

INQAAHE 2026

Harnessing GenAI for Transformative QA: Practical Integration and Impact

**Forum Subtopic 3: Leveraging technology & AI to
strengthen impactful QA**

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Workshop Outline

- Building on INQAAHE 2025 (early AI pilot projects)
- Real world example and shared learning - integration of GenAI tools to enhance thematic analysis processes
- Format
 - Presentation – Case Study AI in Practice
 - Slido Poll
 - Round Table Discussion and Feedback



Why GenAI in QA?

- GenAI - reshaping education and all facets of life
- QA must be agile, forward-looking, and resilient
- Opportunity for QA agencies to lead change, not just respond
- Ensures QA remains relevant in a digitally transformed HE landscape
- GenAI – a new core competency in QA



*"Artificial intelligence is no longer just a frontier technology – it's a **pervasive force** shaping how we live, work and learn."*

— **World Economic Forum, 2025**

*"Subtopic 3: Leveraging technology and AI to **strengthen impactful quality assurance**...assess how technological advancements, including generative AI, can **improve QA practices**, enable data-driven decision-making, and **support agile responses** to educational innovation..." - **INQAAHE Forum 2026***

Useful to recap:

What's changed since INQAAHE 2025?

- ❑ Most HEIs now have AI policies, with guidance for staff and students
- ❑ QA agencies are shifting slowly but surely, from experimentation to implementation
- ❑ Consensus emerging that AI supports – not substitutes – human expertise and judgement
- ❑ Clearer expectations at European Level – i.e. EU, ENQA – around transparency and guidance on responsible use of AI



Slido.com
#4219969

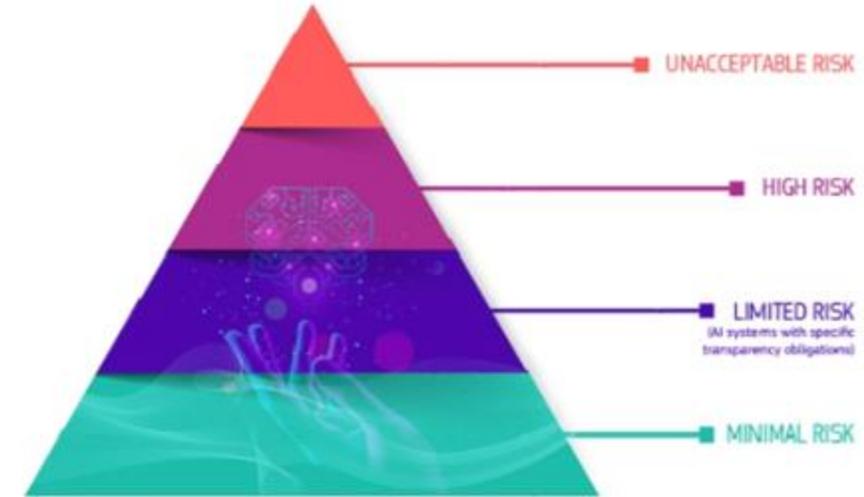


European Context

- Europe
 - EU AI Act & Guidelines
 - Comprehensive legal framework
 - Harmonise rules on AI
 - Risk based approach
- European Association for QA in Higher Education (ENQA)
 - ENQA Guidelines for the Responsible Use of AI in External QA – Support responsible use of AI in EQA activities of QA agencies within EHEA
 - ENQA Internal Policy on the Use of Artificial Intelligence
 - Guidelines for ENQA Agency Reviews - ENQA Policy on the use of AI in ENQA Agency Reviews (p.49)

A Risk-based Approach

The AI Act defines 4 levels of risk for AI systems:



Guidelines for the Responsible Use of AI in External QA November 2025

These guidelines have been developed by ENQA to support the responsible use of artificial intelligence (AI) in the external quality assurance activities of QA agencies within the European Higher Education Area. They are the outcome of ENQA's consultation process with its members and affiliates carried out in 2025¹.

