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Navigating the future of learning, teaching and assessment with Cambridge

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Cambridge Schools Conference, July 2026
Future-ready: preparing learners to thrive

Curriculum: setting up our learners for success

Our commitment to curriculum design

Built on evidence and research – ensuring that the knowledge, understanding, skills and attributes we include in our curriculum are right for your learners now and can keep pace with rapid changes.

Memory and attention systems



Declarative

- Ultra flexible
- Requires conscious effort
- Slow limited capacity
- *It's what you are thinking about*
- Hippocampus and temporal lobe

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Cognitive Offloading

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Procedural

- Ultra fast
- Requires no conscious effort
- Only available for familiar activity
- *Happens automatically*
- Basal ganglia and frontal cortex

Excellent skill development opportunities across our offer to schools

- A rich subject-based curriculum.
- Distinct skills' frameworks – Cambridge Global Perspectives and Primary & Lower Secondary Humanities.
- Teaching and learning resources that encourage wider skill development.
- Assessments that provide opportunities to demonstrate skills.





Entrepreneurial Mindset short course pilot

- In collaboration with IE University, Spain.
- 60-hour programme.
- Curriculum covers:
 - Understanding entrepreneurship
 - Developing an entrepreneurial mindset
 - The entrepreneurial process.
- Students complete an entrepreneurial project working in groups.
- Assessment consists of reflective and presentation tasks.



Rethinking project work for the age of AI

Skills for an AI enabled world

- Uncertainty about the world and how humans and AI will work successfully together.
- What do we **know** already?
 - Need for adaptability and life-long learning.
 - Need to be able to use technology to enhance what we do.
 - Need to be the human in control of complex problem solving.



Ask effective and insightful questions at the right time (prompt engineering)



Creative problem solving (using AI)

