Assessment and Feedback Policy

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1. Purpose

Atlantic Technological University (ATU) positions teaching, learning and assessment as core activities of the University. Designing, implementing, and evaluating student assessments are key activities. Their significance lies in: providing a robust mechanism to allow students to demonstrate their learning achievements and allow examiners to quantify a student's understanding of the desired learning outcomes; shaping student engagement; fostering deeper understanding; providing motivation to engage with learning activities; driving academic success and demonstrating quality assurance in our approach to teaching and learning. We therefore recognise that best practice in assessment and feedback is integral to the remit of the University *and* to the pursuit of higher education.

This policy is designed to underscore ATU's commitment to fostering a student-centred educational environment that values diversity, inclusivity and adaptability; and promotes diverse assessment methods and accessible feedback mechanisms to meet the varied needs, abilities, and backgrounds of all our students.

Assessment refers to the application of processes and instruments to infer a level of student attainment. The goal of assessment is to provide opportunities to students to demonstrate their learning, particularly their achievement of the learning outcomes associated with a module or programme. **Feedback** allows students to reflect on their learning; clarifies areas where students can improve; and provides students with the opportunity to self-assess their skills and capabilities. It has a focus on current performance.

Assessment can serve one or more of the following purposes:

1. To certify student achievements.
2. To enhance student learning.
3. To enable students to demonstrate their learning achievements.
4. To contribute to quality enhancement and enable staff evaluate the effectiveness of their teaching.

Assessment evaluates how learning outcomes are achieved, while feedback helps students develop the ability to monitor, evaluate, and regulate their own learning.

This policy document articulates the principles and practices underpinning ATU's approach to assessment and feedback to inform and facilitate best practice. It provides a framework for ensuring that assessment and feedback is of the highest quality and meets the requirements articulated by the wider academic community, relevant professional bodies and our statutory function in awarding degrees.

The policy document foregrounds flexible, inclusive learning, and innovative teaching to foster employability, sustainability, and student success. It sets out ATU's approach to assessment and feedback and includes:

- the principles that guide and underpin assessment and feedback,
- key terms and definitions,
- considerations for the use of generative artificial intelligence and assessment, and
- the responsibilities relating to the above.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all staff involved in teaching and/or assessment of academic work that contributes to the award of academic credit for learning within the University, and to registered students engaged in a programme of study in ATU.

ATU acknowledges the role of Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs) requirements in programme design and assessment (see *AQAE003 Developing and Validating New Taught Programme Policy).* If a programme is part of a PSRB qualification system, programme documents must clearly explain the assessment requirements needed to progress towards the professional qualification. This includes details on which modules must be passed and the level at which they must be passed to meet the PSRB requirements.

The current policy should be read together with related approved policies and documents within the ATU Academic Quality Assurance and Enhancement Framework (AQAEF), specifically *AQAE005 Marks and Standards, AQAE004 Programme Design Policy, AQAE022 Academic Integrity Policy, AQAE020 Monitoring Evaluation and Enhancement of Programmes, AQAE006 Student Code* and their associated procedures.

3. External Reference Documents

- Department of Education and Skills (2011) *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030* Government of Ireland
- HEA/National Forum for Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (2025) *Ten Considerations for Generative Artificial Intelligence Adoption in Irish Higher Education* HEA
- National Academic Integrity Network (NAIN) (2023) *Guidelines for Academic Integrity in Higher Education*. Dublin: Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)
- National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (2021) *Assessment of/for/as Learning Continuing the Debate and Creating a Focus.* National Resource Hub (Ireland)
- National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (2017) *Expanding our Understanding of Assessment and Feedback in Irish Higher Education* National Resource Hub (Ireland)

- National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (2017) *Authentic Assessment in Irish Higher Education* National Resource Hub (Ireland)
- National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (2016, 2019, 2021) *Assessment of/for/as Learning Enhancement Theme 2016-18.* National Resource Hub (Ireland)
- Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG, 2015)
- Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) Core Quality Assurance Guidelines (QQI, 2016)

4. Policy

4.1 Principles

ATU is committed to the pursuit of collaborative approaches to empower students promoting shared ownership of learning. Principles are a useful way of operationalising and sharing good practice in assessment and feedback. The following principles underpin ATU's approach to the design of assessment and feedback. The principles are informed by and drawn from the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning (2017, 2109, 2021).[1] These principles serve to underpin opportunities for students to self-regulate their learning, fostering autonomy, dialogue and reflective practice.

