Inspired Pathways

Policy on the use of word processors in public exams 2024-25

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Statement

We observe the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) regulations.

Access arrangements are agreed before an assessment. They allow candidates with a specific need, such as special educational needs, disabilities or temporary injuries to access the assessment and show what they know and can do without changing the demands of the assessment. The intention behind an access arrangement is to meet the particular needs of an individual candidate without affecting the integrity of the assessment. Access arrangements are the principal way in which awarding bodies comply with the duty under the Equality Act 2010 to make 'reasonable adjustments'.

The Equality Act 2010 requires an awarding body to make reasonable adjustments where a candidate who is disabled within the meaning of the Equality Act 2010, would be at a substantial disadvantage in comparison to someone who is not disabled.

Centres are allowed to provide a word processor (e.g., laptop, computer) 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.

Policy

In line with JCQ Regulations, we provide a word processor for use in public exams if it is the pupil's normal way of working within HES and is appropriate to the pupil's needs. This policy will be made available to JCQ Inspectors for the purposes of detailing the criteria HES uses to award and allocate word processors for examinations.

The "normal way of working within HES" includes the use of a word processor in the classroom and also during internal and mock examinations. This condition does not apply in the case of sudden physical injury (e.g., broken wrist).

"Appropriate to the pupil's needs" means that provision of a word processor is necessary to avoid the candidate being placed at a substantial (rather than minor) disadvantage in the examination as a consequence of persistent and significant difficulties.

The "needs" of a pupil that would therefore typically lead to them being considered for the use of a word processor include:

- A learning difficulty which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on the ability to write legibly
- A medical condition
- A physical disability
- A sensory impairment
- Planning and organisational problems when writing by hand

This list is not exhaustive

A word processor cannot be granted to a pupil because:

- The pupil prefers to type rather than write
- The pupil can work faster on a keyboard
- Parental request based on observations at home

For external examinations, an application for a word processor must be raised with the Senco no later than April of the year that the examination is to be taken, which reflects the nature of HES as a medical provision with referrals for Year 11 pupils being raised up until December of the current academic year, thus allowing for a term of provision to establish NWOW in those Year 11 pupils with extended non-attendance. This deadline still allows for the effective provision of access arrangements from the perspective of timetabling, equipment, accommodation and staffing, and suitable training and practice for the pupil. This deadline does not apply when there is a temporary physical injury e.g., broken wrist.

When a pupil has been allocated a word processor for examinations, the Senco will advise the subject teachers.

In line with JCQ regulations, the Centre is responsible for determining suitable access arrangements for pupils. Recommendations in privately commissioned reports will not automatically be accepted and the final decision is made by the Centre.

To be accepted for the use of a word processor all candidates must meet the criteria outlined above.

Candidates who have been granted use of a word processor in examinations are provided with one for use in those subjects where there is evidence of substantive need e.g. essay-based subjects.

Appendix

The following is the JCQ guidance for access arrangements for word processors quoted in full from 'Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments':

Word processors (computers, laptops and tablets)

14.1 Centres can provide a word processor (e.g. computer, laptop or tablet), with the spelling and grammar check/predictive text disabled, to a candidate where it is their normal way of working within the centre, unless an awarding body's specification says otherwise. For example, where the curriculum is delivered electronically and the centre provides word processors to all candidates. This also includes an electronic brailler or a tablet.

14.2 Tablets are designed to run for a long period of time once fully charged. Their purpose is to be 'free-

standing'.

The battery capacity of a laptop or a tablet must be checked before the candidate's examination(s) and the centre must ensure that the battery is sufficiently charged for the entire duration of the examination.

The use of a fully-charged laptop or tablet will allow centres to seat a candidate within the main examination hall without the need for separate invigilation and power points.

14.3 Candidates must be reminded to ensure that their centre number, candidate number and the unit/component code appear on each page as a header or footer: e.g. 12345/8001 – 6391/01.

If a candidate is using the software application Notepad or Wordpad these do not allow for the insertion of a header or footer. In these instances, once the candidate has completed the examination and printed off his/her typed script, he/she must handwrite their details as a header or footer. The candidate must be supervised to ensure that he/ she is solely performing this task and not re-reading their answers or amending their work in any way.

14.4 Each page of the typed script must be numbered, e.g. page 1 of 6.

14.5 Invigilators must remind candidates to save their work at regular intervals. Alternatively, an IT technician can set up 'autosave' on each laptop/tablet. This will ensure that if there is a complication or technical issue, the candidate's work is not lost.

To make marking easier for examiners, candidates should use a minimum font size of 12pt and double spacing.

14.6 A word processor:

a) must be used as a typewriter, not as a database, although standard formatting software is acceptable;

b) must have been cleared of any previously stored data, as must any portable storage medium used. An unauthorised memory stick must not be used by a candidate. When needed, the centre must provide a memory stick, which is cleared of any previously stored data, to the candidate;

c) must be in good working order at the time of the examination;

d) must be 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 in another room, a separate invigilator will be required;

e) must either be connected to a printer so that a script can be printed off, or have the facility to print from a portable storage medium. This must be done after the examination is over. The candidate must be present to verify that the work printed is his or her own. Word processed scripts must be attached to any answer booklet which contains some of the answers;

f) must be used to produce scripts under secure conditions, otherwise they may be refused;

g) must not be used to perform skills which are being assessed;

h) must not give the candidate access to other applications such as a calculator (where prohibited in the examination), email, the Internet, social media sites, spreadsheets;

i) must not include graphic packages or computer aided design software unless permission has been given to use these;

j) must 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;

k) must not include computer reading (text to speech) software unless the candidate has permission to use a computer reader;

l) must not include speech recognition technology unless the candidate has permission to use a scribe or relevant software;

m) must not be used on the candidate's behalf by a third party unless the candidate has permission to use a scribe.

14.7 An awarding body may require a word processor cover sheet to be included with the candidate's typed script. Please refer to the relevant awarding body's instructions.

14.8 Centres may retain electronic copies of word-processed scripts. 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.

Examples - Word processor

• A candidate who cannot write legibly because she has significant learning difficulties 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 SENCo allows her to use a word processor in her examinations.

• 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 SENCo because **it reflects his normal way of working within the centre**.

• A candidate wishes to use a word processor since this is her **normal way of working within the centre.** However, the candidate additionally wishes to use the spelling and grammar check facility. Given that she does not meet the published criteria for a scribe, the candidate cannot use the spelling and grammar check facility. The SENCo allows her to use a word processor in line with the regulations as set out in the JCQ 'ICE' booklet.

• A candidate who has significant learning difficulties has quite legible writing. However, he makes many omissions and cannot order his ideas correctly. His written scripts are legible but covered in crossings-out and omission marks. He requests a word processor, and this is granted by the SENCo. The use of a word processor allows him to correct text, sequence his answers and **reflects his normal way of working within the centre**.

• 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 he must meet the published criteria for a scribe, with an approved application in place.**

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**. When typing she can produce her written work effectively. The SENCo awards the use of a word processor as it removes the barrier presented by her slow handwriting. The SENCO will consider whether 25% extra time is required when she writes by hand such as in GCSE Mathematics and Science examinations. The candidate's cognitive processing will need to be assessed as she will require two below average standardised scores or one below average standardised score and one low average standardised score to be awarded 25% extra time.

• A candidate with significant learning difficulties has a below average speed of writing 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 writing 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.