

WORKING WITH AI IN CAREERS GUIDANCE: A PRACTICAL TOOLKIT



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As a Service to then not [use AI] just seems to me like a much quicker road to irrelevance and extinction than a world where it's being used.

Staff don't need the AI skill, they need the AI will. The tools will change... but if you have the AI will, you can sit down with a student and explore together.

We don't want to be dinosaurs, though. I think we really need to support students to use it and use it effectively. We know that they're using it.

The building of a CV, the building of a cover letter, these are procedural tasks. This is what AI is for... it allows the human to do the relational, higher-order guidance.

Quotes in this toolkit are taken from Careers Guidance Professionals across the UK who participated in the research interviews.

Introduction

It is one of the most rapidly evolving issues of our time. Artificial Intelligence (AI) is reshaping work, education, and decision-making, and is now unavoidable, whether welcomed or not. It can support practical tasks such as writing and research, but it also intensifies the spread of misinformation, increasingly blurring the line between what is real and what is not.

But why does this matter for higher education Careers Services?

AI is influencing Careers Services in three key ways:

- **Student behaviour:** Students are already using AI tools for CV writing, applications, and career exploration - often without guidance.
- **Employer practices:** Employers are adapting recruitment processes in response to AI, including concerns about AI-generated applications, authenticity, and changing approaches to assessment and selection.
- **Service demand:** Increasing student numbers and expectations for on-demand support require more scalable and flexible delivery models.

These changes present both opportunity and risk. Without thoughtful engagement, AI use may lead to over-reliance, generic outputs, and inequitable access. With effective integration, however, it can enhance learning, improve access, and free up adviser time for higher-value guidance.

About this toolkit

This research-informed toolkit, developed during the first few months of 2026, is designed to support any careers professional in exploring and shaping their own approach to AI in guidance practice. It is informed by practitioner interviews conducted across multiple UK universities as part of a postgraduate research study exploring how AI is currently used, perceived, and integrated within higher education Careers Services. Drawing on both empirical insights and existing literature, it offers practical, ethical, and pedagogically grounded approaches that reflect real-world practice as well as theory.

The toolkit is intended for careers and employability professionals across higher education, including advisers, practitioners, and service leaders, at all levels of AI confidence. It supports confident and critical engagement with AI, focusing on its use to enhance - not replace - professional judgement and relational practice, and to develop ethical, blended human-AI approaches that support students effectively.

There is no single “correct” way to use AI in careers guidance; instead, the toolkit provides a framework for informed, reflective practice.

Theoretical foundations

This toolkit is grounded in established career development theories that emphasise the importance of **reflection, context,** and **human interaction** in career decision-making. Careers guidance has long been rooted in **person-centred approaches,** which emphasise empathy, trust, and the co-construction of meaning between adviser and student (*Rogers, 2012*). Effective guidance is not simply about providing information, but about supporting individuals to make sense of their experiences, values, and aspirations (*Reid, 2006*).

The following theories provide a framework for understanding how AI may be integrated into practice in ways that remain ethical, developmental, and grounded in professional judgement.

Krumboltz's Learning Theory of Career Choice (2009)

This theory suggests that career decisions are shaped by learning experiences, environmental influences, and chance events. It highlights the importance of adaptability and recognising unexpected opportunities.

Implications for AI in practice

AI can broaden exposure to opportunities and support exploration. However, it cannot replace lived experience or the ability to recognise and act on chance events, which are key to career development in this model. The practitioner's role remains central in helping students reflect on experiences and develop adaptability.

Holland's Theory of Vocational Types (RIASEC) (1959)

Holland's theory suggests that career satisfaction is influenced by the fit between personality type and work environment, grouped into six vocational types (RIASEC).

Implications for AI in practice

AI can support exploration of interests and generate role suggestions aligned to RIASEC types. However, it may oversimplify fit and should be used critically, alongside practitioner-led reflection on identity and changing preferences.

Career Construction Theory (*Savickas, 2013*)

Career Construction Theory and the Career Adaptability Framework emphasise the importance of building skills such as:
Concern (thinking about the future); Control (taking responsibility); Curiosity (exploring possibilities); Confidence (believing in one's ability)

Implications for AI in practice

AI can act as a scaffolding tool, supporting curiosity and confidence through rapid feedback and idea generation. However, career adaptability develops through active engagement and reflection, which are facilitated through guidance conversations rather than automated outputs alone.

DOTS Model of Career Planning (*Law and Watts, 1977*)

The DOTS model outlines four areas of career development: Decision learning, Opportunity awareness, Transition learning, and Self-awareness.

