College of FET Assistive Technology Policy

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1. Policy Statement

The College of FET is committed to providing an inclusive, accessible, and empowering learning environment for all. Our approach to Assistive Technology (AT) is guided by the values of **Respect, Inclusion, Empowerment, and Social Justice**, as set out in our Equality and Human Rights Values Statement. AT is central to enabling learners with disabilities, learning differences, or health conditions to access, participate in, and succeed in further education and training. We recognise that AT benefits not only those with disabilities but can enhance learning for all.

2. Our Public Sector Duty Values in Action[1]

- **Respect:** We foster a culture of mutual empathy, integrity, fairness, and kindness. We listen to and consider the perspectives of our diverse learners and staff, ensuring dignity and safety in all interactions.

- **Inclusion:** We recognise, value, and harness the richness of difference. We strive to remove barriers and operate in an accessible, flexible manner, reflecting the diversity of our communities.

- **Empowerment:** We support learners and staff to take an active role in identifying and using AT, building digital confidence, and influencing decisions that affect their learning and work.

- **Social Justice:** We are committed to reducing inequality, preventing discrimination, and ensuring equitable access to resources and opportunities for all, especially those most marginalised or at risk of social exclusion.

3. Embedding Inclusive Practices and Normalising Accessibility

We recognise that accessibility and inclusion are fundamental to creating an equitable learning environment for all learners, regardless of whether a disability has been disclosed. We are committed to embedding inclusive practices into all aspects of our teaching, learning, and support services. This means proactively designing learning experiences and materials that are accessible by default. Examples include using PowerPoint Live as a default presentation tool, providing learning materials in multiple formats, and ensuring all digital content includes descriptive alt text for images. These practices align with the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and reflect best practice guidance from the [European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education](#), as well as national policy in Ireland.

By normalising the use of inclusive technologies and approaches, we aim to reduce the need for learners to request individual accommodations, which can sometimes be uncomfortable or discouraging. Accessibility is a shared responsibility and a standard part of how we work, benefiting all learners by removing barriers and fostering a culture of inclusiveness. This approach complements our provision of assistive technology and reasonable accommodations, ensuring that every learner receives the support they need to succeed. Together, these strategies help us meet our legal obligations under Irish and UK disability legislation and promote a welcoming, supportive educational environment for everyone.

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[1] https://lcetb.ie/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Assessment-of-Equality-and-Human-Rights-Issues-2024-WEB.pdf

4. Definition

Assistive Technology (AT) is any item, piece of equipment, software, system, or product that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of persons with disabilities or additional needs. AT ranges from simple aids (e.g., reading rulers) to advanced digital solutions (e.g., screen readers, speech-to-text, mind-mapping apps). It encompasses both low-tech and high-tech solutions and is central to enabling access, independence, and participation in education, employment, and daily life. (See examples in Appendix 1).

As outlined in the [LCETB Disability Awareness Information for FET Learning Practitioners (2024, p.34)](#):

"Assistive Technology encompasses a broad spectrum of low-level technology and high-level technology, for example, walking frames, wheelchairs, hearing aids, vision aids and computer-based communication aids. These technologies play a crucial role in enabling the rights of people with disabilities under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) such as access to independent living, education and employment." NDA [2]

5. Guiding Principles

- **Equity & Inclusion:** Every learner has a right to access AT and related supports, free from discrimination.

- **Universal Design:** We embed AT and digital accessibility into all learning environments, resources, and practices.

- **Confidentiality & Respect:** All information about AT needs and disability is handled confidentially and respectfully.

- **Collaboration:** We foster close collaboration between the Active Inclusion Support Service (AISS) the Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL)Team, and learning practitioners to ensure the best outcomes for learners and staff.

- **Continuous Improvement:** We are committed to ongoing review and enhancement of our AT provision, informed by learner and staff feedback.

6. Accessing Assistive Technology

6.1. Disclosure and Needs Assessment

- Learners are encouraged to disclose any disability, learning difference, or health condition to access AT supports by registering with the Active Inclusion Support Service [Click Here](#).

