AI (Artificial Intelligence) Usage Policy for the Finance Function

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Contents

1. Introduction	1
2. Principles for AI Use in Finance	1-2
3. Acceptable uses of AI within the Finance Function	2
4. Prohibited Uses of AI Tools	2
5. AI Tool Approved Process	2
6. Training and Awareness	2
7. Monitoring and Review	2

1. Introduction

This policy sets out how AI may be used within the Finance Function of West Norfolk Academies Trust. It aims to support ethical, responsible and legally compliant use of AI, while enabling innovation and operational efficiency in financial process.

For the purposes of this policy, AI refers to digital systems or tools that replicate or simulate human cognitive functions. This includes but is not limited to:

- Natural language tools (eg ChatGPT).
- Predictive or forecasting models.
- Robotic process Automation (RPA) systems
- Machine learning algorithms that adapt based on input data.

This policy applies to:

- All staff working within any Finance Function
- Any contractors, consultants or temporary personnel involved in finance-related processes or who access financial data.
- All AI tools and services used in financial operations, including generative AI, forecasting algorithms, automation tools and other intelligent.

2. Principles for AI use in finance

Transparency and Accountability

- AI use must be transparent. Stakeholders must be informed when AI is used in financial processes.
- All AI-generated recommendations or decisions must be reviewable and auditable.
- Final accountability for financial decisions lies with designated human staff, not AI systems.

Data Privacy and Security

- All data used by AI tools must comply with data protection laws (eg GDPR, the Data protection Act 2018, charity accounting standards and all relevant ESFA and DFE guidance).
- No personal, sensitive or financial data may be entered into public AI tolls unless anonymised, redacted and where appropriate securely stored.
- Access to AI tools and related datasets for financial purposes will be restricted to authorised personnel only.

Ethical use

- AI outputs must be regularly reviewed to identify and address and bias or unfairness, particularly in decision making areas.

User Accountability

- Responsibility for AI outputs rests with the user. AI cannot be used to deflect accountability for errors or misjudgements and should be used to assist, not replace, financial staff.
- Human review is mandatory for all financial decisions where AI has been used to assist a financial process.

3. Acceptable uses of AI within the Finance Function

Examples of appropriate uses of AI include:

- Drafting financial reports, technical analysis and policy templates (with review).
- Automating repetitive tasks, such as invoice processing and bank reconciliation (if via approved systems)
- Trend analysis and financial forecasting (with oversight)
- Identifying anomalies in expenditure or income patterns.

4. Prohibited Uses of AI tools

The following uses of AI tools are prohibited at WNAT

- Using public AI tools for processing confidential finance or staff data.
- Relying on AI generated results or reports without human validation.
- Using AI to make autonomous decisions.
- Sharing Trust financial data with third party AI providers without a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)

5. AI tool Approval Process

The CEO/Accounting Officer holds overall responsibility for authorising the use of any AI within the Finance function. The CFO will be responsible for the day to day governance of any approved systems. Any new AI tool or system intended for use within the finance team must be:

- Reviewed by the person responsible for cybersecurity risks (Trust ICT Manager)
- Reviewed by the Trusts DPO for data protection compliance.
- Approved by the CEO and CFO

6. Training and Awareness

All Finance staff using AI must:

- Receive training on any AI tools they use, including understanding limitations and implications and the requirement for human oversight at all times.
- Be familiar with the Trusts AI usage policy for finance functions
- Have a full understanding of the trusts GDPR and Data protection policies.

7. Monitoring and Review

The Trust will:

- Monitor and review the use of AI for compliance
- Audit AI driven outputs for accuracy and fairness.
- Review this policy annually or in response to regulatory changes and/or new risks.