



## Quality Assurance Handbook PART A1

### **POLICY No.7: Candidate and Apprentice Supports Policy**

#### 7. Purpose of Policy

Policy No.7 aims to provide relevant and consistent information to ensure candidates and apprentices can ascertain and access what additional supports are available to them in completing a Tech Apprenticeship programme, which is reasonably practical to provide. In line with best practice, FIT adopts an inclusive approach to teaching, learning, and assessment to enable all enrolled apprentices to fully participate in apprenticeships, subject to reasonable accommodations being approved.

FIT is cognisant of and adopts the AHEAD Charter. In collaboration with Delivering Partners, FIT will ensure that education and training services make fair and reasonable adjustments for those notifying a hidden or physical disability.

#### 7.1 Policy Scope

This policy applies to all those who apply to FIT for participation in a Tech Apprenticeship programme, and subsequently to those enrolled in programmes following the candidate recruitment and employer onboarding process. Additional supports available do not apply to apprentices with temporary disabilities, illness, or low language or literacy competence levels. Adaptations or accommodations that are not reasonably achievable, such as those that would involve an excessive cost to FIT and/or the respective Delivering Partners, will be deemed unreasonable.

#### 7.2 Overarching Considerations

FIT directs a significant proportion of our mission towards broad diversity inclusion goals. Providing a high level of succinct information dissemination to all Tech Apprenticeship candidates is vital in ensuring the provision can support diverse access. Navigating the various process steps of the candidate application process can be a significant task and one that FIT aims to make as efficient as possible, particularly concerning those who may have additional needs to be accommodated in the candidate recruitment phase of the onboarding process.

### 7.3 Assessment of Additional Supports Needs

During the application process to commence a Tech Apprenticeship programme, candidates should notify FIT of an additional support requirement, both in terms of the initial candidate application phase or were known regarding support needed from FIT or their future employer while in work-based training elements. In many cases, this could be for support/accommodations in an assessment event. This notification can be forthcoming at the FIT interview stage of the candidate recruitment process, after the initial online application, unless an accommodation is required to access the FIT premises or complete a FIT aptitude test/interview. Disclosure of a disability by a candidate will not influence a decision to progress a candidate through the recruitment process. Later disclosure, especially after programme commencement of a Tech Apprenticeship, may involve delays in providing specific accommodation(s). If an active apprentice chooses not to disclose an additional support requirement, FIT cannot consider this in any subsequent academic assessment appeal.

FIT advises candidates that FIT recruitment staff are not suitably qualified to determine the severity of a given disability or its impact on a candidate. Consequently, subsequent to a notification of a physical or hidden disability, FIT will request the candidate to provide an appropriate report from a qualified expert. For example, this document may take the form of a report from an educational psychologist or medical consultant. The report should include: the author's details provided on a headed paper and be dictated in English, be not more than five years old from the date of online application and must detail the recommendations of the nature of accommodations required. Once this document is received, FIT will undertake a needs assessment based on the practical measures FIT can instigate.

### 7.4 Applications for Reasonable Accommodations and/or Additional Supports

An apprentice must apply for reasonable accommodations and/or additional support in writing to the FIT REGISTRAR 7a Bellevue Industrial Estate, Glasnevin, Dublin 11. The application should include the required report to inform the decision-making process. FIT will communicate the supports to be offered on a need-to-know basis and in consultation with a delivery partner and employer.

### 7.5 Specific Disabilities

FIT endeavours to provide additional support where possible for those making an application with a physical or hidden disability. Delivering Partner locations utilised nationwide have easy access and egress available. Other disabilities where accommodations can be provided include apprentices with Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, visual impairment, hearing impairment etc.

Specific accommodations can include but are not limited to:

- Alternate assessment brief format,

- Provision of a private space to complete an assessment,
- Additional time to complete and submit and assessment submission(s),
- Rest breaks,
- Spelling and grammar waiver (for assessed coursework),
- Provision of a reader,
- Provision of a laptop or another portable digital assistant.

### 7.6 Process of Apprentice Registration (confirmation of identity)

After completing the candidate application process, all new apprentices must undertake the Solas statutory registration process, including completing the Apprentice Registration Form provided by a Solas Authorised Officer. As part of this process, apprentices provide standard items of personal information, including their PPSn number, which assures the identity of the individual commencing a Tech Apprenticeship programme.

### 7.7 Apprentice Welfare

While active in a Tech Apprenticeship programme, apprentice wellbeing and welfare are paramount to FIT. Whereas procedures relating to hard accommodations in assessment can aid appropriately supported progression through a programme, FIT also acknowledges the importance of accessible softer supports. In managing a population of apprentices, occasionally, situations will likely arise requiring timely intervention from FIT, a delivering Partner, Tutor, or Workplace Mentor engaged in discharging their role. In addition to the primary apprenticeship roles, FIT has a full-time People, Analytics and Wellbeing Officer role that assists apprentices in matters of mental health and wellbeing where necessary on a case-by-case basis. With some provisions now operating in a synchronous delivery format rather than just in-person, a broader range of welfare and engagement matters present regularly. To mitigate issues where possible, The People, Analytics and Wellbeing Officer operates a class representative system that identifies issues impacting a group level. However, this role also supports apprentices one-to-one in navigating matters of individual wellbeing, mental health, and readiness for apprentices to engage in learning.

#### 7.7.1 FIT Contact Information

At programme induction and throughout apprentices' participation, the contact details of apprentice-facing members of the Tech Apprenticeship team are furnished to ensure that apprentices understand who to contact for questions related to their programme participation, progression in the workplace and, importantly, matters relating to their general wellbeing.

<b>Document History</b>	
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