

LEVEL 7 ASSESSMENT SPECIFICATION

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Lecturer:	Prof Peter Fong	Internal Verifier:	Dr Andrew Chan
Assignment Title:	Assessment 1 - Portfolio	Word count (or equivalent):	4,500 words (+/-10%)
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Submission method:	All written assessments, where practical and possible, must be submitted via Turnitin unless otherwise instructed by the Lecturer. (Please DO NOT put this assessment specification into Turnitin or it will match many similarities with other students' submissions.) Alternative submission method (if applicable): Late submission of the assessment will result in a late penalty mark. Work which is submitted up to 1 week late will be capped at 50% for the first attempt and will be awarded a mark of 0% for re-assessment. Late submission penalties may be lifted only if there is an approved extenuating circumstances claim. Work submitted more than 1 week late will be considered as a non-submission and will not be marked. The work may be considered as a submission for reassessment if offered by an Examining Board or if there is an approved extenuating circumstances claim.		
Academic honesty / referencing:	Academic honesty is required. In the main body of your <u>submission</u> you must give credit to authors on whose research and ideas your work is based. Append to your submission a reference list that indicates the books, articles, etc. that you have used, cited or quoted <u>in order to</u> complete this assessment.		

The word count excluding title page and references is 4494

1. Summary of research proposal (RP) (750 words)

Introduction

The title of my RP is: Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the Legal Profession, Barriers to Adoption and Critical Success Factors The research proposal (RP) focuses on artificial intelligence adoption in the legal industry, in particular the barriers and the critical success factors to counteract the barriers. The RP also intends to develop an adoption strategy framework.

Literature Review

The RP includes significant developments in AI, from the coining of the term by McCarthy (1955) and Alan Turing's "Turing Test" (Titareva, 2021) through to more recent developments from recent years (2018-2025) such as the development of Generative Pre-trained Transformer (GPT-1) in 2018, ChatGPT-3 in June 2020 (Rane, 2023), followed by DeepSeek in January 2025, which was the most downloaded app in the US (Baptista, 2025). The RP is concerned with the adoption of generative AI technologies, including large language models, machine learning, deep learning and big data (Atallah and Atallah, 2021).

The author's intention to develop a framework has been particularly influenced by the AI Business Strategy Wheel (Hutzschenreuter and Lämmermann, 2025) which is novel and informative. However, observed limitations include the macro nature of its approach, which lacks sufficient depth to support adoption, in addition to a disregard of fundamental risks associated with AI, such as ethics. Interestingly, another approach by Abuzaid (2024) placed ethical risk front and center, highlighting two very contrasting approaches. It is the author's intention to build upon these approaches.

Barriers and Benefits

AI is set to double economic output by 2030 (Accenture, 2019). AI is also

increasingly being adopted by companies to realize increased efficiencies, increase productivity and reduce costs of operations (Accenture, 2017); (Rane, 2023). It is not surprising that AI has been identified as a priority by the management of top organizations (Hutzschenreuter and Lämmermann, 2025); (Thomson Reuters, 2025).

Some key barriers include ethical considerations, misuse of data, voluntary/involuntary biases, data security (Bhattacharyya *et al.*, 2023); (Bostrom and Yudkowsky, 2014); (McLean *et al.*, 2023), not achieving the desired returns (Floridi *et al.*, 2018) and costs associated with unsuccessful adoption and attracting additional costs (Browder *et al.*, 2022).

Critical Success Factors

The study of critical success factors (CSF) forms a key component of this research into AI adoption in the legal industry. The study of critical success factors is common amongst scholars to understand critical components that drive success (Duan, Edwards and Dwivedi, 2019); (Solaimani and Swaak, 2023).

Research Aims and Objectives

Aims

1. Develop a framework for the adoption of AI in the legal profession
2. A study of the barriers that prevent scalable adoption of AI
3. To understand the CSFs that underpin scalable adoption of AI

Objectives

1. An examination of the current of state of scalable adoption of AI in the legal industry
2. An analysis of legal decision-making processes and the impact of AI
3. An identification of the barriers that hinder AI adoption
4. An evaluation of the risks associated with AI adoption

5. An identification of the various stages in an AI strategy required to achieve successful AI adoption
6. A critical analysis of the critical success factors that drive scalable adoption of AI in the legal profession

Research Significance

Global spending on AI is predicted to exceed US\$630 billion by 2028 (Shirer, 2024). The legal industry is worth in excess of US\$1.6 trillion worldwide and employs in excess of 36 million people, consisting of lawyers and support staff (IBA, 2024).

