

Human Futures AI Training Institute™ - Programs

Ethical Design Checkpoints for AI-Powered Data Design

This table uses the Design Thinking framework to illustrate where and how designers should embed ethical reflection when working with AI-powered data systems.

Design Phase	What Designers Are Doing	Ethical Risk Zone in AI/Data	Critical Ethical Questions to Ask	Design Interventions & Safeguards	Primary Ethical Focus
Empathize	User research, data collection, observation	Extractive data practices; misrepresentation	Who is missing? Who benefits from this data? What assumptions define 'normal'?	Participatory research, data minimization, contextual consent	Representation & dignity
Define	Problem framing, success metrics	Value encoding; harmful optimization	Who defines the problem? What harms are normalized?	Co-authored problem statements, harm statements	Power & framing
Ideate	Concept generation, AI use cases	Solutionism; automation bias	Should AI be used at all? Who gains power?	Non-AI alternatives, speculative harm mapping	Agency & necessity
Prototype	Model building, interface design	Opacity; false objectivity	What claims are made about	Human-in-the-loop design, uncertainty indicators	Interpretability

			people? How is uncertainty shown?		
Test	Evaluation and validation	Biased testing; narrow metrics	Who bears the cost of errors? What harms go unseen?	Diverse testing, harm-based metrics	Fairness
Deploy & Monitor	Launch and scale	Normalization of harm	Who is accountable? Can users withdraw consent?	Governance plans, monitoring for emergent harms	Accountability