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The Damara School

Specialist SEMH Independent School

Exams: Use of a Word Processor in Formal Examinations Policy

Approved by: Trust Board	
Initial Ratification: 14 Nov 2024	**Review: Sep 2026**
Next review due by: Sep 2027	

Key staff involved in the policy

Role	Name
Head of Centre/SENDco (CEO)	Mrs. Sandra Govender
Exams Officer	Mrs. Julie Cox
SENDco in Training	Mrs. Toni Mahler-Strzelecki

This policy is reviewed and updated annually on the publication of 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 Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments 2026-27 and Instructions for Conducting Examinations 2026-2027 publications.

Introduction

The use of a word processor in exams and assessments is an available access arrangement.

(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 due to persistent and significant difficulties.

(AA 4.2.2)

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. For example, the use of a practical assistant will not normally be allowed when practical skills are being tested.

(AA 4.2.3)

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

Purpose of the Policy

This policy details how The Damara School complies with AA (chapter 4) Adjustments for Candidates with Disabilities and Learning Difficulties and (chapter 5.8) Word Processor when Awarding and Allocating a Candidate the Use of a Word Processor in his/her Exams.

The term ‘word processor’ is used to describe the use of a computer.

The Use of a Word Processor

The Centre :

- is allowed to provide a word processor, with the spelling and grammar check facility/predictive text switched off, where it is the candidate’s normal way of working within the centre. (AA 5.8.1)

- award the use of a word processor to a candidate if it is appropriate to their needs

Needs may include

- a learning difficulty which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his/her 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)
- consider the needs of the candidate at the start of the candidate’s course leading to a qualification based on evidence gathered that firmly establishes the candidate’s needs and ’normal way of working’ in the classroom, internal tests/exams, mock exams etc
- Arrangements must always be approved before an examination or assessment. (AA 4.2.4)
- provide access to 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 prefer to type rather than write or can work faster on a keyboard, or because they use a laptop at home (AA 5.8.4)

Exceptions

The only exception to the above where the use of a word processor would be considered for a candidate would be:

• 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 a subject within the curriculum is delivered electronically and the Centre provides word processors to all candidates (AA 5.8.4)

Arrangements at the Time of the Assessment for the Use of a Word Processor

A candidate using a word processor is accommodated in a small computer classroom. To comply with ICE 14, the Centre:

• provides a word processor with the spelling and grammar check facility/predictive text disabled (switched off) (ICE 14.20)

• (where a candidate is to be seated with the main cohort without the use of a power point for an in-class assessments only) checks the battery capacity of the word processor before the candidate's exam to ensure that the battery is sufficiently charged for the entire duration of the exam (ICE 14.21.1)

• ensures the candidate is reminded to ensure that his/her 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)

• 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 his/her work at regular intervals (or where possible, an IT technician will set up 'autosave' on each computer) (ICE 14.24)

• instruct the candidate to use a minimum of 12pt font and double spacing in order to assist examiners when marking (ICE 14.24)

The Centre will ensure the word processor

• 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 and is not connected to an intranet or any other means of communication

• 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), spreadsheets etc.

• 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 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

• does not include speech recognition technology unless the candidate has permission to use a scribe or relevant software

• is not used on the candidate's behalf by a third party unless the candidate has permission to use a scribe

Portable storage medium

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

Printing the Script after the exam is over

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, at the time of printing, to verify that the work printed is his or her own

• a word-processed script is attached to any answer booklet which contains some of the answers

• the printed script is clearly labelled with the candidate's details and securely attached to any answer booklet

The criteria The Damara School uses to award and allocate word processors for examinations

The Damara School will provide a word processor for students who have significant difficulties in their ability to express themselves clearly in written form.

The use of a word processor must be the student's normal way of working within the Centre.

Students may be allocated a word processor if they have a difficulty which has a substantial and adverse effect on their ability to write legibly, such as;

• A learning difficulty

• A medical condition

• A physical disability

• A sensory impairment

• A difficulty with fine or gross motor skills

This list is not exhaustive.

Students entitled to use a Word Processor will be allocated a small room and will be accommodated in such a way that other candidates are not disturbed and cannot read the screen.

The only exception to the above where the use of a word processor may be considered for a candidate would be

• on a temporary basis as a consequence of a temporary injury at the time of the assessment

• where a subject within the curriculum is delivered electronically and the Centre provides word processors to all candidates

Arrangements for the use of 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 and the Exams Officer. Students are not permitted to use their own word processors/devices at any time for exams or assessments.