Word Processor Policy (Exams)

2022-2023

This policy is reviewed annually to ensure compliance with current regulations

Date of next review	February 2024

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Key staff involved in the policy

Role	Name(s)
SENDCo	**Kirsty Ashby**
Assessor	**Rachel Cork**
Exams officer	**Lesley Haldane**
Senior leader(s)	**Louise Walder, Deputy Head**
Director of IT	**Anu Chawla**

This policy has been written by the SENDCo and the Exams Officer and signed off by the the Deputy Head with responsibility for exams.

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This policy is reviewed and updated annually on the publication of updated JCQ regulations and guidance on access arrangements and instructions for conducting exams.

References in this policy to AA and ICE relate to/are directly taken from the Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments 2022-2023 (AA) and Instructions for conducting examinations 2022-2023 publications(ICE).

Introduction

The use of a word processor in exams and assessments is an available access arrangement/reasonable adjustment.

(AA 4.2.1)
The purpose of an access arrangement/reasonable adjustment is to ensure, where possible, that barriers to assessment are removed for a disabled candidate preventing him/her from being placed at a substantial disadvantage as a consequence of persistent and significant difficulties. The integrity of the assessment is maintained, whilst at the same time providing access to assessments for a disabled candidate.

(AA 4.2.2)
Although access arrangements/adjustments are intended to allow access to assessments, they cannot be granted where they will compromise the assessment objectives of the specification in question.

(AA 4.2.3)
Candidates may not require the same access arrangements/reasonable adjustments in each specification. Subjects and their methods of assessments may vary, leading to different demands of the candidate. ALS leads/SENCos must consider the need for access arrangements/reasonable adjustments on a subject-by-subject basis.

(AA 4.2.1)
The Additional Learning Support lead/SENCo must ensure that the proposed access arrangement/reasonable adjustment does not unfairly disadvantage or advantage a candidate.

(AA 4.2.7)
The candidate must have had appropriate opportunities to practice using the access arrangement(s)/reasonable adjustment(s) before his/her first examination.

Purpose of the policy

This policy details how Sir William Borlase's Grammar School complies with AA chapter 4 (Managing the needs of candidates and principles for centres), section 5.8 (Word processor) and ICE (sections 14.20-27) when awarding and allocating a candidate the use of word processor in examinations.

The term 'word processor' is used to describe the use of a computer, laptop or tablet as appropriate.

Centre Procedure used by Sir William Borlase's Grammar School for allocating word processors for use in examinations

For a student to be allocated the use of a word processor in examinations, they must meet the criteria through accessing legibility of hand writing or testing handwriting speed through the use of the DASH test (Detailed Assessment of Speed of Handwriting).

Referrals for handwriting (either speed or legibility) can be made to the SENDCo by teaching staff via a form located on the school's Staff Information Centre by teaching staff.

For legibility concerns, the SENDCo will request samples of handwriting either via the teacher or directly from the student. There should be a range of examples including ones that have been written under timed conditions. The SENDCo will seek a second opinion from the SEN specialist teacher before confirming the laptop allocation.

If a concern is raised about speed of writing and the ability to finish written tasks in timed conditions, the SENDCo will arrange for the student to be seen by the specialist teacher who will assess the speed of writing using a DASH test. If the student's handwriting falls below average speed a word processor will be allocated.

In both cases the allocation of a word processor will be confirmed via email to the parents and the student. The teachers of the student will be informed that using a device should be their normal way of working (NWOW) as required by the JCQ regulations. The exams officer will also be informed and the learning needs map updated. Some students will choose a hybrid in some subjects and further discussion with the student will confirm which subjects the word processor should be used for where appropriate. Due to the lack of interactive examination papers at this time, Maths and Physics students seem to prefer not to use a word processor due to the type of answers that need to be given.

Once the word processor has been allocated students must receive training in how to use the ExamWritePad programme and given opportunities to practice using the programme.

Additionally the use of a word processor would be considered for a candidate

- in the event of a temporary injury or impairment, or a diagnosis of a disability or manifestation of an impairment relating to an existing disability arising after the start of the course (AA 4.2.4)

- where the curriculum is delivered electronically and the centre provides word processors to all candidates (AA 5.8.4)

Arrangements at the time of the assessment for the use of a word processor

Candidates using word processors are accommodated in the main examination venue unless they have an additional need which requires them to be accommodated elsewhere.