Implications for AI in practice

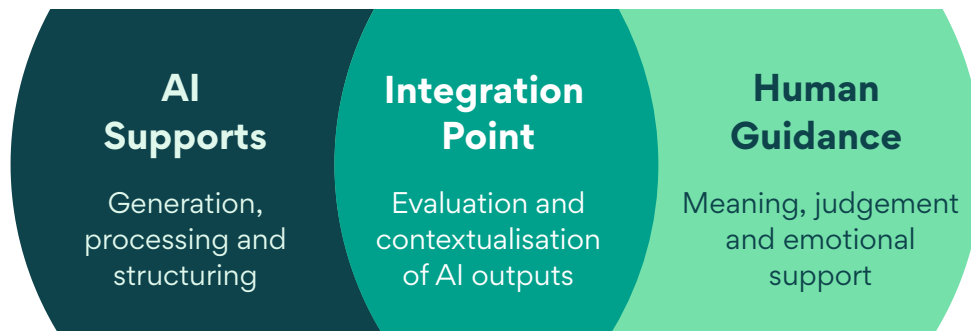
AI can support all four areas through information, structuring tools, and reflection prompts. However, it should be embedded within guided practice, particularly to support self-awareness and transition learning.

What this means for practice

Rather than replacing existing approaches, AI is best understood as a tool that can enhance specific aspects of career development, particularly information processing, exploration, and content generation. AI can therefore support tasks such as idea generation and structuring content, but career development remains a reflective and relational process. Careers professionals continue to play a central role in enabling deeper learning, meaning-making, and decision-making, providing the judgement, ethical guidance, and human connection needed to translate information into meaningful career choices.

These theoretical perspectives illustrate how AI and human guidance can operate in complementary roles, with AI supporting procedural and task-based activity, and practitioners enabling reflection, interpretation, and decision-making within a **blended model of AI-enhanced guidance**.

Integrating AI in Careers Guidance - a blended model:



Guidance Task	AI Supports	Integration Point	Human Guidance
Career exploration	Generating career options based on interests/degree	Interpreting and adapting AI-generated career options	Meaning-making and narrative construction
Self-assessment & identity	Skills analysis and career matching	Bias detection and contextualisation of outputs	Values clarification and career identity development
Labour market understanding	Labour market research and trend summarisation	Critical evaluation of accuracy and relevance	Professional intuition and contextual insight
Decision-making	Job description analysis	Ethical decision-making (how to use / not use AI)	Managing anxiety and emotional impact of decisions
Action planning	Generating summaries and action plans	Guided reflection using AI prompts	Goal-setting and commitment building
Application preparation	CV drafting, cover letter generation, and application tailoring	Iterative editing and co-constructing application strategies	Reflection, self-awareness, and authentic self-presentation
Interview preparation	Interview question generation	Interview coaching using AI-generated questions	Confidence building and reassurance
Professional communication	LinkedIn/ email drafting	Teaching/modelling effective AI use	Relationship-building and authentic communication
Guidance process design	Structuring and organising guidance content; idea generation	Workshop/resource co-design	Professional judgement in designing meaningful guidance experiences

AI is most effective as a tool for supporting tasks and processes, while careers guidance professionals remain central to the reflection, interpretation, and ethical judgement that make guidance meaningful.

Five principles for using AI in Careers Guidance

These principles set out what it means to **use AI effectively in careers guidance**. Grounded in the understanding that AI supports tasks while practitioners enable reflection and meaning-making, they provide a practical framework for integrating AI in ways that are transparent, pedagogical, ethical, human-centred, and inclusive. They are intended to support informed and reflective practice, rather than prescribe a single approach.

1. MAKE IT TRANSPARENT

Careers practitioners should use AI in ways that are open and explicit, ensuring that students understand when AI is being used, why it is being used, and its limitations.

Why this matters:

Transparency builds trust and helps students develop realistic expectations of AI, reducing the risk of over-reliance or uncritical use.

What this means in practice:

Be explicit when AI is being used within guidance and explain its purpose; Explain the strengths and limitations of AI, including inaccuracies and hallucinations; Model critical engagement by questioning and evaluating outputs in real time.

2. MAKE IT PEDAGOGICAL

Generative AI should be embedded as a teaching and learning tool rather than a shortcut, with practitioners supporting students to develop AI literacy as a core careers capability rather than a technical add-on.

Why this matters:

Without guidance, AI can replace learning rather than support it, limiting students' ability to reflect, articulate their experiences, and make informed decisions.

What this means in practice:

Use AI interactively within guidance; Co-create drafts with students and discuss how outputs can be improved; Critique AI-generated content together, focusing on quality, relevance, and authenticity; Prompt students to refine and personalise outputs rather than simply accept them.

If we want students to use GenAI well, we have to teach it like a careers skill, not a tech trick. *(Mirza, 2026)*

3. MAKE IT ETHICAL

Careers practitioners should use AI in ways that uphold professional and ethical standards, prioritising data minimisation, fairness, authenticity, and informed consent.

Why this matters:

AI introduces risks around bias, misinformation, data misuse, and environmental impact, which can undermine both student outcomes and professional integrity.

What this means in practice:

Avoid sharing identifiable or sensitive data into AI tools; Always use institutionally approved or secure platforms; Critically assess outputs for bias or errors; Teach safe, ethical AI use; Remain accountable for guidance quality and integrity; Use AI responsibly, considering environmental impact.

4. MAKE IT HUMAN-CENTRED

Careers practitioners should integrate AI in ways that enhance - rather than replace - the relational, interpretive, and personalised aspects of guidance.

