

Turning Generative AI Policy into Responsible Institutional Practice in Higher Education in Bangladesh

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Abstract

Generative artificial intelligence is moving rapidly into university teaching, assessment, research and administration, forcing higher education institutions to decide not only whether AI should be used, but how its use should be governed. In Bangladesh, recent evidence points to policy gaps, uneven institutional readiness, fragmented guidance and substantial dependence on instructor discretion. This research blog argues that producing an AI policy is only the first step. The more important governance challenge is whether formal policy is translated into coherent institutional practice through clear rules, leadership responsibility, staff development, communication, infrastructure, review processes and mechanisms for accountability. Drawing on Institutional Theory and recent research in the *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, the blog identifies a need to study the policy-practice relationship across Bangladeshi public and private universities. It proposes a comparative research agenda for examining policy coherence and institutional implementation capacity as the conditions through which responsible Generative AI governance can become embedded in everyday university practice.

Keywords: Generative Artificial Intelligence; Higher Education Policy; Institutional Governance; Policy Implementation; Institutional Theory; Bangladesh

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Rationale

Universities are moving beyond the initial question of whether generative artificial intelligence should be permitted. The harder question is how institutions can govern its use consistently across research, teaching, assessment and administration. Smith et al. (2026), writing in the *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, developed a university-level framework for responsible GenAI use in research from the experiences of two Australian universities. Their framework does not treat policy as an isolated document. It connects an institutional position on GenAI with principles such as honesty, transparency and accountability, and with supporting changes in training, communication, infrastructure and organizational processes. This is an important shift because responsible AI governance depends on what universities enable, explain, monitor and review after a formal policy has been approved (Hasnat et al., 2025, 2026b).

Other work in the same journal reinforces this policy-to-practice concern. Wilson et al. (2025), examining a major assessment-policy reform, show how implementation requires coordinated governance, people change and quality-assurance mechanisms rather than policy declaration alone. Margetts et al. (2024) demonstrate that university policy production is also shaped by managerial power and organizational processes that can create distance between formal policy and everyday practice. Saleh and Gamar (2024), in a non-Western university setting, further emphasize evidence, stakeholder participation and institutional decision processes in policy development. Together, these studies suggest that the quality of a policy cannot be judged only by the text it contains. Its value also depends on whether institutional actors understand it, have the capacity to enact it and experience compatible expectations across different parts of the university.

The challenge is especially visible with GenAI because institutional responses can easily become fragmented. Universities may publish general integrity statements while departments create separate rules, individual teachers set their own expectations, research offices issue additional guidance and technology units make independent decisions about access or data security. Bassett et al. (2026) illustrate the risk of narrow policy responses in their critique of AI-detection tools. They argue that questionable detection practices can create problems of procedural fairness, evidence and data security, suggesting that responsible governance requires defensible assessment and policy design rather than reliance on a single technological control.

Bangladesh is therefore a timely setting for studying institutional implementation rather than policy adoption alone. Islam (2026), based on interviews with university teachers and students, reported policy shortcomings, ethical concerns and governance gaps around academic AI use in Bangladeshi higher education. More recent evidence from bin Ahsan et al. (2026) similarly describes GenAI readiness as uneven and weakly institutionalized, with fragmented governance, limited structured professional development, infrastructural

constraints and substantial reliance on local discretion. A strong research rationale should move beyond describing this gap and identify the organizational process that can explain it (Hasan et al., 2026a). In this case, the key process is the movement from formal GenAI policy to responsible institutional practice.

Research Gap

Existing research has begun to establish both sides of the problem. International higher-education research provides frameworks for responsible GenAI governance and examples of how universities develop institutional positions, principles and implementation supports (Smith et al., 2026). Research in Bangladesh, meanwhile, indicates that AI use is expanding while governance, training, infrastructure and institutional guidance remain uneven (Islam, 2026; bin Ahsan et al., 2026). What remains underdeveloped is comparative evidence on the middle of this process: how formal institutional policy is translated into consistent practice across different units, actors and university types.

The research gap is therefore more precise than stating that Bangladeshi universities need AI policies. A useful gap should clarify what is known, what relationship remains uncertain and why the missing knowledge matters (Hasnat et al., 2026a). The unresolved question is whether policy coherence and institutional implementation capacity determine the quality of responsible GenAI governance. Policy coherence refers here to the degree to which expectations about acceptable use, disclosure, accountability, privacy, assessment, research integrity, training and review are mutually consistent rather than contradictory. Implementation capacity refers to whether universities have the leadership responsibility, communication, professional development, infrastructure and review mechanisms needed to turn these expectations into routine practice.

Institutional Theory offers a useful lens for this question because formal structures can acquire legitimacy without being fully embedded in everyday organizational practice. In higher education, this means that a university can appear compliant by issuing a GenAI policy while implementation remains decoupled across faculties, departments and administrative units. The empirical contribution is therefore not to ask only whether a policy exists, but to examine whether the formal policy and the institution's actual practices are aligned. This distinction is particularly important in Bangladesh, where public and private universities differ in governance arrangements, resources, digital infrastructure and managerial capacity (Hasan et al., 2025, 2026b, 2026c).

The model paper by Smith et al. (2026) creates a direct opportunity for this extension. Their framework was developed from two Australian university contexts and was designed to be adaptable. The authors also identify the value of testing strategies within the framework to establish which approaches most effectively encourage responsible GenAI use. A Bangladesh study can move this agenda from framework development toward

comparative implementation evidence, asking not simply what responsible AI governance should contain, but how it becomes institutionally workable in a resource-constrained and diverse higher-education system.

Future Implications

Future research should begin with a comparative audit of GenAI-related institutional documents across Bangladeshi universities. A sample of approximately 12 to 15 public and private universities could be used to collect institutional AI policies, academic-integrity rules, research guidance, assessment regulations, staff guidance and relevant technology or data-governance documents. Researchers could code these materials against a common framework covering permitted and prohibited uses, disclosure, accountability, privacy and data protection, assessment, research integrity, training, infrastructure, decision responsibility and policy-review mechanisms. This would make it possible to distinguish institutions with coherent governance architectures from those relying on fragmented or overlapping rules.

A second phase should examine implementation through semi-structured interviews with senior academic leaders, quality-assurance personnel, research and ethics officers, IT or digital leaders and faculty representatives. Interviews could explore who owns GenAI policy, how rules are communicated, how disagreements are resolved, what training is available, whether staff have access to approved tools, how policy breaches are handled and how often guidance is reviewed (Hasan et al., 2026d). Comparing these accounts with the document audit would reveal where formal policy is enacted, adapted or effectively bypassed.

A targeted staff survey could then test whether perceived policy coherence and institutional implementation capacity are associated with stronger perceptions of responsible GenAI governance. Public-private university comparisons would be particularly valuable because institutional resources and governance arrangements may shape implementation differently. Rather than treating these differences as background noise, a multigroup analysis could examine whether the same governance model operates similarly across institutional types. A policy-governance maturity matrix could finally integrate document, interview and survey evidence and provide universities with a practical diagnostic tool.

The practical implication is that universities should avoid equating policy publication with governance completion. Responsible institutional practice may require a visible chain from principles to operational rules, training, communication, infrastructure, accountability and scheduled review. Yet these mechanisms should be evaluated rather than assumed to work universally. Research blogs should connect evidence with realistic possibilities for policy and practice without presenting proposed solutions as established facts (Khandakar et al., 2026). For Bangladesh, the central challenge is therefore not simply to produce more GenAI policies, but

to ensure that institutional rules are coherent enough, supported enough and adaptable enough to guide responsible practice across the university.

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Conflict of Interest

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