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance on key principles and considerations that agencies should observe when integrating AI into their external QA procedures. The guidelines are intended as a resource to foster reflection, transparency, and responsibility in the use of AI rather than as binding requirements. ENQA will not assess how agencies implement or follow these guidelines as part of ENQA Agency Reviews.

Strategic and Organisational Integration

QA agencies are encouraged to adopt and publish a clear, organisation-wide policy on the use of AI, focussing on its role as a tool in external QA activities rather than as a goal in itself.

Ethical, Inclusive, and Sustainable Use

Agencies should seek to ensure that the use of AI aligns with ethical standards, inclusivity, environmental sustainability, academic autonomy, and relevant national or regional legal and human rights frameworks.

Transparency and Communication

Agencies should openly communicate how AI is used in external QA, including public declarations of use and transparent processes with stakeholders.

Data Protection and Consent

AI use should comply with data protection laws. No personal or other sensitive data should be processed without explicit consent from the evaluated HEIs, relevant stakeholders, and review panel members.

Equity and Access

Agencies are encouraged to support fair access to AI for those involved in external QA, and avoid reinforcing existing inequalities in QA processes.

Fitness for Purpose and Continuous Evaluation

Agencies should use AI tools in their external QA activities only when appropriate, and continuously monitor, evaluate, and improve their effectiveness, accuracy, and alignment with the purposes of their external QA activities.



GUIDELINES FOR THE RESPONSIBLE
USE OF AI IN EXTERNAL QA

Human Oversight and Accountability

AI is intended to support and not replace human judgment. Final decisions should remain the responsibility of human experts, in line with the key principle of peer review set out in the ESG, and should include a critical assessment of any AI-generated outputs.

Training and AI Literacy

All staff and review panel members involved in external QA should be regularly trained in AI tools, risks, and opportunities to promote responsible and informed use.

Innovation with Caution

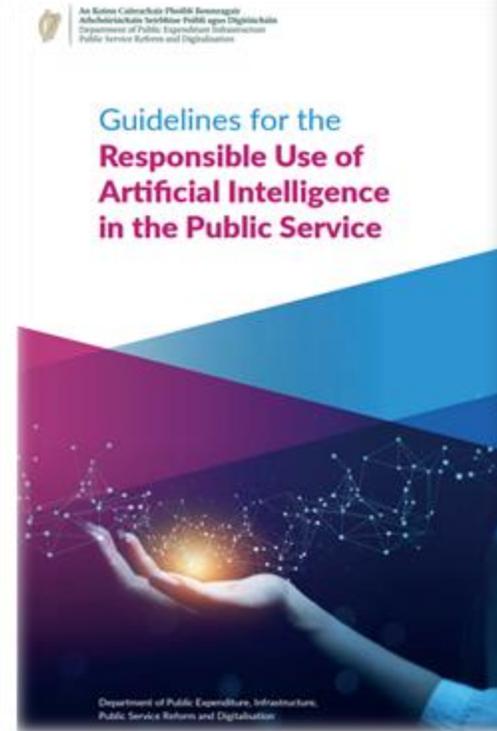
Agencies should create space for experimentation and innovation with AI, while applying clear guidelines to safeguard quality and integrity.

Regular Review and Adaptation

Agency principles and strategies for the use of AI should be regularly reviewed and updated to reflect technological developments and changes in the higher education landscape.

National & Strategic Context (Ireland)

- National and Public- Sector Policy
 - AI strategy and guidelines
 - Public sector principles AI: i.e. accountability, transparency, security, oversight
- QQI Strategic commitment
 - Use AI 'where appropriate' in system level (thematic) analysis
 - Strengthen data-informed oversight and evidence-based QA practice
 - Build organisational capability in AI



Publications from the Higher Education Authority (HEA) – AI in Teaching and Learning

1. [Generative AI in Higher Education Teaching & Learning - Policy Framework](#). (The Higher Education Authority, Ireland)
2. [Generative AI in Higher Education Teaching & Learning: Principles for Ethical AI Adoption](#)