More than 83% of executives want to leverage AI, yet the majority of those surveyed, did not know how to scale AI in their organizations (Accenture, 2019).

These numbers are significant and staggering and warrant further study. There is existing literature that comprehensively explores the barriers and CSFs of scalable adoption of AI in the legal industry. The existing literature is fragmented and focuses on fundamentally contrasting principles and considerations. The RP aims to address this gap and to make a significant contribution by developing a framework.

Research Method

The study will adopt a mixed-method approach based on initial interviews with global industry experts and legal practitioners (approximately 50 participants x 60 mins) to understand the current barriers and critical success factors. The quantitative portion of the study will leverage data from the qualitative study, which shall target approx. 500 participants, and be hosted using Qualtrics software. The analysis will be conducted using SPSS software. The research is expected to be concluded within a total period of 24 months. The research planning and undertaking of research including selection of participants and conducting the qualitative and quantitative elements will require approximately 9-12 months, with the remainder of the time used for writing up the results of the study. An initial pilot study will be conducted using a much smaller sample size, and the lessons learned will be incorporated into the main study.

Conclusion

The RP will make a significant contribution to the field of AI and inform strategies for scalable adoption in the legal industry, which is a critical industry worth trillions of dollars and employing millions worldwide. Business practitioners, scholars and other stakeholders will benefit from the study.

- 2. Critically evaluate and critique the RP, as well as incorporate the comments and feedback given at the presentation. Analyze the strengths, weaknesses, and limitations of the study within the body of literature in the field. (1,500 words)**

Strengths

Timely and Relevant

AI is a multi-billion dollar industry (Shirer, 2024) (Accenture, 2019) and the benefits and barriers to adoption have only been researched in their broad and all prevailing sense, but no research exists as defined in the RP. The scale and importance of AI development in the legal profession warrants further study, which will make a significant contribution to the literature. Such a study would also help firms avoid the costly mistakes made by other would-be early adopters of AI.

The legal profession is worth over US\$1.6 trillion (IBA, 2024) and would benefit from a comprehensive study of the benefits, barriers to adoption, and critical success factors associated with AI adoption. Such an industry would also benefit from the proposed framework that the RP aims to develop.

Clear Objectives

The objectives of the RP to explore the specific barriers to adoption and the critical success factors for adoption of AI in the legal industry are very clear and well defined. The results of which will inform relevant stakeholders on how to overcome identified barriers with the identified critical success factors. The development of a framework will provide further guidance on the subject.

Potential for Further Study

The current RP can inspire a program of study in this nascent area of study that will contribute to the growing literature in this field. Whether it be other an extension of the study into other areas of the law not included in the current RP or by inspiring an alternative framework.

Weaknesses

Further Literature Review

The current RP considered two fundamentally different approaches to AI adoption, one by Hutzschenreuter and Lämmermann (2025) and the other by Abuzaid (2024). From these two approaches, the author was inspired to develop another approach to AI adoption strategy. However, the author recognises that the RP would benefit from a broader study of existing literature on technology and digital transformation adoption strategies for organisations. Such digital transformation strategies usually vary considerably depending on the goals and objectives of the organisation involved and the technology being adopted (Matt, Hess and Benlian, 2015). Such a review would provide the author with further valuable insights and may result in an existing framework that can be leveraged to guide the author's goal of developing a framework for AI adoption.

Scope Refinement

The author feels that the RP would benefit from further refinement in its scope. During the development of the initial RP, the author had decided to limit the scope to the legal profession from initially no industry limitation at all. This is a balancing act. After reviewing the literature, it was observed that there was a mixture of approaches, some authors limited their scope to a specific industry whereas others did not. The balance is whether the RP will be able to achieve its intended purpose. During the course of reviewing the RP, and after having presented it to Prof. Fong and my cohort and having solicited their feedback, the author believes that the RP would benefit from further scope refinement to focus on a particular area of the law, for example, criminal law, corporate law, contract law, formal dispute resolution, and the like. Perhaps, it would be most beneficial to focus on either contract law and/or dispute resolution, two areas of the law that the author is familiar with and would therefore be able to scrutinise further in

relation to AI adoption barriers, CSFs and the development of a strategic framework.

Overly Ambitious Goals

Perhaps the intention to develop a comprehensive strategy for AI adoption in the legal field coupled with the wide scope mentioned above is overly ambitious given time and resource constraints, amongst others. I recognise that the RP is overly ambitious and would benefit from further refinement, most likely by refining the scope of the legal field that it aims to address, such as, contract law or legal arbitration.

