Quality Assurance Handbook PART A1

POLICY No.22: Acceptable use of Artificial Intelligence tools

22. Purpose of policy

The development of artificial intelligence (AI) tools proceeds at a rapid pace. The pace is more exponential than linear, with a plethora of new technologies appearing and quickly being adopted as industry-standard in increasingly short periods of time. As National Coordinating Provider of the consortium-led Tech Apprenticeship (TA) programmes, FIT recognises its responsibility to the technology and related sectors to stay informed about these advances and ensure that all apprentices on TA programmes are aware of the cutting-edge technologies being developed and deployed in different workplace environments. As outlined in the QAH Policy No. 21: Invigilation & Proctoring, FIT must always strive to devise learning materials and assessments that accurately simulate real-world working environments insofar as is possible.

FIT is also required to ensure that apprentices on apprenticeship programmes adhere to ethical considerations and academic standards and are encouraged not to engage in academic misconduct at all times. While FIT's approach to handling academic misconduct is well articulated in the QAH Policies No. 6 and 21: Academic Impropriety and Assessment Malpractice and Invigilation & Proctoring, it is readily apparent that current AI tools present a unique and specific challenge to maintaining academic integrity of apprenticeship

programmes. On the one hand, apprentices must demonstrate their "true learning"[1] of core knowledge and skills while undertaking summative assessments; on the other, many AI technologies that apprentices are encouraged to use in the workplace can cast doubt on whether true learning has been achieved when such technologies have been used inappropriately. Given that FIT emphasises to apprentices at all times that participating in a FIT apprenticeship programme is equivalent to full-time employment, the line between "effective use of an AI tool in a business scenario" and "breach of academic integrity protocols" can sometimes appear blurry.

FIT is sympathetic to this state of affairs and views all apprentices on apprenticeship programmes as operating in good faith with respect to academic integrity, in the absence of evidence to the contrary. In FIT's experience in this regard, academic misconduct primarily occurs when apprentices are unclear as to the purposes and requirements of teaching, learning, and assessment, which must be clearly defined by FIT. Therefore, FIT adopts the position that AI tools may be used in a wide variety of scenarios, including in summative assessments (with detailed caveats), as the alternative would be to ignore standard industry practices and to put TA programme participants at a disadvantage. In short, FIT's stance is that learners may use AI technologies once their true learning has been established in formal and informal learning environments. "Importantly, in the formal context, true learning is established when a tutor assesses an apprentice's module-level assessment submissions, typically at the end or during the latter stages of a given module, against FIT's assessment criteria, which set the required minimum module-level learning outcome threshold requirements."

22.1 Policy scope

This policy governs the use of AI tools at all stages of teaching, learning and assessment of FIT apprenticeship programmes. Given FIT's commitment to viewing apprentices as rational

[1] QQI, Assessments and Standards, Revised 2022, 2022 [hereinafter referred to as 'QQI 2022'], p. 11. Available at: https://www.qqi.ie/sites/default/files/2022-09/assessment_and_standards-revised-2022.pdf. The concept of "true learning" and its critical importance within summative assessments is discussed at length in the FIT Invigilation & Proctoring Policy document.

and mature actors, it is imperative that access to worthwhile and engaging learning resources is safeguarded at all times. While AI tools can be used to generate learning resource materials and to enhance off-the-job module delivery, they must never be deployed by tutors as a complete replacement for human-designed learning materials. Additionally, FIT cannot compel apprentices to avoid using AI tools when doing summative assessments if tutors have supplied them with AI-generated materials rather than appropriately designed resources that have been informed by pedagogical best practices. When devising notes and activities for their learners, tutors must, therefore, only employ AI technologies as a supplement to their work and/or when instruction covering core modular syllabi (as defined by the module-level learning outcomes and accompanying indicative content) has concluded.

On the other hand, apprentices must also abide by this policy at all times. As such, they must commit to displaying their true learning of core curricular concepts before employing AI tools in summative assessments and off-the-job training environments. Authentic demonstration of true learning is the cornerstone upon which FIT's assessment strategies are constructed. Using AI tools to obviate the need for this engagement with core concepts is tantamount to academic misconduct.

