drop-off rate both in the lead-up and on the day itself. To mitigate this in future iterations, we recommend increasing the number of initial places available to account for anticipated attrition.

Providing a longer promotional period would also be beneficial. Allowing more time for advertising is likely to support greater engagement and help attract a more diverse audience.

The challenges set for participants were well-pitched, offering sufficient breadth to enable varied and creative interpretations of the issues presented. However, the overall narrative and structure of the task could be strengthened. Introducing a scheduled check-in point with the subject-matter expert would allow groups to receive formative feedback before final delivery, ensuring clearer direction and enhancing the quality of outcomes.

Southampton AI+Us Resources

The following resources are available [here](#)

- Opening and closing slide deck
- GenAI prompt-a-thon slide deck
- Community-focused civic challenges
- Scoring template for the challenges
- Certificates