Pace of AI Development

Since current AI development is so rapid, with seemingly new developments occurring daily, there is a risk that aspects of the study may be outdated before its even published. This risk is acknowledged, and the author intends to follow AI developments closely in order to make sure that the research remains timely and relevant when it is published.

Clarity of Research Question

One of Prof. Fong's comments was in relation to the suitability of the title of the RP. Prof. Fong made a valid point regarding the inclusion of "benefits" to the title, which I agree with and have addressed in the revised RP.

Limitations

Limited by the Data that Can Be Gathered

The literature review is limited by what is currently published in peer reviewed journals and given the rapid advancement of AI development, there is perhaps a greater reliance on quicker sources of data, such as, website publications that publish more contemporaneously than traditional peer reviewed journals. Thus, highlighting the above-mentioned weakness in terms of the authors own research being out of date upon publication.

The fact that the study involves the legal sector can present its own challenges outside the sphere of AI, an obvious factor being confidentiality. Additionally, there will also be ethical considerations as lawyers are strictly bound by rules of confidentiality and ethics.

Although limiting, the author does not believe such considerations will be detrimental to the study and workable solutions can be developed. For example, during the data collection process, the author may collect certain discreet demographic information and will not require the disclosure of confidential personal information, questions will be framed in a manner that preserves confidentiality, preserving confidentiality of the participants, and more importantly the confidentiality of their firm and clients.

Data Availability -Uncharted territory - there are few experts

Although, from the literature review, we have seen that AI has been around since the 1950s, which is not considered “new”. The RP focuses on recent AI advances, in particular AI adoption in the legal industry, which is uncharted territory since the industry is still figuring this out, and there are few leaders. Experts in this area will therefore be limited. However, the RP is designed in such a manner to address this, hence why the RP has been designed to adopt an initial qualitative study to understand the current barriers to adoption and the CSFs in the legal industry. Having limited experts and experience to draw upon will undoubtedly be a limitation of the study. However, the author sees opportunity to leverage approaches adopted by other industries that are perhaps more advanced in their adoption of scalable AI technologies, which may inform this study. The author foresees a direct correlation between advances in AI adoption in the legal sector and the quality of relevant and available data. This will inevitably benefit future researchers interested in this area.

Reliance on Professional Networks

The RP relies on leveraging professionally members association that the author is affiliated with, such as, The Chartered Institute of Arbitrators, The Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors, The Chartered Institute of Builders, World Commerce and Contracts, and The Society of Construction Law. It also relies on some organizations that the author is not currently associated with, such as, Computational Intelligence Society (CIS), Association for the Advancement of Artificial Intelligence (AAAI), International Association for AI and Law (IAAIL), The Partnership on AI, The Law Society of Hong Kong (LSHK), and The Hong Kong Bar Association (HKBA). The reliance on these organizations to find participants to conduct the study on could be a limitation if the author is unable to source the required participants. The pilot study

should shed light on this issue.

Time and Resource Limitations

The author recognizes that considerable time and resources will be required to realize the full extent of the RP. The study is intended to be concluded within 2 years, which would prove challenging for a full-time student, let alone someone with a full-time job. In addition, the author is limited in resources as he is working alone and does not have other resources to draw upon such as additional team members, not to mention this project will be completely self-funded.

Proposed Amendments from Feedback

I was honored to have been given the opportunity to present the RP to Prof. Fong and my cohort and to receive their valuable feedback. Prof. Fong noted that the current RP discussed the benefits of AI adoption, however, this was not reflected in the title, which only made reference to barriers and critical success factors. The author values the feedback provided and has adopted it fully. The revised RP title will read Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the Legal Profession, Benefits, Barriers to Adoption and Critical Success Factors.

Another piece of feedback received during the presentation, by both Prof. Fong and the cohort, was that the scope of the study would benefit from further scope refinement to capture a more defined area of the law, as mentioned above, under the weaknesses section. This feedback is invaluable and corroborates the author's own sentiments on this and will be reflected in a revision to the RP to limit the scope to a more specific area of the law, such as, contract law and/or formal dispute resolution, the precise nature of the limitation is yet to be decided.

Prof. Fong also gave feedback about there being no framework being referred to during the presentation of the RP. With this feedback in mind, I undertook further literature review to address this point and discuss some of the findings in the next section of this portfolio, below. A more detailed review will be addressed in the future along with the relevant amendments to the RP to resolve this point.