22.2 Overarching considerations

As stated at the outset of this policy document, FIT recognises that it can be difficult to discern between appropriate and inappropriate usage of AI technologies in a learning environment, particularly with the increasing incentives for apprentices to leverage similar tools while in the workplace. Apprentices, in many cases, are introduced to a wide range of IT concepts and tools that were previously unknown to them. To overcome initial knowledge gaps, it is understandable that apprentices may be drawn to using generative AI tools to explain core ideas. FIT understands that apprentices want to succeed in their summative assessments and appreciates that there are many ways in which AI technologies can assist them to achieve this goal. However, it is also FIT's responsibility to communicate to

apprentices that there is no substitute for learner-driven, tutor-supported, formative learning processes culminating in meaningful summative assessments. FIT operates under the guiding principle that employment opportunities currently (and historically) available to apprentices will not be replaced by AI tools but, rather, that candidates with mastery of core IT concepts—along with sophisticated knowledge of a range of IT tools—will fill those positions. FIT has raised and discussed this idea in various formal scenarios, including Academic Council sessions and internal strategy meetings.

Therefore, apprentices must be given every chance to succeed in their TA programme. Success, in this context, means being well-positioned to build up their knowledge bases with respect to the programme's various areas and to have the confidence to distinguish reliable sources of information from less valuable ones. Accordingly, apprentices will be shown how to recognise the hallmarks of AI-generated materials and will be guided in how to deploy AI-enhanced tools to complement core skills. This guidance will be accomplished, initially, through focused induction sessions run by FIT, wherein learners will be made aware of FIT's policies on use of AI tools in teaching, learning, and assessment. The Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) Unit and Registry team will set the tone at the outset by characterising AI tools as supplemental resources that apprentices can engage with once they have understood fundamental concepts. This is in line with feedback provided to FIT by industry representatives that, while AI technologies present exciting opportunities for innovation and are a core part of most workflows, foundational ideas must first be well-established.

FIT will also work with tutors before a programme's commencement to outline best practices in devising lesson plans, identifying and generating effective learning materials, and engaging with the diverse needs of their apprentices. This will include ongoing guidance regarding the deployment of AI tools in learning environments, where the central theme of this policy document will be emphasised at all times—that apprentices must be aware of AI technologies, but not at the expense of true learning. Tutors will be shown examples of how AI can be used to enhance teaching and learning, in both preparation for instruction to apprentices and for live-delivery contexts. At all times, FIT will stress the importance of upholding the social contract that exists between educator and learner, one that can be

harmed if AI tools are used inappropriately. FIT's goal is to empower tutors to remain adaptable to the needs of their apprentices and the changing landscape of the IT industry while accomplishing their pedagogical objectives. In light of apprentices' employment context being exposed to the type and volume of AI tools and technologies, it would be inappropriate to unduly restrict their use of them in the college-based setting for the purposes of learning new skills, as long as it is clear to all parties that core learning milestones must be achieved in a meaningful manner.

22.3 Policy statement

Apprentices participating in FIT apprenticeship programmes are responsible for the work they produce in informal classroom environments and formal summative assessment events. To produce this work, they may consult the resources provided by their tutor(s) and the FIT TEL Unit, reputable sources of information, and ideas arising from discussions with their fellow apprentices. AI tools may be used to enhance this work, but only once true learning has taken place and it has been shown that state-of-the-art skills have been used in the IT industry. QQI distinguishes "true learning" from "superficial appearances of learning", which are a result of "poor learning strategies."[2] Therefore, apprentices must unequivocally display a deep understanding of a subject before deploying AI tools to supplement their work. As sole owners of their work, they must be able to account for all sources consulted in developing it and to explain clearly their decision-making process in so doing.

There shall be, therefore, no question as to whether apprentices were apprised of their responsibilities to ensuring academic integrity at all times. In the absence of exceptional circumstances, apprentices may not claim ignorance of FIT's policies nor the content of components of their work with respect to appropriate and inappropriate use of AI tools to defend academic misconduct in a classroom or assessment setting. This, undoubtedly, places a high burden on apprentices, who must ensure that their work demonstrates true

[2] QQI 2022, p. 11.

learning at all times. As such, FIT will support apprentices and their tutors by clearly communicating the scope and impact of academic misconduct in all settings. FIT will equip apprentices with the ability to discern appropriate use of AI tools from inappropriate use and will ensure that apprentices and tutors alike are supported with appropriate use and guidance information in cases where the use of AI tools is both relevant and worthwhile.

