Word processor policy (exams)

Last Review: **Autumn Term 2026**
Next Review: **by the end of the Autumn Term 2027**
Committee: **Inclusion**

This policy is reviewed annually to ensure compliance with current regulations and is written in line with the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) guidance: 'Adjustments for Candidates with Disabilities and Learning Difficulties: Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments,' which can be found via the link below:

http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-special-consideration/regulations-and-guidance

Key staff involved in awarding and allocating word processors for exams.

Role
SENDCo
Assistant SENCo
EAA Coordinator
Exams officer
SLT members
IT Manager

Introduction

This policy on the use of word processors in examinations and assessments is reviewed and updated annually, on the publication of updated JCQ regulations and guidance contained in the publications Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments and Instructions for conducting examinations.
References to 'AA' relate to JCQ Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments 2025/26 and ICE to JCQ Instructions for conducting examinations 2025/26.

Purpose of the policy

This policy details how the centre manages and administers the use of word processors (including laptops and tablets) in examinations and assessments.

Principles for using a word processor.

JCoSS complies with AA chapter 5Adjustments for candidates with disabilities and learning difficulties regulations and guidance as follows:

AA 5.8- Candidates with access to word processors are allowed to do so in order to remove barriers for disabled candidates which prevent them from being placed at a substantial disadvantage as a consequence of persistent and significant difficulties**.**

The use of word processors is only permitted whilst ensuring that the integrity of the assessment is maintained, at the same time as providing access to assessments for a disabled candidate.

(AA 5.8) - The use of a word processor is not granted where it will compromise the assessment objectives of the specification in question.

(AA 5.8)- Candidates may not require the use of a word processor in each specification. As subjects and their methods of assessments may vary, leading to different demands of our candidates, the need for the use of a word processor is considered on a subject-by-subject basis.

(AA 5.8) -The use of a word processor is normally considered and agreed where appropriate at the start of the course providing the centre has firmly established a picture of need and normal way of working for a candidate.

Candidates are made aware when they will have the use of a word processor for timetabled examinations and non-examination assessments.

(AA 5.8)-The use of a word processor for candidates is only granted if it reflects the support given to the candidate as their 'normal way of working', which is defined as support:

- in the classroom; or
- working in small groups for reading and/or writing; or
- literacy support lessons; or
- literacy intervention strategies; and/or
- in internal school tests/examinations
- in mock examinations

The only exceptions to the above would be 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.

The use of a word processor
JCoSS complies with AA chapter 5 Access arrangements available as follows:

(AA 5.8.1)- 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 (see 4.2.5 above) within the centre.
Only grants the use of a word processor to a candidate if it 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).

(The above also extends to the use of electronic braillers and tablets)

(AA 5.8.2)-Provides access to word processors to candidates in non-examination assessment components as standard practice unless prohibited by the specification.

(AA 5.8.3)- Allows candidates to use a word processor in an examination to type certain questions, i.e., those requiring extended writing, and handwrite shorter answers.
Are also aware that 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.

(AA 5.8.4)- For AQA and Pearson exams no cover sheet is required. Other exam boards may require their own cover sheet. SEN department to check if cover sheets are required.
Does not simply grant the use of a word processor to a candidate because he/she prefers to type rather than write or can work faster on a keyboard, or because he/she uses a laptop at home**.**

Centre specific processes

During KS3 laptop use for student's is considered on a case-by-case basis, based upon their diagnoses and writing legibility concerns raised by teachers. If a student in KS3 is deemed responsible enough, has the necessary organisational skills and a good typing speed then laptop use will be considered. In Year 9 students are screened as part of the school's process for access arrangements. Where a student scores a below average handwriting score but has a higher typing speed then a laptop maybe deemed the most appropriate access arrangement.

Laptop use is always put into place on a trial basis and is monitored to ensure it is being used appropriately and supports the students learning. For any student permitted to use a laptop at JCoSS parents will receive a copy of the school's laptop rules.

Word processors and their programmes

JCoSS complies with ICE 8.8 Word processors instructions 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 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 inserted in/attached to any answer booklet which contains some of the answers (and according to instructions issued by the individual awarding body)
- word processors are used to produce scripts under secure conditions, and if they are not then 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 or any other means of communication.
- candidates are not given access to other applications such as a calculator (where prohibited in the examination), spreadsheets etc when using a word processor.
- graphic packages or computer aided design software is 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.
- 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.

Laptops

JCoSS further complies with ICE 8.8 instructions by ensuring:

- candidates' laptops are always plugged in throughout examinations.
- candidates using WordPad software (which allows 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.
- 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.

