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, which are reasonably practicable to provide, are available to them in completing a Tech Apprenticeship programme. In line with best practice, FIT adopts an inclusive approach to teaching, learning and assessment to enable all enrolled apprentices to fully participate in their 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 FIT that they have 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 available supports do not apply to apprentices with temporary disabilities, illness, or low language or literacy levels. Adaptations or accommodations that are not reasonably achievable, such as those that

would involve an excessive cost to FIT and/or its respective Delivering Partners, will be deemed unreasonable.

7.2 Overarching considerations

FIT directs a significant proportion of our efforts towards broad diversity inclusion. Providing a high level of succinct information to all Tech Apprenticeship candidates is vital in ensuring FIT can support diverse access. Navigating the various steps of the candidate application process can be a significant task for applicants, and is 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, either with regard to the initial candidate application phase, or, where known, regarding support needed from FIT or their future employer while engaging in work-based training. In many cases, this could be for support/accommodations for 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 attend a FIT aptitude test/interview. Disclosure of a disability by a candidate will not influence a decision whether to progress a candidate through the recruitment process. A later disclosure, particularly after programme commencement of a Tech Apprenticeship, may involve delays in FIT's 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 its 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 . 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 headed paper, and be written in English; be not more than five years old from the date of the online application; and must detail recommendations regarding the nature of accommodations that are required. FIT, on receipt of this document, will undertake a needs assessment based on the practical measures it can reasonably be expected to instigate.

7.4 Applications for reasonable accommodations and/or additional supports

An apprentice can 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 so as to inform the decision-making process. FIT will communicate the supports it proposes to offer 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 to those with a physical or hidden disability who are making an application. Delivering Partner locations 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 assessment submission(s)
- Rest breaks

- Spelling and grammar waiver (for assessed coursework)
- Provision of a reader; and
- Provision of a laptop or another portable digital assistant.

7.6 Process of apprentice registration (confirmation of identity)

Having completed 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 must provide standard items of personal information, including their PPS number, which confirms the identity of the individual commencing a Tech Apprenticeship programme.

7.7 Apprentice welfare

While the apprentice is participating in a Tech Apprenticeship programme, their wellbeing and welfare are of paramount importance to FIT. Although 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 Lead who assists apprentices in matters of mental health and wellbeing where necessary on a case-by-case basis. With some provisions now operating in a blended delivery format rather than just in-person, a broader range of welfare and engagement matters regularly present themselves. To address issues as far as possible, the Registrar operates a class representative system that identifies issues impacting at a group level. This role also supports apprentices on a one-to-one basis in navigating matters of individual wellbeing, mental health, and readiness by 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 regarding questions related to their programme participation, progression in the workplace and, importantly, matters relating to their general wellbeing.

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