LCETB Case Study 3 – Title: TEL And QA Support Services Collaborative Response To An Evolving Digital Assessment Landscape.

1. Introduction

This case study details the collaborative approach undertaken by the Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) and Quality Assurance (QA) Support Services in addressing critical areas within the Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board (LCETB). These areas encompass the development of robust assessment guidelines, a strategic response to the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in education, and the design and implementation of comprehensive professional development (PD) programmes for staff. It demonstrates the effectiveness of this collaborative model in fostering innovation, ensuring quality, and promoting ethical practices within the FET. The coordinated effort between TEL and QA led to more effective outcomes, particularly when it came to the College of FET's ability to respond to a rapidly evolving landscape with digital technologies and assessment methodologies.

2. Description of Issue

The ETB College of FET faced a series of interconnected complex challenges that necessitated a coordinated and strategic response:

1. **Need for Updated Assessment Guidelines:**

As the digital transformation of FET became a central focus for the organisation, a move to more fully digital assessment necessitated significant reform of practices, policies and procedures that were initially designed as paper-based and where assessment methods and guidelines failed to fully leverage the potential of digital tools and resources. There was also pressing need to align assessment practices with evolving QQI (Quality and Qualifications Ireland) certification standards, ensuring that digital assessments met the required quality benchmarks. The shift towards remote and mixed-mode learning environments, accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, further underscored the urgency of developing comprehensive digital assessment guidelines.

2. **Emergence of AI in Education:**

The public launch of ChatGPT in November 2022 triggered widespread discussions and concerns regarding the integrity of traditional assessment methods. There was a perceived threat that AI could be used to undermine academic integrity, leading to questions about the authenticity and reliability of student work. It was also necessary to respond to the AI in a manner that was inclusive and harnessed Learning Practitioners required clear guidance on how to manage the use of AI in assessments, balancing the potential benefits with the risks of misuse. It was also critical to ensure that the integration of AI aligned with the organisation's core values, promoting ethical, inclusive, and equitable practices. There was a need to provide pragmatic advice and support to teachers, enabling them to use AI in a way that enhances learning without compromising academic standards.

3. **Professional Development Requirements:**

The successful integration of digital assessment methods and guidance on AI into practice in teaching, learning and assessment depended heavily on the skills and confidence of Learning Practitioners as well as all those involved in internal verification and external authentication. Many learning practitioners required training and support to effectively use digital platforms such as Moodle and Microsoft Teams including features such as inbuilt AI features,

gradebooks and rubrics. In addition, the emergence of AI required teaching staff needed to be supported in navigating the challenges presented for assessment whilst ethically and safely harnessing the potential of AI tools.

3. Action

To effectively address these challenges, the TEL and QA Support Services adopted a multifaceted, collaborative approach:

a) Development of Assessment Guidelines:

LCETB College of TEL and QA teams initiated a comprehensive consultation process in spring 2022 involving all relevant stakeholders, including teaching staff, line managers, and external authenticators, to gather input and ensure that digital assessment guidelines were practical and relevant. Recognising the importance of a consistent user experience, the services promoted the use of Moodle and Microsoft Teams as the primary platforms for digital assessment, providing training and support for both systems. The guidelines provided a clear definition of digital assessment, outlining acceptable practices for the submission and grading of digital evidence, while explicitly prohibiting the use of unapproved platforms and storage devices such as USB devices for summative assessment. It also laid out a detailed roadmap from 2022 to 2025, which charted a strategic progression towards fully digital assessment on approved platforms by September 2025.

b) Response to AI:

Following the launch of Generative AI into the public domain/mainstream in late 2022 LCETB College of FET was the first ETB and amongst the first educational institutions to develop AI and assessment guidelines. The response to the emergence of Generative AI occurred in distinct stages as follows

- **Initial Awareness Raising:** The TEL team proactively initiated discussions and workshops to raise awareness among staff about the emergence of AI tools and their potential impact on teaching and assessment. Initiatives included a lunchtime ‘Show and TEL’ webinar on AI use showcasing ethical and unethical use in January 2023 and a workshop for managers as part of a digital transformation of FET event in February 2023.

- **Guideline Development:** Drawing on their combined expertise, the TEL and QA teams drafted and circulated comprehensive draft guidelines on the ethical and inclusive use of AI in assessment, providing practical advice and support for learning practitioners. The guidelines were approved and adopted by the College of FT following stakeholder feedback in early 2023. To provide clarity and flexibility, the guidelines included four distinct options for AI use in assessment, ranging from a complete prohibition to unrestricted use, with appropriate acknowledgement and transparency.

- **Professional Development:** The TEL and QA team collaborative effort continued with the design and delivery of a series of professional development workshops, focusing on practical strategies for using digital assessment tools and AI effectively. These workshops were promoted which over 200 learning practitioners attended incorporated hands-on activities, case studies, and group discussions, providing participants with opportunities to apply their learning and share best practices.

- **Resources and Support:** Recognising the importance of ongoing support, the teams provided a range of resources, including videos promoting the AI in assessment guidance, online tutorials, one-to-one support clinics, and access to campus-based digital champions

to support teachers in assessment design and in ensuring that they were enabled to effectively apply both the digital assessment and AI in assessment guidelines.