The criteria JCoSS uses to award and allocate word processors for examinations.

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." (AA 5.8)

JCoSS's criteria for awarding use of a word processor is to follow the regulations outlined in Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments and Instructions for conducting examinations.

This publication gives the following criteria for when a word processor can be agreed:

(AA 5.8) - The use of a word processor is normally considered and agreed where appropriate at the start of the course providing the centre has firmly established a picture of need and normal way of working for a candidate.

Therefore, JCoSS will collect evidence of need from Year 7 onwards as well as assessing all students for writing to ensure no one who requires a laptop is overlooked.

The only exception to the above criteria would be if a student has a temporary injury which means they cannot write. In this instance an emergency arrangement would be put in place.

An example is given below.

Student A has Dyspraxia, and an Occupational Therapy Report has officially diagnosed this and recommended use of a laptop in lessons. Student A finds written work very tiring, and their typing skills are much better than their writing speed due to their Dyspraxic difficulties. Student A uses a laptop in school during Years 7—9. They are assessed using a DASH free writing test and also a laptop test. The comparison of their written and typed work highlights the need for a laptop to be used in examinations as their typed work is much faster and their written work is very hard to read.

The 'normal way of working' for exam candidates, as directed by the head of centre, is that candidates handwrite their exams. An exception to this is where a candidate may have an approved access arrangement in place, for example the use of a scribe/speech recognition technology.

Allocating word processors for examinations

Appropriate exam-compliant word processors will be allocated by the IT department in liaison with the SENCo and the Exams Officer. 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 published start time. The security of the exam will be maintained at all times and candidates will be supervised in line with section 2.11 of ICE.

Principles for using a word processor during examinations.

JCoSS complies with Joint Council for Qualifications regulations and guidance as follows:

- Candidates with access to word processors are allowed to do so in order to remove barriers for disabled candidates which prevent them from being placed at a substantial disadvantage as a consequence of persistent and significant difficulties. This includes, for example, a candidate with:
- a learning difficulty which has a substantial & long-term adverse effect on their ability to write legibly.
- a medical condition
- a physical disability
- a sensory impairment
- planning & organisational problems when writing by hand
- poor handwriting.

This list is not exhaustive.

- Candidates may not require the use of a word processor in each specification. As subjects and their methods of assessments may vary, leading to different demands of our candidates, the need for the use of a word processor is considered on a subject-by-subject basis.

- The use of a word processor is considered and agreed where appropriate at the start of the course. Candidates are subsequently aware that they **must** use a word processor as their normal way of working in the classroom and for examinations and controlled assessments/coursework. Failure to do this will result in the candidate not having a word processor in examinations as it will not be considered the candidate's normal way of working.

- The Centre has a screening process for authorisation for laptop use and a laptop will only be authorised once the process has been completed and the candidate has satisfied all of the criteria.

- The Centre will monitor the use of laptops in the classroom, assessments and during formal exams and if it is found that use of a word processor is not used correctly or is proved unbeneficial for the candidate this access arrangement will be removed by the SENCo.
- Year 12 students are authorised to use a laptop in class and for home learning. However, only students with exam access arrangements for a laptop may use one for in-class assessments, formal and public exams.

Appendix 1: Laptop Eligibility Screening Process for classroom purposes

Stage	Comments and Next Steps
1	• Handwriting concerns raised by staff • School to seek medical evidence if applicable (e.g., GP letter, OT report) • Move to stage 2
2	• Exams Access Arrangements Coordinator to establish level of need. • If there is no evidence of need, no further action. Parents/staff to be informed of outcome • If there is evidence of need, move to stage 3
3	• Exams Access Arrangements Coordinator will consult with teachers and parents to discuss possibility of using a laptop in school (e.g., does the student have a laptop at home they can use, does the student have the necessary organisation skills?). If parents and teachers are in agreement, move to stage 4
4	• **Exams Access Arrangements Coordinator to inform IT department and teachers that a student is authorised a laptop for a trial period (approx. 6 weeks)** • Student to use his/her personal laptop in all lessons for trial period • Move to stage 5 after trial period
5	• If teachers do not raise any concerns to the Exams Access Arrangements Coordinator during the trial period the laptop arrangement will become permanent for the student. If teachers' feedback is negative, the laptop arrangement will be removed. Exams Access Arrangements Coordinator to inform parents of outcome.
6	• Exams Access Arrangements Coordinator will monitor student's use of laptop in Assessments through the school's monitoring system. Findings will determine whether the laptop arrangement will remain in place or be removed.