Why this matters:

The most impactful aspects of careers guidance - reflection, confidence-building, and decision-making (*Reid, 2006*) - depend on human interaction and cannot be fully replicated by AI.

What this means in practice:

Use AI to support preparation and content generation, not to replace guidance conversations; Prioritise dialogue, reflection, and personalised support within appointments; Interpret and adapt AI outputs with the student, in relation to their context, experiences, and goals; Remain attentive to nuance, emotion, and uncertainty that AI cannot capture.

5. MAKE IT INCLUSIVE

Careers practitioners should integrate AI in ways that actively promote inclusion, recognising and addressing differences in access, confidence, and capability.

Why this matters:

AI can widen existing inequalities where differences in access, confidence, and capability mean that some students are better able to benefit from its use than others.

What this means in practice:

Address barriers like digital poverty, disability, and language; Don't assume prior knowledge or access to AI tools; Provide accessible and non-AI alternatives; Design inclusive support for confident AI use; Be mindful of the limitations of AI for diverse users (e.g. accessibility, bias, language).

Ethical foundations: a quick practice checklist

Before using AI in careers guidance practice (whether in appointments, resources, workshops or service delivery), consider:

Transparency

Have I been clear about when and how AI is being used?

Am I presenting outputs critically, rather than as authoritative?

Will this use of AI support or reduce opportunities for reflection?



Bias and fairness

Could this output reinforce stereotypes or narrow options?

Have I encouraged broader and more diverse exploration?



Human in the loop

Am I interpreting and adapting this output, rather than accepting it?

Does this reflect the student's context, experiences, and needs?

Am I using AI in a way that supports learning, not replaces it?



Data and privacy

Am I avoiding sharing personal or sensitive data?

Is this tool appropriate, secure, and institutionally approved?



Inclusion and access

Could this approach disadvantage any students (e.g. access, confidence, disability)?

Am I providing appropriate support or alternatives where needed?



Students see AI skills as essential, but institutional support lags behind. While over two-thirds of students believe AI skills are essential to thrive in today's world, fewer than half feel their teaching staff are helping them to develop these skills for their future careers. *(Stephenson et al., 2026)*

If your careers service looks the same in 2026 as it did in 2024, you're already behind. If your careers service is still treating GenAI as a 'tool to try', you're already in 'catch-up mode'. In 2026, [it] won't be a shiny add-on, it will be part of how students write, search, decide, and apply. Our choice is simple: shape that reality with care or let it shape students without us. *(Mirza, 2026)*

Think back to the 1990s. Teaching children to type was not just teaching a skill, it gave children a passport to professional life. AI literacy is that same transition, arriving faster and cutting deeper. Learning to use AI fluently in 2026 is what learning to type was in 1995. *(Bhoopalan, 2026)*

Quotes from recent publications.

Which tools to use

In the fast-moving world of generative AI, providing a static “best tools” list is challenging, as platforms and features evolve rapidly. Instead, practitioners should use the following checklist when selecting and using AI tools:

Institutionally approved

Is the tool permitted by your university/service and compliant with data protection and GDPR requirements?



Appropriate for the task

Does the tool match the intended use (e.g. drafting text, summarising information, generating ideas, analysing job descriptions)?



Transparency of outputs

Can you explain, check, and verify how outputs are generated and on what basis?



Accuracy and reliability

Have outputs been critically reviewed for errors, bias, or “hallucinations”?



Pedagogical value

Does the tool support student learning and reflection, rather than simply completing the task for them?



Equity and access

Does reliance on this tool risk excluding students who do not have access to paid or premium versions?



Professional oversight

Are you confident that AI use remains under practitioner control and does not replace professional judgement?



Flexibility

Is the tool part of a wider adaptable approach, rather than something you are becoming dependent on?



Environmental impact

Is the use of this tool justified given its energy consumption, and could a lower-impact alternative achieve the same outcome?