Methods of assessment and feedback may differ between disciplines and programmes. Therefore, while the principles underpinning assessment and feedback outlined in this policy document serve to guide both programme and module assessment, their application and emphasis will vary according to the context and purposes of the assessment. The balance of emphasis in practice requires professional judgment based on the overall intended learning outcomes, stage of student learning, educational rationale and pedagogic approach.

1. Assessment and feedback must be accessible, fair and transparent:
   a. The programme and module learning outcomes and the module assessment strategy should be clearly articulated to students at the outset of a programme and module.
   b. Students should be informed early in each semester of the assessment components, including where applicable marking criteria, submission date(s), feedback dates

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[1] Relevant aspects of the ALTITUDE Charter (the National Charter for Universal Design in Tertiary Education, the EDIT Inclusive Curriculum Toolkit, the ATU Curriculum Framework and the *Seven Steps to Programme Development in ATU* have been drawn on in the formulation of the principles.

  c. The purpose, expectations, and language of assessment and feedback will be clear to both staff and students.

  d. Students will be supported in relation to assessment and feedback literacy.

2. Assessments must be valid, reliable and consistent:

  a. The goal of assessment is to provide opportunities to students to demonstrate their learning, particularly their achievement of the learning outcomes associated with a module or programme.

  b. Assessments will be discipline appropriate and pedagogically informed and employed to support the development of personal and professional skills, ethical conduct and academic integrity.

  c. Comparable grades across time, across markers and across methods can be generated to ensure academic standards.

  d. Assessments are designed in such a way that the intended learning outcomes they aim to assess and the ways students can demonstrate their understanding are clearly defined. The teaching strategies can be tailored to actively engage students in activities that maximise their ability to achieve these outcomes.

  e. Assessment methods are designed to provide clear and accurate evaluations of how effectively the outcomes have been met.

  f. Staff will facilitate student involvement in assessment and feedback through programme monitoring and evaluation activities such as Programme Boards and module evaluations and consider student feedback in assessment design, methods and timing.

3. Assessment and feedback must be guided by a programme-level approach where:

  a. Consideration of assessment timing, load, and variety is important to facilitate making it more manageable for students and staff and to enable a focus on deeper learning.

  b. Programmes will incorporate varied assessment tasks introduced sequentially to support student development and choice. This means that more is expected of the student as they move through the programme of study.

  c. An indicative programme assessment plan is prepared, by stage, in advance of the stage delivery, and communicated to all registered students within one week of teaching commencing.

  d. Where appropriate, collaborative and group work assessments should be incorporated.

  e. Work-based and authentic assessments (*see section 4.2 for definition*) may be included that are student-directed, contextually applied, discipline-specific, and designed to foster engagement and complex learning.

  f. The integration of learning is facilitated across modules and levels of the programme to help students to demonstrate their achievement of all learning outcomes by the end of the programme.

  g. Integrated assessments within a semester/stage may be facilitated to demonstrate integrated learning and address assessment workload.

  h. Assessment and feedback decisions will align with programme-level strategies, ensuring they are diverse, preparatory for lifelong learning and work, and are resource-efficient.

  i. Programme level discussions on Generative Artificial Intelligence (Gen AI) will enable staff to consider its impact in individual modules.

