

Global Digital Compact on Education

10 principles to ensure digital technologies empower education in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals

Written Evidence to the UN Office of General-Secretary's Envoy on Technology

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Introduction

The Glenlead Centre has submitted 10 principles as written evidence to the UN Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Technology's proposal for a Global Digital Compact to be presented at the UN Summit of the Future in September 2024.

The intention behind the Global Digital Compact was set out in the UN Secretary-General's *Common Agenda* (2021) to "outline shared principles for an open, free and secure digital future for all."¹

The Global Digital Compact will consist of principles and commitments that governments, civil society, organisations, and the international community can adopt for a shared digital future. The call for evidence asked for principles and commitments under seven headings: (1) connect all people to the Internet, (2) avoid Internet fragmentation, (3) protect data, (4) applying human rights online, (5) accountability criteria for discrimination and misleading content, (6) promote the regulation of AI, and (7) the digital commons as a public good.

While Glenlead's submission follows the headings, it must be recognised that the headings reflect a set of values and assumption of the universal applicability of principles that could be contested. Thus, while accepting and engaging with the Global Digital Compact as conceptualised, this submission asks for a greater explorative and consultative process for the selection and framing of the issues going forward.

This submission is narrowly focused on a Digital Global Compact that would give effect to the Fourth UN Sustainable Development Goal:

Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

¹ UN Secretary-General, *Our Common Agenda – Report of the Secretary-General* (United Nations 2021) <https://www.un.org/en/content/common-agenda-report/#:~:text=Our%20Common%20Agenda%20contains%20recommendations,equitably%20and%20sustainably%20for%20a> ll.

Summary of Principles

Principle 1:

As the Internet has opened up for new opportunities for education, **the right to connect to the Internet** for all students, regardless of gender, age, religious or cultural affiliation, is necessary to give effect to Article 26 of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights 1948, providing a universal right to education.

Principle 2:

Global standards of interoperability and net neutrality should be adopted to ensure there is no socio-economic divide between the Global North and Global South and students' ability to access the Internet for education purposes.

Principle 3:

All processing of students' personal data for commercial surveillance purposes which is generated and collected in the context of education should be prohibited.

Principle 4:

All education provided throughout the Internet should adhere to global international frameworks protecting **human rights** online.

Principle 5:

All students should have the **right to control their personal data** obtained through learning environments which do not directly

relate to their scholastic assessments or are necessary for identification purposes.

Principle 6:

Digital literacy and e-safety must be a core component of curriculums around the world.

Principle 7:

Advertisement that has not been **fact-checked** and **approved** should not be allowed to associate with educational provisions on the Internet.

Principle 8:

All AI systems used in education must comport with international regulatory standards of transparency, safety, and accountability.

Principle 9:

All AI systems used in education must adopt the concept of **safety-by-design**.

Principle 10:

It should be recognised that the Internet is vital to deliver education as a **global digital good**.

Connect All People to the Internet

Principle 1

Commitments

As the internet has opened up for new opportunities for education, the right to connect to the Internet for all students, regardless of gender, age, religious or cultural affiliation, is necessary to give effect to Article 26 of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights 1948, providing a universal right to education.

Providers of education should have choice regarding providers, platforms, and products enabling the access to education through the Internet.

Access to the Internet for educational purposes should be free, and there should be choice of access providers.

Avoid Internet Fragmentation

Principle 2

Global standards of interoperability and net neutrality should be adopted to ensure there is no socio-economic divide between the Global North and Global South and students' ability to access the Internet for education purposes.

Commitments

Global standards must ensure device neutrality so that learning can happen via a wide range of devices, including smartphones.

Providers of educational services must permit students and schools to easily transfer or port data when changing Internet providers.

Protect Data

Principle 3

All processing of students' personal data for commercial surveillance purposes which is generated and collected in the context of education should be prohibited.

Commitments

All processing of students' sensory and biometric data should not be allowed except for identification purposes.

Students' personal data should not be used in training data of generative AI algorithms without explicit informed consent.

Students should have the right to access their personal data, and they should be informed of all data uses, including how their personal data may be shared with third parties.

Students' personal data collected should not exceed that which is necessary for the provision of that service.

Processing of students' personal data should not infringe on their neuro-rights by inferring emotional or psychological mental states.

Websites providing educational web services must be required to implement good security practices, such as 2FA or log-in by email, and adhere to leading data security regulatory frameworks. These security standards must be verifiably applied to all parties throughout the service chain, including sub- and infrastructure providers.

Applying Human Rights Online

Principle 4

Commitments

All education provided throughout the Internet should adhere to global international frameworks protecting human rights online.

Principle 5

Commitments

All students should have the right to control their personal data obtained through learning environments which do not directly relate to their scholastic assessments or are necessary for identification purposes.

The right to educate is also the right to learn by making mistakes. Students should have the right to control digital and online memories of their learning experiences, including a right to have their digital footprint forgotten.

Accountability Criteria for Discrimination and Misleading Content

Principle 6	Commitments
Digital literacy and e-safety must be a core component of curriculums around the world.	
Principle 7	Commitments
Advertisement that has not been fact-checked and approved should not be allowed to associate with educational provisions on the Internet.	<p>Training for teachers must sufficiently equip educators to teach digital literacy and e-safety at a high standard. It must promote skills to enable teachers to recognise biases, discrimination, and misleading content.</p> <p>Educational web services must ensure their systems enables schools to remove inappropriate advertisements.</p> <p>Educational providers must ensure students are not exposed to grooming, including requests to engage online on platforms, websites, and chatrooms that have not been approved or overseen by teachers and educators.</p> <p>Educational providers should make and uphold a commitment to ensure their teaching materials are fact-checked, and promote scientific methods, critical thinking and evaluation, and intellectual curiosity</p>

((Principle 5))

Promote the Regulation of AI

Principle 8

Commitments

All AI systems used in education must comport with international regulatory standards of transparency, safety, and accountability.

Principle 9

Commitments

All AI systems in education must adopt the concept of safety-by-design.

All AI systems in education must deliver on commitments to transparency and explainability.

All AI systems used in education must be developed and tested to ensure they do not contain unconscious bias or discrimination against protected groups or characteristics

The Digital Commons as a Public Good

Principle 10

Commitments

It should be recognised that the Internet is vital to deliver education as a global digital good.

The delivery of education over the Internet should be adequately resourced and safe.

The Glenlead Centre

The Glenlead Centre researches and delivers policy solutions to legislators, regulators, policymakers, universities, public sector bodies, non-governmental organisations, and private enterprise. We lead projects focussed on building stakeholder capabilities and capacity to better inform decision-making on policies for a digital and AI-driven future.

Our mission is to conduct and leverage high-quality research and support human-centric policy development and solutions in the digital and AI for the benefit of the public good. Our work is designed to ensure that decision-making affecting our digital lives are informed, balanced, and adapted for the future. Our aim is to encourage responsible, ethical, and human-centric technologies that will contribute to epistemic justice and a more prosperous and sustainable future.