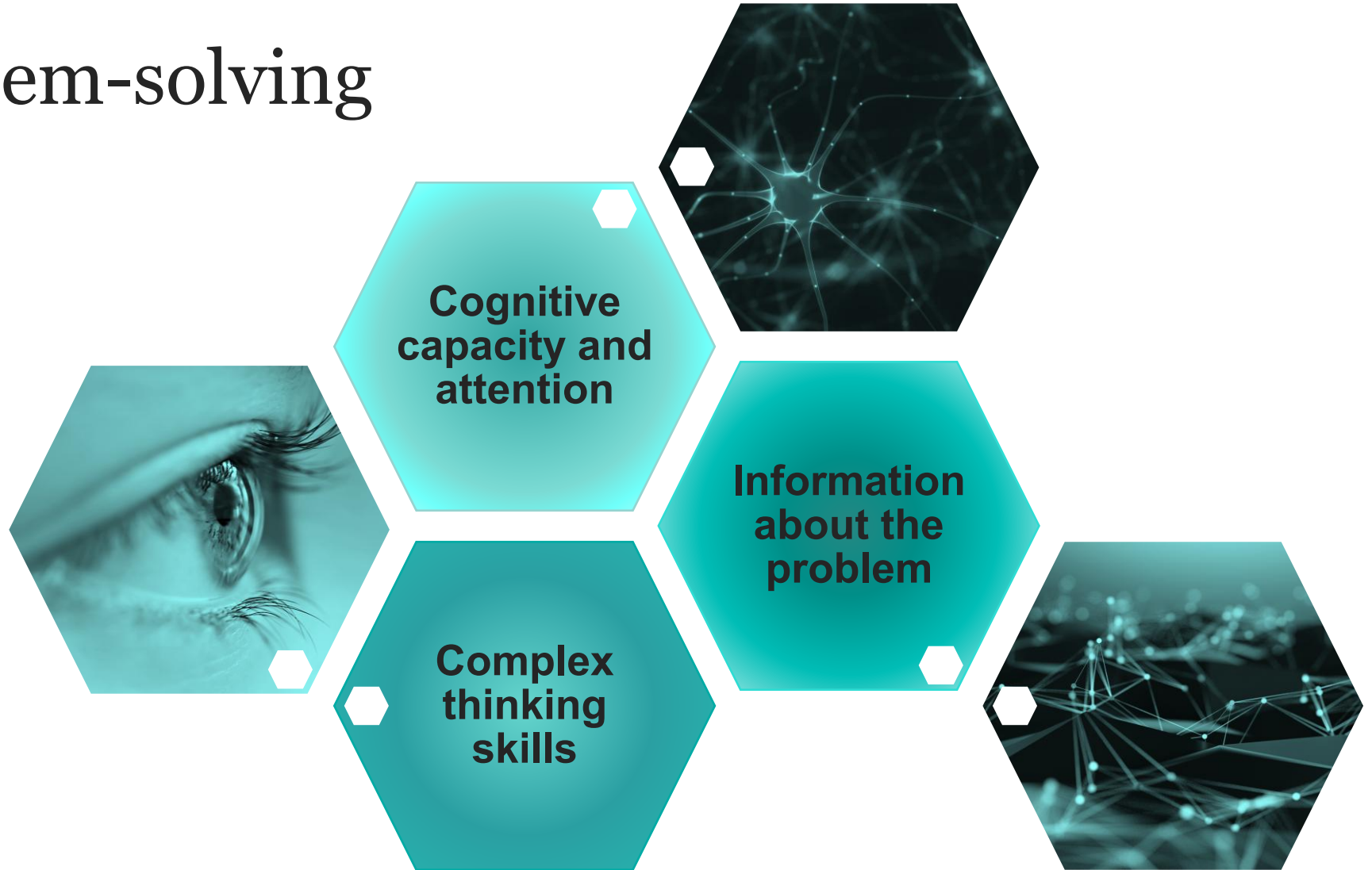


Critically evaluate AI – spot errors, gaps and oversimplifications



Be human - reflect on potential bias and think ethically

Complex problem-solving



Problem solving and procedural memory

Cognitive capacity to engage with complex problems

Processing procedural memory requires embedding frameworks of understanding (schemata) about a subject

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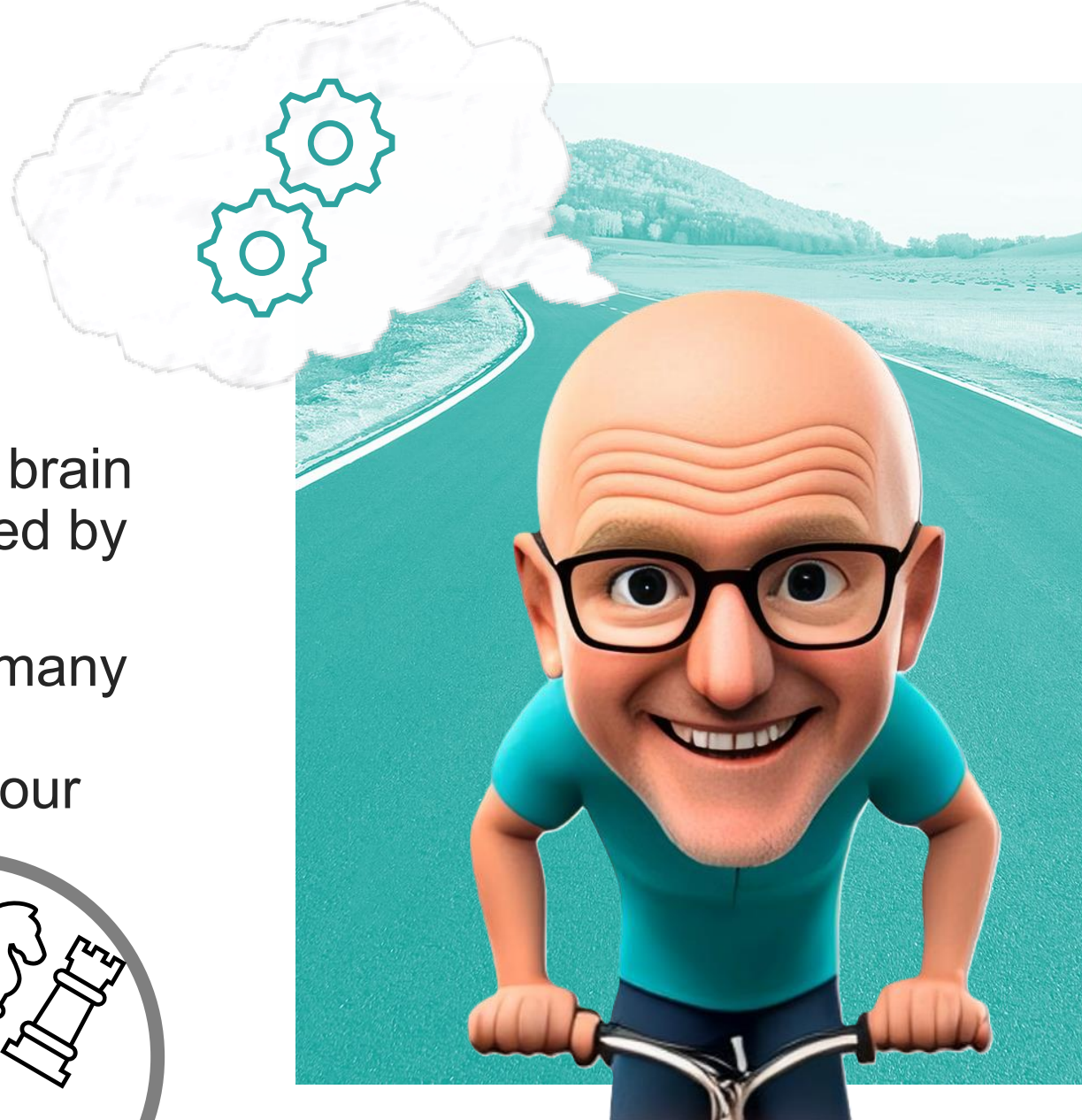
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Need to be able to think like a chemist automatically with little conscious effort