4. Feedback is an integral part of assessment and learning:

  a. Students will have opportunities to receive feedback as feedback supports students to enhance their learning and prepare for future assessments.

  b. Feedback shall be related to the learning outcomes and assessment criteria.

  c. Timing of feedback may vary depending on the nature of the assessment, and the volume of assessment load. Feedback will normally be provided within three weeks of submission of an in-semester assessment.

  d. Feedback may be individual, to identify specific issues relating to one student's work, or generic, referring to general points about the assessment as a whole and addressed to a group or whole class.

  e. Forms of feedback can vary and may include *inter alia* marking rubrics, oral feedback, written feedback, online feedback and audio feedback.

  f. Feedback can be presented in a variety of ways and may include *inter alia* in class, out of class, in meetings, through the Virtual Learning Environment (V.L.E.).

  g. Feedback must be consistent, useful and relevant.

  h. Feedback should match the student's level, the learning outcomes and the nature of the learning activity. This is underpinned by the principle of '*constructive alignment*' which seeks to ensure there is coherence between the learning outcomes and the alignment of assessment which serves to guide the relevance and appropriateness of feedback.

  i. Opportunities for feedback that includes feed-forward advice and peer feedback will be provided.

5. Best practice in assessment and feedback is endorsed by ATU:

  a. ATU promotes high quality teaching using a wide range of practices, methods and pedagogies which encourage active learning.

  b. Staff will be encouraged and supported to avail of continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities provided by ATU and external agencies that inform teaching, learning and assessment. These may include programmes of

training and study in curriculum development, use of digital tools, academic integrity safeguards and use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (Gen AI).

c. Staff will be encouraged to share good practice at various fora to ensure upskilling in assessment and feedback best practice.

6. ATU policies will promote best practice in assessment and feedback, emphasising their roles in fostering learning:

a. ATU seeks to foster an innovative community of learning and to continually develop a well-equipped, flexible, and stimulating learning environments.

b. ATU recognises the importance of regularly and consistently reviewing its curricula and pedagogy and assessment methodologies to ensure they reflect global, national and regional intellectual, social, economic and technological developments.

c. ATU will retain assessment material in accordance with the retention schedule should a recheck, review or appeal be required.

4.2 Key Terms and Definitions

Assessment and feedback are key to the learning process. Figure 1 illustrates the common vocabulary of assessment and feedback, the relationship between them and associated terminology. Produced by the National Forum for the enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education in Ireland, it is used widely throughout Higher Education.
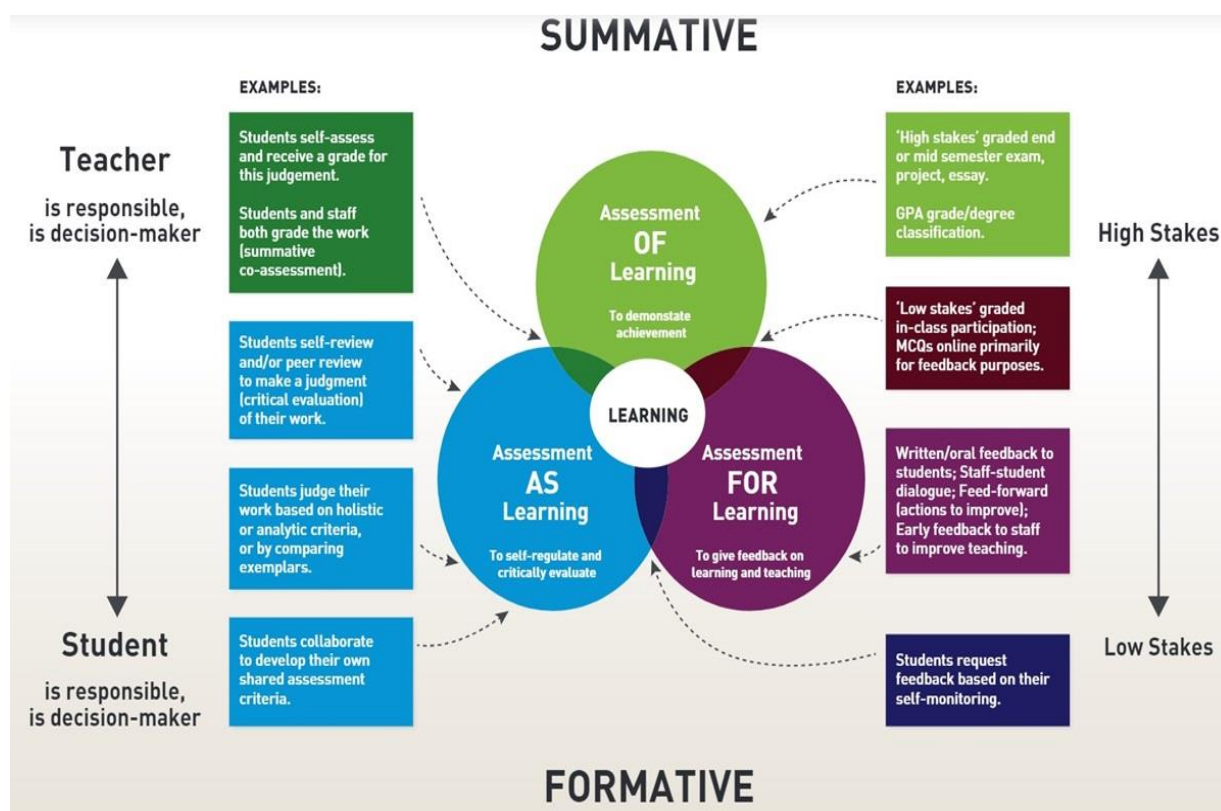