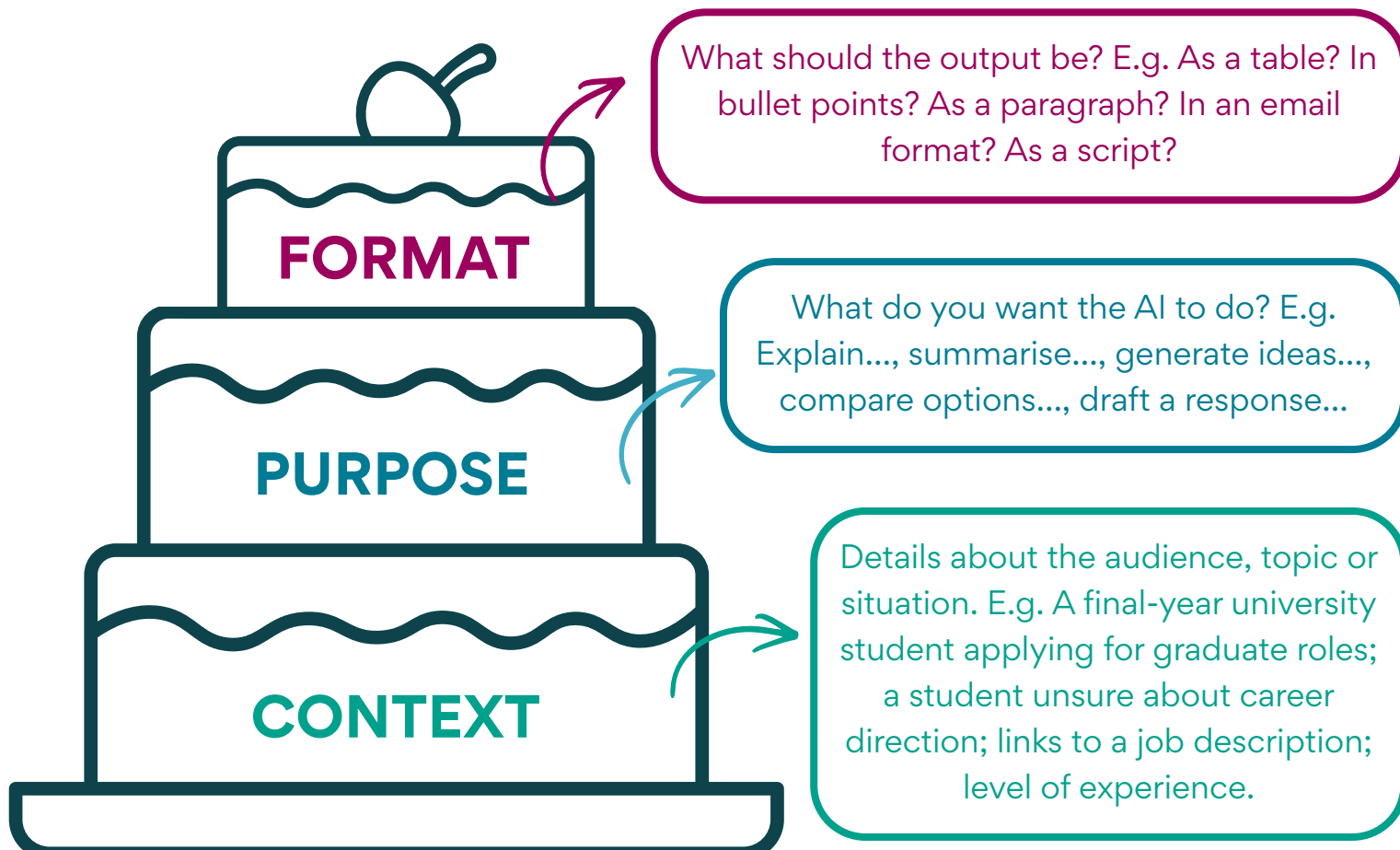
You will find a list of potential tools and when to use them in the appendix on Page 25 (accurate as of May 2026).

Creating AI prompts

Creating effective prompts for generative AI is a bit like **baking a cake** – the quality of your ingredients directly affects the final result.

Just as a good recipe leads to a delicious cake, a well-constructed prompt leads to useful, engaging and accurate AI-generated outputs.

The following “prompt-cake” shows you how to craft clear, purposeful and creative prompts by combining the right elements: **Context**, **Format** and **Purpose**.



EXAMPLE

“As a careers adviser, I am supporting a final-year university student who is applying for graduate roles in marketing but lacks confidence in articulating their skills **[context]**. Can you generate a set of tailored interview questions and model answers that highlight transferable skills such as communication, teamwork, and creativity **[purpose]**, presented in a clear table format with columns for question, suggested answer, and skills demonstrated **[format]**?”

Do's & Don'ts when using AI in Careers Guidance

Do

- use AI to refine content.
- focus AI on procedural tasks (CV structuring, interview questions, job description analysis).
- encourage students to keep their authentic voice central.
- explain data protection and safe prompting.
- keep the human-in-the-loop for all evaluative and relational decisions.

I'd hate to think that someone had come in for a human interaction and they just sat with someone who can do the prompts that they could do in their own room. We still need to protect our profession.

Try and write something and then get it to kind of iterate it... don't just blindly go into AI and say generate this.

Don't

- let AI overshadow rapport, nuance or pastoral cues.
- rely on AI outputs without checking for hallucinations.
- assume students know how to use AI ethically or safely.
- use tools that compromise privacy or equity.
- encourage dependency (watch for cognitive offloading).
- submit AI generated content without reviewing for accuracy and authenticity.

REMEMBER YOU OWN THE OUTPUT NOT THE AI. Ask it where it sourced the data. Check it is reliable data. Make sure you understand, agree with, and can discuss the output.

Capability-building for careers staff

Integrating AI into careers guidance is not just a technical change, but a professional capability issue. It requires practitioners to build confidence, adapt practice, and critically engage with AI tools while maintaining the core values of guidance.