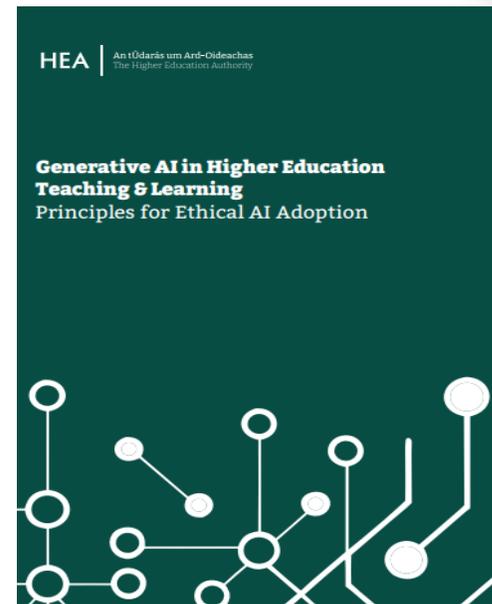


HEA | An tÚdarás um Ard-Oideachas
The Higher Education Authority

HEA | Generative AI in Higher Education in Teaching & Learning

Table of Contents

Purpose of the Framework	1
Context	4
Framework Principles	8
Principle 1: Academic Integrity, Transparency, & Accountability	9
Principle 2: Equity & Inclusion	10
Principle 3: Critical Engagement, Human Oversight, & AI Literacy	10
Principle 4: Privacy & Data Governance	11
Principle 5: Sustainable Pedagogy	11
Operationalising the Principles	12
Principle 1: Academic Integrity, Transparency, and Accountability	13
Principle 2: Equity & Inclusion	14
Principle 3: Critical Engagement, Human Oversight & AI Literacy	15
Principle 4: Privacy & Data Governance	16
Principle 5: Sustainable Pedagogy	17
Monitoring and Sector Learning	18
References	20



HEA | An tÚdarás um Ard-Oideachas
The Higher Education Authority

HEA | Generative AI in Higher Education in Teaching & Learning

Table of Contents

1 Generative AI Adoption in Irish Higher Education	1	215 Institutional infrastructure for AI literacy	31
2 Provisions of the Principles for Ethical AI Adoption	6	216 Evaluation of AI literacy	31
2.1 Academic Integrity, Transparency, and Accountability	7	217 Governance and accountability	32
2.1.1 Institutional policies and academic freedom	7	218 Summary of Recommendations	33
2.1.2 Assessment design and authenticity	9	24 Privacy & Data Governance	34
2.1.3 Disclosure, citation, and authorship	11	24.1 AI literacy	34
2.1.4 Detection and investigation	13	24.2 Data protection	35
2.1.5 Capacity building	14	24.3 Impact assessment and special categories	36
2.1.6 Governance, monitoring, and review	16	24.4 Approval tools and vendor governance	37
2.1.7 Summary of Recommendations	17	24.5 Transparency and intellectual property	37
2.2 Equity & Inclusion	19	24.6 Summary of Recommendations	38
2.2.1 Commitment to inclusive education	19	25 Sustainable Pedagogy	39
2.2.2 Equitable access to AI tools and infrastructure	19	25.1 Environmental sustainability and resource consumption	39
2.2.3 Assessment equity and standardisation	20	25.2 Promoting foundational intellectual capabilities	40
2.2.4 Mitigating bias and discrimination in AI systems	20	25.3 Long-term educational ecosystem health	41
2.2.5 Irish language and minority language contexts	21	25.4 Institutional capacity and resilience	41
2.2.6 Supporting diverse learners and needs	22	25.5 Monitoring and continuous improvement	42
2.2.7 AI literacy and professional development for equity	23	25.6 Summary of Recommendations	42
2.2.8 Monitoring, accountability, and redress	24	3 References	44
2.2.9 Summary of Recommendations	24		
2.3 Critical Engagement, Human Oversight, and AI Literacy	26		
2.3.1 Embedding AI literacy as core competency	26		
2.3.2 Human oversight in pedagogical processes	27		
2.3.3 Developing critical AI engagement	28		
2.3.4 Student Development Pathways	30		

