

AI in Fitness to Practice processes

Navigating complexity with purpose

Michael Rowe

Director of Teaching and Learning

University of Lincoln

mrowe@lincoln.ac.uk

Assumptions

- We can't control this AI moment; we can only decide how we are going to respond
- Generative AI platforms are not “tools”; they are fundamentally different ways of interacting with machines
- Instead of spending time and money trying to catch students cheating, it's better to create environments where they choose not to cheat

Why this matters now

- AI is already part of the practice landscape—clinicians will work with these tools throughout their careers
- FtP processes offer an opportunity to model thoughtful AI integration rather than defensive prohibition
- Question isn't whether AI belongs in these processes (it already is), but how we navigate its use to strengthen rather than undermine developmental purposes
- Thoughtful frameworks now prevent reactive policies later

What AI can actually do in FtP contexts

- Students
 - Draft reflections and action plans, particularly supporting those with language barriers or learning differences
 - Prepare for panel interviews through role-play, reducing anxiety and improving articulation
 - Interpret standards and policy documents more accessibly
- Staff and panels
 - Systematically analyse incident reports for competency concerns
 - Structure complex decisions with prompts for multiple perspectives
 - Identify relevant precedents and policy sections efficiently

Opportunities for stakeholder groups

Students: AI can address equity gaps—helping those whose first language isn't English articulate insights, or those with neurodiverse learning profiles structure reflections effectively

Academic staff: Tools for more consistent, systematic approaches to complex cases while managing workload pressures

Opportunities for stakeholder groups (2)

Clinical educators: Support for structuring observations clearly and translating practice concerns into formal competency language without overwhelming administrative burden

Regulators: Potential for enhanced consistency and documentation across institutions

Patients: Better-prepared practitioners who've engaged with AI thoughtfully throughout their education

Decision framework: How to do this well

- Rather than asking "should we allow AI?", we need questions that help us use it purposefully
- Three critical stages where thoughtful AI integration can strengthen FtP processes:
 - initial documentation
 - student response
 - panel decision-making
- Each stage offers opportunities to enhance quality, consistency, and fairness—if we're deliberate about how AI supports human judgement

1. Initial concern and incident documentation

- How can AI help clinical staff structure comprehensive, clear observations that strengthen the evidence base for FtP decisions?
- What practices ensure AI supports accurate documentation of what happened, while preserving human judgement about significance?
- How can AI reduce administrative burden while maintaining the quality of incident reporting?

2. Student response and reflection

- How can AI support students to develop and articulate deeper reflections; moving beyond surface responses to genuine professional growth?
- What approaches help us assess students' actual capacity for insight and development when AI assists with expression?
- How can we use AI to address equity concerns while ensuring authentic professional development for everyone?

3. Panel preparation and decision-making

- How can AI help panels consider multiple perspectives systematically, prompting reflection on aspects that might otherwise be overlooked?
- What practices ensure AI enhances rather than obscures the transparency of professional judgement in decision-making?
- How can AI support more consistent, thorough analysis while keeping human values and professional wisdom central?

Navigating complexity and risk

- **AI can be confidently wrong:** systems need to help users evaluate outputs critically, not simply accept them
- **Transparency matters for fairness:** students and staff both benefit from clarity about how and when AI is used in processes
- **Purpose must drive use:** developmental goals should shape how we integrate AI, not efficiency or convenience
- Could we explain this approach to stakeholders, demonstrating how it strengthens rather than compromises professional standards?

Two paths for institutional response

Prohibition and control

- Detection, prohibition, compliance monitoring
- Drives AI use underground where students and staff can't learn to use it well
- FtP processes become adversarial rather than developmental
- Nursing education falls behind the practice reality that graduates will enter

Two paths for institutional response (2)

Thoughtful integration

- Focus on authentic professional growth regardless of tools used
- Explicit frameworks that help everyone use AI purposefully
- FtP processes remain educative and prepare students for AI-integrated practice
- Institutions lead in developing professional approaches to new technologies

Implications for governance

- **Policy development:** opportunity to lead on thoughtful AI integration in professional practice
- **Staff development:** focus on evaluation of AI outputs and purposeful use; build institutional AI literacy
- **Documentation and transparency** systems can be enhanced to reflect how professional practice works
- Interim guidance demonstrates **institutional leadership** while formal frameworks develop

The real opportunity

- AI in FtP processes offers genuine opportunities for equity, consistency, support, and enhanced professional development
- The choice isn't between AI or no AI—it's between thoughtful integration that strengthens developmental purposes, or reactive prohibition
- Nursing education has the opportunity to lead in developing human-centred approaches to AI

Q&A

Michael Rowe
mrowe@lincoln.ac.uk