Use of Word Processors in Examinations

Dibden Park School

Document control	Details
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Operational lead	SENCo (Tracy Gammons) and Examinations Officer (Laura Bortkiewicz)
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Our vision

Dibden Park School supports every child and young person to feel safe, be heard, discover their worth, develop their strengths and create a limitless future.



Respect | Engage | Belong | Independence | Ambition

Learn Now, Succeed Together, Grow Forever

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Policy information

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1. Purpose and scope

This policy sets out how Dibden Park School decides when a candidate may use a word processor in a written examination and how the school prepares, supervises and secures that use. The aim is to let candidates demonstrate their knowledge and skills without changing what the examination assesses or giving an unfair advantage.

The policy applies to examinations for GCSE, GCE and other qualifications taken at the school. It applies to computers, laptops, tablets and electronic braillers used to produce a candidate's written response. It must be read with the current JCQ Instructions for Conducting Examinations (ICE), the JCQ Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments guidance, the relevant awarding organisation's specification and the school's Access Arrangements Procedures.

Where an awarding organisation's specification or current instructions set a different requirement, the Examinations Officer will confirm the rule with the awarding organisation and the school will follow it. The current JCQ rules and awarding organisation instructions take precedence over this policy.

2. Eligibility and decision making

A word processor may be provided where it reflects the candidate's normal way of working within the school, unless the relevant specification says otherwise. This may include a school-wide approach where teaching and ordinary written work are routinely completed electronically. A candidate is not given a word processor solely because they prefer typing, type faster than they write or use a computer at home.

The SENCo considers the candidate's needs, evidence from teaching and learning, written work, internal tests and mock examinations, and the access arrangements that are the candidate's normal way of working. The SENCo consults the candidate and, where appropriate, their parent/carer and relevant staff. The school also considers whether the candidate can use a word processor effectively and whether the arrangement is compatible with the assessment objectives and awarding organisation rules.

A word processor may be appropriate for a candidate with a disability, learning difficulty, medical condition or temporary injury that affects handwriting or written communication. It may also be used when the school provides word processors as a normal part of its curriculum and this practice is established for the candidate. A word processor will not be used where typing would compromise a skill being assessed or where the qualification rules prohibit it.

The SENCo records the evidence, decision, subjects or components affected, any permitted software features, the candidate's usual practice and the arrangements required. The SENCo reviews the decision at least annually and when the candidate's needs or normal way of working changes. Any awarding organisation application or approval required for an additional arrangement is made and recorded in accordance with the Access Arrangements Procedures.

3. Roles and responsibilities

- The Headteacher, as Head of Centre, is responsible for ensuring that examinations are conducted in accordance with JCQ and awarding organisation requirements and that the centre has adequate equipment, staffing and secure procedures.
- The SENCo identifies and reviews candidates' needs, checks that use of a word processor reflects normal way of working, consults relevant staff and maintains the supporting evidence and decision record.
- The Examinations Officer coordinates examination arrangements, checks the current JCQ and awarding organisation rules, confirms rooming and invigilation, oversees equipment preparation and ensures that scripts are printed, identified, submitted and retained securely.
- IT staff configure and test devices, remove access to unauthorised functions, check security and provide technical support under the direction of the Examinations Officer. They do not access or alter a candidate's answers except where required to preserve the work after a technical failure, with the candidate and invigilator present where practicable.
- Invigilators supervise candidates using a word processor, give only permitted reminders, monitor compliance and report technical problems or suspected irregularities immediately to the Examinations Officer.
- Candidates use only the equipment and software provided or approved by the school, follow invigilator instructions, save their work regularly and check that their personal and examination details appear on every page.

4. Equipment and examination arrangements

The school provides the device and software. Before each examination, the Examinations Officer and OFG IT staff ensure that the device is in good working order, sufficiently charged for the full examination and arranged so that the candidate can work without disturbing others or allowing others to read the screen. A candidate may be seated in the main examination room if the arrangement is suitable. If the candidate is accommodated in a separate room, the required separate invigilation is arranged.

The device is set up to function as a typewriter. It is cleared of any previously stored data, and any portable storage medium is cleared before use. The school provides any memory stick required; candidates must not use an unauthorised storage device. The candidate's work is saved to a secure location or a school-provided device under invigilator supervision.

Before the examination starts, the Examinations Officer or IT staff check that the candidate cannot access the internet, email, social media, messaging, stored notes, spreadsheets, unauthorised calculators or other applications. AI tools and writing assistance must be disabled throughout the device and any network connection, including AI features within the word processor, the operating system or other installed applications. The school tests its settings in advance and does not assume that disabling one feature or application is sufficient.

