Quality Assurance Handbook PART A1

POLICY No.21: Invigilation and proctoring policy

21. Purpose of policy

A core tenet of FIT's approach to assessments is our belief that academic misconduct is primarily the result of poor assessment strategies. FIT views all active apprentices as rational actors who are motivated to do well throughout their learning journey and, as such, wish to avoid engaging in academic misconduct as a matter of principle. When academic misconduct does occur, there is an onus on FIT to examine the conditions that led to it and to investigate why an apprentice felt compelled to act in such a manner.

FIT, as the National Coordinating Provider of the consortium-led Tech Apprenticeship (TA) programmes, recognises its responsibility to stakeholders in minimising instances of academic misconduct. Under FIT's policies, FIT must guarantee to employers that apprentices on the TA programmes conduct themselves with integrity when undergoing summative assessments. FIT must also assure the academic integrity of the programme to QQI and advisory groups such as the Academic Council. Finally, FIT must also support the Education and Training Boards (ETBs), their tutors and additional staff involved in delivering these modular components and overseeing the summative assessments.

This policy, therefore, formalises FIT's strategy to ensure academic integrity in assessments through an invigilation process that recognises the interconnected roles of the tutor, invigilator, and assessor, as well as the purpose of summative assessments.

21.1 Policy scope

This policy describes FIT's implementation of invigilation and proctoring in summative assessments. "Invigilation" is defined as the monitoring of live assessments in an in-person setting. "Proctoring" is defined as the monitoring of live assessments in a synchronous online environment. Both terms refer to the same core process—ensuring academic integrity in summative assessments in real time. These definitions are guided by QQI's 2021 report E-Proctoring in Theory and in Practice: A Review,[1] wherein "in-class/on-site live invigilation" is described as the process of minimising "potential cheating by students" using tools such as "plagiarism-detection software like Turnitin."[2] The report continues: "remote, online, or e-proctoring is a general term that covers a range of different approaches that try to simulate on-site supervised examination conditions in digital assessments."[3] FIT, therefore, is confident that the combination of invigilation and proctoring in this policy document is in line with QQI's policies.

Additionally, QQI provides a more comprehensive definition of proctoring in that report:

Online or e-proctoring involves the systematic monitoring of student behaviour in real time during examinations administered electronically to verify the identity of the student, that the work completed is the student's own, and to ensure test conditions and academic integrity are maintained. Monitoring is usually carried out through the camera/webcam and/or microphone on the device on which the student is completing the online examination and can include monitoring of the student's screen and computer activity. With this in mind, regarding e-proctoring, FIT mandates a camera-on approach. E-proctoring can be conducted live by an invigilator or through Artificial Intelligence (AI) software or a combination of both, or is based on a recording of the student's activity through video,

1 Report compiled by Professor Paul Giller (Former Registrar and Senior Vice President Academic at UCC Emeritus Professor of Ecology, School of Biological, Earth and Environmental Sciences, University College Cork) in October 2021. Full text available here: https://www.qqi.ie/sites/default/files/2021-12/e-proctoring-in-theory-and-practice-a-review.pdf.

2 E-Proctoring in Theory and in Practice [hereafter: QQI 2021], p. 7.

3 QQI, 2021, p.7.

photographs, microphone, keyboard or mouse use during the examination which can be reviewed at a later date.[4]

FIT appreciates the clarity and robustness of this definition in guiding its own implementation of proctoring strategies. While the QQI report pertains to Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), there are obvious implications for FET providers including FIT. In Section 21.3 (below), FIT's specific invigilation and proctoring processes are explained and have been devised to fulfil the QQI criteria mentioned above. As discussed in that Section, FIT has adopted an approach to invigilation and proctoring that the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual), the UK regulator of qualifications, examinations, and tests, terms "live invigilation" (as opposed to "record and review").[5]

The assessment instruments deployed by FIT across its Tech Apprenticeship (TA) programmes, and that are therefore subject to the proctoring and invigilation protocols described in this document, are as follows:

1. **Timed Examinations** *(time limit: between 2.5 and 5 hours)*[6]
2. **Assignments** *(completed during the duration of a module)*
3. **Technical logbook entries** *(submitted at pre-determined times during a programme's schedule)*
4. **Transversal skills reports** *(submitted near the end of a TA programme's schedule, with at least one draft report submitted at the halfway point of the programme)*
5. **Presentations** *(delivered upon the completion of all technical logbook entries and the transversal skills report)*
6. **Timed multiple-choice questionnaires** *(time limit: 50 minutes)*
7. **Viva-style oral examinations** *(time limit: between 15 and 20 minutes)*

[4] QQI, 2021, p.7.
[5] From the report Remote invigilation within vocational and technical qualifications (Tonin & Cadwallader), published by Ofqual in 2023 [hereinafter referred to as 'Ofqual 2023']. In compiling this policy document, FIT has reviewed literature from Irish organisations, such as regulatory bodies, FET providers and HEI institutions, as well as international ones, underlining its commitment to setting out an informed and equitable policy statement.
[6] All specified assessment time limits are based on current programmes validation timelines and are subject to change. Additional time, consisting of at least 15 minutes per hour is provided for learners who have completed a valid Needs Assessment.