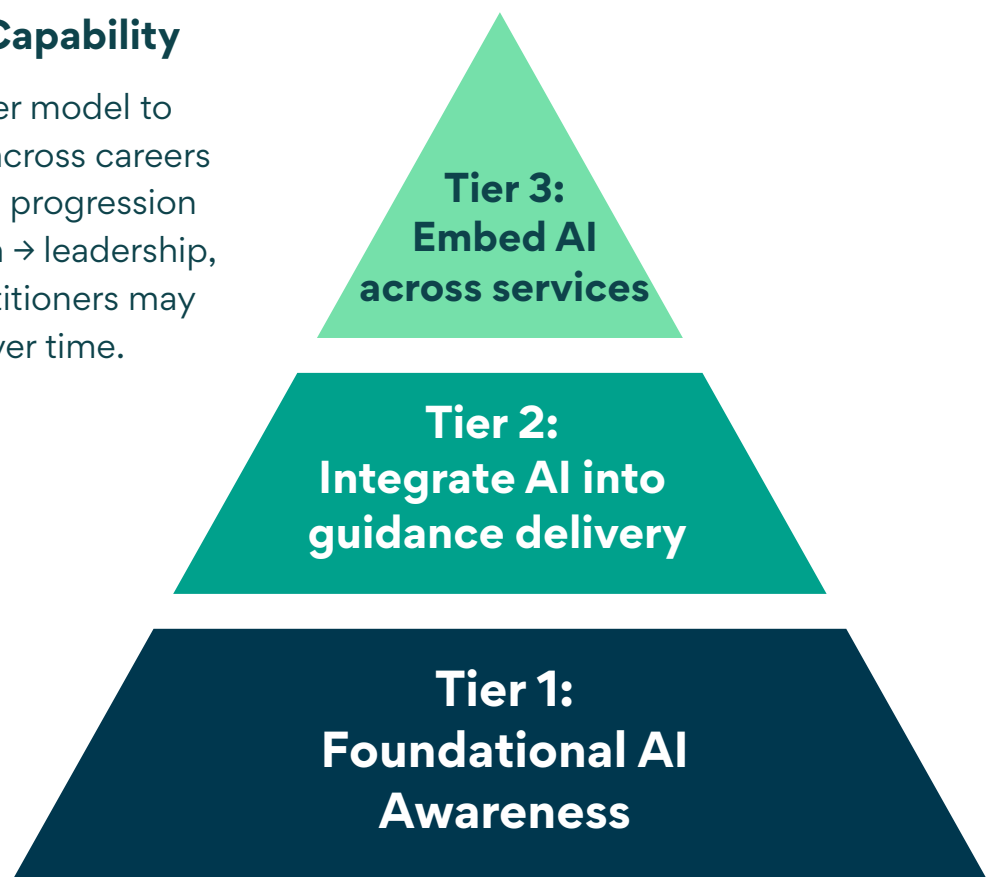
Capability-building is therefore less about technical expertise and more about developing AI judgement - knowing when, how, and why to use AI to enhance practice appropriately. This includes understanding how to engage with AI in a structured and intentional way, where the quality of outputs is shaped by reflective use, critical evaluation, and purposeful prompting rather than technical proficiency alone.

Engagement with AI will vary across staff. Some practitioners may adopt it quickly, while others may be more cautious due to ethical concerns or limited confidence. This is expected and should be recognised as part of a normal development process rather than a barrier.

The focus should be on creating space for experimentation, reflection, and shared learning, enabling practitioners to develop at a pace that is appropriate to their context and to build confidence in using AI as a pedagogical and reflective tool rather than a purely technical one.

A Tiered Model of AI Capability

This toolkit uses a three-tier model to support capability-building across careers services. The model reflects progression from awareness → application → leadership, while recognising that practitioners may move between levels over time.



TIER 1: FOUNDATIONAL AI AWARENESS

Building confidence, safety, and critical understanding

At this level, the focus is on developing basic AI literacy and safe use.

Core capabilities:

- Understanding what AI tools are and how they are used in careers contexts.
- Writing and refining simple prompts.
- Recognising limitations, including hallucinations and inaccuracies.
- Applying basic ethical principles (privacy, transparency, bias awareness).

What this looks like in practice:

- Experimenting with AI tools for simple tasks (e.g. CV structuring, idea generation).
- Discussing AI use openly with students.
- Checking and verifying outputs before use.

TIER 2: APPLIED AI IN PRACTICE

Integrating AI into guidance delivery

At this level, practitioners begin to embed AI into appointments, workshops, and resources in a purposeful and pedagogical way.

Core capabilities:

- Using AI interactively within guidance appointments, ensuring both adviser and student critically engage with AI outputs.
- Designing and delivering activities and/or resources that develop students' ability to use AI effectively for careers development.
- Integrating AI into workshops and digital resources.

What this looks like in practice:

- Co-creating CVs or applications with students using AI.
- Using AI outputs as discussion prompts in appointments.
- Embedding AI into employability workshops.
- Teaching students how to use AI effectively and ethically.

TIER 3: STRATEGIC AND SERVICE-LEVEL AI LEADERSHIP

Embedding AI across services and shaping practice

At this level, the focus shifts from individual use to service-wide integration and leadership.