3. Discuss how the use of another method as an alternative approach in research design can be employed to conduct research on the topic and address the shortcomings in the RP (1,500)

I find the idea of conducting research on AI and its impact on business to be extremely fascinating, hence my decision to study AI as part of my DBA thesis. However, deciding on which research angle to approach from has been particularly challenging. Based on my own observations of recent AI developments, such as the ad-hoc adoption of generative AI in my workplace, it led me to wonder, what are the barriers that prevent a more scaled adoption? How is adoption affected by factors, such as, industry, profession, size of organization, costs of adoption, risk perception, ethics, to name but a few. Conversely, upon engaging with the literature, I also pondered what might be the critical success factors that could surmount those barriers. The existing literature also motivated me to want to develop my own framework in the pursuit of a better AI adoption strategy that is guided by research.

My current RP is based on an inductive approach to data collection, which relies firstly on gathering qualitative data from managers in the legal profession (solicitors and barristers) about their perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, barriers and CSFs about AI adoption in the legal industry. Following this information gathering approach, I will code the responses into key themes to identify barriers and success factors. This will be followed by a quantitative study.

Notwithstanding that, in light of the shortcomings identified, I have considered some alternative approaches, which can be separated into two parts, namely, (i) fundamentally the same RP aims but with changes to the research methodology only, or (ii) changes to the RP aims and research approach.

Changing the Research Method

Based on the former proposition, the current RP methodology is mixed methods and is structured to enable a qualitative study to inform the quantitative study, by discerning the contemporaneous barriers and success factors to AI adoption encountered by managers in the legal profession. The alternative to this approach would be to conduct a comprehensive literature review on the subject, negating the requirement to first conduct a qualitative study. This would perhaps render the RP a

quantitative study only. Another alternative would be to reorder the current RP, first starting a quantitative survey and then supplementing the quantitative data with interviews in a small-scale qualitative study to confirm and extend survey data. This approach would be more aligned with a deductive approach.

However, the approach to use mixed methods in the current RP was decided upon when the initial literature review did not readily reveal the information that was being researched.

The reason why I chose to use the proposed methodology is based on my comprehensive literature review, which has revealed a lack of a consistent framework around key barriers and success factors within the legal industry. Which is most likely due to the nascent nature of the aims targeted in the RP. Therefore, it is deemed necessary to interview managers within this industry to identify unique barriers and success factors that enable and constrain AI adoption within this particular field. This can then be followed up with a quantitative survey to confirm initial findings following the qualitative study.

Non-Industry Specific

Another approach could be to conduct research into non-industry specific barriers and critical success factors first. This could be by way of literature review first to understand what research has already been done. If the available information is insufficient, then proceed to undertake a similar qualitative study (as above) by way of interviews with non-industry specific managers to understand the barriers and critical successful factors that they have encountered. Once this information is obtained, it would be used to compare and contrast non-industry with legal industry specific barriers and CSFs to understand which are common across industries and which are legal specific, thereby providing deeper insights into the topic. Further thematic analysis would be used to inform the design of the questionnaire in the quantitative study.

If the RP became industry neutral then the development of a framework could adopt a more macro approach, similar to the framework proposed by Hutzschenreuter and Lämmermann (2025). However, my initial literature review had concluded that that literature lacked specificity, therefore the proposed solutions were too generalized

and did not provide the details that specific practitioners would require for more specific guidance, which is the reason why my RP attaches to the legal context. Also, this approach was also informed after reviewing numerous literature dedicated to AI and the medical field, which similar to the legal field is complicated and often considered esoteric due to the specialist knowledge required. Therefore, in order to avoid providing a disservice to the legal profession, a focused and detailed framework would be stronger and more useful than a generic framework.

Applying Existing Frameworks

Upon further consideration to the feedback received from Prof. Fong, I explored further the idea of applying my study to an existing framework. After conducting further research, the following are frameworks commonly cited in relation to adoption of technology. These include, Diffusion of Innovation (DOI) model (*Diffusion of Innovations, 4th Edition*, 2010), the Technology, Organization, and Environment context (TOE) model (Tornatzky, 1990), the Benefits, Organizational Readiness, and External Pressure (BOE) model (Iacovou, Benbasat and Dexter, 1995), and Functionality, Availability, Complexity, Cost (FACC) model (Wendler, 2019).

These models although varying in their approach, provide useful insight as to the factors to be considered for technology adoption, and serve to emphasize the numerous approaches that can be adopted. DOI is predominantly focused on the time element of technology adoption, TOE leans more to external factors, such as, regulations and market forces, whereas the BOE model attempts a more rounded approach, addressing (i) external pressure, (ii) organisational readiness and (iii) perceived benefits. BOE was originally designed for the adoption of electronic data interchange (EDI) technology, and was later adopted for use as a general model for technology related adoption. Another model, the FACC model uses different criteria but is also concerned primarily with understanding the correct time, or the “when” to adopt technology (Wendler, 2019). All of the above models appear simple in nature, but are in fact, extremely powerful in terms of the insights that they can reveal. However, I consider they all provide limited value, in that whilst they help influence early factors that may determine “go” or “no go” decisions to be made, i.e. the why and when, but they do not adequately address the how. Further amplifying the need

for a bespoke framework when it comes to AI adoption in the legal context.

