ST CUTHBERT'S
CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

# Word Processor Policy (Examinations)

## for the Academic Year 2026 – 2027

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| **Approved by:** | Local Governing Committee | **Approved on:** | |
| **Review date:** | | **Revision approved:** | |
| **Version No:** | 1 | **Originator(s):** | JCQ Policy |

This policy is reviewed and updated annually on the publication of any updated JCQ regulations and guidance on access arrangements and instructions for conducting exams. References in this policy to AA and ICE relate to/are directly taken from the current JCQ documents Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments and Instructions for conducting examinations.

## 1. Introduction

The use of a word processor in exams and assessments is an available access arrangement/reasonable adjustment. (AA 4.2.1)

The purpose of an access arrangement/reasonable adjustment is to ensure, where possible, that barriers to assessment are removed for a disabled candidate preventing them from being placed at a substantial disadvantage persistent and significant difficulties. The integrity of the assessment is maintained, whilst at the same time providing access to assessments for a disabled candidate. (AA 4.2.2)

A centre **must** make decisions on appropriate access arrangements for their candidates. Although professionals from other organisations may give advice, they **cannot** make the decision for the centre. They will not have a working knowledge of an individual candidate's needs and how their difficulties impact in the classroom and/or in timed assessments. It is the responsibility of the SENCo (or equivalent role) to make appropriate and informed decisions based on the JCQ regulations.

Although access arrangements/adjustments are intended to allow access to assessments, they cannot be granted where they will compromise the assessment objectives of the specification in question. (AA 4.2.3)

Candidates may not require the same access arrangements/reasonable adjustments in each specification. Subjects and their methods of assessments may vary, leading to different demands of the candidate. SENCos must consider the need for access arrangements/reasonable adjustments on a subject-by-subject basis. (AA 4.2.1)

The SENCo (or equivalent role) must ensure that the proposed access arrangement / reasonable adjustment does not unfairly disadvantage or advantage the candidate. (AA 4.2.7)

The candidate must have had appropriate opportunities to practice using the access arrangement(s) / reasonable adjustment(s) before his/her first examination.

## 2. Purpose of the policy

This policy details how St Cuthbert's Catholic High School complies with AA chapter 4 (Managing the needs of candidates and principles for centres), section 5.8 (Word processor) and ICE (sections 14.20-27) when awarding and allocating a candidate the use of a word processor in examinations.
The term 'word processor' is used to describe for example, the use of a computer, laptop or tablet.

## 3. Key Staff involved in this policy.

| Role | Name(s) |
|---|---|
| Head of centre | Daniel P. Murray |
| Exams officer line manager (Senior leader) | Karl Stuart |
| Exams manager/officer | Carol Wetherell |
| ALS lead/SENCo | Richard Collinson |
| Senior leader(s) | David Swindells, Juliana Blackie, Jeni Westwood, Matt Turner, Michael Donnelly and Paul Burrows |

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| IT Manager | Ian Gallagher |

**4. The criteria St Cuthbert's Catholic High School uses to award and allocate word processors for examinations and assessments.**

The 'normal way of working' for exam candidates, as directed by the head of centre, is that candidates handwrite their exams unless there are exceptions.

**Exceptions:** A candidate may be awarded the use of a word processor in examinations where:

- the candidate may have an approved access arrangement in place, for example the use of a scribe/speech recognition technology.
- the candidate has a firmly established need, it reflects the candidate's normal way of working and by not being awarded a word processor would be at a substantial disadvantage to other candidates.

**The centre will**

- allocate the use of a word processor to a candidate with the spelling and grammar check facility/predictive text (switched off) where it is their normal way of working within the centre (AA 5.8.1)
- award the use of a word processor to a candidate where appropriate to their needs.
    - For example, a candidate with:
    - 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 (AA 5.8.4)
- only permit the use of a word processor where the integrity of the assessment can be maintained (AA 4.2.1)
- not grant the use of a word processor where it will compromise the assessment objectives of the specification in question (AA 4.2.2)
- consider on a subject-by-subject basis if the candidate will need to use a word processor in each specification (AA 4.2.3)
- process access arrangements/reasonable adjustments at the start of the course, or as soon as practicable having firmly established a picture of need and normal way of working, ensuring arrangements are always approved before an examination or assessment (AA 4.2.4)
- provide the use of word processors to candidates in non-examination assessment components as standard practice unless prohibited by the specification (AA 5.8.2)

**The centre will not:**

- simply grant the use of a word processor to a candidate because they now want to type rather than write in examinations or can work faster on a keyboard, or because they use a laptop at home. (AA 5.8.4)

The use of a word processor would be considered for a candidate:

- 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 (AA 4.2.4)
- where the curriculum is delivered electronically, and the centre provides word processors to all candidates (AA 5.8.4)

**5. Arrangements at the time of the assessment for the use of a word processor**

A candidate using a word processor is accommodated in the Exam Room with similar needs.