Integration of GenAI in EQA Processes

- ❑ AI Tools used:
 - ❑ Microsoft Copilot (Licenced)
 - ❑ MAXQDA Tailwind (Licenced)
- to support the **Thematic Analysis** of 2025 Annual Quality Reports from HEIs



QQI Internal approval process

- Business Case
- New – AI specific criteria

Power Apps | QQI IT Software Inventory

Home

Recent

Pinned

Software Inventory

Software Inventory L...

MAYQDA Tailwind - Saved

Recent items

Software Inventory

Marie Gou Record Owner

Inventory Item | ICT Review | Approval Details

Form as

Inventory Item Details

What is the name of the application? *

MAXQDA Tailwind

Contact details - e.g. account manager or support portal

Who is the business owner? *

Marie Gou

Business owner division *

QQI - Quality Assurance

Who is the provider of the application?

MAXQDA

Application category

Analytics

Is the application core?

MAYQDA Tailwind - Saved

QQI IT Software Inventory

Marie Gou Record Owner

Inventory Item | ICT Review | Approval Details

Form assist

Is there an AI component in the software?

Yes

What level of transparency is required for the AI system?

...

Why is AI the best solution?

...

What are the bias detection and mitigation strategies?

...

What type of AI solution is the best fit?

...

EU AI Act: risk categorisation

...

What are the potential risks and how will they be mitigated?

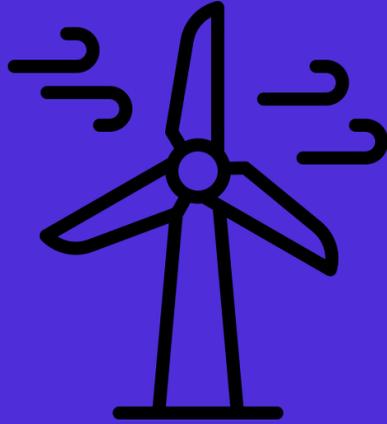
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Annual Quality Reports(AQRs) and Synthesis Report Process

- AQRs submitted by all public and larger private HEIs
- QQI produces a sector-wide annual synthesis report
- Highlights trends, good practices, challenges; informs policy, supports enhancement
- Traditionally resource heavy and costly to produce
- GenAI - opportunity for efficiency and potentially deeper insights

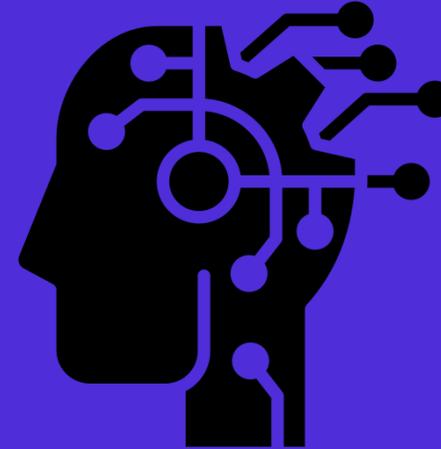


Process Innovations with GenAI



MAXQDA Tailwind (Licensed)

- Coding and analysing annual quality reports
- Identifying key themes and trends



Microsoft Copilot (Licensed)

- Assist with writing and proofreading (Proof reader agent created)

Process Overview

Input

- Annual Quality Reports from HEIs
- Uploaded to MAXQDA Tailwind

GenAI Tools

- MAXQDA Tailwind (Coding and theme extraction)
- Microsoft Copilot (Proofing, research, writing style)

Process

- Thematic analysis, cross-institutional theme identification
- Synthesis of main cross-cutting themes and topics arising
- Thematic map