Figure 1: Assessment and Feedback
(National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, 2021)

Key terms associated with assessment and feedback are defined as follows in ATU:

Assessment AS Learning refers to the process where students actively engage in their own learning by using assessment and feedback to monitor, think about, and reflect on their progress. The aim is to empower students to self-regulate and to critically evaluate their own learning and performance.

Assessment Component: a module may contain several assessment components (for example a final exam; course work) that all contribute to the final mark for that assessment.

Assessment Element: an assessment component may contain several assessment elements that make up the totality of the assessment component (for example, essays, presentations)

Assessment Criteria refer to specific criteria against which work is assessed. An understanding of the criteria must be shared by the internal examiner and the student. Feedback should relate to these criteria.

Authentic Assessments refers to meaningful and challenging assessments designed to develop attributes, capabilities and professional skills.

Constructive alignment refers to a process aimed at ensuring coherence and consistency between the intended learning outcomes and teaching methods, assessment tasks, and learning activities.

Formative Assessment/Assessment FOR Learning refers to assessment of progress and achievement to support and enhance learning. It occurs during the learning process. Its role in decision-making is to help students understand their own strengths and gaps to plan their future learning. It informs students' actions for improvement to their learning. It also supports the development of students' self-regulation skills.

Summative Assessment/Assessment OF Learning refers to assessment of an activity that has occurred and is typically used to determine whether students have achieved the learning outcomes and to assign grades.

Scaffolding refers to the technique of providing support to students as they learn new concepts or skills to enable students to complete tasks on their own and engage in independent learning.

4.3 Generative AI and Assessment

Generative AI (Gen AI) refers to a subset of artificial intelligence that focuses on creating or generating new data, content, or information that is similar to what a human might produce. It is designed to generate outputs that resemble human-created content in various domains, such as text, images, music, and more. Gen AI models are trained on large datasets and are capable of learning patterns and structures within that data. This learned knowledge is used to produce new content that is consistent with the patterns they have learned. Some examples of Gen AI include ChatGPT and Copilot.

ATU recognises that AI generally and Gen AI particularly have had and continue to have a major impact both on and in higher education. There are potential benefits and challenges in its usage. AI usage may offer new opportunities for teaching, learning, assessment and research. AI usage may also present risks including for academic integrity, ethics, privacy, impartiality, intellectual property and sustainability.