In compliance with the regulations the centre:

- provides a word processor with the spelling and grammar check and predictive text switched off to a candidate where it is their normal way of working within the centre, unless an awarding body's specification says otherwise (ICE 14.20)
- (Where a candidate is to be seated with the main cohort without the use of a power point) checks the battery capacity of the laptop or tablet before the candidate's exam to ensure that the battery is sufficiently charged to last for the entire duration of the exam (ICE 14.21)
- ensures the candidate is 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 (ICE 14.22)
- If a candidate is using the software application Notepad this does not allow for the insertion of a header or footer. Once the candidate has completed the examination and printed off their typed script, they are instructed to handwrite their details as a header or footer. The candidate is supervised throughout this process to ensure that they are solely performing this task and not re-reading their answers or amending their work in any way.
- ensures the candidate understands that each page of the typed script must be numbered, e.g., page 1 of 6 (ICE 14.23)
- ensures the candidate is reminded to save their work at regular intervals. (Or where possible, an IT technician will set up 'autosave' on each laptop/tablet to ensure that if there is a complication or technical issue, the candidate's work is not lost) (ICE 14.24)
- instructs the candidate to use a minimum of 12pt font and double spacing to make marking easier for examiners (ICE 14.24)

  (ICE 14.25)

The centre will ensure the word processor:

- is only used in a way that ensures a candidate's script is produced under secure conditions.
- is not used to perform skills which are being assessed.
- is in good working order at the time of the exam.
- is accommodated in such a way that other candidates are not disturbed and cannot read the screen.
- is used as a typewriter, not as a database, although standard formatting software is acceptable.
- is cleared of any previously stored data.
- does not give the candidate access to other applications, such as a calculator (where prohibited in the examination), e-mail, the Internet, social media sites, spreadsheets.
- does not include graphic packages or computer aided design software unless permission has been given to use these.
- does not have any predictive text software or an automatic spelling and grammar check enabled unless the candidate has been permitted a scribe (a scribe cover sheet must be completed), or the awarding body's specification permits the use of automatic spell checking.
- does not include computer reading (text to speech) software unless the candidate has permission to use a computer reader.
- does not include speech recognition technology unless the candidate has permission to use a scribe (a scribe cover sheet must be included)
- does not include AI tools
- is not used on the candidate's behalf by a third party unless the candidate has permission to use a scribe (a scribe cover sheet must be completed)

**AI tools**

For paper-based examinations where candidates are using a word processor and are not allowed internet access, the centre will ensure all AI tools that the candidate could use during the examination are turned off.

This means:

- AI features inside the word processor itself (for example, writing assistants, "rewrite this" suggestions, AI summaries)
- AI features built into the device's operating system (for example, Microsoft Copilot, Apple Intelligence or similar tools that the candidate could open from outside the word processor)
- AI features available through any web browser or other application installed on the device

If the examination tests spelling, punctuation and grammar (SPaG), the centre will ensure that spell-check and grammar-check tools are turned off (This will include any application on the device that offers these features, not just the main word processor, as even simple applications such as Notepad now include spell-check).

The centre will:

- identify if AI and writing-assistance tools are available on the devices being used for examinations and make sure they are turned off.
  - AI can be generated from three places:
    - the application the candidate is using
    - the device's operating system, and
    - the network the device is connected to
- not assume that turning one of these off is enough on its own
- test its chosen approach before the examination to confirm that the candidate cannot access any AI or assistance tools during the examination

**5.1 Portable storage medium** (ICE 14.25)

The centre will ensure that any portable storage medium (e.g., a memory stick) used:

- is provided by the centre.
- is cleared of any previously stored data.

**5.2 Printing the script after the exam has ended.**

(ICE 14.25)

The centre will ensure:

- the word processor is either connected to a printer so that a script can be printed off or have the facility to print from a portable storage medium.
- the candidate is present to verify that the work printed is their own.
- a word-processed script is attached to any answer booklet which contains some of the answers.
- if a candidate omits to insert the required header or footer, they are instructed to handwrite the details as a header or footer; the candidate is supervised throughout this process to ensure that they are solely performing this task and not re-reading their answers or amending their work in any way (ICE 14.22)

## After the exam

The centre:

- will ensure that where an awarding body may require a word processor cover sheet, this is included with the candidate's typed script (and according to the relevant awarding body's instructions) (ICE 14.26)
- will keep candidate work safe and send it to the awarding body for marking by the method the awarding body stipulates (ICE 14.25)
- may retain electronic copies of word-processed scripts as 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 electronic file has been kept securely. The head of centre would be required to confirm this in writing to the awarding body. (ICE 14.27)

**6. Allocating word processors at the time of the assessment**

Appropriate exam-compliant word processors will be provided by the IT department in liaison with the SENCo (or equivalent role) and the exams manager/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 awarding body's published start time.
The security of the exam will be maintained at all times and candidates will be supervised in line with section 7 of ICE.]