All instruments listed above are summative assessments and involve original work to be completed by apprentices on a TA programme. While presentations and Viva-style oral examinations are assessing an apprentice's live delivery of learning, questions can be asked about the nature of documentation that was submitted rather than merely the text that has been included.

21.2 Overarching considerations

This policy concerns summative assessments rather than diagnostic or formative assessments. Non-summative assessment types are utilised throughout FIT's TA programmes, but are entirely the domain of the off-the-job tutor. That is, tutors are encouraged to assess their apprentices' needs and identify in instances where more detailed instruction is needed to support the achievement of module-level learning outcomes. While the teaching and learning activities involved in these non-summative assessments are subject to FIT's QAH Policy No. 22: Acceptable Usage of Artificial Intelligence Tools and are referenced in the Teaching, Learning, and Assessment Strategy 2026–2030, they are not within the scope of this policy. It is worth emphasising the distinction between assessment types at this point to underline the role and importance of summative assessments.

Summative assessments evaluate apprentices' depth of understanding of a module's core material. According to QQI: "valid summative assessment will differentiate true learning from the superficial appearances of learning, and it will not reward poor learning strategies." Clearly, then, FIT's assessment strategy must penalise "poor learning strategies,"[7] which we understand to mean academic misconduct and/or superficial engagement with learning materials. As outlined in the introduction to this document, understanding the cause of these poor learning strategies is critical to maintaining an environment that respects and reinforces high levels of academic integrity —apprentices do not, as a rule, wish to engage

[7] QQI, Assessments and Standards, Revised 2022, 2022 [hereafter: QQI 2022], p. 11. Available at: https://www.qqi.ie/sites/default/files/2022-09/assessment_and_standards-revised-2022.pdf.

in academic misconduct. When they do, FIT bears a significant share of the responsibility, since it is likely that the learning materials and/or assessment approach are not in line with apprentices' expectations. Additionally, FIT must provide ongoing support to tutors to ensure that apprentices' experiences of off-the-job learning are of the highest standard.

To assess "true" learning, FIT's strategy is to reward clear explanations and analyses in learners' own words of concepts. For practical tasks, such as implementing processes and demonstrating skills, it must also be clear that apprentices are not merely following a script by rote but are engaging in a practical activity grounded in their grasp of key ideas and a deep appreciation for industry-standard best practices. FIT is committed to developing apprentices in the IT industry who are adaptable, creative and self-reliant, applying skills acquired in the classroom in a diverse range of real-world scenarios. This can only be achieved if assessments adequately simulate authentic environments informed by industry needs. Apprentices, then, must be incentivised to display not only their awareness of key skills but their mastery of them. That an apprentice has mastered a key skill can only be assured if the work produced in a summative assessment is clearly original and, where possible, innovative, with reference to theoretical concepts and their chosen IT discipline in the relevant IT field.

With the above in mind, FIT defines the following roles and responsibilities associated with summative assessments:

1. The Apprentice must:
    a. Commit to engaging with the Tutor and the learning materials provided
    b. Avoid engaging in academic misconduct.
2. The Tutor must:
    a. Design and deliver engaging off-the-job learning activities, supported by the TEL Unit
    b. Engage in formative and diagnostic assessment activities during the course of off-the-job learning activities to support the needs of each apprentice

c. Foster a supportive learning environment in which apprentices are encouraged to ask questions and receive feedback on their work in both summative and non-summative assessments.

3. The Invigilator must:

a. Verify the identity of all apprentices undertaking summative assessments, supported by the digital tools supplied by the TEL Unit

b. Ensure that no academic misconduct occurs during a summative assessment.

4. The Assessor must:

a. Critically evaluate all apprentices' submissions in summative assessments in line with FIT's Assessments Grading Rubric and the relevant Assessor Marking Guide

b. Ensure that no academic misconduct has taken place and, where it has, notify FIT to discuss possible further actions

c. Provide detailed feedback to the apprentices, peer reviewer and external examiner, where applicable

d. Perform their duties in an equitable and timely manner.

5. The Peer Reviewer (PR) must:

a. Analyse a representative sample of assessed work for each off-the-job module on a TA programme to ensure that Assessors are compliant with the Assessments Grading Rubric and relevant Assessor Marking Guide

b. Notify FIT about any irregularities in assessed work.