In terms of assessment, Gen AI deserves careful consideration amongst all stakeholders as its prevalence has increased exponentially in recent times. This is best undertaken from an informed perspective which requires a level of Gen AI literacy and understanding of its usage. ATU is committed to ensuing all staff are Gen AI literate and will continue to roll out Gen AI training and provide an array of resources and guidelines on Gen AI through the Academic Integrity Hub. The TLC have developed a set of guidelines for staff and students on the use of Gen AI. These are living documents that will be updated as necessary.

It is challenging to make final determinations on the use of Gen AI as the technologies are rapidly evolving (see Appendix 9.1 for an illustration of discussions on use of AI at a national level in Irish Higher Education). In this context, the broad parameters within which Gen AI usage is framed in ATU are as follows:

1. Gen AI usage will be framed by responsibility and accountability.
2. A Programme Board discussion on Gen AI usage will consider its impact at programme level.
3. Unauthorised use of Gen AI is not permitted and is addressed in *AQAE022 Academic Integrity Policy.*[2]
4. Staff teaching modules must specify the permitted level of Gen AI use in their assessment briefs including information on how to reference such material.
5. All usage must be acknowledged with proper attribution and citation.
6. All usage must be underpinned by an understanding that Gen AI content is not always reliable. Gen AI through regurgitation of flawed training data can reinforce

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[2] There are effective and ethical ways in which to engage with AI that are not contrary to the principles of Academic Integrity. This is evolving as AI usage evolves.

established biased narratives and amplify their effects when not evaluated correctly before reuse.

Appendix 9.2: the AI Assessment Scale, provides a useful scale which can help programme boards, individual staff and students identify levels of permitted Gen AI usage.

5. Responsibilities

The successful implementation of this policy depends on a variety of stakeholders involved in the teaching, learning and assessment processes. Please read *AQAE005 Marks and Standards* and *AQAE004 Programme Design Policy* for specific responsibilities of Programme Design Teams, Programme Boards, Examination Boards, External Examiners, Academic Council and Vice President Academic Affairs & Registrar which amongst other responsibilities also address those related to assessment and feedback.

5.1 Academic Staff (Internal Examiner)

Academic staff include those teaching/supervising at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Assessment and providing feedback are some of the principal responsibilities of academic staff teaching/delivering a module. The principles set out in *section 4.1* of this document shall facilitate academic staff to discharge these responsibilities.

Key responsibilities of Academic Staff (Internal Examiner) including those related to assessment and feedback are also outlined in *AQAE005 Marks and Standards Policy*. Overall academic staff have responsibilities to:

- have a duty of care in the preparation of assessments and in the compilation of accurate marks,
- apply high ethical standards including fairness, objectivity, and consistency in the communication of assessment criteria, and in student assessment and feedback,
- prepare reliable and valid assessments as a basis for inferring the standards of knowledge, skill or competence achieved by students relative to module and programme intended learning outcome,
- ensure that all assessments are outlined on the programme assessment plan, that they comply with the provisions of the approved programme schedule (APS), and that details of how assessments will be marked are communicated to students,
- communicate provisional coursework results and relevant feedback to students in a timely manner,
- keep up to date with relevant policies and procedures in designing and implementing assessments and feedback.

5.2 Students

Students' obligations and standards of behaviour in respect of assessment and feedback are outlined in *AQAE005 Marks and Standards Policy* and the *AQAE022 Academic Integrity Policy*. Overall, students have a responsibility to:

- engage with their programme of learning,
- discuss and reflect on their learning and progress,
- approach their academic endeavours with honesty and integrity,
- consider feedback given on their work to seek to understand and act on the feedback,
- familiarise themselves with the assessment plan and submission requirements for their programme of study, and
- abide by relevant University policies and procedures.

