Quality Assurance Handbook PART A1

POLICY No.3: Technology-enhanced learning policy

Supporting blended delivery modes

3. Purpose of policy

Policy No.3 sets out FIT's approach to leveraging existing and emerging technologies to provide optimal learning experiences for all apprentices participating in Tech Apprenticeship programmes. It also giving context to the infrastructure in place to provide for the efficient integration of digital tools that enhance teaching and learning. While this policy relates to all apprentices, FIT recognises the importance of placement and equivalence for those participating in the programmes through blended synchronous modalities via FIT's virtual learning environment (virtual classroom).

3.1 Policy scope

This policy applies to all activities that promote FIT's digital-first approach to teaching, learning and assessment. Technology-enhanced learning is enhanced, supported or assessed using educational technologies. Technology can enhance learning on initial engagement, as part of an apprenticeship programme, through assessment and feedback, and in supporting timely programme progression.

3.2 Overarching considerations

The development of this policy during the early part of 2024 took direction from QQI publications and evolving national and international best practices in blended and fully online learning. At the heart of QQI's guidance is the necessity to provide a permanent institutional fulcrum within a provider to scope, test, administer and promote ICT infrastructure and interoperable systems to support technology-enhanced learning activities.

3.3 Policy statement

To achieve a constant focus on the enhancement of technology-enhanced learning, in early 2024 FIT constituted a new entity within the structures of Tech Apprenticeship. This entity is titled FIT's Technology Enhanced Learning Unit. This unit comprises FIT's Senior Learning Technologist and the separate role of Digital Systems and Learning Specialist, supported by the wider FIT apprenticeship team. This permanent fulcrum enables the growth of apprenticeship functions both now and in the future, future-proofing FIT's digital infrastructure. The unit's activities include scoping, testing, sign-off, deployment and expediting licensing requirements for technology products utilised in the delivery of the Tech Apprenticeship initiative. The unit has two overarching goals:

1. Strengthening and supporting FIT's virtual learning environment, institutional academic integrity approaches, and learning resources repositories

   and

2. Enhancing the capabilities of internal staff and external stakeholders by leveraging deployed technologies in a cohesive and efficient manner.

Additionally, the unit will engage wider tutors in mandatory inductions and training while supporting and facilitating stakeholders' access to a vibrant and dynamic community of practice. The unit will provide flexible, continuous professional development opportunities and, separately, contribute where applicable to developing relevant policy and codifying best practices into concise and accessible procedures. Specifically, the Terms of Reference

for this unit detail expectations regarding the evaluation and approval of digital tools, considering cybersecurity, life expectations of online systems, data migration, technology failures, and mitigation approaches.

While this Technology Enhanced Learning Unit will manage matters related to providing digital infrastructure and systems, all tutors and broad stakeholders must engage in inductions and ongoing briefings/training associated with the optimal use of these systems to benefit their apprentice cohort.

3.4 Access to tools and learning resources

Apprentices undertaking Tech Apprenticeships must be provided access to a variety of ICT systems and digital learning resources. From 2025 onwards, all apprentices[1] will, where applicable, access FIT's integrated LMS (Learner Management System), which has the following features:

- FIT's Learner Management System (Cloud-Based LMS Moodle);
- BigBlueButton Virtual Classroom; and
- Plagiarism Detection Solution by PlagiarismCheck.org.

3.4.1 FIT's Cloud-Based LMS (Moodle)

FIT's LMS facilitates the administration, delivery, tracking and reporting of Tech Apprenticeship programmes. It is a centralised platform for organising and managing online learning content and resources. The primary purpose of the LMS is to provide a structured and efficient way to deliver learning materials to apprentices, to track their progress, and assess their performance. The LMS will focus on seven key aspects: user management, programme management, assessment, evaluation, progress tracking, communication, and

[1] Enrolled post-September 2024.

collaboration. The LMS ensures that apprentices can upload their formative work and summative assessment/assignments where applicable.

3.4.2 FIT's Virtual Classroom (BigBlueButton)

BigBlueButton effortlessly provides a virtual classroom specifically built for pedagogical integrations. Its benefits include, but are not limited to, private and group chat functions, intuitive screen sharing, sharing of webcams, shared notes for group collaboration, polling, multi-user whiteboards, break-out rooms, etc.