In compliance with the regulations the centre:

- provides a word processor with the spelling and grammar check predictive text disabled (switched off) to a candidate where it is their normal way of working within the centre, unless an awarding body's specification says otherwise (ICE 14.20)
- where a candidate is to be seated in a venue without access to a power point, checks the battery capacity of the word processor before the candidate's exam to ensure that the battery is sufficiently charged for the entire duration of the exam (ICE 14.21)
- ensures the setup of the software ExamWritePad so that all the candidate details, page numbers, required font and spacing and auto-saving of work occur (ICE 14.22, 14.24, 14.25)

The centre will ensure the word processor:
- is only used in a way that ensures a candidate's script is produced under secure conditions
- is not used to perform skills which should be assessed via handwriting – the writing of Mandarin characters for example
- is in good working order at the time of the exam
- is accommodated in such a way that other candidates are not disturbed and cannot read the screen
- is used as a typewriter, not as a database, although standard formatting software is acceptable
- is cleared of any previously stored data
- does not give the candidate access to other applications such as a calculator (where prohibited in the examination), e-mail, the Internet, social media sites, spreadsheets
- does not include graphic packages or computer aided design software unless permission has been given to use these
- does not have any predictive text software or an automatic spelling and grammar check enabled unless the candidate has been permitted a scribe or is using speech recognition technology (a scribe cover sheet must be completed), or the awarding body's specification permits the use of automatic spell checking
- does not include computer reading (text to speech) software unless the candidate has permission to use a computer reader
- does not include speech recognition technology unless the candidate has permission to use a scribe or relevant software
- is not used on the candidate's behalf by a third party unless the candidate has permission to use a scribe

Portable storage medium
(ICE 14.25)
The centre will ensure that any portable storage medium for the transfer of the examination script for printing (eg a memory stick) used:
- is provided by the centre
- is cleared of any previously stored data

Printing the script after the exam has ended
(ICE 14.25)
The centre will ensure:
- the word processor is either connected to a printer so that a script can be printed off, or that there is a facility to print from a portable storage medium
- the candidate is present to verify that the work printed is his or their own
- a word processed script is attached to any answer booklet which contains some of the answers
- that if ExamWritePad fails to print the required details onto the work, a candidate will be instructed to handwrite the details as a header or footer. The candidate will be supervised

throughout this process to ensure that they are solely performing this task and not re-reading their answers or amending their work in any way (ICE 14.22)

The centre will also ensure that where an awarding body may require a word processor cover sheet, this is included with the candidate's typed script (and according to the relevant awarding body's instructions). (ICE 14.26)

The centre may retain electronic copies of word processed scripts as the electronic copy of a word processed script may be accepted by an awarding body where the printed copy has been lost. However, the centre would need to demonstrate to the awarding body that the file has been kept securely. The head of centre would be required to confirm this in writing to the awarding body. (ICE 14.27)

IT practicalities of allocating word processors for examinations

The IT department and the Exams Officer liaise after the entries are made regarding the number of devices that will be required during the examination series. A small additional number are held in reserve in case of device failure or late awarding of the arrangement. These are charged nightly by the examinations team in IT cabinets designed and maintained for this purpose.

The IT department and the Exams Officer liaise before the examination series to ensure that the configuration file for ExamWritePad contains all the necessary details.

In exceptional circumstances where the number of appropriate word processors may be insufficient for the cohort of candidates approved to use them in an exam session, the cohort will be split into two groups. One group will sit the exam earlier than or later than the awarding body's published start time.   The security of the exam will be maintained at all times and candidates will be supervised in line with section 7 of ICE.]

SWBGS supports and implements the use of word processors in assessments and examinations in line with JCQ regulations and recommendations

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JCQ Recommendations

5.8.1 Centres are allowed to provide a word processor with the spelling and grammar check facility/predictive text disabled (switched off) to a candidate where it is their normal way of working within the centre and is appropriate to their needs.

For example, the quality of language significantly improves as a result of using a word processor due to problems with planning and organisation when writing by hand.

(This also extends to the use of electronic braillers and tablets.)

5.8.2 The use of word processors in controlled assessment or coursework components will be considered standard practice unless prohibited by the specification.

5.8.3 It is permissible for a candidate using a word processor in an examination to type certain questions, i.e. those requiring extended writing, and handwrite shorter answers, annotate maps/ diagrams.