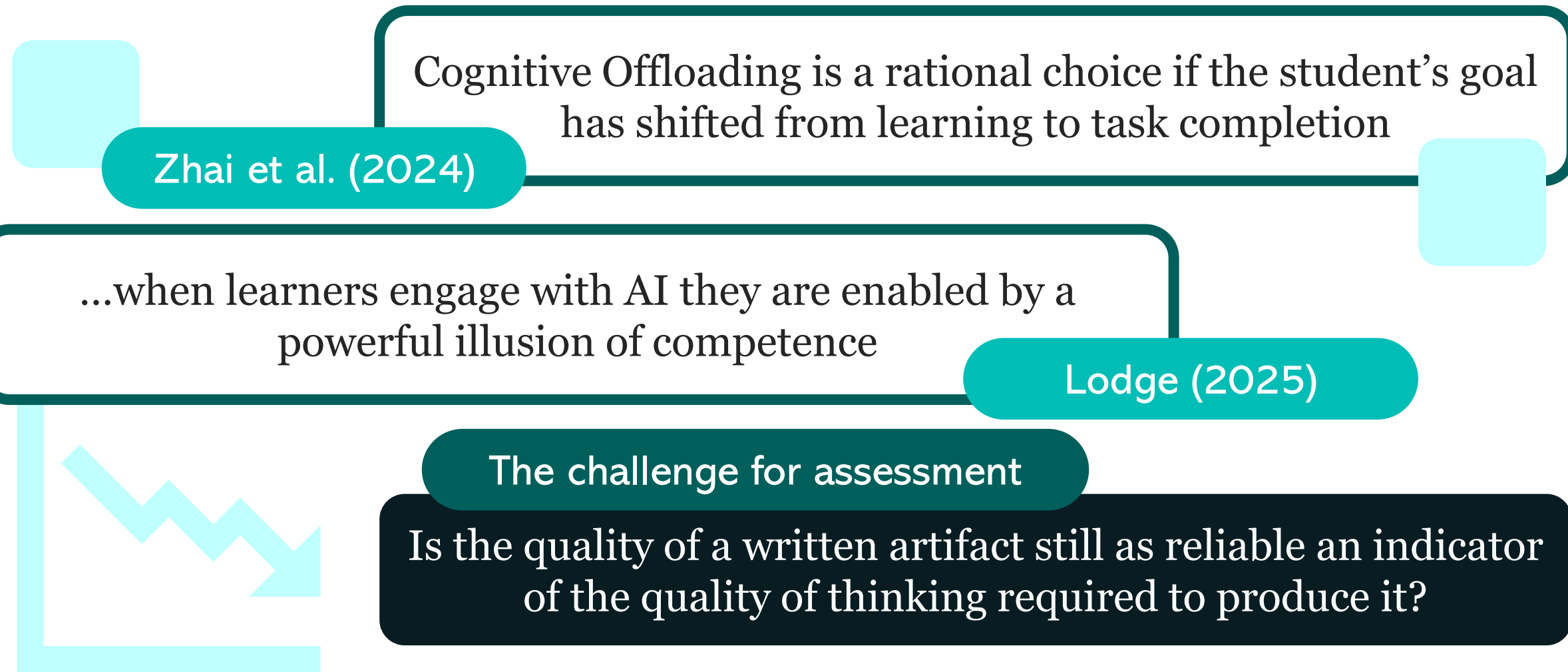


Attention and prediction errors

- The neurotransmitters that prime the brain to pay attention and learn are triggered by the unexpected.
- For complex problems there are too many things to make conscious predictions about – procedural memory primes your attention.



Illusion of competence



Cognitive Offloading is a rational choice if the student's goal has shifted from learning to task completion

Zhai et al. (2024)

...when learners engage with AI they are enabled by a powerful illusion of competence

Lodge (2025)

The challenge for assessment

Is the quality of a written artifact still as reliable an indicator of the quality of thinking required to produce it?

