

***Intelligence and Consciousness: Conceptual and Ethical Challenges
for research in the age of AI***

SACRU Summer School, 26 to 30 October, Santiago, Chile.

I. Presentation of the Summer School

This document is an initial proposal for the SACRU Summer School 2026, to be held in Santiago, Chile, from 26 to 30 October 2026.

Abstract: What is intelligence, and can it exist outside the human mind? This question, long debated in philosophy and cognitive science, has acquired new urgency with the rise of artificial intelligence. As machines demonstrate capacities once considered distinctively human — reasoning, creativity, moral judgment — the boundaries between natural and artificial intelligence become harder to draw. This summer school takes this conceptual difficulty as its starting point and asks what it means for the way we do research, govern societies, and understand ourselves.

The programme explores these questions across a range of domains where AI is already producing significant effects. Lectures and discussions will address the blurring boundary between biological and synthetic life, the role of AI in health and biomedical research, its impact on democratic participation and legal rights, and its growing presence in creative and artistic practice. A recurring concern throughout the week is the unequal distribution of AI's risks and benefits — particularly the structural asymmetries between the Global North and Global South that shape whose values are embedded in AI systems and whose communities are most exposed to their failures. The question of what AI means for higher education and for the future of research itself will also be central, as these are concerns that touch the participants directly as early-career researchers.

These discussions are not merely academic. AI systems reflect choices — about what to optimize, whose data to use, what counts as a valid output — and those choices have consequences for real people. Developing the conceptual and ethical tools to engage with those consequences is part of what it means to be a responsible researcher today. The school closes with participants working together to draft a Declaration of Human-Centric AI, an attempt to articulate, collectively and in their own terms, the principles that should orient research and development in this field.

II. Types of Activities

The programme is structured around five complementary activity formats:

- Talks: Expert lectures delivered by academics from the different universities of the SACRU network (Green).
- World Café: Small-group sessions that facilitate cross-disciplinary dialogue and generate diverse perspectives among doctoral candidates and their research (Blue).

- Case Studies: Applied sessions in which participants analyse concrete examples and challenges at the intersection of AI and ethics, health, or research (Orange).
- Manifesto Workshop: A collaborative closing session in which participants draft a declaration articulating a shared vision for human-centric AI in research and society (Purple).
- Field Activities: On-site visits providing participants with direct exposure to UC research centers that work on AI. The other focuses on a cultural visit to the landmarks in Santiago (Yellow).

III. Thematic

Areas

The Summer School will address the following major thematic areas, which are based on a preliminary discussion and subject to the revision of the SACRU Executive Committee.

- AI and its Conceptual Implications in Life (Ethics, Law and Theology).
- AI in Democracy, Citizenship and Human Rights.
- AI in Health, Biomedical and Engineering.
- AI in Arts and Creativity.

IV. Proposed Programme

The following represents a preliminary programme structure for the five working days of the Summer School (Monday 26 October – Friday 30 October 2026)

	Monday 26	Tuesday 27	Wednesday 28	Thursday 29	Friday 30
8:30 - 9:00	Registration	Registration	Registration	Registration	Registration
9:00-10:30	Opening & Welcome: AI Boundaries between Biological and Synthetic Life	Talk 3: AI in Citizenship and Democracy	Talk 4: AI in Health	Talk 5: AI in Arts and Creativity	Building a Manifesto: Collective Visioning
10:30-10:45	Coffee break	Coffee break	Coffee break	Coffee break	Coffee break
10:45-12:30	World Café: Defining "mind"	World Café: The Future of Higher Education	Case Study: AI in Biomedicine	Case Study: Algorithm Bias, Global North vs Global South	Building a Manifesto: Drafting & Synthesis

12:30-14:30	Lunch Break	Field Activity: Cultural Activity (Tour in Santiago)	Lunch Break	Lunch Break	Lunch Break
14:30-15:30	Talk 2: Ethics and Moral Aspects in AI		Field Activity: Visiting AI centres at UC Chile (CENIA, IHEALTH, FAIR.IMFD)	Talk 6: Neuro- law and Neuro Rights	Closure: AI and Theology
15:30-15:45	Coffee break			Coffee break	
15:45-17:30	Case study: AI Ethics in Practice		World café: The future of research & creativity		