

Hong Kong based Alliance aims to Accelerate Systemic Benefits of AI for Autism

The Hong Kong Autism Institute (HKAI) and The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST) today announced the formation of the *Autism Data Alliance (ADA)* through the signing of a joint Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).

“AI promises tremendous global advancement in the early identification, diagnosis and rehabilitation support for children with Autism but is currently under-delivering due to poor collaboration and a lack of scale,” said Mr. Damien Green, Executive Chair of the Hong Kong Autism Institute.

“Whilst there is an abundance of AI initiatives underway across the Autism ecosystem in Hong Kong SAR and beyond, there is nevertheless a profound lack of cross-sector, cross-border and inter-organisational collaboration. As a result there is a general view within the stakeholder community that the opportunity for systemic change is being missed,” said Mr Green.

[Recent published research](#) on AI applications dedicated to Autism diagnosis shows that AI is extremely promising as a tool to supplement current diagnostic techniques. It shows that AI can deliver more efficient, timely and objective identification in children. For example, specific AI models trained on facial, vocal and textual analysis were shown to have very high diagnosis accuracy rates of between 70% and 99%.

“As AI continues to evolve, it offers promising opportunities to enhance support for individuals with Autism and their families, and address broader societal challenges. Building on our strengths in AI research and innovation, HKUST is well positioned to support the goals of this *Autism Data Alliance*. We believe that by bringing together diverse expertise and perspectives, this partnership can help drive new insights, expand impact, and create lasting benefits for the community,” said Professor Tim Cheng, Vice-President for Research and Development of HKUST.

The Department of Mathematics in the HKUST School of Sciences has in recent years developed both an ‘Autism (ASD) Super-Agent’ and a ‘Massive Data Hub’ with over one million Autism related data-points, along with specialised software infrastructure for fully de-identified data sharing across domains to accelerate AI learning on Autism.

As a world leading data collaboration, the *Autism Data Alliance (ADA)* aims to bring together major universities, medical and health providers, NGOs, insurers and regulators, and other private and public sector stakeholder organisations to develop a protocol that enables the sharing of AI learning data at an unprecedented scale. The ADA will be centred initially on the Greater Bay Area (GBA) and the Chinese Mainland.

The ADA will address barriers to sharing including the de-identification of data, regulatory and ethical considerations and boundaries, a shared ‘open-source’ benefit model, and a framework to both protect and overcome intellectual property rights as a potential constraint to transformation.

Through the MoU, the HKUST will be a leading contributor to the ADA by providing expertise in AI research and applied systems, technical support, and by serving as an academic and technical anchor.

The HKAI will convene, coordinate and publicly represent the ADA — including through stakeholder engagement, governance, the securing of funding, and implementation of data-sharing protocols.

Further major partners entering this landmark collaboration will be announced over coming months leading up to the *United Nations World Autism Awareness Day* in April 2027 (WAAD 2027).

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About Autism in Hong Kong SAR and the Chinese Mainland

- Estimated to impact 1 in 39 Hong Kong children aged 6-17 years (CUHK)
- Autism is now the leading cause of juvenile critical illness insurance claims in Hong Kong SAR, overtaking cancer for the first time (GenRe)
- 10 million people in Mainland China including 2 million children under the age of 14 (Wucailu Centre, Beijing)
- 685,000 people in China's Greater Bay Area (GBA), including 288,000 children (Hong Kong Autism Institute estimates*)

* Based on CDC, WHO and CUHK estimates reflecting published population data

About the Hong Kong Autism Institute (HKAI)

The HKAI is a non-profit policy focused Hong Kong organisation with a vision for Hong Kong SAR to be Asia's Centre of Excellence for Autism. It aims for systemic change through greater collaboration. www.autism-hk.org

About The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology

The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST) (<https://hkust.edu.hk/>) is a world-class university known for its innovative education, research excellence, and impactful knowledge transfer.

With a holistic and interdisciplinary pedagogical approach, HKUST was ranked 33rd and 6th in the QS World University Rankings 2027 and QS Asia University Rankings 2026, respectively, and 20th globally in the Times Higher Education Sustainability Impact Ratings 2026, ranking first among universities in Hong Kong and the Chinese Mainland for the third consecutive year.

Eleven HKUST subjects were ranked among the world's top 50 in the QS World University Rankings by Subject 2026. In addition, in the Times Higher Education World University Rankings by Subject 2026, HKUST's Computer Science discipline which encompasses areas such as artificial intelligence and machine learning, has been ranked No. 1 in Hong Kong for ten consecutive years.

Our graduates are highly competitive, consistently ranking among the world's top 30 most sought-after employees. In terms of research and entrepreneurship, over 80% of our work was rated "internationally excellent" or "world leading" in the Research Assessment Exercise 2020 of the Hong Kong's University Grants Committee. As of July 2026, HKUST members have founded over 2,000 active start-ups, including 11 Unicorns and 22 exits (IPO or M&A).