6. The External Examiner (EA)[8] must:

a. Analyse a representative sample of assessed work for each off-the-job module on a TA programme to ensure that Assessors are compliant with the Assessments Grading Rubric and relevant Assessor Marking Guide

[8] As the titles of the two QA roles suggest, Peer Reviewers are FET educators with experience delivering off-the-job training on TA programmes (although not within the same FET institution as the Assessor, insofar as possible) and External Examiners are subject-matter experts (usually drawn from departments of HEIs) who do not work in any other capacity on the TA programmes.

b. Notify FIT of any irregularities in assessed work.

7. The Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) Unit membership must:

a. Support Tutors and Apprentices by designing and publishing engaging learning materials
b. Coordinate induction sessions and to inform Apprentices, Tutors, Invigilators, Assessors, PRs, and EAs on an ongoing basis about assessment procedures
c. Contribute to the development of effective assessment instruments that evaluate true learning
d. Regularly review deployed assessment instruments to ensure that they are free of errors and up to date with respect to current industry trends and module-level learning outcomes
e. Support the investigation of potential cases of academic misconduct/impropriety with the Registrar when notified by Tutors, Invigilators, Assessors, PRs, and/or EAs to identify possible next steps.

8. The Registrar and Registry Team must:

a. Work with delivery providers to ensure the smooth functioning of assessment events for learners
b. Ensure that Assessors are aware of their responsibility to deliver assessment results promptly and to follow up in cases of delay
c. Investigate potential cases of academic misconduct when notified by the TEL Unit, Tutors, Invigilators, Assessors, PRs, and/or EAs in accordance with the procedures outlined in QAH Policy No. 6: Academic Impropriety and Assessment Malpractice.

While the roles of Tutor, Invigilator, and Assessor have distinct responsibilities in the context of summative assessments, a cornerstone of the TA programmes is that, in practice, these roles are performed by the same individual. Instances the Only in exceptional circumstances will FIT allow Assessor functions to be carried out by an individual other than the Tutor. The same holds for Invigilator functions, although FIT allows flexibility in cases where a Tutor-Assessor cannot be present to invigilate or proctor a summative assessment.

FIT's approach to intertwining the roles of Tutor, Invigilator and Assessor is to safeguard the assessment of true learning. In order to place a high premium on explanations in apprentices' own words of core modular syllabus components. A natural consequence of the relatively small size of TA programme cohorts (with intakes usually ranging in size from 12 to 25 learners each) is that Tutors come to recognise the unique characteristics of their Apprentices' written and verbal expression. As such, they are best placed to identify when an apprentice is providing explanations of key concepts—true learning—in their own words, as opposed to reproducing the work of others or using inappropriate digital tools (such as generative artificial intelligence [AI]). When a Tutor identifies suspected academic misconduct, they will notify the TEL Unit's Academic Integrity Advisor, who will document the matter and notify the FIT Registrar, consistent with FIT's academic misconduct and data retention policies."

21.3 Policy statement

In a summative assessment environment, apprentices are subject to invigilation and proctoring protocols. Invigilation (for in-person assessments) and proctoring (for online live-synchronous assessments) both refer to the implementation and control of a sterile testing environment by an Invigilator. Such an environment is one in which the Invigilator is assured that inappropriate use of digital tools (such as generative AI) is unlikely and that, for proctoring assessments, the identity of person on screen is verified to match the person undertaking the assessment.

Apprentices must, at all times, express themselves in their own words and, in cases where external resources are employed, reference them accordingly. Apprentices are permitted to examine approved learning materials and other resources while undertaking a summative assessment, provided that all work they subsequently submit clearly demonstrates their true learning. Apprentices must read and agree to the Authenticity Declaration before undertaking a summative assessment and, in so doing, commit to abide by all assessment regulations.

In cases where an Invigilator suspects that an Apprentice, or group of Apprentices, is engaging in academic misconduct during a summative assessment, they must make a record of it within the accompanying Assessment Invigilator & Assessor Report form.

21.3.1 Proctoring tools in blended learning environments

During an assessment event, FIT uses a series of tools that are part of the digital ecosystem known as the FIT Knowledge Arena (KA). These tools are utilised to ensure that the authenticity and integrity of an assessment is maintained at all times.

FIT Knowledge Arena – An integrated digital ecosystem enabling operational oversight and delivery of scalable learning and development programmes

KA-LMS – A state-of-the-art learning management system built on the core foundations of a Moodle environment

KA-VLE – An interactive pedagogy-focused Virtual Learning Environment enabling remotely a classroom-like environment using the BigBlueButton platform

PlagiarismCheck.org – A plagiarism and AI content-checking software that verifies the authenticity of learner work

The learning management system KA-LMS provides a centralised assessment centre for apprentices and tutors. Regardless of the specific assessment or the medium in which it is conducted, the platform is used to facilitate access to instructions, the submission of apprentices' work, and subsequent grading by an assessor. The maintenance, access to, and configuration of, the assessment centre are managed directly by FIT.