Tutors must design learning materials and activities that are engaging, current, and well-considered. Tutors may also make use of pedagogical resources provided by FIT, and those developed by other educators once permission has been sought and formal consent obtained where appropriate. All materials deployed by tutors in preparing for and delivering off-the-job training must be relevant to the module-level learning outcomes. Except for those developed by FIT, tutors are responsible for the quality assurance of resources in terms of their technical accuracy and accessibility from a diversity, equality and inclusion perspective. Therefore, tutors must be transparent as to their use of AI tools, and must be able to show that such use is appropriate and adds value to their learning materials. Such transparency must be maintained by tutors with their apprentices, as well as with FIT, to uphold the social contract in the classroom that is critical to the success of a given module delivery.

When assessing apprentices' work in informal classroom and summative assessment environments, tutors shall perform the due diligence required to ensure that inappropriate use of AI tools by apprentices has not occurred. Where a tutor has a suspicion that such misconduct has taken place, they must notify the Registrar.

22.3.1 Sample scenarios: appropriate use of Artificial Intelligence tools

At the outset of this document, it was stated that it is permissible for apprentices to use AI tools only after their true learning of core concepts has been clearly established, in either formal or informal learning environments. To clarify this further, it may be useful to examine a number of illustrative scenarios in which the use of AI technologies would be considered appropriate.

22.3.1.1 In summative assessments

Summative assessments serve to evaluate whether an apprentice has acquired true learning of a module's syllabus and aligned learning outcomes. Once true learning has been established, and beyond the threshold of meeting minimum module-level learning outcomes, apprentices may, in some instances, include work that builds on core concepts but is not subject to additional formal assessment, and it may involve the deployment of AI technologies. Table 1 provides some insight into FIT's in-use assessment instruments. For example, apprentices within a Software Development Associate programme undertaking the assessment for the Web Development module may be required to build a web page containing some core elements. Once these elements have been created, in an entirely original way, apprentices may use AI tools to add more advanced features and functionality to the web page. They may also use these tools to design additional web pages that are not required in the assessment brief but could be relevant to a real-world website implementation.

This logic can be applied across all other summative assessments for modules on the Software Development Associate programme, as well as those on the Cybersecurity, and Computer Networking Associate, apprenticeship programmes. Where apprentices have the opportunity to add an element of "flourish" or otherwise display their engagement with state-of-the-art aspects of their programme's subject-matter, they are encouraged to do so—once true learning of core concepts has been thoroughly established.

AI tools that perform tasks beyond the scope of a given assessment, but are clearly relevant to the topic at hand, may be deployed by apprentices. In addition, apprentices may use AI orchestration tools to simulate workflows based on underlying original work done to meet assessment requirements. Ultimately, once assessors, tutors and invigilators are satisfied that any AI tools deployed in the course of a learner's work throughout a summative assessment event does not obscure true learning and are relevant to the tasks at hand, the use of such tools is permissible.

Table 1-Summative assessment AI tool use				
Assessment Instrument	*AI Use*	*Permitted AI use*	*Not permitted*	*Assurance mechanism*
Timed Examinations	No AI	None unless AI itself is explicitly being assessed	Generating answers, or explanations	Invigilation, restricted resources, time limits
Assignments	Permitted with declaration	Brainstorming, structure, language support, research assistance	Undisclosed generation of substantive assessed work	AI declaration plus assessor questioning
Technical logbook entries (workplace)	Permitted for normal authentic use with declaration	Query generation, exploratory analysis, interpretation support, coding assistance when in completion of a task in the workplace	Undisclosed generation of substantive assessed work/logbook entries	Apprentice must validate outputs and explain methodology
Transversal skills report	Authentic use	None unless used in preamble research	Fabricated data, unverified outputs, undisclosed AI-generated analysis	Apprentice must validate outputs and explain methodology
Presentations	Permitted with disclosure	Slide development, images, structure, rehearsal	Apprentice not positioned to explain presented material	Live presentation and Q&A
Timed MCQs	No AI	None during an assessment	ChatGPT, Copilot, Gemini, AI search/answer tools	Controlled timed environment, randomised question bank
Viva-style oral exam	No AI during assessment	AI may be used in preparation	Real-time AI-generated responses	Identity verification and spontaneous probing

