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Big Creative Academy

[Centre No 13448]

Word Processor Policy

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This policy is reviewed annually to ensure compliance with current regulations

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 and ICE to JCQ Instructions for Conducting Examinations.

Purpose of the policy

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

Principles of using a word processor

Big Creative Academy complies with AA chapter 4 Adjustments for candidates with disabilities and learning difficulties regulations and guidance regarding the use of word processors 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. (AA 4.2.1)
- 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 4.2.1)
- The use of a word processor is not granted where it will compromise the assessment objectives of the specification in question (AA 4.2.2).
- “Centres are allowed to provide a word processor 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. 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.” (AA, 5.8.1)
- A word processor cannot simply be granted to a candidate because he/she now wants to type rather than write in examinations or can work faster on a keyboard, or because he/she uses a laptop at home. The use of a word processor must reflect the candidate’s normal way of working within the centre.
- The purpose of an access arrangement is to ensure, where possible, that barriers to assessment are removed for a disabled candidate preventing him/her from being placed at a substantial disadvantage due to persistent and significant difficulties. The integrity of the assessment is maintained, whilst at the same time providing access to assessments for a disabled candidate. The school will consider allowing a student to use a word processor as part of their normal way of working in a number of situations, including the following:

    - a learning difficulty which has a substantial and long term adverse 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.

  This list is not exhaustive (it is taken from AA, 5.8.4).

- 'Normal way of working' is defined as support given to the candidate in school for one or more of the following (see AA, 4.2.5):
    - in the classroom (where appropriate);

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

At Big Creative Academy we consider that a "normal way of working" would in almost all circumstances be established throughout the two year period leading up to a public examination. However, this should certainly be for a minimum of one year, unless there are exceptional circumstances. In all cases, a "normal way of working" necessarily entails the candidate having used a word processor for the mock examination of the qualification in question. The only exception to this is where an arrangement may need to be put in place as a consequence of a temporary injury or impairment at the time of an exam or assessment.

- "The use of word processors in non-examination assessment components will be considered standard practice unless prohibited by the specification." (AA, 5.8.2)
- Access arrangements should be processed at the start of the course. The academy, for example, should be able to process applications at the start of or during the first year of a two-year course having firmly established a picture of need and normal way of working. However, 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. (AA, 4.2.4)
- It is permissible for a candidate using a word processor in an examination to type certain questions, i.e. those requiring extended writing, and handwrite shorter answers. N.B. 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 computer screen. (AA, 5.8.3)
- Candidates may not require the same access arrangements in each specification (AA, 4.2.3). 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 in discussion with the SENCO and Examinations Manager, with the final decision taken by the SENCO. Parents or students may appeal to the Head of Centre who will then investigate to check that an appropriate process was carried out prior to the decision being taken.

Word processors and their programmes

Big Creative Academy complies with ICE 14.25 word processors instructions by ensuring:

A word processor:

- must be used as a type-writer, not as a database, although standard formatting software is acceptable;
- 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. Where required, the centre must provide a memory stick to the candidate, which is cleared of any previously stored data;
- must be in good working order at the time of the examination;
- 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;

- 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;
- must be used to produce scripts under secure conditions, otherwise they may be refused;
- must not be used to perform skills which are being assessed;
- must not be connected to an intranet or any other means of communication;
- must not give the candidate access to other applications such as a calculator (where prohibited in the examination), spreadsheets etc;
- must not include graphic packages or computer aided design software unless permission has been given to use these;
- 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;
- must not include speech recognition technology unless the candidate has permission to use a scribe or relevant software;
- must not be used on the candidate's behalf by a third party unless the candidate has permission to use a scribe.

Laptops

Big Creative Academy further complies with ICE 14.20 – 14.24 instructions by ensuring:

- Tablets are designed to run for a long period of time once fully charged. Their purpose is to be 'freestanding'. The battery capacity of a laptop or a tablet must be checked before the candidate's examination(s). 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 a centre to seat a candidate within the main examination hall without the need for separate invigilation and power points.
- 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 and sign it.

Accommodating word processors in examinations

Candidates using word processors are internally accommodated in the following manner:

- in the main examination hall, towards the rear or side unless additional access arrangements preclude it.

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

- on completion of the examination an invigilator will remind the student to save all work onto the memory stick provided by Big Creative Academy;
- the invigilator will accompany the student, the laptop and the memory stick to the printer for the work to be printed off and verified.

On completion of the exam:

- when all work is printed and verified, it will be enclosed inside the student's examination script for submission to the awarding body with a completed word processor cover sheet;
- the memory stick and word processor will be cleared of all work.

Applying for Word Processors

All applications must be made to the SENCo, who will liaise with the Exams Manager, using the relevant documentation, i.e. Form 8 Application or a Concise File Note for Exams processes, providing clear evidence of need and normal way of working. Awarding word processors The SENCo will determine if a candidate may be awarded the use of a word processor in exams where he/she has a firmly established need, that the use of a Word Processor reflects the candidate's normal way of working and that by not being awarded a word processor the candidate in question would be at a substantial disadvantage to other candidates.

For example:

- a learning difficulty which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on their ability to write legibly;
- a medical condition restricting upper body movement associated with handwriting tasks;
- a physical disability restricting handwriting tasks ;
- a sensory impairment restricting access to handwriting tasks ;
- planning and organisational problems when writing by hand ;
- poor handwriting resulting in a diagnosed impairment NOT a deficit of writing skills.

Allocating word processors

Appropriate exam-compliant word processors will be allocated by the Exams Team for 'on demand' and formal examinations only in liaison with the SENCo and the exams manager. Mock Exams in class tests and assessments are not provided for, although guidance and advice can be sought from the SENCo.

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.

SENCo and the Exams Manager will determine those candidates who are to be prioritised.