Core capabilities:

- Developing guidance on ethical and effective AI use for careers staff.
- Leading training and capability-building across teams.
- Conducting risk assessments and ensuring compliance (e.g. GDPR).
- Redesigning services to incorporate AI-enhanced delivery.

What this looks like in practice:

- Creating AI policies or frameworks for the service.
- Supporting colleagues to develop confidence and capability.
- Evaluating the impact of using AI on student outcomes.
- Embedding AI into strategy, systems, and provision.

Practitioner personas

While the capability model outlines the progression of AI skills, the following personas illustrate how these levels may appear in practice across different practitioners. They are designed to support reflection, discussion, and professional development.

Tier 1 Persona: The Explorer

*"I'm curious,
but cautious."*

The Explorer is aware of AI and its potential but lacks confidence in using it within guidance practice. They may have experimented with tools in a limited way, but remain unsure about accuracy, ethics, and how to integrate AI appropriately into student interactions.

In practice, **Explorers** often:

- Use AI cautiously or avoid using it in appointments.
- Prefer to observe or learn from colleagues before trying new approaches.
- Feel uncertain about how to evaluate AI outputs.
- Have concerns about data privacy, bias, or "getting it wrong".

Next steps:

- Begin with low-risk, clearly defined tasks (e.g. writing interview questions).
- Observe or co-deliver sessions with more experienced colleagues.
- Focus on building confidence in evaluating and questioning outputs.
- Engage with introductory training and guided practice.

Tier 2 Persona: The Practitioner

*"I use AI, but I
want to use it
better."*

The Practitioner is actively using AI in parts of their work and is developing confidence in integrating it into guidance. They recognise its value but are still refining how to use it in a way that is pedagogically meaningful and ethically consistent.

In practice, **Practitioners** often:

- Use AI within appointments to support CVs, applications, or interview preparation.
- Experiment with integrating AI into workshops or resources.
- Co-create content with students, but may not always fully personalise outputs.
- Are confident using tools, but less confident in teaching students how to use them critically.

Next steps:

- Shift from "using AI" to teaching students how to use AI effectively.
- Embed critical reflection and evaluation into AI-supported activities.
- Share practice with colleagues and learn from peer approaches.
- Experiment with more structured, pedagogical uses of AI.

Tier 3 Persona: The Strategist

*"I lead and
shape how AI
is used in our
service."*

The Strategist is confident in using AI and plays a key role in embedding it within practice at a team or service level. They are focused not just on individual use, but on consistency, quality, and responsible integration across provision.

In practice, **Strategists** often:

- Lead or support training for colleagues.
- Develop guidance, frameworks, or resources for AI use.
- Consider ethical, legal, and institutional implications.
- Explore how AI can enhance service delivery at scale.

Next steps:

- Support colleagues at different levels of confidence and willingness through structured development.
- Embed clear ethical and practical guidance across the service.
- Evaluate the impact of AI on student outcomes and experience.
- Engage with sector-wide developments and contribute to emerging practice.

Which persona best reflects your current practice?

Case studies

The following case studies, drawn from practitioner interviews, illustrate how AI is being integrated into careers guidance across different contexts. They reflect a range of adoption styles, student behaviours, and practical challenges, while reinforcing a consistent principle: **AI enhances provision, but human judgement remains central.**

THE “CAUTIOUS ADOPTER” APPROACH

Model: Light-touch integration

In some services, AI use remains limited due to concerns about data privacy and GDPR, lack of confidence or training, and unclear institutional policies. Some staff are reluctant to adopt AI until clearer frameworks and examples are available.

Practitioners may:

- Use AI privately for preparation.
- Signpost students to general guidance.
- Avoid direct use in appointments.

Key insight: Adoption is shaped as much by confidence and culture as by technology.

Impact:

- Slower adoption across the service.
- Inconsistent student experience.
- Missed opportunities for skill development.

THE “MODERATE ADOPTER” SERVICE

Model: Appointment-enhanced guidance

A mid-sized service uses AI selectively within appointments and workshops.

Advisers commonly use AI for:

- Generating interview questions.
- Structuring CVs and cover letters.
- Supporting labour market research.

During appointments, AI outputs are co-created and edited live, with advisers helping students refine tone, remove generic phrasing, and tailor content.

Impact:

- Improved efficiency in appointments.
- Higher-quality student drafts.
- Maintained focus on personalised guidance.

Key insight: AI is treated as a starting point, with advisers restoring authenticity and context.

THE “SUPER ADOPTER” SERVICE

Model: AI-enabled service redesign and scaled delivery

A large careers service has embedded AI across workshops, drop-ins, and digital resources. Rather than focusing on specific tools, it provides prompt frameworks, demonstrations, and guardrails, enabling students to use their preferred AI platforms.

AI is used to:

- Support CV drafting and job applications.
- Generate interview questions.
- Enable pre-appointment preparation.

The service has also introduced AI-supported drop-ins, where students arrive with AI-generated drafts or ideas.