22.3.1.2 In informal learning environments

While summative assessments can overlap with informal learning environments (such as where apprentices work on assignments during off-the-job training sessions), these environments usually involve formative assessment activities. It is within these environments that true learning is acquired and established in the first instance, and so it is critical that any use of AI tools does not come at the expense of an apprentice's ability to understand core concepts. However, apprentices may use AI tools as a research aid provided that their tutors are satisfied with the validity of any findings. For example, while engaging with a technical topic for the first time, apprentices may use a generative AI tool to suggest real-world applications of the technologies and ideas. They must then present the outputs of this tool to the relevant tutor, who will assess their findings and clarify any concerns that arise. Apprentices may also use AI tools to assist in their note taking and study during off-the-job training, although they are required to ensure that the resulting AI-formatted study guides are accurate with respect to the subject-matter. Again, this accuracy shall be shown by the apprentice through dialogue with the tutor. In general, once AI tools are not used to generate work in its entirety (i.e., without any original inputs from apprentices beyond a series of prompts or instructions to an AI tool), apprentices may make use of AI technologies under the supervision of their tutor to assist in their acquisition of true learning.

Just as a plethora of study-focused AI-enhanced applications exist for apprentices, so, too, does similar software exist for educators. Many of these applications can generate learning plans, suggest learning activities, design pedagogical resources, and more. A tutor may never rely solely on such software to develop their entire teaching strategies for a module or set of modules, but may use these tools as a reference point. That is, tutors may use AI tools to generate pedagogical materials and may use their critical and expert discernment to determine their value for a given TA programme module. Tutors must be honest and transparent regarding their use of AI tools, informing FIT staff as to the rationale for their deployment in the instance of their first use of such tools. Tutors may also encourage their apprentices to engage with AI tools that fulfil a defined purpose within a relevant IT field, such as those that provide value in the areas of automation and orchestration, workflow

enhancement, template and design generation, code auto-complete, troubleshooting and debugging, brainstorming and idea generation, and so on. At all times, tutors must ensure that learners are made aware of the limitations and potential inaccuracies associated with these tools and that true learning is never supplanted.

22.4 Artificial Intelligence tool awareness

FIT encourages all stakeholders who participate in FIT's apprenticeship provision to be curious and forward-thinking in their approach to the artificial intelligence tools utilised in the contemporary business environment and by apprentices participating in a FIT-coordinated apprenticeship programme.

Apprentices will firstly be provided with information regarding acceptable use of artificial intelligence tools ,including oversight of the policies utilised by FIT to address suspected cases of assessment malpractice, at the point of initial programme induction facilitated and hosted by FIT. Separately, at the start of work-based duties, each apprentice will undertake a work-based orientation that provides them with a necessary overview of the work environment and the broad base of aligned IT technologies and tools in use, with appropriate reference, where necessary, to any specific generative artificial intelligence technologies associated with work duties. As apprentices progress through their initial programme modules, they will utilise artificial intelligence tools under their tutors' guidance for informal learning and summative assessments in accordance with the rules for acceptable use set out by this policy.

Apprising tutors of acceptable parameters for the use of artificial intelligence in FIT's apprenticeship programmes is essential for the appropriate delivery of apprenticeship programmes. Consequently, all new tutors must complete an initial induction with FIT before undertaking any apprentice-facing duties. Tutor induction ensures that tutors understand the requirements for using generative artificial intelligence tools to support their training delivery to apprentices. Beyond tutor induction, FIT's TEL Unit convenes a regular Community of Practice that tutors are encouraged to attend, which provides information on

the evolving landscape of generative artificial intelligence tools pertinent to FIT's apprenticeship provision.

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