Predictive text, spelling and grammar checking must be switched off unless the awarding organisation's specification permits them or the candidate has been permitted a scribe and the applicable rules allow their use. Where spelling, punctuation and grammar are being assessed, spell-check and grammar-check functions must also be disabled in any application on the device. Computer reader, speech recognition, graphics packages and other specialist software may only be used where the candidate is permitted to use the relevant arrangement and the awarding organisation's rules allow it.

The Examinations Officer checks that any required awarding organisation approval has been obtained and that a word processor cover sheet or other form is available where required. The candidate is told in advance which software features are available and is given an opportunity to practise with the same type of setup in an internal test or mock examination.

5. Conduct of the examination

- The candidate must use the device only for the examination response. The device must not be used as a database or to access unauthorised information, functions or applications. No third party may type, edit or otherwise produce work on the candidate's behalf unless the candidate has permission to use a scribe and the scribe rules are followed.
- The candidate is reminded to save their work at regular intervals. Auto-save may be configured and tested before the examination. The candidate should use a minimum font size of 12 point and double spacing where practical, to assist marking.
- The candidate must ensure that the centre number, candidate number and unit or component code appear as a header or footer on every page, and that each page is numbered. If the software does not allow headers or footers, the candidate writes the details on the printed pages after printing. This is done under supervision; the candidate must not re-read or amend answers during this step.
- The candidate must be present when the script is printed after the examination has ended so they can verify that the printed work is their own. Printing and checking must take place under supervision, and no amendment to the script is allowed. Typed pages are attached to any answer booklet containing handwritten answers. The school includes any cover sheet required by the awarding organisation and submits the script using the required method.
- The candidate may handwrite short answers and type extended responses where appropriate, unless the qualification instructions require a different approach. Any handwritten and typed work must be clearly identified and submitted together as required by the awarding organisation.

6. Technical failure or incident

If a device, software or printing problem occurs, the candidate raises a hand and the invigilator records the time and nature of the problem and informs the Examinations Officer. The invigilator continues to supervise the candidate and does not provide technical assistance that could affect the candidate's answers. The Examinations Officer or authorised IT staff may resolve the issue in a way that preserves examination security and the candidate's work.

The school takes reasonable steps to recover work and may move the candidate to a tested replacement device where this can be done without compromising security or the examination rules. The candidate remains under supervision throughout. The school records the circumstances, the time lost, action taken and any effect on the candidate. The Headteacher and Examinations Officer decide whether the awarding organisation must be notified or whether an application for special consideration is appropriate, following the relevant deadline and guidance.

Any suspected unauthorised access, use of an AI or writing-assistance tool, communication, stored material or alteration of work is reported immediately to the Headteacher and Examinations Officer and handled under the current JCQ and awarding organisation malpractice procedures.

7. Records, monitoring and review

The SENCo keeps the evidence and decision record for each candidate. The Examinations Officer records the examination, room, device, software configuration, any required approval, invigilator, script submission and any incident. Electronic scripts and temporary working files are stored securely with access restricted to authorised staff. They are retained or securely deleted in line with awarding organisation requirements and the school's records retention arrangements.

Before each examination series, the Examinations Officer and IT staff check the equipment and software settings, including AI and writing-assistance features, and confirm that staff know how to respond to a technical problem. Following each series, the Examinations Officer reviews any incidents or concerns with the SENCo and Headteacher. The Headteacher reviews this policy annually and when JCQ or awarding organisation requirements change.

Appendix A. Word processor examination checklist

Complete before the candidate's examination and retain with the centre's examination records.

☐ The SENCo has recorded the candidate's needs, evidence, decision and normal way of working; any required approval is in place.

☐ The candidate has practised with the relevant device and understands saving, page identification and printing arrangements.

☐ The device is charged, tested, cleared of stored data and configured with only permitted software and functions.

☐ Internet, AI tools, predictive text, spell-check, grammar-check and other prohibited assistance features are disabled as required and the setup has been tested.

☐ Rooming, seating, privacy and invigilation arrangements comply with current requirements.

☐ The candidate's center number, candidate number, component code and page numbering appear on every printed page.

☐ The candidate is present while the script is printed and verifies it; typed and handwritten work and any required cover sheet are attached and submitted securely.

☐ Any technical failure or incident is recorded, reported and followed up with the awarding organisation where required.

Candidate / exam: _____ Checked by: _____ Date: _____

References

- JCQ, Instructions for Conducting Examinations, 2026–2027, section 14.20–14.27; Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments, current edition; General Regulations for Approved Centres, current edition; relevant awarding organisation specifications and instructions.