N.B. Examinations which have a significant amount of writing, as well as those that place a greater demand on the need to organise thought and plan extended answers, are those where candidates will frequently need to type. Examinations which require more simplistic answers are often easier to handwrite within the answer booklet. The candidate avoids the difficulty of visually tracking between the question paper and screen.

The use of a word processor must reflect the candidate's normal way of working within the centre and be appropriate to the candidate's needs.

Use of a word processor in examinations is a centre-delegated arrangement in line with JCQ information. This statement about the use of word processors has been prepared to be shared with stakeholders.

Principally, a word processor cannot simply be granted to a candidate because he/she now **wants to** type rather than write in examinations or can work faster on a keyboard, or because he/she uses a laptop at home.

It is not a reasonable adjustment for a candidate to request use of a word processor because they can type faster than they can handwrite. The use of a word processor will be as a result of a **well-established SEND need/illegible handwriting which has been identified and evidenced over time with clear professional input, eg teaching staff.**

Students and their parents are at liberty to request permission to use their own word processor/laptop/i-pad in lessons/study periods/support sessions at their own risk. This request will be considered by the SENDCo and will be granted if it is agreed it will benefit the student. A school word processor agreement must be signed before this arrangement can begin and the device has to be PAT tested before it can be used in school. Personal devices brought into school are the responsibility of the student at all times and the school cannot be held liable for any loss or damage.

Permission to use a laptop/device in class must not be taken to imply permission to allow this arrangement in assessments/exams. These decisions are taken at the start of the GCSE/A Level courses following testing and consultation with staff.

Permission to use a word processor in an exam may well be granted for a candidate with:

• a learning difficulty which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on their ability to write legibly;
• a medical condition;
• a physical disability;
• a sensory impairment;

• planning and organisational problems when writing by hand;
• poor handwriting.
This list is not exhaustive. Each case will be considered on its merits and a decision will be made by the SENDCO with evidence from relevant professionals and in consultation with relevant SLT.
Examples - Word processor
• A candidate who cannot write legibly because she has been assessed with dyslexia asks to use a word processor in her examinations. It is her normal means of producing written work within the centre because her teachers cannot read her writing. She is very proficient in using a word processor. The SENDCO allows her to use a word processor in her examinations following teacher evidence.
• A candidate does not have a learning difficulty but is a 'messy' writer. His handwriting is hard to decipher. He requests the use of a word processor. This is granted by the SENDCO because it reflects his normal way of working within the centre and is appropriate to his needs. (see point above about use being based on well-established SEND need over time)
• A candidate wishes to use a word processor since this is her normal way of working within the centre and is evidenced in accordance with requirements. However, the candidate additionally wishes to use the spelling and grammar check facility. Given that she does not meet the criteria for a scribe, the candidate cannot use the spelling and grammar check facility. The SENDCO allows her to use a word processor in line with the regulations as set out in the JCQ 'ICE' booklet.
• A candidate taking an ICT paper wishes to use a word processor with the spelling and grammar check facility enabled. However, the paper is testing his ability to proof-read a document. The SENDCO refuses the use of the spelling and grammar check facility. He uses the word processor with the spelling and grammar check disabled (switched off).
• A blind candidate asks to use a word processor in his examinations. He also requests the use of a screen reader to allow him to 'read' back and check the answers he has typed. These arrangements are permitted when using a word processor in his examinations. However, if the candidate also wants to use predictive text and/or the spelling and grammar check facility the centre must apply for the use of a scribe.

Examples - Word processor and 25% extra time
• A candidate has a below average free writing speed when handwriting and qualifies for 25% extra time. However, using a word processor is her normal way of working within the centre and when typing she can produce her written work effectively, and at a speed equivalent to an average handwriting rate. She has no further learning difficulties and so she is awarded the use of a word processor as it removes the barrier presented by her slow

handwriting, and only given 25% extra time when she writes by hand such as in GCSE Mathematics examinations.
• A candidate with dyslexia has a below average speed of handwriting and below average scores in areas of cognitive processing and reading speed. As using a word processor is his normal way of working within the centre he has been able to improve his typing speed to match the equivalent average handwriting rate. However, he has persistent and significant difficulties in interpreting questions and formulating his typed answers. He is given 25% extra time, as well as the use of a word processor, as both arrangements are appropriate to his needs.