Quality Assurance Handbook PART A1

POLICY No.4: Access, Transfer, and Progression Policy

4. Purpose of Policy

Policy No.4 aims to clearly outline FIT's approach to managing access arrangements for Tech Apprenticeships while also detailing the arrangements for those who wish to transfer or progress from the programmes into employment or further education opportunities. Importantly, this policy provides a source of accurate and reliable information regarding access, transfer, and progression.

4.1 Policy Scope

Programme candidates should access this policy, along with apprentices, tutors, FIT staff, Approved Delivery Partners[1], and broader regulatory and accreditor stakeholders. Promoting wide accessibility to Tech Apprenticeship for FIT candidates is a key element of FIT's organisational mission. This document reflects sectoral best practices and QQI guidance on access, transfer, and progression provided in *"QQI Policy Restatement Policy And Criteria For Access, Transfer And Progression In Relation To Learners For Providers Of Further And Higher Education And Training [NQAI 2003, Restated 2015]"*.

4.2 Overarching Considerations

FIT recognises that many candidates accessing Tech Apprenticeships may have distinct requirements that include programme access accommodations relating to a notified physical or intellectual learning disability. In addition, Tech Apprentices come from wide-ranging backgrounds. FIT also aims to ensure that mechanisms are in place to facilitate applicants who do not meet traditional entry criteria, such as those who submit educational qualifications from across European Union Member states and beyond.

Considering the diversity of the candidate population and FIT's ongoing use of synchronous live webinar technology, ease of candidate access to the required technology while navigating learning

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[1] Typically an Education and Training Board.

resources and attending live webinars is paramount. Therefore, this policy focuses on the need to ensure candidates who come through the admissions process and who may have additional needs are facilitated in a supported and timely manner enabling ready access to their chosen Tech Apprenticeship programme and all required technology hardware and software.

4.3 Policy Statement

FIT is committed to providing an environment of quality-assured education and training with the ultimate goal of enhancing career opportunities for graduating apprentices of Tech Apprenticeship programmes. FIT will instigate a learning environment that stimulates and supports *'life-long learners'* while also contributing to the continued development of an integrated National Framework of Qualifications through identifiable transfer and progression routes. The integrity of entry/access arrangements is clear, and decisions on the allocation of apprentice placements on programmes are transparent. All programme candidates and those subsequently enrolled are treated fairly, equally, and consistently. The FIT candidate recruitment process is deployed to provide a supported and responsive recruitment process for both candidates and participating Approved Employers.

Recognition of Prior Learning mechanisms are in place to facilitate candidates to furnish prior qualifications and a process to advance candidate applications on this basis through the Registry Office. In addition, on a limited case-by-case basis, the Registrar may exempt the completion of some early stage module assessment due to verifiable completion beforehand by an apprentice on a separate programme where this material forms like-for-like constituent assessment elements of the Tech Apprenticeship programme.

Advanced entry to programmes does not apply as, for statutory purposes, all apprentices must be registered with Solas on the National Register of Apprentices for a period of no less than two years. Embedded programme transfer arrangements do not apply, but FIT has formalised several progression routes and is keen to continue establishing and disseminating broad graduate educational destinations of higher NFQ level standing. FIT aims to facilitate and ensure, where possible, that graduated apprentices can continue employment with their apprenticeship employer while undertaking further study. In addition, FIT is committed to continuing to foster industry-supported skills development initiatives as a vibrant progression opportunity.

4.3.1 Programme Access

FIT define access to programmes as a process by which applicants conclude the candidate application steps, including aptitude testing, FIT mock employer interview, and their subsequent placement in employment with an approved and participating employer, including satisfactory completion of statutory registration processes.

4.3.2 Entry Criteria

Candidates must be 18 years or older and have achieved a passing grade (O6/H7) in 5 or more subjects (to include Maths and English) at Ordinary Level in the Irish Leaving Certificate. Candidates will be required to complete a comprehensive application form, initial online aptitude test, mock interview, employer interview, subsequent onboarding, and conclusion of applicable registration processes. For those who may not hold a Leaving Certificate, equivalence may be decided through the Recognition of Prior Learning procedure.

