

DE/2026-038 – Freedom of Information Request

Request:

I am writing to request information on your department's current use of artificial intelligence systems and hope you can provide the following.

- A list of all AI tools, systems or models currently in use within the department or its agencies.
- A description of the purpose of each AI system, including the tasks it supports and the problem it is intended to address.
- Details of any external providers or contractors involved in supplying, maintaining or operating these AI systems.
- Any internal guidance, risk assessments or governance frameworks that relate to the deployment or oversight of AI within the department.
- Information on any planned future use of AI, including systems under procurement, testing or evaluation.

If elements of this information are already published, please direct me to the relevant sources.

Department Response:

Thank you for your request for information relating to AI use within the Department of Education (DE). The request was received on 5 March 2026. I can confirm that DE holds the information requested and has answered your query within the body of this letter.

While interest in and the availability of AI in DE is increasing, access to AI software is controlled by Department of Finance's (DoF) IT Assist and potential users of AI in DE, must follow an approval process before advanced AI licenses are granted. Use of AI is subject to staff oversight and follows the guidance in the NICS AI Policy – Securely Maximising the Benefits of Artificial Intelligence.

You ask for the following information (in bold) and I've answered each query separately below –

- ***A list of all AI tools, systems or models currently in use within the department or its agencies.***

The Department currently has access to these AI Tools -
Turnitin

Co-Pilot (Basic and Advanced)

These are add-ons to Microsoft 365 which is used in the department.

We cannot answer on behalf of other agencies; any outside agencies would have to be approached directly to answer information requests pertaining to themselves.

A description of the purpose of each AI system, including the tasks it supports and the problem it is intended to address.

Turnitin – is an AI tool currently available within MS Teams to promote academic integrity and to streamline feedback. This is intended to address the potential for pupils/students to use AI to complete an assignment and pass it off as their own work. Currently, a limited number of DE staff has access to Turnitin for policy development purposes.

Microsoft 365 Co-Pilot is an AI-powered productivity tool available to all DE staff and is designed to support the work experience by integrating seamlessly with Microsoft 365 apps like Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook, and Teams. It allows the user to enter a natural language prompt in the suite of Office applications to perform a range of functions.

Advanced licence Co-Pilot is only available within DE to a selection of staff, following an application and approval process, including cost approval from IT Assist's Business Relationship Manager (BRM), as well as Departmental Information Manager (DIM), and DE's Senior Information Risk Owner (SIRO).

• ***Details of any external providers or contractors involved in supplying, maintaining or operating these AI systems.***

DE does not currently use external providers or contractors to supply AI systems. As part of the transformation of the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS), IT provision was centralised for all Departments under one body called Digital, Security & Financial Shared Services (DSF). This body is under the sponsorship of DoF.

• ***Any internal guidance, risk assessments or governance frameworks that relate to the deployment or oversight of AI within the department.***

DE follows the NICS use of Generative AI Policy, by which NICS staff wishing to utilise the technology must complete the DE Governance and Approval Proforma –

- Receive business area approval (Grade 6 minimum approval grade) for the specific use case(s) in which they intend to use AI.
- Engage with the departmental IT Security Officer (ITSO) and DE's SIRO with written assurance that a security assessment has been carried out and the Generative AI Model aligns with the principles detailed within the AI Cyber Security Code of Practice, National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) guidance 'Principles for the security of machine learning', 'securing your infrastructure' and 'data supply chains' that there is no risk to NICS.
- Engage with the Data Protection Officer (DPO) to ensure a full understanding of the terms of use and privacy notice of the Generative AI Model they intend to use.

Should personal data be involved, consider a Data Protection Impact Assessment to ensure compliance with UK Data Protection legislation to determine there is low/no risk to the personal data involved.

- Receive approval from the departmental SIRO for the specific case(s) in which they intend to use AI.
- Adhere to the guidance on 'The use of Generative AI in the NICS – Guidance Paper'.
- Provide assurance to the G6 (minimum), DPO, ITSO and SIRO during and on completion of the Generative AI usage that all data, privacy, information, security and ethical regulations / standards have been adhered to.

As previously stated above, the NICS IT provision is centralised for all Departments under one body – DoF’s DSF. The only AI applications that DE use or has access to are those in the IT Assist product catalogue, which is provided by DSF.

DE understands that as AI changes and evolves, these documents will need to be reviewed and updated.

- ***Information on any planned future use of AI, including systems under procurement, testing or evaluation.***

Having conducted a search of our records, we do not hold this information.

As previously explained, the NICS IT provision is centralised for all Departments under one body - DoF’s DSF. DSF may hold information in relation to any planned future use of AI, and of any systems under procurement, testing or evaluation. You can request further information from DSF via DoF at this email address - foi@finance-ni.gov.uk