Quality Assurance Handbook PART A1

POLICY No.5: Apprentice Code of Conduct Policy

5. Purpose of policy

Policy No.5 aims to ensure that apprentices and employers know what they can expect from an apprentice in terms of an agreed set of reasonable and expected behaviours and performance during all on- and off-the-job programme modules.

5.1 Policy scope

This policy aims to set out measures to maintain acceptable standards of behaviour within the apprentice community, can encourage individuals to accept their obligations, and can maintain FIT's good standing within the collective of approved and participating employers. This policy also sets out expectations that will help ensure a collegial and positive environment that contributes to best practice in a vibrant and diverse community of learning, thereby facilitating the successful completion of a Tech Apprenticeship. FIT does not intend this to be an exhaustive document or one with onerous provisions, but rather to complement the broader Solas Code of Practice for Employers and Apprentices, with due regard to an apprentice also being an employee of an Approved Employer while active on the programme.

5.2 Overarching considerations

FIT appreciates that positive interactions between apprenticeship stakeholders and the timely progress of an apprentice as per the programme delivery schedule engender confidence among employers in the individual apprentice and the programme generally. A negative experience or series of negative behaviour in the workplace can dissuade the employer from participating in the programme in the future. Consequently, FIT, where possible, strives to ensure the early identification of any issue that may arise by rigorous monitoring of apprentices' progress on Tech Apprenticeship programmes.

Apprentices have responsibilities to fulfil on an ongoing basis throughout the programme. These responsibilities are critical regarding interactions with an apprentice's respective employer both in the workplace, and, separately, with one's fellow apprentices, as well as tutors and delivering partner ETBs while participating in off-the-job study. Most importantly, however, apprentices have responsibilities to themselves. At the outset of each programme, each apprentice signs up to the FIT Apprentice Charter and Participation Agreement provisions. This Charter sets out a series of clear expectations for those participating in a programme.

5.3 Policy statement

FIT expects each apprentice, as per the conditions of the Apprentice Charter and Participation Agreement, to be responsible for their learning during their time on a programme that incorporates a mix of classroom-based training and Industry-based learning and assessment. Apprentices must conduct themselves appropriately and respectfully in their interactions with and on behalf of FIT and should not engage in any activity that may negatively affect the name of FIT, an Education and Training Board, their sponsoring employer, its staff or learners. All communications by apprentices noting FIT or any of its stakeholders must be respectfully expressed and based on dignity, equality and inclusion.

Apprentices must be committed to acting in an appropriate manner regarding their general behaviour, must satisfy the programme requirements and regulations, and must maintain active in-class face-to-face sessions and attend scheduled virtual classes as required. They must also make responsible use of relevant social media, and show respect for premises, property and staff associated with all relevant stakeholders. Any act or omission that adversely affects the rights of any other member of the apprentice community, including partners or external stakeholders, or that disrupts the conduct of any apprenticeship, will be considered a breach of the Code of Conduct and be subject to disciplinary proceedings. In summary[1], apprentices must:

- Attend and actively participate in each module/element of the programme;
- Maintain at all times the highest levels of academic integrity;
- Meet the requirement for full attendance and punctuality;
- Attend all classes face-to-face or virtually on time;
- Behave in the workplace with due regard to all conduct-related policies;
- Always behave respectfully, considering the legitimate needs of others;
- Not engage in any discriminatory or disrespectful language to any stakeholder;
- Conform with all Health and Safety requirements of FIT and delivering partners;
- Where possible, keep the physical learning environment (classroom and lab) clean;
- Complete all paperwork required by FIT and delivering partners;
- Treat the property of all stakeholders with due care and respect;
- Complete and satisfy all programme content, assessments, assignments, and work practice; and
- Ensure at all times the secure and appropriate management of their employer's proprietary data.

[1] Full details available in the FIT Apprentice Charter and Participation Agreement.

5.4 Breach of the Code of Conduct

During the lifetime of the Tech Apprenticeship programmes, only in rare instances has it been necessary for FIT, a delivering partner ETB or an employer to instigate any form of disciplinary proceedings. Participation in a Tech Apprenticeship ensures access to timely support that facilitates the completion of such a programme. Where an apprentice does not reasonably accept appropriate apprenticeship-related support and/or their performance level does not improve In line with stated programme progression requirements, FIT may commence disciplinary proceedings in consultation with its stakeholders. Instigating such proceedings is, however, regarded as a last resort, only to be engaged in once all other reasonable steps have been taken to successfully address the situation.

5.4.1 Issues relating to performance in the workplace

Approved employers will manage an apprentice-related issue or series of issues in the workplace through their Human Resource policies in accordance with relevant Irish employment rights legislation. Employers will notify FIT about any outcome that is likely to affect an apprentice's capacity to remain in employment or where a breach of this Code of Conduct Policy may have occurred.

5.4.2 Issues relating to performance in off-the-job (ETB/College-Based) study

Approved delivering partner ETBs will manage an apprentice issue or series of issues through their respective disciplinary policies. The ETB will notify the registry Team/Registrar of any outcome that is likely to affect an apprentice's capacity to remain in off-the-job training or where a breach of the Code of Practice may have occurred.

5.4.3 Issues relating to general programme progression/disengagement

During programme participation, it is likely that when an issue occurs regarding apprentice engagement, it may affect progression through both the on- and off-the-job elements of the

programme. In cases where an apprentice does not satisfactorily rectify not making the required progress, i.e., being up-to-date with the various on- and off-the-job assessments, FIT reserves the right to impose a caution, reprimand, or seek an academic termination from the programme at the next available sitting of the Examination Board. In cases where a severe disciplinary item emerges during off-the-job programme elements, this will be managed by a sitting of the Disciplinary Committee comprising the FIT Registrar (Chairperson), an ETB and an employer representative. An apprentice may appeal the outcome of this process to the FIT Director of Academic Affairs.

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