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Originator: Catherine Murphy
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Use of Word Processors in Examinations Policy

Background from JCQ document Adjustments for candidates with disabilities and learning difficulties

Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments

Managing the needs of candidates with disabilities and learning needs

Word Processors may be required by candidates with the following needs:

- Cognition and Learning (4.1.1)
- Communication and Interaction (4.1.2)
- Sensory and Physical (4.1.3)
- Social, Mental and Emotional (4.1.4)

The use of a word processor as an access arrangement is to ensure the removal of barriers to an assessment for a disabled candidate preventing him/her being placed at a substantial disadvantage as a consequence of persistent and significant difficulties.

The use of the word processor must allow the integrity of the assessment to be maintained, whilst at the same time providing access to the assessments for a disabled candidate. (4.2.1)

The use of a word processor cannot be granted where it will compromise the assessment objective of the specification in question. (4.2.2)

Candidates may not require the use of a word processor in each specification. Subjects and their methods of assessments may vary, leading to different demands of the candidate. The need for use of a word processor should be considered on a subject-by-subject basis. (4.2.3)

The use of a word processor should normally be agreed at the start of the course, having a firmly established picture of need and normal way of working.

The only exception to the above would be as a result 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.

(4.2.4)

The arrangement to use a word processor must reflect the support given to the candidate in the centre, for example:

- In the classroom (where appropriate);
- Working in small groups for reading and/or writing;
- Literacy support lessons;
- Literacy intervention strategies;
- In internal tests/examinations;
- Mock examinations.

(4.2.5)

This is referred to as the 'normal way of working' for the candidate.

In relation to the choice between the use of a scribe or a word processor the JCQ guidelines state the following:

If a word processor (with the spelling and grammar check disabled) is the candidate's normal way of working within the centre, then it should be used in examinations in order to encourage independent working and access to marks awarded for spelling, punctuation and grammar.

A scribe must only be used where a candidate is not sufficiently competent or confident in using a word processor with the spelling and grammar check or predictive text facility disabled (switched off). (5.7.1)

At Fullhurst, the use of a word processor is always considered prior to the application for the use of a scribe.

Additional information regarding the use of a scribe

Where the candidate has been awarded the use of a scribe through Access Arrangements Online and where it reflects their normal way of working the candidate may alternatively use: a word processor with the spelling and grammar facility enabled (with some subject restrictions); a word processor with predictive text/spelling and grammar check facility enabled; speech recognition technology with predictive text when the candidate dictates into a word processor; computer software producing speech which is used to dictate to a scribe. In these cases a scribe cover sheet rather than a word processor cover sheet must be completed. (5.7.4)

Key information relating specifically to the use of word processors (Section 5.8 JCQ regulations)

There is not an arrangement to process an application using Access Arrangements Online or to record the use of the arrangement. No evidence is needed to support the arrangement. (This also applies where a candidate is using a word processor on a temporary basis as a consequence of a temporary injury.)

A member of the centre's senior leadership team must produce a statement for inspection purposes which details the criteria the centre uses to award and allocate word processors for examinations. In addition the JCQ regulations require that a centre has a policy on the use of word processors which can be articulated to parents.

Fullhurst complies with the JCQ regulations regarding the use of word processors as follows:

- Provides a word processor with the spelling and grammar check facility/predictive text disabled (switched off).
- Only grants the use of a word processor to a candidate where it is their normal way of working within the centre.
- Only grants the use of a word processor to a candidate where it is appropriate to their needs (5.8.1)
- Allows the use of word processors in non-examination assessment components and considers this as standard practice unless prohibited by the specification. (5.8.2)
- Allows a candidate to use a word processor to type certain questions e.g. those requiring longer answers, and handwrite shorter answers. For example candidates may need to type those examinations that place a greater demand on the need to organise thought and plan extended answers. Examinations which require more simplistic answers are often easier to handwrite within the answer booklet. (5.8.3)
- Regulations for using word processors in examinations see JCQ 'ICE' booklet. (5.8.4)

- The use of a word processor is considered on a subject by subject basis. (4.2.3)
- In all cases a word processor cover sheet (Form 4) must be completed.

In all cases a word processor cover sheet (Form 4) must be completed.

Fullhurst complies with the regulations by following the following procedures:

- A word processor is not simply granted to a candidate because he/she wants to type rather than write in examinations or can work faster on a key board, or because he/she uses a laptop at home.
- The use of a word processor must reflect the normal way of working within the centre.

The following criteria are used to identify candidates who would benefit from the use of a word processor:

- The use of a word processor is always considered as a preferred option for candidates who may have been considered for using a scribe but are confident and competent in using a word processor (with the spelling and grammar check facility/predictive text disabled i.e. switched off). However, please see information on the previous page regarding candidates who have been awarded the use of a scribe (5.7.4). We have some students who would have possibly been eligible for a scribe because of slow handwriting speed but who have used a word processor as their normal way of working and in exams.
- A learning difficulty which has a substantial and long term 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. A decision regarding any illegibility is made using the following evidence: evaluating work in their books; discussions with the student; discussions with teaching staff, SENCo and access arrangements assessor.
- A candidate who has below average free writing speed and who would qualify for extra time. However, if when typing they can produce work at a speed equivalent to an average handwriting rate then a word processor would remove the barrier presented by the candidates slow handwriting.
- Where a candidate moves from GCSE to GCE examinations within our school then they can continue the arrangement to use a word processor providing that it remains their normal way of working and they continue to have an identified need.