Coursework: Have students learnt what we are claiming?



Questions to encourage
cognitive struggle

Can you apply the
learning to a novel
situation?

What biases might be
contained in this answer?

What other factors
might we bring to
bear in this
argument?

How did you fact
check this?

What assumptions
does your argument
depend on?

Which prompts did
you use and why?



Authenticity and reliable evidence of learning

Periods of use of any technology the students wants to use (including AI)

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Controlled assessment points

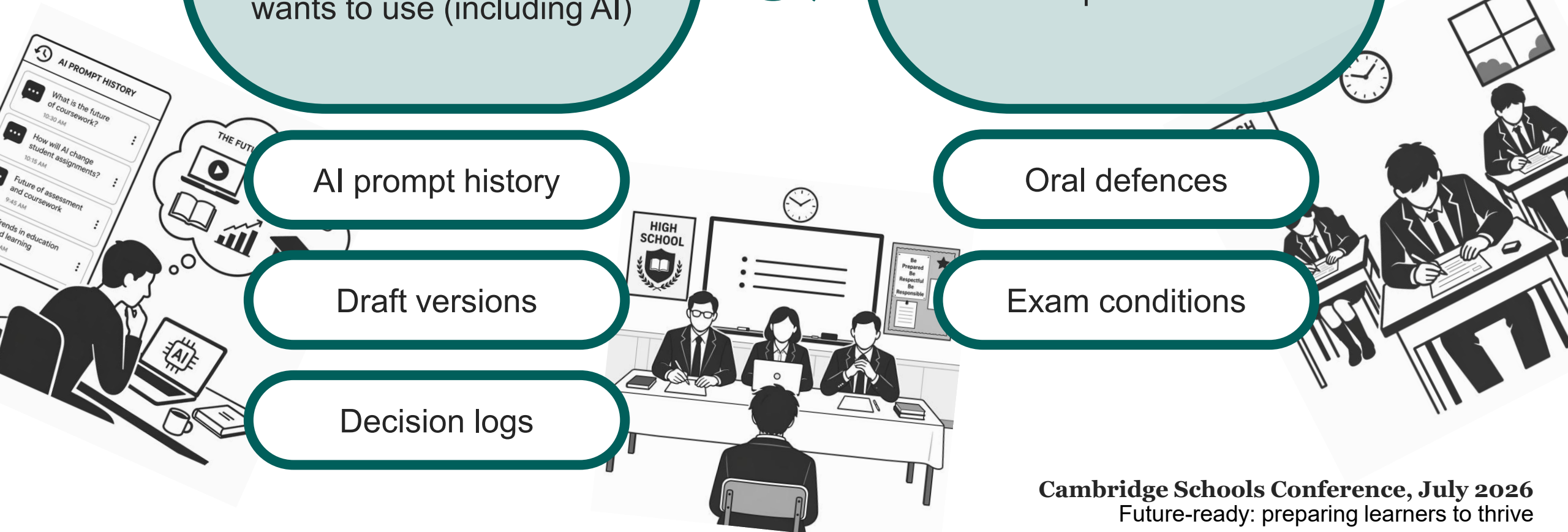
AI prompt history

Oral defences

Draft versions

Exam conditions

Decision logs



Teacher & school leader professional development

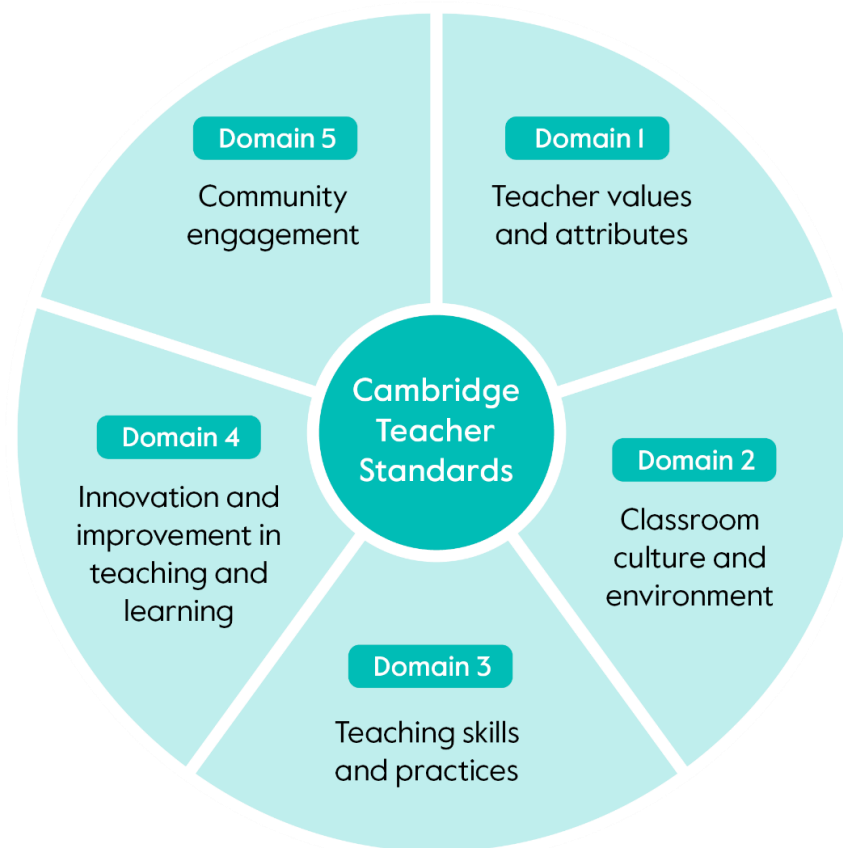
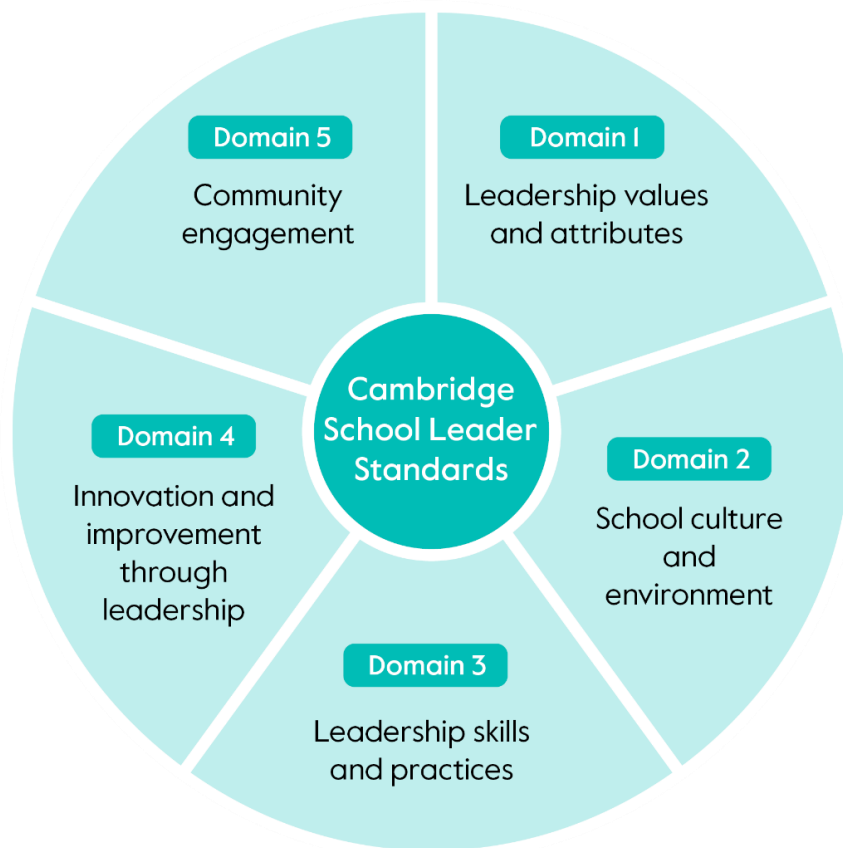
Implications of today's discussion for teachers, teaching and school leadership

- Teachers and teaching is more important than ever.
- Teachers know how to adapt and prepare learners to thrive in a changing world.
- We are focused on supporting teachers to navigate the challenges of the changing classroom to help them they feel supported and empowered to do their best work.
- We recognise the need to support school leaders to build and maintain cultures that strengthen teacher wellbeing, belonging and professional growth.

Setting the benchmark for professional development

- Research-informed professional learning materials that translate theory into impactful classroom practice.
- Trusted and quality-assured trainers with proven expertise.
- A dedicated delivery team ensuring high-quality course experiences, delivered consistently whatever the delivery method.
- Clear standards for teachers and school leaders that provide a benchmark for continuous improvement and professional development planning.

Cambridge International Standards for school leaders and teachers



What we heard from our ‘Preparing learners for the future report’

- Interpersonal skills need safe spaces to develop: students need confidence to speak, listen and disagree well.
- Self management is critical, but hard to teach.
- AI is raising new challenges and opportunities in teaching, learning and assessment.
- Future ready learners need teachers and school leaders who model empowerment, agency and optimism about change.



**Preparing learners to thrive
in a changing world**



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