4.3.3 Skills and Attributes Upon Entry

Candidates must be numerate and literate, have good communication and learning skills, and be interested in technology and customer service. In addition, candidates should be able to absorb product knowledge and demonstrate a good motivation to start an apprenticeship programme while also being motivated and analytically minded. Ideally, candidates should be determined to succeed, have even temperament and excellent interpersonal skills, with adaptability and capacity to work in a team.

4.3.4 Reasonable Accommodations (to support programme access/entry)

Candidates are required to inform FIT during the application process if they require any reasonable accommodations at the earliest juncture possible. These might include provisions to accommodate arrangements for a physical or hidden disability or in cases where a candidate(s) seeks extra support to utilise technology as part of the candidate application process. The FIT Registrar will take all practicable means to ensure that such accommodations are processed, and that the applicant is supported to the greatest extent possible.

4.4 Transfer

Providing an internal transfer mechanism is a process by which an apprentice can transfer from one programme to another by being awarded general credit to recognise learning outcomes already achieved in the previous programme. With regard to the specific skills and competency development goals of individual Tech Apprenticeships, it is not practical or feasible to support arrangements for the formal internal transfer between apprenticeship programmes. However, FIT appreciates the need to help support apprentices who may wish to exit mid programme to seek a different learning opportunity. Apprentices who have achieved modular components of Tech Apprenticeships may be eligible to use those awards towards the achievement of alternative/additional City and Guilds or industry certifications or access to other programmes offered by different providers.

FIT will collaborate with relevant awarding bodies to identify differing trajectories for exiting apprentices on programmes leading to awards in the NFQ. Specifically, FIT will specify any particular attainments in the awards to which their programmes are intended to lead, which are required for an apprentice to exit a Tech Apprenticeship with the view to up taking another programme.

4.5 Progression

Progression routes/destinations are how apprentices, on successful completion of their Tech Apprenticeship programme, can progress to another programme of education and training generally of a higher NFQ level standing. In the spirit of cultivating future possibilities for graduated apprentices, FIT has established approved progression pathways that are communicated by FIT staff to all graduating cohorts relevant to skills acquisition in the information, communications, and technology sectors. These routes may provide efficient enrolment of apprentices on a part-time base allowing for the continuation of full-time employment and the establishment of long-term careers.

Any apprentice who furnishes their award certificate to another Institute following completion of a Tech Apprenticeship may seek advanced entry to a programme of education and training of higher NFQ level standing on an individual basis.

4.6 Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

Recognition of Prior Learning is a mechanism that candidates may use to gain access to a programme, receive credit towards an award, or receive a full award. Details noted in this section describe how RPL is applied in the context of Tech Apprenticeships.

4.6.1 Recognition of Prior Learning for Access

Candidates who may not be able to demonstrate compliance with the entry criteria defined, may request to have their prior learning assessed for the purpose of entry. The candidate should submit the request in writing to the Tech Apprenticeship Registrar, who will consider the evidence of prior learning presented by the candidate and may request additional evidence. The apprentice will receive

written confirmation from the Registrar (or delegate) within two months of receipt of the formal request.

4.6.2 Recognition of Prior Learning for Credit or Advanced Entry

Apprentices cannot use RPL to achieve credit towards an overarching Tech Apprenticeship Award, such as the QQI L6 *Advanced Certificate Apprenticeship Award*. An advanced entry to a Tech Apprenticeship is not permitted.

4.6.3 Recognition of Prior Learning for a full Award

RPL cannot be provided to achieve an overarching Tech Apprenticeship Award, such as the *QQI L6 Advanced Certificate Apprenticeship Award.*

4.7 Information Provision

The following programme information will be known to apprentices post employer onboarding and before active enrolment in the given intake cohort:

I.   The name of the awarding body (or bodies) making the award for the programme,

II.   The title of the programme and the award to which it leads,

III. Access arrangements and selection criteria,

IV.   Course structure online/blended or face to face,

V.   Assessment methods, module summaries, tuition methods & locations,

VI.   The award level and type (a Major, Minor, Special Purpose or Supplemental) on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ),

VII. Admission requirements, including a statement of the knowledge, skill, and competence needed by the learner as a basis for successful participation in the programme,

VIII. Details of learning support available for specific learner groups, such as learners with disabilities or learners whose mother tongue is not English.

Document History

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