FAST-08 Reading List: AI for Workflow Improvement and Process Automation

Provider: 7formations | Course: FAST-08 | Instructor: Wadood Chaudhary | Links verified by fetch or search as of Oct 2026

Readings cover process mapping, how AI steps and agents fit into workflows, the build tools for both tracks (Microsoft and Zapier), and the controls that keep automations safe: approvals, data policies, and security testing. Vendor documentation changes often; read the current version and follow your employer's track.

How to use. Required readings take 20 to 45 minutes per session and are done before (or right after) the session they support. Optional readings go deeper. 'Living page' means the publisher updates it continuously; read the current version. Reading times are estimates for the parts that matter to this course, not the whole document.

Session 1: See the process

Required

- **Value Stream Mapping (Lean Lexicon)**
  Publisher: Lean Enterprise Institute | Date: Living page | Reading time: about 15 min
  URL: https://www.lean.org/lexicon-terms/value-stream-mapping/
  Why read: The Lean Enterprise Institute's short explanation of current-state and future-state mapping, lead time, and cycle time. The same ideas apply to office and request processes.

Optional

- **Navigating the Jagged Technological Frontier (Dell'Acqua et al.), HBS Working Paper 24-013**
  Publisher: Harvard Business School | Date: September 2023 | Reading time: about 20 min
  URL: https://www.hbs.edu/faculty/Pages/item.aspx?num=64700
  Why read: Why AI helps on some tasks and hurts on others. Use it when deciding which steps are good automation candidates.

Session 2: Redesign with AI and people

Required

- **Building effective agents**
  Publisher: Anthropic (Engineering) | Date: December 19, 2024 (with 2026 note) | Reading time: about 20 min
  URL: https://www.anthropic.com/engineering/building-effective-agents
  Why read: Anthropic's widely cited guide distinguishes fixed workflows from open-ended agents and recommends the simplest design that works. Read 'Workflow: Routing' and 'When (and when not) to use agents.'

- **201 CMR 17.00: Standards for the Protection of Personal Information of MA Residents**
  Publisher: Mass.gov, Office of Consumer Affairs and Business Regulation | Date: Regulation page dated 10/19/2017 (in force since 2010) | Reading time: about 10 min
  URL: https://www.mass.gov/regulations/201-CMR-1700-standards-for-the-protection-of-personal-information-of-ma-residents
  Why read: 201 CMR 17.00. Any automation that moves MA residents' personal information must fit your written security program.

Optional

- **OWASP GenAI LLM Top 10 2026**
  Publisher: OWASP Gen AI Security Project | Date: Published August 4, 2026 | Reading time: about 20 min
  URL: https://genai.owasp.org/resource/owasp-genai-llm-top-10-2026/
  Why read: OWASP's 2026 Top 10 for LLM applications. Read Excessive Agency (LLM03) for why AI steps should not be allowed to take actions on their own.

Session 3: Build

Required

- **Explore the Power Automate home page**
  Publisher: Microsoft Learn (Power Automate) | Date: Living page | Reading time: about 10 min
  URL: https://learn.microsoft.com/en-us/power-automate/getting-started
  Why read: Microsoft track: the Power Automate home page, environments, and where to start a flow. Note the section on choosing an environment (use the sandbox).
- **Use AI by Zapier to analyze and return data**
  Publisher: Zapier Help Center | Date: Updated October 28, 2026 | Reading time: about 10 min
  URL: https://help.zapier.com/hc/en-us/articles/8496342944013-Use-AI-by-Zapier-to-analyze-and-return-data
  Why read: Zapier track: how to add an AI by Zapier step, map fields, and define output fields.

Optional

- **Overview: Microsoft Copilot Studio**
  Publisher: Microsoft Learn | Date: Living page | Reading time: about 10 min
  URL: https://learn.microsoft.com/en-us/microsoft-copilot-studio/fundamentals-what-is-copilot-studio
  Why read: Microsoft track: what Copilot Studio adds (agents, workflows, agent flows) and its human-in-the-loop controls.

Session 4: Build with AI and approvals

Required

- **Overview of AI Builder**
  Publisher: Microsoft Learn (Power Platform) | Date: Living page | Reading time: about 10 min

URL: https://learn.microsoft.com/en-us/ai-builder/overview
Why read: Microsoft track: AI Builder's prebuilt models, including document processing for invoices.

- **Get started with Power Automate approvals**
  Publisher: Microsoft Learn (Power Automate) | Date: Living page | Reading time: about 12 min
  URL: https://learn.microsoft.com/en-us/power-automate/get-started-approvals
  Why read: Approval types (everyone must approve, first to respond, sequential) and when to use each.

Optional

- **Data policies (data loss prevention) for Power Platform**
  Publisher: Microsoft Learn (Power Platform admin) | Date: Living page | Reading time: about 15 min
  URL: https://learn.microsoft.com/en-us/power-platform/admin/wp-data-loss-prevention
  Why read: How administrators use data policies to control which connectors flows may use. Explains why your flow may be blocked in some environments.

Session 5: Test and propose

Required

- **OWASP GenAI LLM Top 10 2026**
  Publisher: OWASP Gen AI Security Project | Date: Published August 4, 2026 | Reading time: about 15 min
  URL: https://genai.owasp.org/resource/owasp-genai-llm-top-10-2026/
  Why read: Re-read Prompt Injection (LLM01) and Sensitive Information Disclosure (LLM02) before writing your break-it tests.

Optional

- **Artificial Intelligence Risk Management Framework: Generative Artificial Intelligence Profile, NIST AI 600-1**
  Publisher: NIST | Date: July 2024 | Reading time: about 20 min
  URL: https://nvlpubs.nist.gov/nistpubs/ai/NIST.AI.600-1.pdf
  Why read: NIST's Generative AI Profile. Skim the suggested actions on pre-deployment testing for ideas to add to your test log.
- **Employer Costs for Employee Compensation (news release)**
  Publisher: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics | Date: June 2026 data, released September 9, 2026 | Reading time: about 8 min
  URL: https://www.bls.gov/news.release/ecec.htm
  Why read: Bureau of Labor Statistics data on employer costs per hour worked (wages plus benefits). Useful when converting hours saved into dollars in your proposal.
- **The state of AI in 2026: On the road to ROI**
  Publisher: McKinsey & Company (QuantumBlack) | Date: August 25, 2026 | Reading time: about 15 min
  URL: https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/quantumblack/our-insights/the-state-of-ai
  Why read: McKinsey's 2026 survey: high performers redesign workflows rather than inserting AI into old ones. Context for your proposal's framing.

Link verification

Links verified by fetch or search as of Oct 2026. Links that could not be confirmed were dropped and are not listed. The instructor re-checks links before each cohort.