

The AI decision tree

What AI should do, and what stays human. Aptem AI webinar series, session 5

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Take any task. Ask the five questions in order. Stop at the first answer that places it. In every lane, a named person owns the outcome. What changes is who does the work.

1

Does a rule require a named person to make this decision?

Regulation, contract or law. For example, marks that count towards a qualification, or safeguarding decisions.

Yes →

A named person decides

Human only, for now, or AI drafts and they decide

↓ No

2

Is the human contact itself the point?

A disclosure, a difficult conversation, a wellbeing check-in. Be strict: this list is shorter than it feels.

Yes →

Human leads, AI supports

Preparation, notes, actions, follow-up

↓ No

3

If it goes wrong, is the harm serious or hard to undo?

To a learner, an employer, funding or your reputation.

Yes →

AI drafts, human decides

Every output checked before it goes anywhere

↓ No

4

Could the person checking actually spot a wrong answer?

Do they know the standard, and do they have time to look? If not, the check is theatre.

No →

Not yet

Fix the skills or the standard first, then come back

↓ Yes

5

Would you sample this if a new team member did it?

Same standard as for people, not a higher one. People make mistakes too.

Yes →

AI does it, humans sample-check

Start with a bigger sample and a smaller group. Ease off as it earns trust

↓ No

AI drafts, human decides

Check every one, as you would for a person

Owning the outcome: IQA for a new kind of assessor

- **Can judge:** the checker is occupationally competent and knows the standard.
- **Does check:** time is given and a sampling plan is followed. Not a click.
- **Answers for it:** a named role signs the sample, not "the system".

You would not let a new assessor sign off work without sampling them. Do not let AI either.

"Human only" means for now

The tree reflects today's rules and today's tools. Revisit it once a year, alongside your quality improvement plan. Tasks can move lanes in either direction.

Worked examples

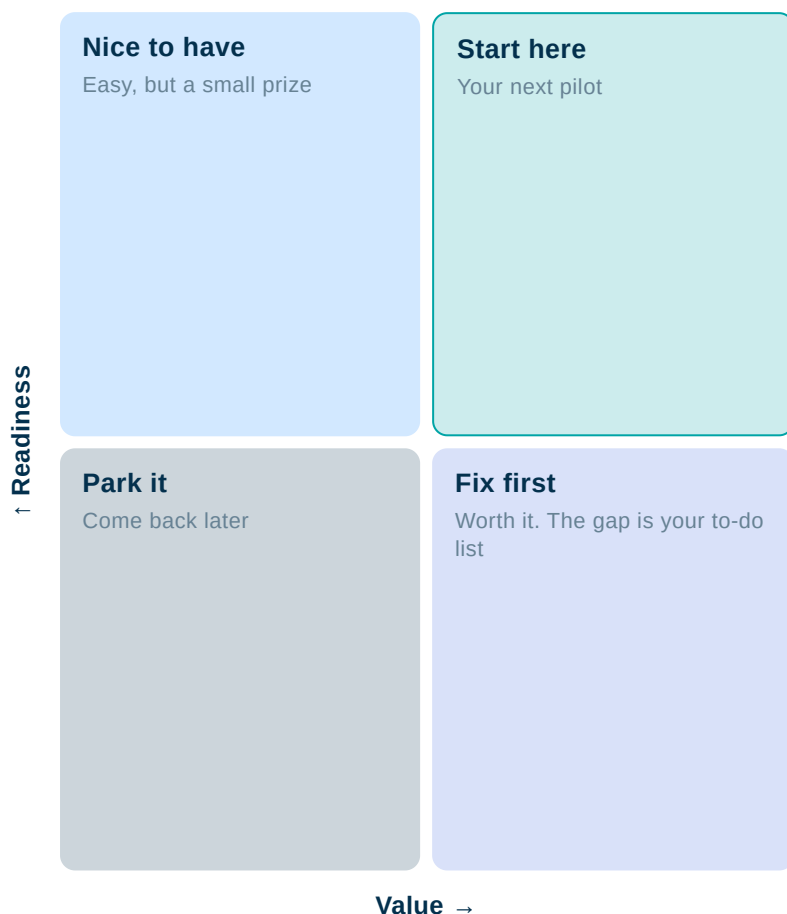
- Checking OTJT hours against evidence: AI drafts, human decides (question 3 catches it)
- At-risk apprentices: spotting, AI does it; the conversation, human leads
- Out-of-hours questions: facts, AI does it; any distress, a named person decides
- Picking your IQA sample by risk: AI drafts, the IQA lead decides

The suitability test: value against readiness



The tree tells you the lane. The grid tells you which task to start with.

List up to six candidate tasks. Ask the value and readiness questions about each, then write its number on the grid.



Value

- How often does it happen?
- How much time would it give back?
- Can you measure it, before and after?

Readiness

- Is there a clear standard for what good looks like?
- Is the data usable, and allowed in the tool? (Session 3's seven supplier questions)
- Is there someone who can check the output, with time to do it?
- Does the team doing it today want the help?

Your candidate tasks

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

The rule of thumb

Start **top right**, in a **low-harm lane** on the tree. One task, one team, one reviewer. Bottom right? The readiness gap is your to-do list.

What the regulators say

Ofsted: "Any evaluation that Ofsted makes is about the provider's decision-making, what they have considered, and the impacts on children and learners, not about the tool itself."

Ofqual: "the use of AI as the sole mechanism for awarding marks does not comply with our current regulations."

Sources: Ofsted, How Ofsted looks at AI during inspection and regulation (GOV.UK, updated 21 October 2025; Ofsted states it "does not represent a final position"). Ofsted, Further education and skills operating guide for inspectors, for use from September 2026. Ofqual blog, Using AI in marking, 14 January 2026. Jisc National Centre for AI, Formative First: insights from the AI in Marking and Feedback Pilot, 20 May 2026. This guide is a planning aid, not legal or regulatory advice. Check current guidance before acting.