BALLYMENA ACADEMY

EST. 1828

Use of Word Processors in Examinations Policy

Introduction

The use of word processors in examinations and assessments is an available access arrangement. This policy complies with the JCQ regulations and guidance contained in the:
- *Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments 2024-2025 (AARA): section 5.8* and
- *Instructions for Conducting Examinations 2024-2025 (ICE): section on Access Arrangements 14.20 – 14.27.*

Key staff involved in the allocation and provision of word processors for exams are:
- Mrs R. Matchett (Learning Support Co-ordinator)
- Mr. A. Munce (Examinations Officer)
- Mr. J. Armstrong (ICT Technician)

Access Arrangements

Access Arrangements are agreed before an assessment. They allow candidates with specific needs such as special education needs, disabilities or temporary injuries to access assessment, show what they know and can do without changing the demands of the assessment. The intention is to meet the needs of an individual candidate without affecting the integrity of the assessment. Candidates may not require the same access arrangements in each specification as subjects and their methods of assessments may vary, placing different demands on the candidate. The Learning Support Co-ordinator must consider the need for access arrangements on a subject-by-subject basis.

Word Processing in Examinations

The use of a word processor cannot simply be granted to a candidate on the basis of his/her preference; the use of a word processor must reflect the candidate's individual need(s) and normal way of working within the centre e.g. where he/she has :-
- a learning difficulty which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his/her ability to write legibly;
- a medical condition;
- a physical disability;
- a sensory impairment;
- planning and organisational problems when writing by hand
- poor handwriting etc.

The use of a word processor for candidates is only granted if it appropriate to their needs and reflects the support given to the candidate as his/her 'normal way of working', which is defined as support:
- in the classroom ;
- in the test hall;
- whilst working in small groups for reading and/or writing;
- in support lessons;
- as part of intervention strategies;

- in internal school test and mock examinations;
- in mock examinations.

In such cases, the use of a word processor is considered and agreed, where appropriate, at the start of the course. This means that any pupil using a word processor for external exams should have this arrangement in place at the start of or during year 11 (apart from in exceptional circumstances), having firmly established a picture of need and a normal way of working in Years 8 -10. Access arrangements are based on evidence gathered that firmly establishes the candidate's needs and 'normal way of working' in the classroom, internal tests, exams, mock exams etc. and confirmed arrangements are in place before the candidate takes an exam or assessment.

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, access arrangements should be applied for as soon as is practicable.

For all candidates requiring a word processor, the Learning Support Co-ordinator should provide a concise file note on centre-headed paper, signed and dated, confirming the nature of the candidate's impairment and the need for the use of a word processor.

The use of a Word Processor

The school complies with JCQ *Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments (AARA) 2024-2025: chapter 5 section 8* which states that centres:

- are allowed to provide a word processor (e.g. computer, laptop or tablet) with the spelling and grammar check facility/predictive text disabled where it is a candidate's normal way of working within the centre, unless an awarding body's specification says otherwise;
- can provide access to word processors to candidates in non-examination assessment components (including controlled assessments or coursework) as standard practice unless prohibited by the specification;
- Are allowed to let candidates use a word processor in an examination to type answers to certain questions i.e. those requiring extended writing, and to hand-write shorter answers. Examinations which have a significant amount of writing, as well as those that place 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 hand-write within the answer booklet. The candidate avoids the difficulty of visually tracking between the question paper and screen.

The school complies with JCQ's *Instructions for Conducting Examinations 2024-2025: section 14 on Access Arrangements* by ensuring:

- Word processors are used as a typewriter, not as a database, although standard formatting software is acceptable.
- Word processors have been cleared of any previously stored data, as must be any portable storage medium used
- An unauthorised memory stick is not permitted for use by a candidate. Where required, candidates are provided with a memory stick, which has been cleared of any previously stored data, by a nominated member of centre staff
- Word processors are in good working order at the time of the examination
- Word processors are accommodated in such a way that other candidates are not disturbed and cannot read the screen .Where a candidate using a word processor is accommodated separately, a separate invigilator is used.
- Word processors are either connected to a printer so that a script can be printed off or have the facility to print from a portable storage medium .Documents are printed after the examination is over .Candidates are present to verify that the work printed is their own. Word processed scripts are forwarded according to the relevant awarding body's instructions.
- Word processors are used to produce scripts under secure conditions. If they are not, the centre is aware that they may be refused by the awarding body.
- Word processors are not used to perform skills which are being assessed.
- Word processors are not connected to an intranet/internet or any other means of communication e.g. email, social media sites, spreadsheets etc.
- Candidates are not given access to other applications such as a calculator (where prohibited in the examination).
- Graphic packages or computer-aided design software are not included on a word processor unless permission has been given to use these.
- Predictive text software or an automatic spelling and grammar check is disabled unless the candidate has been permitted a scribe or is using voice recognition technology (the script must have a completed scribe cover sheet included), or the awarding body's specification permits the use of automatic spell checking.
- Computer reading (text to speech) software is not included unless the candidate has permission to use a computer reader.
- Voice recognition technology is not included on word processors unless the candidate has permission to use a scribe or relevant software.
- Word processors are not used on the candidate's behalf by a third party unless the candidate has permission to use a scribe.

Centres may retain electronic copies of word-processes scripts. The electronic copy of a word-processed script may be accepted by the 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 is required to confirm this on writing to the awarding body.

Laptops and tablets

The school further complies with *Instructions for Conducting Examinations 2024-2025: section 14 on Access Arrangements* by ensuring:

- Laptop computers / tablets used during examinations/assessments are 'free standing,' designed to run for a long period of time once fully charged.
- The battery capacity of all laptops and/or tablets is checked before the candidate's examination(s) with the battery sufficiently charged for the entire duration of the examination.
- Candidates with fully charged laptops or tablets may be given the opportunity to be seated within the main examination hall without the need for separate invigilation and power points.
- Candidates are reminded that their centre number, candidate number and the unit/component code must appear on each page as a header or footer.
- Candidates using Notepad or WordPad software (which do not allow for the insertion of a header or footer) are instructed to handwrite their details as a header or footer once they have finished the examination and printed off their typed script. Candidates are also supervised to ensure that they are solely performing this task and not re-reading their answers or amending their work in any way.
- Candidates are instructed to appropriately number each page e.g. page 1of 6
- Candidates are instructed to use a minimum point 12 font and double spacing.
- Invigilators remind candidates to save their work at regular intervals .
- Where it is possible 'autosave' is set up on each laptop/tablet.
- Candidates are present at the end of the examination when their script is printed off so they can verify that the work printed is their own.

Invigilation arrangements relating to the use of word processors include the following:

- When housed within the main exam hall invigilators will be made aware of students using word processors and will be informed of the processes involved. An ICT technician will be available to assist at the end of the exam to ensure scripts are printed off correctly with students still present to handover to the Lead Invigilator to send off to the exam board with the rest of the cohort's completed papers
- When housed in a separate exam room from the main cohort, the invigilator will be informed of the processes involved. The ICT technician will be available to assist at the end of the exam to ensure scripts are printed off correctly with students still present to handover to the Lead Invigilator to send off to the exam board with the rest of the cohort's completed papers.
- If the Awarding body requires, a cover sheet will be handed over to the invigilator at the beginning of each exam for each student using a word processor.

This Policy will be reviewed annually or more frequently if JCQ regulations change in relation to the provision of word processors, as a student's normal way of working.