- Once registered, learners will be contacted by a member of the AISS team and invited to discuss their support requirements. This process will involve:

  - Gathering some relevant background information about the learners needs;
  - Discussing the demands of the course and any technology needs;
  - Deciding on learning support and reasonable accommodations, where necessary;
  - Answering any questions learners may have.

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[2] [Assistive Technology | Disability |The National Disability Authority - National Disability Authority](#)

- This results in a Learning Educational Needs Summary (LENS) Report which details supports, including any assistive technology, are tailored to the needs of the learner and, with the learner's consent can be shared with relevant staff.

6.2. Provision and Funding

- College of FET provides a range of AT devices and software, including (but not limited to): screen readers, dictation tools, mind-mapping software, adapted keyboards, magnifiers, and mobile apps.

- Funding is supported by the Fund for Learners with Disabilities (FSD) for PLC Learners and other SOLAS funding for learners attending other provision.

- As far as possible, AT is available in classrooms, learning hubs, and for home use where appropriate.

- Device loan schemes are available to ensure equitable access.

6.3. Training and Ongoing Support

- Learners receive tailored training in the use of recommended AT, with refresher sessions and drop-in support available through the AISS team.

- Workshops are provided to build digital confidence and independence.

- Staff are trained to support AT use in teaching and assessment.

6.4. Digital Accessibility and Inclusive Practice

- All digital learning platforms, resources, and communications will meet or exceed WCAG 2.1 AA accessibility standards.

- Staff are provided with guidance and training on creating accessible content and using inclusive teaching methods.

- The College promotes the use of accessible formats (digital, large print, audio, captioned video) as standard practice.

7. The Role of the Active Inclusion Support Service (AISS) Team

In line with the Learner Support Framework Learner Support Framework, the AISS Team:

- Provide pre-entry and on-entry information, advice, and guidance to prospective and current learners regarding available supports, including AT.

- Conduct holistic needs assessments for learners who disclose a disability, learning difference, or health condition, identifying appropriate supports and reasonable accommodations.

- Develop and review Learning Educational Needs Summary (LENS) Reports and support plans in partnership with learners, ensuring these are shared (with consent) with relevant staff.

- Coordinate the provision and training of assistive technology to learners and ensure device equity supports are accessible to all who need them.

- Offer ongoing support, check-ins, and advocacy throughout the learner's journey, including signposting to additional services (e.g., guidance counselling, mental health supports).

- Promote inclusive practice and works collaboratively with teaching staff, the TEL Team, and other support services to embed accessibility and inclusion across the College of FET.

- Gather and respond to learner feedback to continually improve support and provision.

8. The Role of the Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) Team

In line with the Technology Enhanced Learning Action Plan, the TEL team

- Provide expert support and training to staff on the effective use of digital technologies in teaching, learning, and assessment.

- Deliver TEL Cafés to help staff design accessible, engaging and inclusive learning experiences, and to integrate assistive technologies into their practice.

- Develop and maintain digital resources, guides, and workshops for staff and supports the use of the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) and other digital platforms.

- Collaborate closely with the Active inclusion Support Service to ensure all digital learning environments are accessible and that best practice in technology-enhanced learning is shared across the College of FET

- Actively promotes the use of supportive technologies in the classroom and seeks to embed them in our engagement with staff through workshops, TEL Cafés, and one-to-one sessions.

9. Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Responsibilities
Learners	Disclose needs, participate in needs assessments, engage with training and supports, give feedback
Active inclusion Support Service	Coordinate needs assessments, AT provision, training and ongoing support for learners, ensure digital accessibility, support device loan schemes and keep updated with emerging, trends, tools, legislation and practices.
TEL Team	Provide digital support and training to staff, promote accessible and innovative use of technology keep updated with emerging, trends, tools, legislation and practices.
Teaching Staff	Support AT use in teaching and assessment, create accessible resources, promote inclusion by embedding AT into lesson planning, modelling and/or demonstrating use of AT as part of provision while keeping updated with emerging trends, tools, legislation and practices.