- **AI ethics and the Critical AI Project:** Recognising the need for ongoing evaluation and informed decision-making the TEL Support Service launched a "Critical AI project" to assess a range of AI tools for teaching and learning. This project involved learning support staff and teachers in a structured evaluation process, using a rubric based on the ETBs values and our public sector duty that considered ethical factors such as data use, inclusion and impact on the environment as well as the impact on teaching and learning. The project has now been mainstreamed into policy so that all technologies procured and supported by the College of FET are evaluated using the critical evaluation process.

c) Ongoing TEL and QA collaboration

The success of the collaborative effort on digital assessment and AI guidance has resulted in an ongoing collaboration where the TEL and QA teams meet twice monthly to respond to the evolving technology and assessment landscapes. Among the outcomes of tis collaborative effort is the updating of our guidelines to V2 in 2024. The teams are currently exploring models to enhance both our guidelines and CPD including engagement with professor Danny Liu and an exploration of the potential application of the 2-lane model adopted by University of Australia to FET. We are also currently designing a PD workshop series on assessment design for Learning Practitioners which will combine the move to digital assessment, applying the AI guidance and UDL principles to assessment design.

4. Key Outcomes/Impacts

The collaborative approach adopted by the TEL and QA Support Services yielded a range of significant and positive outcomes:

- **Clear and Consistent Guidelines:**
  - The development and implementation of clear, consistent guidelines for digital assessment and AI use ensured that all staff were working to the same standards.
  - The guidelines helped to reduce confusion and anxiety among learners and learning practitioners, providing them with the confidence to embrace new technologies and assessment methods.
- **Increased Awareness and Understanding:**
  - The proactive awareness-raising activities increased staff understanding of the benefits and risks associated with AI, enabling them to make informed decisions about its use in their teaching practice.
  - The collaborative approach ensured that both the technical and quality assurance aspects of AI were considered, leading to a more holistic and balanced perspective
- **Enhanced Skills and Confidence:**
  - The professional development workshops improved teaching staff skills in using digital tools and AI for assessment, enhancing their confidence and competence in a digital learning environment.
  - Participants reported that the workshops were highly useful and relevant, providing them with practical strategies and resources that they could apply in their own practice.
- **Reinforced Inclusive Practices:**
  - By promoting Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles and accessible assessment methods, the collaborative approach reinforced inclusive practices, ensuring that all learners could benefit from digital assessment and AI.
  - The focus on multiple means of action and expression enabled learning practitioners to cater to the diverse needs and preferences of their learners.

- **Informed Decision-Making:**
  - The Critical AI project provided a structured and evidence-based approach to evaluating AI tools, enabling the LCETB to make informed decisions about which technologies to adopt and support.
  - The project ensured that ethical considerations and learner needs were central to the decision-making process, aligning technology use with the organisation's core values.
- **Positive Feedback and Engagement:**
  - Feedback from professional development sessions indicated high levels of satisfaction, with participants praising the relevance, practicality, and collaborative nature of the workshops.
  - The engagement of learning support staff, teachers, and digital champions in the Critical AI project fostered a sense of ownership and shared responsibility for the successful integration of AI.

5. Key Learnings

This case study underscores several key lessons that are relevant to educational institutions seeking to navigate the challenges and opportunities presented by digital assessment and AI:

- **Collaboration is Essential:**
  - A collaborative approach between TEL and QA Support Services is highly effective in addressing complex issues that span both technical and pedagogical domains.
  - By combining their expertise and resources, these services can develop comprehensive and practical solutions that are aligned with the organisation's strategic goals.
- **Proactive Engagement is Key:**
  - Addressing AI proactively, rather than simply banning it, allows for the development of ethical and inclusive practices that harness the potential of these technologies to enhance learning.
  - By engaging staff in discussions and providing clear guidance, organisations can foster a culture of innovation and responsible technology use.
- **Professional Development is Crucial:**
  - Providing ongoing professional development and support is essential for the successful integration of digital tools and AI in education.
  - Training programmes should be practical, hands-on, and tailored to the specific needs of learning practitioners, enabling them to develop the skills and confidence to embrace new technologies.
- **Values-Driven Approach is Paramount:**
  - Basing decisions about technology use on core values such as inclusivity, ethics, and learner-centeredness ensures that technology is used in a way that aligns with the organisation's mission and benefits all learners.
  - A values-driven approach can help to mitigate potential risks and biases associated with AI, promoting equitable and responsible technology use.
- **Critical Evaluation is Necessary:**
  - Continuously evaluating tools and practices is necessary to adapt to the rapidly changing technological landscape and ensure that technology is being used effectively and ethically.
  - Evaluation processes should involve a diverse range of stakeholders, including learning practitioners, support staff, and learners, to gather a broad range of perspectives and insights.

By adopting a collaborative, proactive, and values-driven approach, the TEL and QA Support Services at LCETB effectively navigated the challenges posed by digital assessment and AI, fostering a culture of innovation, inclusion, and ethical practice within the organisation. This case study provides a valuable model for other educational institutions seeking to embrace the potential of technology while upholding the highest standards of quality and integrity.

Relevant Links:

- CFET Guidance on Artificial Intelligence
- Links to CFET QA Assessment Procedures and Forms