When a timed examination is taking place remotely, the virtual learning environment (KA-VLE) allows an invigilator to simulate an in-person examination environment. Apprentices must be present in the virtual classroom with their cameras on to enable remote invigilation and real-time support by an invigilator. In the rare event that an invigilator is not familiar with the cohort they are invigilating, apprentices must how identification to confirm their identities.

All assessments submitted through the assessment centre are checked and verified by robust plagiarism and AI detection software, providing assessors with a report comparing

submissions across the FIT environment and with online sources. Additionally, the report may also include an indication of suspected AI-generated content. This information is available to the assessor and can be utilised to support an investigation if a suspicion has arisen regarding the authenticity of the presented work.



Figure 1. AI-detected results from plagiarismcheck.org

During the assessment process, the assessor has full access to work submitted by learners, including the aforementioned authenticity report. During timed examination assessments, there is also a full log of activity, providing complete transparency into the actions taken by all stakeholders, including the assessor. This empowers the assessor to ensure that submitted work meets the expected standards of authenticity and integrity.

Considering that FIT's overall assessment strategy focuses on practical demonstrations, that the overall size of a cohort of apprentices is 12–14 on average for an assessment event, the involved nature of the tutor-led training, and the robust tools in place, FIT is confident that the current tools satisfy the need to verify authenticity and integrity of all assessment events.

If, in the future, FIT seeks to modify the use of these tools, or the tools themselves, to ensure academic integrity, it will be done in a measured and considered manner. As outlined in this policy document, FIT is keenly aware of its obligations to all stakeholders regarding TA programmes in the context of summative assessments, and will carefully weigh the impacts of deploying new tools to assist proctoring and invigilation efforts. Before any pilot implementation of new tools or amendments to existing procedures, the TEL Unit, in consultation with the Registrar and Registry Team, will examine how apprentices might be affected. While academic integrity is of the utmost importance, so, too, is learners' experience in assessment events. These events, as emphasised throughout this document, must simulate a real-world working environment to the greatest extent possible. The TEL Unit will therefore ensure that any amendments to the processes of proctoring and invigilation do not result in an assessment environment that adversely impacts apprentices and/or specific groups of learners. Similarly, their effect must not degrade the assessment environment as a workplace simulation.

21.3.2 Evaluating the impact, security and integrity of proctoring tools

Technological tools will be evaluated by FIT in terms of their implications for data protection and confidentiality, as well as their compatibility with a diverse range of desktop computers, laptops, and other devices used in assessment environments, in line with FIT's policy regarding the minimum requirements of acceptable devices within the TA programmes. If, and only if, a tool that is proposed, or a modification to existing invigilation and proctoring procedures, is deemed to cohere with this core tenet, the TEL Unit will, in conjunction with the Registrar and Registry team, approve a pilot programme of use in a live environment. The TEL Unit will then analyse the results of the programme and present its findings to the Registrar and Registry team. The TEL Unit and Registrar and Registry team will then decide whether the piloted initiatives should be adopted and formally codified within the overall assessment strategy.

21.3.3 Academic misconduct procedures

When an Invigilator, Assessor, PR, or EA identifies a possible case of academic misconduct in a summative assessment, they must notify the Registrar or FIT's Academic Integrity Advisor[9] about it as soon as possible.

In cases where the suspected academic misconduct/impropriety has occurred as a result of suspected impersonation of an apprentice or group of Apprentices, the FIT's Academic Integrity Advisor will alert FIT's Registrar, who will investigate the suspected behaviour.

In cases where the suspected misconduct has occurred as a result of the inappropriate use of generative AI tools by an Apprentice or group of Apprentices, the Academic Integrity Advisor will consult the PlagiarismCheck.org "AI score" metric. While this metric alone is not sufficient to establish beyond any doubt whether generative AI tools have been employed, the TEL Unit will use this data point, along with their assessment of the flagged submission(s) and dialogue with the Invigilator, Assessor, PR, and/or EA, to determine whether further investigation is required by the FIT Registrar as per the procedure noted in QAH Policy No. 6: Academic Impropriety and Assessment Malpractice.

In cases where the suspected academic misconduct is due to plagiarism by an Apprentice or group of Apprentices, the TEL Unit will consult the PlagiarismCheck.org "Similarity score" metric. While this metric alone is not sufficient to establish categorically whether plagiarism has taken place, the TEL Unit will use this data point, along with their assessment of the flagged submission(s) and dialogue with the Invigilator, Assessor, PR, and/or EA, to determine whether further investigation is required by the FIT Registrar with reference to the QAH Policy No. 6: Academic Impropriety and Assessment Malpractice. All Apprentices have the right to reply in any formal case of academic misconduct brought against them by FIT.

[9] A member of the TEL Unit.

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