Role	Responsibilities
Strategic Regional Planning Network (SRPN)	Ensure resources and funding for effective AT provision, support policy implementation
IT Department	Maintain ICT infrastructure,

10. Review, Feedback, and Continuous Improvement

- This policy will be reviewed annually, with input from learners, staff, and external partners.

- Learners and staff are encouraged to provide feedback on AT provision and suggest improvements via surveys, focus groups, or direct contact.

- For more information or to give feedback on this policy, please contact: learnersupport@lcetb.ie

- Learners are actively involved in reviewing and improving AT provision through feedback, focus groups, and representation on relevant committees.

- The College collaborates with national agencies (AHEAD, NDA, NCBI, etc.) to ensure best practice and access to up-to-date resources.

References

- National Disability Authority (NDA), "Assistive Technology," nda.ie Assistive Technology | Disability |The National Disability Authority - National Disability Authority

- World Health Organization, "Defining Assistive Technology," Full article: Defining assistive technology: Adopting a common framework

- Assistive Technology Industry Association (ATIA), "What is AT?" What is AT? - Assistive Technology Industry Association

- United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), Article 4, 20, 24, 27, 29 https://social.desa.un.org/issues/disability/crpd/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities-crpd

Appendix 1 Assistive Technology Examples with Information Links

For Blind or Vision-Impaired Learners

- Screen Reading Software: JAWS, NVDA, VoiceOver
- Screen Magnification Software: ZoomText, Windows Magnifier
- Text-to-Speech Software: Read&Write, Kurzweil 3000
- Braille Displays and Embossers: AHEAD list
- Electronic Magnifiers and CCTV: AHEAD list

For Deaf or Hard of Hearing Learners

- Induction Loop Systems: AHEAD list
- Real-Time Captioning Systems: AHEAD list
- FM Listening Systems and Personal Amplifiers: AHEAD list
- Closed Captioning and Subtitling Tools: Trinity College Dublin AT

For Learners with Mobility or Physical Disabilities

- Voice Recognition Software: Dragon NaturallySpeaking, Microsoft Dictate
- Adapted/Ergonomic Keyboards and Mice: AHEAD list
- Eye-Tracking Devices: AHEAD list
- Sip-and-Puff Systems, Head Pointers: AHEAD list

For Learners with Specific Learning Difficulties (e.g. Dyslexia, Dyspraxia)

- Text-to-Speech and Speech-to-Text Software: Read&Write, Speechify, Microsoft Dictate
- Mind-Mapping Software: MindMeister, Inspiration
- Audio Recorders and Smartpens: Livescribe
- Reading Guides and Coloured Overlays: AHEAD list
- Dyslexia-Friendly Fonts: AHEAD list

For Learners with Communication Difficulties

- AAC Devices and Apps: GoTalk 9+, Proloquo2Go
- Speech-Generating Devices: AHEAD list

For Learners with Cognitive or Executive Function Needs

- Electronic Organisers and Timers: AHEAD list
- Reminder and Scheduling Apps: AHEAD list
- Task Management Software: Microsoft To Do, Google Keep

- Note-Taking Apps: [OneNote](#), [Notability](#)

For ESOL and Multilingual Learners

- Translation Tools: [Google Lens](#), [Microsoft Translator](#)

- Language Learning Apps: [Duolingo](#), [Quizlet](#)

General and Cross-Disability Tools

- Reader Pens: [AHEAD list](#)

- Immersive Reader (Microsoft): [Trinity College Dublin AT](#)

- Accessible Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs): [Dublin City University AT](#)

- Collaboration Platforms: [Microsoft Teams](#), [Google Classroom](#)

Further Information and Practical Guides

- [AHEAD: Assistive Technology for Students](#)

- [Dublin City University: Assistive Technology](#)

- [Trinity College Dublin: Assistive Technology](#)

- [TU Dublin: Assistive Technology Service](#)

- [National College of Art and Design: Assistive Technology](#)

- [IADT: Assistive Technology Services](#)

- [University of Galway: Assistive Technology Area](#)

- [Enable Ireland: Foundations in Assistive Technology Course](#)