

IFKAD
International Forum on Knowledge Asset Dynamics

28 - 30 JUNE 2027

IFKAD 2027

22nd International Forum on Knowedge Asset Dynamics

University of Basilicata, Matera, Italy

The Ecology of Knowledge in the AI Era

CALL FOR EXTENDED ABSTRACTS - IFKAD 2027
www.ifkad.org

Special Track n.: 31

Beyond the Ivory Tower: Reimagining Higher Education in the AI and Sustainability Era

Description

Higher education is undergoing a far-reaching transformation that is reshaping teaching, research, institutional operations, and universities' wider role in society. Universities are no longer seen as places where knowledge is created and transmitted; they are increasingly becoming open innovation ecosystems, digital service providers, community partners, and key actors in lifelong learning. The rapid expansion of artificial intelligence, the convergence of physical and digital learning environments, changing learner and labor market expectations, and sustainability challenges are prompting institutions to rethink their missions, structures, and practices. As universities adapt to these developments, the focus extends beyond the adoption of new technologies. AI, data analytics, and digital infrastructures are influencing how institutions make decisions, organize learning, conduct research, engage with external stakeholders, and fulfill their public mission. At the same time, they bring renewed attention to issues of academic integrity, privacy, transparency, equity, governance, and environmental responsibility. This highlights the need for approaches that situate technological innovation within broader institutional and societal contexts. One manifestation of this transformation is the emergence of data-informed and AI-supported universities. Another is the growing integration of physical and digital environments that is redefining the university experience. Hybrid and "phygital" forms of education, immersive learning technologies, digital collaboration networks, and smart campus initiatives are changing how students, educators, and institutions interact. These developments create new possibilities for learning, resource management, accessibility, and community building, while also raising important questions concerning inclusion and persistent forms of digital inequality. These changes are also influencing how learning itself is designed and experienced. In a context of continuous technological and social change, universities are increasingly expected to cultivate not only disciplinary expertise but also critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, adaptability, and ethical reasoning. This shift has stimulated growing interest in active and experiential learning, project-based education, personalized learning pathways, modular learning structures, and new forms of student engagement. At the same time, it raises important questions about how educational quality, meaningful learning outcomes, and learner diversity can be supported in ways that are both innovative and inclusive. The transformation of learning is closely linked to changing relationships between universities and the societies they serve. The traditional model centered on a one-time degree is gradually giving way to more continuous forms of engagement that support learners throughout their professional and personal lives. Continuing education, reskilling and upskilling initiatives, micro-credentials, university-industry partnerships, entrepreneurial ecosystems, and knowledge-transfer activities all reflect a growing emphasis on long-term collaboration and societal impact. In this evolving landscape, universities are expected not only to generate knowledge but also to facilitate its application in addressing economic, social, and environmental challenges.

This special track explores these developments through an integrated and interdisciplinary perspective. It is based on the view that artificial intelligence, digital innovation, sustainability, pedagogical renewal, and lifelong learning are deeply interconnected aspects of a broader transformation of higher education. We welcome theoretical, empirical, comparative, critical, and practice-oriented contributions that enhance our understanding of how universities can respond to these challenges while remaining innovative, inclusive, responsible, and sustainable. Particular interest is given to research that bridges technological, pedagogical, organisational, social, and environmental perspectives and offers insights into the future development of higher education. Methodologically, the track is open to diverse forms of approaches, including

literature reviews, conceptual papers, case studies, expert assessments, and qualitative or quantitative empirical research. Contributions using foresight, futures studies, scenario-based approaches, and other innovative methodologies to explore the future of higher education are particularly encouraged.

Indicative Topics

- The changing mission of universities as key actors in open innovation ecosystems and regional development.
- The relationship between digital transformation and sustainability in higher education, including opportunities, synergies, and potential tensions emerging from the adoption of new technologies.
- The redesign of curricula and learning outcomes to prepare students for future workplaces characterized by rapid technological change, interdisciplinary collaboration, and sustainability challenges.
- Academic integrity, assessment practices, and quality assurance in an era increasingly shaped by generative technologies.
- Sustainable campus development, including energy efficiency, smart infrastructure, resource management, and institutional climate action initiatives.
- Universities' social responsibility, community engagement activities, and their broader contribution to societal well-being through the third mission.
- Equity, inclusion, and access in digitally enhanced learning environments, with particular attention to reducing educational disparities among diverse student populations.
- Leadership, governance, and strategic decision-making processes that support responsible and transparent institutional transformation.
- Innovative pedagogical approaches, lifelong learning pathways, micro-credentials, and flexible educational models responding to changing learner needs.
- Collaboration between higher education institutions and external stakeholders to foster knowledge transfer, innovation, and sustainable development.
- Professional development and capacity building for academic staff navigating technological, pedagogical, and organizational change.
- The development of students' digital literacy, critical thinking, ethical awareness, and readiness to engage with emerging technologies.
- Interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research approaches aimed at addressing complex social, economic, and environmental challenges.
- The future of academic work, including changing professional roles, organizational practices, and staff well-being in increasingly digital institutional settings.
- The contribution of higher education institutions to the achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and the assessment of their societal impact.
- University-based innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystems supporting the creation of sustainable and technology-driven ventures.
- Experiential, challenge-based, and project-oriented learning approaches that connect students with real-world problems and stakeholders.
- Internationalization strategies, global partnerships, and cross-border collaborations that strengthen the global role of higher education.

Keywords

Strategic management, project management, knowledge management, innovation management, higher education institution

Organizers

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Follow this link to see the Special Track details on IFKAD website ››

Guidelines and Requirements

Researchers wishing to contribute are invited to submit an EXTENDED ABSTRACT (in MS Word format) of min 500 and max 1000 words, not later than **22 JANUARY 2027**. All submission must be done via dedicated form on our website. The abstract should address theoretical background, research objective, methodology, and results in terms of expected contribution to Knowledge Management theory and practice.
Authors are required to follow the guidelines and templates available on IFKAD website: www.ifkad.org

Important Dates

22 January 2027 – Extended Abstract Submission Deadline
19 February 2027 – Acceptance Notification to Authors
16 April 2027 – Early-Bird Registration & Payment Deadline
23 April 2027 – Full Paper Submission Deadline
28 May 2027 – Regular and PhD Students Registration & Payment Deadline
12 June 2027 – Conference Program Release
28-30 June 2027 – Conference sessions *(to be considered as 3 full working days)*

Please note that all above indicated dates are **CUT-OFF** deadlines. There will not be an extention to any of these.

Further Information

For any information related to the conference and/or any special track, please see the event website at www.ifkad.org or contact the conference manager at **info@ifkad.org**