Generative AI in assessment: academic session 2025–26

Purpose and scope

The following document outlines SQA's stance on learners' use of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) in assessments for the 2025–26 session. It replaces the previous position. This stance relates to all SQA summative assessments, whether set externally by SQA or internally devised by practitioners to meet SQA course requirements.

The purpose of this document is to help learners and practitioners make informed decisions in relation to the use of GenAI in assessment contexts.

We recognise that learners and practitioners may wish to make use of GenAI tools in their wider learning and teaching activities. However, we want to emphasise that classroom practices, such as teaching and learning methods, fall outside the scope of this stance, as SQA's remit is limited to the assessment and awarding of qualifications and does not extend to teaching and learning.

SQA's stance for 2025–26 focuses on two key areas:

- GenAI tools and acceptable use
- GenAI tools and unacceptable use.

Context

The fast-paced advances in GenAI technologies offer opportunities for education and assessment. Together with our partners in the education sector, we continue to explore those opportunities and to seek ways to overcome potential challenges. SQA has an ongoing programme of consultations and engagement, including various events, surveys, and focus groups, to continue to develop our understanding of the impact of GenAI on learning and teaching, and the implications for assessment. Through this work, we have seen many examples of GenAI's potential across the education sector. However, at present, a number of concerns remain about the potential for misuse of GenAI in

assessment contexts. It is important that we embrace emergent technologies responsibly to support learners and practitioners while maintaining the integrity of SQA qualifications and ensuring equity, transparency and fairness.

Position statement

GenAI tools and acceptable use

The use of GenAI is only acceptable when it does not compromise (or attempt to compromise) the integrity of SQA course assessments or certification.

Learners may use GenAI tools in the following situations:

- when this does not undermine learners' ability to demonstrate that they have the required knowledge, understanding and skills to meet the assessment standards of the qualification
- when the course or unit specifications explicitly allow such use.

Before using GenAI tools, learners should discuss this with their teachers, lecturers or trainers to check that using GenAI will not undermine the achievement of their learning and assessment objectives.

Guidance on potentially acceptable and unacceptable GenAI use in assessments can be found in the Exemplification resource. These provide examples from various subjects, and key considerations to help decide if the use of GenAI is appropriate in other assessment contexts.

Learners must acknowledge any use of GenAI tools in their submissions. This acknowledgement should include which tool was used and what function it performed within the assessment. Learners and practitioners should carefully consider the best way to acknowledge the use of GenAI tools for a specific purpose.

Examples of acknowledgements (note this is for indicative purposes only):

'ChatGPT was used to generate ideas for…'

'Gemini was used to generate images for…'

Both learners and practitioners must recognise that GenAI tools have limitations and may not always produce reliable outputs. As with any resource or tool, learners and practitioners should critically evaluate the appropriateness of GenAI for a given task. They should also consider user age restrictions and possible implications of sharing personal information or one's own work.

Learners can choose not to use GenAI tools if they wish.

GenAI tools and assessment arrangements

Learners who have prior agreement to use specific assistive technologies as an assessment arrangement may find that these tools now have integrated GenAI functionality.

Disabled learners and those with additional support needs can use assistive technologies that require the integration of GenAI to function, provided the use of this technology does not compromise the integrity of SQA's qualifications and assessments. Centres should refer to the principles of assessment arrangements in Assessment Arrangements Explained: Information for centres which is on our website and the ICT Security Checklist from our secure website for further information.

GenAI tools and unacceptable use

Citations

AI-generated outputs should not be used as independent or primary sources of information for citations.

Learners studying towards SQA qualifications should use valid, reliable and authoritative sources to support their work. GenAI outputs do not meet these criteria and should not be cited as stand-alone sources of factual evidence or to support arguments. These are some of the significant issues regarding the reliability and validity of GenAI outputs:

- **They are often not verifiable:** AI-generated outputs cannot always be linked to the original source(s) of information, making verifying the information difficult.

- **They can be inaccurate, biased or nonsensical:** GenAI tools can generate apparently convincing but incorrect or misleading content, as well as 'hallucinations', which are fabricated facts, data, citations and references.
- **They lack credibility:** AI-generated outputs lack authority. SQA qualifications require citations from reputable sources that credit the original authors or sources.

Malpractice

Learners' assessed work must reflect their own knowledge, skills and understanding, demonstrating independent competence. Inappropriate use of GenAI tools may undermine this and mean the learners' assessed work fails to meet the marking criteria.

Additionally, learners must not submit AI-generated outputs or ideas as their own for assessment tasks that contribute towards an SQA qualification. Doing so would constitute malpractice and may result in awards being cancelled.

Reminders for GenAI use in assessments

Before using GenAI, it is essential to ensure that the conditions of assessment specified in the course or unit specification are always followed. This is crucial in maintaining fairness and consistency in assessment.

Learners and practitioners should consider the following points, which summarise SQA's position:

- GenAI can be used to support, and not replace, the development of skills, knowledge and understanding.
- GenAI should not be used if it compromises the integrity of SQA's assessments or certification of qualifications.
- Learners should always check with their practitioners about using GenAI tools.
- Where the use of GenAI is permitted, its use must always be acknowledged.
- Use credible sources for citations: don't use GenAI instead of authoritative and verifiable sources.
- Submitting GenAI outputs as a learner's own work is considered malpractice.
- Beware of GenAI limitations, such as potential bias and hallucinations.

- Protect any personal and confidential data.
- Consider any age restrictions associated with the GenAI tool used.

Before using any GenAI tools in SQA assessment contexts, learners and practitioners must ensure that this will not undermine learners' achievement of their learning objectives, or compromise the integrity of the assessment in any way.

Note: Teaching and learning methods are outside the scope of SQA's remit and are therefore not addressed in this position statement. For practitioners wishing to learn more about the use of GenAI in education, the Exemplification resource offers a wealth of useful links in its final section.

Future use of GenAI: promoting transparency and collaboration

We have consulted our key stakeholders in preparing this position statement. We will continue to consult learners, practitioners, centres and our partners as we further explore the impact of GenAI tools on assessment, and ensure their voices are integral to our decision-making process.

We also encourage practitioners to discuss the role of GenAI in assessment, and its broader implications for education, with their colleagues, teams and learners.