Output

- Enhanced synthesis report
- Improved efficiency – shorter timeframe



Summary

MAXQDA Tailwind

- Code and categorise qualitative data
- Identify cross cutting themes
- Extracting examples

Microsoft Copilot

- Quality Assurance Agent: refine thematic categories
- Researcher Agent: Identify institutional trends/contemporary topics in HE
- Proofreading Agent: Enhance clarity and consistency

Human Validity and Cross Checking

- All GenAI outputs were reviewed by QQI staff
- Validation of findings against original AQRs
- Ensures accuracy and reliability of thematic trends

MAXQDA Tailwind

Projects
Go ahead and create projects! [+ New Project](#)

Setting up the project

Project	Description	Files	Topics	Summary T...
Thematic Framework	Summary of key themes, sub themes ...	1	0	0

Summary Table
Comparative Tables [Export](#)

Add Data 15 | Add Topics 1

	Digital Transformation
Atlantic Technological University AQR 2025 Report	Atlantic Technological University (ATU) has undertaken significant digital transformation initiatives 70-71 75-83 107-110 120 125 127-129 133 151 168 198-208 283-293 382-450 483-486 595-607. These include the integration of core HR and payroll systems, completed in November 2024 71. The integration of student record systems (Banner) is an ongoing project in conjunction with EduCampus 71. An integrated applications system and CRM for online, flexible, and professional development (OPFD) applicants is also underway 71. A single module management system (Academic Module Manager, AMM) is being rolled out across campuses 71 78 133-134 611-619, with three instances currently in place 71. A Research Information Management System (RIMS) is being introduced in phases 71 168. Enhanced cybersecurity services, including penetration testing and threat
Dublin City University AQR 2025 Report	Dublin City University (DCU) implemented a new Student Information System (SIS) in August 2024, transforming student interaction and improving the experience for both students and staff 11. The Quality Improvement Office (QIO) developed PowerBI dashboards to enhance strategic business

Topics
Create & manage up to 20 topics [Export](#) [Find Topics](#) [+](#)

Identifying Initial Core Topics

Equality Diversity and Inclusion

Description

This theme incorporates institutional strategic commitments and developments in all elements of equality, diversity, inclusion and equity.

Topic Summary

Report) and annual quality reports (Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology AQR 2025 Report, Munster Technological University AQR 2025 Report, National University of Ireland AQR 2025 Report, South East

Digital Transformation

Description

Digital transformation in higher education refers to the strategic integration of digital technologies to enhance teaching, learning, administration, and student support services

Topic Summary

System Upgrades and Integrations: A dominant theme across the documents is the significant investment in upgrading and integrating IT systems. Many institutions, including ATU (Atlantic Technological University AQR 2025

Chat
Chat function – can use for all or individual documents

Search chats... x

CHAT HISTORY 26/100

September

- Topics
- AQR Synthesis 2025
- AQR Synthesis: Trinity College D...
- AQR Synthesis Examples Review
- AQR Synthesis References
- AQR Synthesis Report Cross-Ch...
- Concluding Chapter Draft

August

- EDI Case Study Extraction
- Graduate Attributes & Curriculu...
- Digital Transformation Summary
- Research Strategic Planning An...

Welcome! How can I assist you today?

Select the documents you want to chat with.

Chat with 16 documents

Enter your question

0/2000

M365 Copilot – My Agents

M365 Copilot

Search

Chat

Agents

- Researcher
- Analyst
- Quality Analysis Assistant

Writing and Proofreader

All agents

Create agent

Conversations

Pages

Notebooks

Create

Marie Gould

Create agent

Agent Store

Find agents with the expertise to help you complete complex tasks

Search agents

Your agents

- Researcher
- Analyst
- Quality Analysis As...
- Writing and Profr...

Built by Microsoft

Copilot Agents

The screenshot displays the Microsoft Copilot Agents interface. At the top, there are four main categories: Researcher, Analyst, Quality Analysis As..., and Writing and Proofr... Below this, a section titled "Built by Microsoft" lists nine specific agents in a grid format. Each agent card includes an icon, a title, and a brief description of its capabilities.

