South Thames Colleges Group

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EXAMINATIONS & ASSESSMENTS POLICY - Word Processors in Examinations & Assessments

1. Introduction

The use of a word processor (WP) in an exam or assessment is available as an access arrangement.

The purpose of an access arrangement is to ensure, where possible, that barriers to assessment are removed for disabled candidates preventing them from being placed at a substantial disadvantage as a consequence of persistent and significant difficulties. The integrity of the assessment is maintained, whilst at the same time providing access to assessment for a disabled candidate.

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

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

2. Purpose of the Policy

This policy details how STCG colleges manage and administer the use of WPs as an access arrangement in examinations and assessments in compliance with current JCQ publications "Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments" and "Instructions for Conducting Examinations". WP is used to describe the use of a computer, laptop or tablet for example.

A WP will not be granted simply because the student prefers to type rather than write in exams, works faster on a keyboard or uses a laptop at home. The use of a WP reflects the candidate's normal way of working.

3. Eligibility for Use of a WP

STCG colleges will allocate the use of a WP to candidates where it is their normal way of working within the centre and where it is appropriate to their needs.

Needs may include (*list not exhaustive*):

- A learning difficulty which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on the ability to write legibly
- A medical condition
- A physical disability
- A sensory impairment
- Planning and organisational problems when writing by hand (evidence of need required)
- Poor (illegible) handwriting

1

4. Use of a WP

STCG colleges:

- only permit the use of a WP where the integrity of the assessment can be maintained
- do not grant the use of a WP where it will compromise the assessment objectives of the specification in question
- consider on a subject-by-subject basis if the candidate will need to use a WP in each specification
- consider the needs of the candidate at the start of their course enabling evidence to be gathered of normal way of working in the classroom, internal tests/exams, mock exams etc to fully support the candidate's eligibility to use a WP in exams or assessments
- provide access to WPs to candidates in non-exam assessment components as standard practice whenever possible unless prohibited by the specification

Exceptions:

The only exceptions to the above would be:

- in the event of a temporary injury or impairment or a diagnosis of a disability arising after the start of a course
- where a subject is delivered electronically and a WP is provided to all candidates

In practice:

a. Candidates may mix the way they answer exam questions, i.e. use a WP for those requiring extended writing and handwrite shorter answers. It is recognised that exams 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, whereas exams which require simpler answers are often easier to handwrite. In general, a WP is not considered to be an appropriate access arrangement for Maths or Science exams and will be granted only in exceptional circumstances.

b. Approval for use of a WP in exams is processed at the start of the course, usually the beginning of the academic year. Candidates will then be aware that they have approved use of a WP for exams for some/all subjects. The arrangement must be formally approved before an exam or assessment takes place.

c. If a temporary problem arises, such an injury to an arm or hand, the need for a WP will be assessed at the time.

d. The candidate must be proficient in word processing to ensure the arrangement is appropriate. Candidates will normally take exams on WPs in suitably equipped rooms and will not be in separate accommodation

e. If a candidate does not make use of the arrangement it can be withdrawn

5. Arrangements at the time of the assessment for the use of a WP

In compliance with the regulations:

- WPs are provided with the spelling and grammar check facility/predictive text disabled, unless an awarding body's specification says otherwise
- candidates are fully informed and reminded they should ensure the centre number, candidate number and the unit/component code appear on each page as a header or footer (if using Wordpad or Notepad these details must be handwritten under supervision on the completed printed script). Candidates must also take care to number each page of a typed

script. Invigilators must be familiar with these requirements and able to assist candidates if necessary.

- candidates are reminded to save their work at regular intervals (by the invigilator)
- candidates are instructed to use a minimum of 12pt font and double spacing in order to assist examiners when marking (documents are set up in this format prior to exams starting)

STCG colleges ensure any WP used in an exam or assessment is:

- only used in a way that ensures candidates' scripts are produced under secure conditions
- in good working order at the time of the exam
- accommodated in such a way that other candidates are not disturbed and cannot read the screen
- used as a typewriter, not as a database, although standard formatting software is acceptable
- not connected to the internet or have any other means of communication
- cleared of any previously stored data (any portable storage medium is provided by the college and cleared of any previously stored data)
- disabled so as not to give candidates access to other applications such as calculators (where prohibited in the exam), spreadsheets etc.
- set up not to include graphic packages or computer aided design software unless permission has been given to use these
- not enabled for any predictive text software or automatic spelling and grammar check technology, unless the candidate has been permitted a scribe or the 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
- not used on the candidate's behalf by a third party unless the candidate has permission to use a scribe

Printing the script after the exam is over:

- the WP is either connected to a printer so that scripts can be printed off, or have the facility to print from a portable storage medium
- candidates are present to verify that the work is their own
- word processed scripts are attached to any answer booklet which contains some of the answers
- in all cases a WP cover sheet (Form 4) is completed and attached to each candidate's typed script (according to the relevant awarding body's instructions)

6. Staff Roles

The usual STCG colleges' procedures and the roles of those involved in the allocation of access arrangements apply.

STATEMENT DETAILING THE CRITERIA USED TO AWARD AND ALLOCATE WPs 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)

The 'normal way of working' for STCG exam candidates is for candidates to handwrite their exams.

An exception to this would be where a candidate has an approved access arrangement in place, for example the use of a scribe.

The use of WPs

There are also exceptions where a candidate may be awarded/allocated the use of a word processor in exams where he/she has a firmly established need, it reflects the candidate's normal way of working and by not being awarded a word processor the candidate would be at a substantial disadvantage to other candidates.

Examples of the type of needs a candidate may have are:

- 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

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 WPs to all candidates

Arrangements for the use of word processors at the time of the assessment

Appropriate exam-compliant WPs will be provided by the IT department in liaison with the access arrangement assessor and the exams officer.

Statement produced by: **[insert name, job role]**　　　　Statement date:

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