Fine-Tuning of Scope

Perhaps if the change is driven by the limiting of the legal context to a specific aspect of law, such as arbitration, then the aims and objectives would be equally refined, such that benefits, barriers, and critical success factors would be very focused. For example, barriers would relate to arbitration clause, tribunal selection and appointment, legal seat, jurisdiction matters, legal discovery, procedural matters, statement of claims, statement of defense, arbitral hearings, arbitrators' procedural orders, and awards. CSFs would equally be specific and nuanced. The data source would also be more targeted to legal arbitration practitioners, such as arbitrators, solicitors and barristers specializing in dispute resolution services. The sources for data collection would be more focused to organizations, such as, The Chartered Institute of Arbitrators, The Law Society of Hong Kong, and The International Bar Association.

4. Discuss how the expected findings/results of the research could enhance knowledge, practice, and management in the field of study. (750 words)

A. Understand the contemporaneous benefits and actual use cases to support adoption of AI

The research will go beyond the existing literature and expand on the common and typical benefits, such as, cost reductions and increased efficiencies, to identify in detail the most recent benefits and actual use cases, as they relate specifically in the legal context as well as the general context for comparison purposes. The results will showcase some of the most innovative examples of AI use and adoption strategies. The potential of AI and its increasing adoption is advancing daily, the research findings will provide contemporaneous examples of its use and inspire further interest, innovation, research and adoption. The findings will also focus on the benefits of AI adoption in the legal industry, which will be of interest to legal practitioners and scholars alike.

- B. Identification of specific barriers and critical success factors to adoption in the legal industry to facilitate specific solutions

The results of the research will identify the common barriers encountered both across industries with a focus on specific legal industry barriers. These barriers will be countered with the identification of critical success factors. The intended purpose of this pairing is to demonstrate that the barriers are surmountable. No one barrier is intended to have a specific CSF to counter the barrier, it may differ depending on various circumstances, however, the intention is to demonstrate and inspire solutions to the barriers based on the research findings. Barriers and CSFs are an ever-evolving topic as AI technology and adoption advances, which will invariably lead to the generation of new barriers and new CSFs, which will inevitably inspire further research on this topic.

- C. Specific ethical concerns and possible solutions to overcome them

Ethical considerations surrounding AI use and adoption is a fundamental concern and the results will address these both in the general context and specifically to the legal sector. The results will deal with specific ethical barriers and CSFs as they relate to the legal sector, such as, strict confidentiality compliance and concerns around data used for AI training, to name a few.

- D. A framework that can be adopted by organizations that will enable them to adopt scalable AI to achieve a competitive advantage in legal practice

Currently, there are few frameworks that have been designed specifically for AI adoption in the legal sector. The framework aims to fill a gap in the literature, and it would help guide potential adopters through the maze of key considerations and enable them to tailor a solution based on their needs and their circumstances. Since the framework is founded on data and research from legal peers, its relevance and practicability will be compelling. It can also be leveraged as a platform for further research and improvement.

- E. The findings will be beneficial for leaders of legal practices, policymakers, scholars and students interested in AI and strategic adoption in the legal field

Given the nascent nature of the RP, the results and findings of this RP will inform interested stakeholders such as general industry practitioners, legal practitioners, AI strategists, policy makers, scholars and other interested parties in the field of AI, as it will provide research backed data on AI adoption trends and provide valuable insights into the challenges and solutions the legal industry face when it comes to AI adoption. The results can be further studied by scholars to build on the study to look at other legal sectors not addressed by the RP or to explore completely different industries and how they are scaling AI adoption. A comparison of two different industries, one more successful than the other, and their AI adoption strategies, along with case studies would be extremely insightful, with analysis on the factors that dictated particular decision-making processes would be interesting and would yield many valuable learnings. Given the legal lens that the RP is framed on, it is hoped that legal practitioners will gain valuable insights from the results of the RP and perhaps even motivate AI adoption sceptics to adopt AI in their businesses to leverage the benefits identified by the study. Moreover, the framework would be particularly useful for general practitioners, as well as legal practitioners. Legal practitioners would find it especially compelling since the research has been conducted on legal experts and the data has been provided by legal practitioners and therefore the results are particularly aligned and relevant.

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