5.3 Head of Department

Heads of Department have responsibilities to:

- ensure that quality assurance processes for changes to programme and modules, arising from monitoring and review activities are actioned,
- ensure Programme Boards are meeting regularly to consider the monitoring and review of assessment and feedback,
- ensure Programme Board Annual Report is completed by the Programme Board
- encourage all staff to particate in CPD annually.

5.4 Programme Board

- prepare an indicative programme assessment plan, by stage, in advance of the stage delivery, and communicate same to all registered students within one week of teaching commencing,
- ensure the reports of External Examiners are provided to academic staff and encourage enhancement of programmes to address same and,
- prepare Programme Board Annual Report.

5.5 Teaching and Learning Centre

The Teaching and Learning Centre has responsibilities to:

- support staff via Continuous Professional Development (CPD) initiatives to maintain and enhance teaching, learning, assessment and feedback,
- promote best practices in teaching, learning and assessment,
- offer support and guidance to all staff on teaching, learning and assessment, and

- provide relevant resources and supports for students, including for example academic integrity training.

6. Documents Related to this Policy

6.1 Policies

- *AQAE005 Marks and Standards*
- *AQAE006 Student Code*
- *AQAE004 Programme Design Policy*
- *AQAE022 Academic Integrity Policy*
- *AQAE012 Reasonable Accommodations for Student Policy*
- *AQAE017 Programme and Module Revision Policy*
- *AQAE020 Monitoring Evaluation and Enhancement of Programmes*

6.2 Procedures

- *AQAE042 Procedure for Examination and Assessment Regulations*
- *AQAE008 Procedure for Academic Misconduct (draft)*

7. Revision History

Revision No	Description of Change	Approval Date
000	New Policy	11/04/2025

8. Appendices

8.1 An Approach to Gen AI Usage in Irish Higher Education

Generative AI is not a monolithic tool but a collection of diverse technologies. Institutional and disciplinary taxonomies will need to be developed so staff are positioned to make informed decisions on what is—and is not—an allowable use of AI in the context of specific subject matters.[3] Exploring the use of generative AI to enhance education must be prioritised, so that Irish education can retain its reputation as a leader in inclusive, public education. The following 'ten considerations for generative AI adoption' outline key issues identified through dialogue with stakeholders across Ireland's higher education sector, industry, and associated agencies between September and December 2024 (Figure 2).
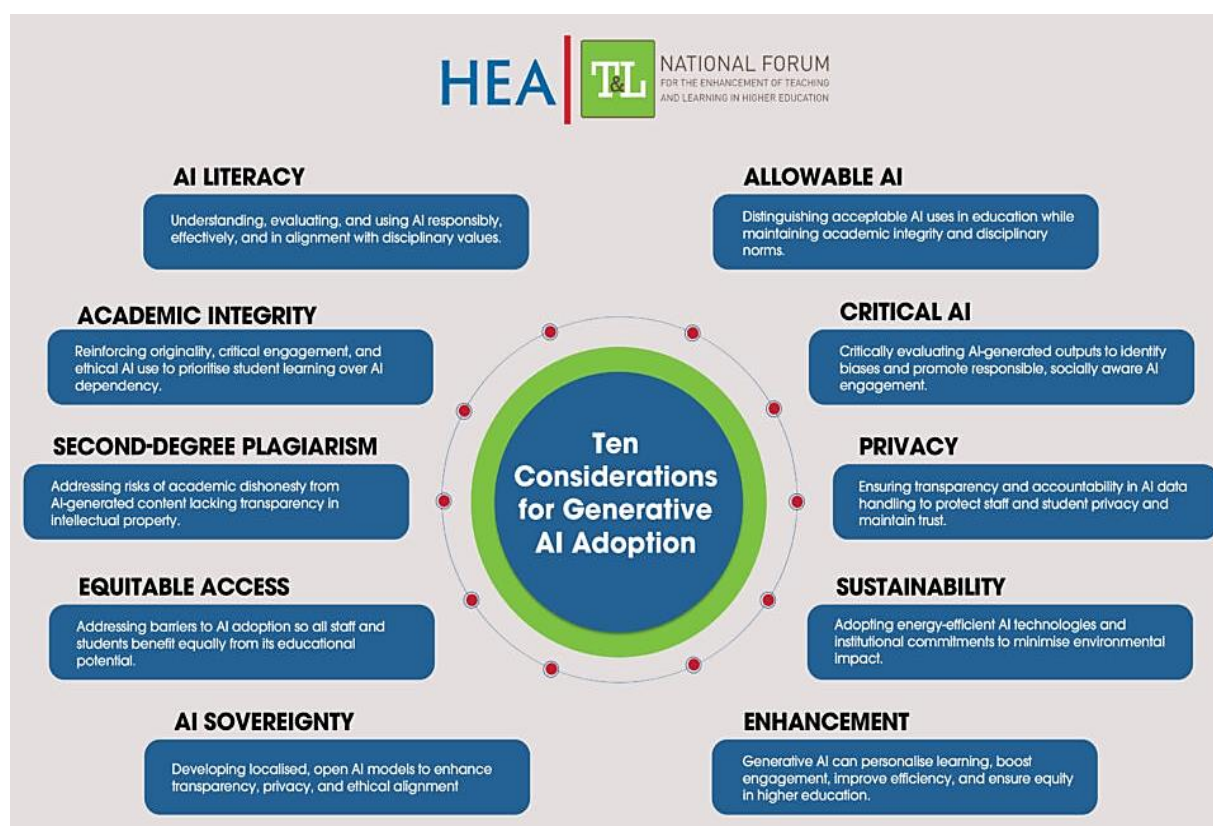