Impact:

- Increased engagement and reduced “blank page” issues.
- More time for advisers to focus on higher-level coaching.
- Strong student demand for AI-related support.

Key insight: AI is used to scale access and preparation, while advisers focus on interpretation and decision-making.

WIDENING PARTICIPATION CHALLENGE

Model: Equity-focused intervention

A university with a large widening participation cohort identified digital inequality as a key issue in AI use, including students lacking access to paid AI tools, limited access to personal devices, and lower confidence in using AI effectively.

To address this, the service:

- Provided on-site access to devices and AI tools.
- Delivered structured workshops on safe and effective AI use.
- Increased human-led support for these groups.

Impact:

- Reduced inequity in access to AI support.
- Improved confidence among underrepresented students.
- More inclusive use of AI across the cohort.

Key insight: Without intervention, AI can widen existing inequalities in access and outcomes.

STUDENT OVER-RELIANCE ON AI

Model: Correcting inappropriate use through guidance

A student presented a CV and cover letter generated almost entirely by AI, which was generic and formulaic, lacked personal detail, and did not reflect the student's actual experience.

The adviser shifted the session to focus on:

- Deconstructing the AI output.
- Identifying where it lacked authenticity.
- Rebuilding the application using the student's own experiences.

The adviser reframed AI as: *A tool to improve what you write, not replace it.*

Impact:

- Student developed better understanding of effective applications.
- Increased confidence in articulating their own experience.
- Reduced reliance on AI-generated content.

Key insight: Over-reliance on AI can weaken reflection and authenticity unless actively mediated by guidance.

AI-ENABLED TRIAGE AND PREPARATION

Model: Pre-guidance AI use to enhance appointments

Some services encourage students to use AI before attending appointments, for example to draft CVs or cover letters, generate interview questions, and research roles and sectors.

Advisers then use the appointment to:

- Refine and personalise outputs.
- Challenge assumptions.
- Support decision-making.

Impact:

- More focused and productive appointments.
- Reduced time spent on basic drafting.
- Greater emphasis on coaching and reflection.

Key insight: AI can shift guidance from content creation to higher-order support.

Next steps: putting this into practice

This toolkit is designed to support reflection, not prescribe a single way of working. The next step is to apply these insights within your own context, translating ideas into practice in a way that is meaningful, ethical, and sustainable.

REFLECT ON YOUR PRACTICE

Where is AI already present in your work and where are the gaps?

Prompt? What am I currently avoiding or unsure about when it comes to AI?

IDENTIFY OPPORTUNITIES

Where could AI enhance efficiency, access, or student preparation?

Prompt? Which task(s) takes up time that could be better spent on deeper guidance?

APPLY A BLENDED APPROACH

Use AI for structure and efficiency; retain human judgement for interpretation and decision-making.

Prompt? Where does my input add something AI cannot?

EMBED ETHICAL PRACTICE

Ensure AI use is transparent, secure, and inclusive.

Prompt? Who might be disadvantaged by this approach - and how can I mitigate that?

START SMALL

Experiment with low-risk tasks and build confidence over time.

Prompt? What is one thing I can test safely without changing my whole practice?

KEEP EVOLVING

Engage with colleagues and adapt as practice develops.

Prompt? What have I learned from trying AI that I can share with others?

FINAL THOUGHT: AI is a powerful technical tool that can support and enhance - but not replace - the essential role of careers practitioners within higher education.

Glossary

- **AI literacy:** The foundational understanding of how AI works, its risks, and its role in the workplace.
- **AI will:** A practitioner's proactive mindset and willingness to experiment with technology.
- **Algorithm:** A set of rules or calculations used by a computer to solve problems or perform tasks.
- **ATS (Applicant Tracking System):** Software used by employers to scan, sort, and rank job applications.
- **Bias (in AI):** When an AI system produces unfair outcomes that favour one group of people over another, often because it was trained on incomplete or prejudiced historical data.
- **Blank page syndrome:** The difficulty students face when starting a document from scratch.
- **Career construction theory:** A narrative model by Mark Savickas that focuses on how individuals construct their career stories.
- **Careers guidance:** the process of supporting individuals to understand their skills, interests, and opportunities in order to make informed decisions about their education, training, and career pathways.
- **Cognitive offloading:** The act of using technology to perform tasks that used to require human brainpower.
- **Digital poverty:** The lack of access to paid AI tools or high-quality hardware.
- **DOTS model:** A traditional career development framework consisting of Decision learning, Opportunity awareness, Transition learning, and Self-awareness.
- **Generative AI (GenAI):** A type of AI capable of generating text, images, or other media.
- **Hallucination:** A phenomenon where an AI model perceives patterns or objects that are non-existent or creates factually incorrect information that sounds confident.
- **Hybrid guidance:** An integration model where human practitioners and AI tools work together to support a student.
- **Labour Market Information (LMI):** Data about jobs and industries. AI can be used to curate this information to keep advisors up to date on rapidly changing sectors.
- **LLM (Large Language Model):** A type of AI trained on vast amounts of text data to understand and generate human-like language.
- **Platform agnostic:** The practice of teaching students to use multiple AI tools to avoid usage limits and find the best output for specific tasks.
- **Procedural tasks:** Administrative or routine duties within careers guidance that involve structured data or repetitive formatting.
- **Prompting:** The act of giving an AI a specific instruction or input to generate a desired output.
- **Prompt engineering:** The process of refining and optimising prompts to get more accurate, nuanced, or useful results from an AI.
- **RAG (Retrieval-Augmented Generation):** A method of providing an AI with specific, vetted data to prevent it from making things up.
- **Statistical model:** A description of how AI works by predicting the probability of which word should come next, rather than having genuine intelligence.
- **Sycophantic:** The tendency of AI to be overly agreeable and validating every idea rather than challenging the user or provoking deeper thought.
- **Triage mechanism:** A system used to filter student enquiries so that only the most complex cases reach a one-to-one appointment with a senior consultant.