Agent Name	Description
Researcher	With Researcher, now every employee has access to...
Analyst	Perform complex data analysis over files in a varie...
Prompt Coach	Write and improve your prompts
Writing Coach	Take your writing to the next level with Writing Coach
Idea Coach	Plan and navigate the brainstorming process
Career Coach	Elevate your career with Career Coach
Learning Coach	Unlock your potential with Learning Coach
Surveys (Frontier)	Surveys agent automates survey creation, distributio...
Microsoft 365 Admin	Use AI to help you manage Microsoft 365.



Thematic Analysis Report



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword	2
Introduction	3
Methodology for Synthesis	4
Executive Summary	5
Section 1: Quality in Public Higher Education Institutions	8
Thematic Map	9
1. Quality Implementation and Developments	13
1.1 Strategic planning and alignment	13
Sustainability and Climate Action	15
Inclusivity and Equity	15
Societal and Community Engagement	16
Research	17
Collaboration	20
Internationalisation	24
1.2 Governance, Management and Leadership	24
1.3 Internal Monitoring and Review	28
1.4 Quality Assurance Framework Development and Enhancement	29
Proactive Implementation of CHMTC Recommendations	30
2. IQA System Enhancement and Impacts	31
2.1 Academic Integrity and Response to Gender	39
2.2 Programme Development and Review	40
2.3 Research Activities and Developments	44
3. Additional Cross-Cutting Themes	48
Funding	48
Digital Transformation	50
Cybersecurity	52
4. Conclusions	56

METHODOLOGY FOR SYNTHESIS

This methodology for this synthesis report employed an iterative qualitative data analysis process using licensed versions of [MAXQDA](#) desktop application and [MAXQDA Online](#). Firstly, a coding framework was developed based on the IQA template and relevant sections of the IQAs were coded within MAXQDA desktop application.

Secondly, MAXQDA Talanta's AI-driven thematic analysis was used to identify recurring themes. The coding scheme was then refined based on initial findings and insights generated by the MAXQDA Talanta's AI-driven analysis.

MAXQDA reporting tools were used to extract illustrative examples and conduct the thematic synthesis. This combined approach significantly expedited the identification of key themes and the subsequent thematic synthesis, facilitated by MAXQDA reporting tools.

In addition, a licensed Microsoft Copilot Pro/Insider Agent was used to assist with proofreading during the development of the synthesis. All suggested edits were reviewed by the executive. The tool provided an efficient first layer of proofing.

Insights and Lessons Learned

- Process efficiency – Time (shorter) and cost savings
- Positive impact on process (Quality Synthesis)
- Human oversight – does not replace the team
- Training, capacity building – GenAI for staff
- Rate and pace of change (enhancement GenAI tools)
- Security – managing data risks (IT support)
- Transparency in process
- Data protection/security
- Positive staff feedback



Next Steps

- Embed GenAI into our annual synthesis report process (*Hoping to reducing timeframe for production and publication by approx. 5 months*)
- QQI policy and principles for use of GenAI – Finalised by March
- Plans for releasing licenced Microsoft Copilot for all agency staff
- Staff training to be rolled out
- Update our reviewer guidelines and briefings
- Explore GenAI tools in IQA and EQA processes with HEIs – Community of Practice idea?

Round Table Discussions



Dearbhú Cáilíochta
agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann
Quality and
Qualifications Ireland

Discussion

(15 Mins + 10 mins feedback)

Ideas Generation- Practical Applications of GenAI in QA

- 1) What potential applications of GenAI can be explored to further innovate QA processes in higher education?
- 2) What are some of the key challenges?
- 3) How could QA agencies and institutions work together in exploring application of GenAI in internal and external QA systems – If you can, give some practical suggestions.



Thank You!

Contact: mgould@qqi.ie



Dearbhú Cáilíochta
agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann
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