3.4.3 Plagiarism detection solutions (PlagiarismCheck.org)

PlagiarismCheck.org integrates fully with the other components of FIT's LMS. This plagiarism detection software uses advanced algorithms that help find the slightest similarities in texts. This product acts as an additional tool for tutors to detect various forms of assessment malpractice. The product helps to ensure academic honesty by automating plagiarism detection when apprentices upload their respective assessment assignments. This key feature of the LMS will complement actions taken to implement FIT's Academic Impropriety and Assessment Malpractice Policy.

3.5 Data Retention and Systems Back-Up

FIT's Data Protection and Privacy Statement is published on the FIT website, FIT.ie. It includes access to the relevant Subject Access Request forms required under the General Data Protection Regulation. All data processed by FIT on the Apprenticeship initiative are processed under a written agreement with vendors who have stored FIT's data in accordance with the firm expectation that the data are stored digitally on servers solely within the European Union.

3.6 Considering LMS access

Providing equitable access to Tech Apprenticeship programmes is at the heart of FIT's mission. Access is not merely a statement about how an individual is enabled to enrol on a Tech Apprenticeship programme. Rather, it is about how that individual interfaces with all aspects of their programme over the total duration of the programme. This policy promotes a digital-first approach to delivery. Therefore, apprentice challenges interfacing with ICT systems associated with FIT's LMS are a risk factor that might contribute to or impede apprentices' progression.

3.6.1 LMS Access Statement

As the provider of an LMS that apprentices utilise in completing Tech Apprenticeship programmes, FIT is committed to providing an interoperable platform that is accessible to the broadest possible audience and is free from technical issues that could impede timely access to supported digital resource content. FIT aims to ensure that everyone using the LMS finds the experience rewarding and conducive to learning. In support of this vision, FIT strives to make the LMS as accessible as possible to users, regardless of the extent of their previous experience of undertaking studies supported by digital infrastructure.

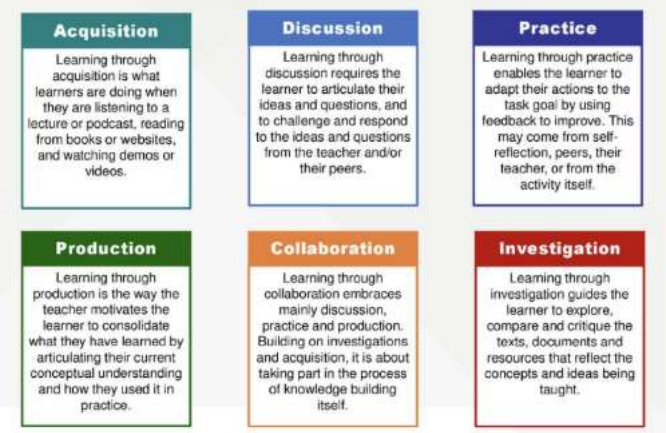
3.7 LMS sustainability

Understanding that data stored for unnecessarily long periods on large data centre servers can have an environmental impact, FIT always seeks the appropriate retention and timely deletion of data.

3.8 Pedagogically-centred approaches

In 2022, following a period of emergency measures instigated in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, off-the-job aspects of tech apprenticeships pivoted to synchronous delivery

modulates. Evaluating the pros and cons of this change, FIT anticipates that a proportion of future apprentice intakes will continue to use a blended mode for off-the-job aspects, with the larger aspect of training happening primarily in-person within the workplace setting. FIT's LMS will support all delivery of Tech Apprenticeships from an ICT systems and software perspective. However, as distinct from systems considerations, FIT has evaluated several pedagogical approaches to delivering Tech Apprenticeships. These approaches detail differing ways of engaging apprentices in the process of teaching. Considering the expected intake cohorts of apprentices to be diverse, it is vital to ensure that such delivery is vibrant and accommodates applicants who are likely to absorb knowledge in differing ways. Therefore, learning resources for all Tech Apprenticeships are presented digitally on the LMS and in a format consistent with Dr. Diana Laurillard's Conversational Framework, which includes the following learning types:



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