Figure 2: Ten Considerations for Generative Artificial Intelligence Adoption in Irish Higher Education (HEA/National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education)

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[3] O'Sullivan, J. (2025) HEA Ten Considerations for Generative Artificial Intelligence Adoption in Irish Higher Education - National Resource Hub

8.2 The AI Assessment Scale

The following scale (Figure 3) developed by Leon Furze and associates provides a framework for staff and students to identify the permitted level of Gen AI integration in the completion of assessment. The different levels may be adopted depending on a range of factors including: the discipline; the nature of the assessment; the purpose of the assessment; and the intended learning outcomes.

The AI Assessment Scale

1	NO AI	The assessment is completed entirely without AI assistance in a controlled environment, ensuring that students rely solely on their existing knowledge, understanding, and skills **You must not use AI at any point during the assessment. You must demonstrate your core skills and knowledge.**
2	AI PLANNING	AI may be used for pre-task activities such as brainstorming, outlining and initial research. This level focuses on the effective use of AI for planning, synthesis, and ideation, but assessments should emphasise the ability to develop and refine these ideas independently. **You may use AI for planning, idea development, and research. Your final submission should show how you have developed and refined these ideas.**
3	AI COLLABORATION	AI may be used to help complete the task, including idea generation, drafting, feedback, and refinement. Students should critically evaluate and modify the AI suggested outputs, demonstrating their understanding. **You may use AI to assist with specific tasks such as drafting text, refining and evaluating your work. You must critically evaluate and modify any AI-generated content you use.**
4	FULL AI	AI may be used to complete any elements of the task, with students directing AI to achieve the assessment goals. Assessments at this level may also require engagement with AI to achieve goals and solve problems. **You may use AI extensively throughout your work either as you wish, or as specifically directed in your assessment. Focus on directing AI to achieve your goals while demonstrating your critical thinking.**
5	AI EXPLORATION	AI is used creatively to enhance problem-solving, generate novel insights, or develop innovative solutions to solve problems. Students and educators co-design assessments to explore unique AI applications within the field of study. **You should use AI creatively to solve the task, potentially co-designing new approaches with your instructor.**

Figure 3: AI Assessment Scale (Furze et al. 2024)