

WHOSE RESPONSIBILITY IS ETHICAL AI?

Insights from Personal Tutoring

Transcript

Penny Mosavian, Associate Professor/Senior Tutor
Warwick Global Academy

Hello and welcome to this nano presentation.

I want to start with a question.

Whose responsibility is ethical AI in higher education?

Ask that in a committee meeting and you'll get a strategy document.

Ask it in a personal tutoring session and you'll get something much more interesting — a student who says, "I used AI on this. Was that okay?" And a tutor who has to figure out what to say next, in real time, potentially with no script.

My name is Penny Mosavian. I'm an Associate Professor and Senior Tutor at Warwick Global Academy. And today I want to make the case that the ethical AI debate belongs in personal tutoring space— because that is where care, hope, and equity are either practised or abandoned.

The ethical AI debate in higher education is everywhere. But most of it happens above students — in strategy documents, in Senate committees, in policy frameworks.

Personal tutoring gives us the ground-level view. It's where a student sits across from you and says: *"I used AI. Was that okay?"*

And I want to name this from the start: that question is never just about rules. It is about **equity**. Which students know how to navigate this space confidently — and which ones don't? That is the question this presentation is really asking.

So why does personal tutoring matter here specifically? Four reasons.

Personal tutors are often the first person to notice that AI is part of how a student is coping — not just working. They're the ones being asked to interpret and apply institutional AI policy in real time, in individual conversations, often without any training to do so.

They're also the first point of contact when something has gone wrong — or when a student is worried it has.

But here is the reason that matters most to me. Students don't arrive at university equally positioned in relation to AI. International students, first-generation students, students from under-resourced backgrounds — they carry different assumptions, different levels of digital literacy, different risks. The personal tutor is often the one person who sees that inequality up close. That makes them an equity agent. And we should start treating them like one.

Here's what I observe in practice. The ethical AI conversation doesn't begin with a policy document. It begins with feedback — a student asking why AI seemed to understand the brief better than they did. It begins with uncertainty — "I wasn't sure I was allowed

to." It begins with acceptable use — a phrase that sounds perfectly clear until you try to explain it to someone at eleven o'clock at night who is panicking about a submission. These are recurring patterns in tutoring conversations. Not edge cases. Not one-offs. This is the texture of the work now. And that is exactly why personal tutoring is the right lens for this debate.

This diagram captures something I think we often miss. The ethical AI debate doesn't happen in one place. It happens at the intersection of three interpretive communities — institutions, students, and tutors — each of whom is making sense of AI differently. Institutions apply policy. Students process it — through anxiety, confusion, and their own lived experience. Tutors sit in the middle, translating institutional intent into something an individual student can actually use.

The institutional frame matters. It sets the terms. But it is the tutor who carries those terms into the room. And that means the tutor is doing something that has barely been acknowledged — they are the human infrastructure of ethical AI practice.

When AI enters the tutoring conversation, something shifts. The tutor is no longer simply monitoring academic progress. They are navigating ambiguity — AI-generated work doesn't announce itself. They are providing reassurance — students often feel guilty long before they feel understood. They are doing relational work. And this work has a cost. My abstract talks about staff wellbeing — and I want to be precise about that. This is emotional labour. Tutors are being asked to hold enormous ethical complexity, in individual conversations, often without adequate preparation or support. If we are serious about equity for students, we have to be equally serious about the conditions under which tutors are being asked to work. Those two things are not separate.

Neil Selwyn's work is essential here — and it belongs in the body of this argument, not tucked away on a references slide.

Selwyn shows us that students don't just use AI as a tool. They use it to make sense of university itself. To interpret feedback that feels opaque. To decode expectations that were never clearly communicated. To manage uncertainty about what they are and aren't permitted to do.

In a tutoring session, that means the tutor is being asked to be a feedback interpreter, an expectation decoder, an uncertainty manager — and someone who helps a student understand where the boundaries are and why they exist.

And here is the equity point I want to press. AI creates what I'd call differential opacity. Students who already know how to navigate institutional expectations use AI to do it faster and more fluently. Students who don't yet know — who are still working out the rules — use AI to fill a gap, and sometimes fall foul of rules they never fully understood in the first place. The tutor is the person who can intervene in that gap. The tutor is the equity lever.

So I want to propose a framework. Three questions — three dimensions of what a genuinely relational approach to ethical AI in personal tutoring actually looks like.

The first is Clarity. What is AI doing here? Can you show me what you asked it, and what it said? Was this about understanding the task — or generating the work?

The second is Care. What uncertainty is present? Was there a moment where you weren't sure if you were allowed to do this? How confident are you feeling about this module overall?

The third is Responsibility. Who should carry what? Did I give this student enough to work with before they turned to AI? Is this a guidance gap I can address — or one that needs escalating?

These are not abstract concepts. They are reflective prompts for practice — questions that shift the tutoring conversation from surveillance to dialogue. From detection to understanding. A tutor who asks these questions is not a compliance officer. They are an educator.

Because the alternative is surveillance. And a surveillance model is adversarial — it treats uncertainty as guilt, and it disproportionately harms the students already carrying the most risk.

But I want to make a **design argument** here. If you want ethical AI to work in practice — not just on paper — you need to invest in the relational infrastructure that makes it possible. Trained tutors. Supported tutors. Recognised tutors. Hope and anxiety are not soft concepts. They are **structural outcomes**. And we can design for them — or we can design against them. That is a policy choice.

Selwyn's central argument is that AI in education is never neutral. It reproduces and amplifies existing inequalities — unless we actively intervene.

If AI is changing what learning looks like — how feedback lands, how students seek help, what academic risk means, how knowledge gets built — then it must also change how we support the humans within learning.

Personal tutoring is not a welfare afterthought. It is a site of ethical AI practice. It is where care, judgement, and relational labour happen every day — largely unrecognised and under-resourced. That is what this presentation is asking you to see.

I want to close with questions rather than conclusions — because that feels right for this topic.

Where do you see AI boundaries in your own context? How are students in your institution actually supported in navigating AI — not in policy, but in practice? And what challenges are emerging that nobody is yet naming out loud?

AI is not just a technical issue. It is a relational one. The Padlet for this session is an open space — I'd genuinely love to hear how those relationships are changing where you are.

Thank you for watching.

Links to readings and other resources are available on the Padlet

P.J.Mosavian@warwick.ac.uk



<https://padlet.com/universityofwarwick/ethical-ai-in-personal-tutoring-a-shared-space-m38ljvfqq5xb4hqf>