Tools

Given the rapid evolution of generative AI, static “best tools” lists quickly become outdated. Practitioners should instead use the **checklist on page 14** to guide tool selection and use. The list below is a starting point, accurate as of May 2026. Practitioners remain responsible for conducting due diligence, including verifying institutional approval, data protection compliance, and alignment with the ethical, pedagogical, and sustainability criteria outlined in the checklist.

General Generative AI & Large Language Models (LLMs)

- **ChatGPT:** Used widely for drafting, feedback, brainstorming, and session design. Features such as 'canvas' allow for live, side-by-side document editing.
- **Claude:** An LLM by Anthropic favoured by some practitioners for its specific writing style and conversational nuances.
- **DeepSeek:** Mentioned as an alternative model for generating text and providing feedback.
- **Gemini:** A Google-developed tool used for real-time student queries and action planning.
- **Microsoft Copilot:** The official university-sanctioned tool in most institutions, integrated with Office 365 to ensure data protection and institutional compliance.
- **GreenGPT:** An environmentally conscious AI used by staff members concerned about the carbon footprint of data centers.

Specialised Guidance and Practice Tools

- **Career Set:** An AI-powered tool used as a triage tool to check CVs, cover letters, and LinkedIn profiles.
- **Shortlist.me:** A video interview tool that provides AI-driven feedback on speech pace, pitch, tone, and filler words.
- **Hume AI:** An empathetic voice interface that analyses emotional tone in student speech during mock interviews.
- **Pi (Inflection AI):** An emotionally intelligent AI used by practitioners to practice empathy, rapport building, and conversational flow.

Creative and Visual

- **Adobe firefly:** An AI integrated creative software for visual and graphical tasks, and for generating unique images by prompting.
- **Canva Pro:** Used to develop content for social media, publicity posters, and presentation slides.
- **Napkin AI:** A tool that converts text into infographics, graphs, and charts.
- **Suno:** An AI tool capable of generating songs and audio content within seconds.

Research Tools

- **elicit / consensus / scite ai / typeset.io:** Specialised research tools used for deep academic and labour market information (LMI) searches.
- **Going Global:** A partnership tool that provides AI-informed data on international career opportunities.

Other tools

- **Google Notebook LM:** A tool used to organise personal research and labour market data into notebooks.
- **Access Abintegro:** A digital office suite featuring 'CV360' and 'Interview 360'; often used for initial career exploration and self-assessment quizzes.
- **Engagedly:** A virtual classroom tool repurposed for 'online drop-ins' featuring virtual tables for different career topics.
- **Graduates First:** A platform for psychometric testing and coaching, featuring a video interview tool with facial analysis.
- **Sprout:** A rapid application tool, described as 'Tinder for jobs', that swipes on job descriptions and generates cover letters.

Further resources

For practitioners looking to explore AI in careers guidance in more depth, the following resources may be helpful:

Sector guidance and ethics

- [Graduate Futures Institute](#) - Insights and emerging practice on AI and careers services.
- [Graduate Futures Institute Code of Ethics](#) - sets out the attitudes and behaviours expected from our members, and offers clear guidance to support professional growth.
- [Jisc](#) - AI guidance, policy frameworks, and digital capability resources.
- [Career Development Institute](#) - Ethical guidance and professional standards for careers practitioners.
- [Jisc AI ethics training](#) - useful for staff CPD and reflective practice.
- [AdvanceHE](#) - Preparing for an AI-Enabled Future (change and leadership programme).

Training and capability development

- [Google AI Essentials](#) - Introductory training on using AI tools effectively.
- [Jisc Training and Digital capability frameworks](#) - Supporting staff development in digital and AI literacy.
- [Microsoft AI learning resources](#) - Introductory materials on responsible use of generative AI.

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Five Principles for Using AI in Careers Guidance



Make it Transparent



Make it Pedagogical



Make it Ethical



Make it Human-Centered



Make it Inclusive



This toolkit was developed by a practising senior careers adviser at the University of Aberdeen as part of an MA research project at the University of Warwick. The work was supported by a Jisc-Prospects Luminare grant and draws on both practitioner experience and academic research.



www.abdn.ac.uk/careers/about/research-activities