EXAMINATIONS & ASSESSMENTS POLICY - Word Processors in Examinations & Assessments

1. 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 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.

2. Eligibility for Use of a WP

STCG colleges will allocate the use of a WP, with the spelling and grammar check/predictive text disabled (switched off), to candidates where it is their normal way of working within the college and where it is appropriate to their needs. WPs do not include computer reading software unless a candidate has permission to use a computer reader. Approvals for WPs are reviewed annually and adjusted in accordance with a particular student's 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

3. 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 and so on 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

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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 very 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 as 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/typing 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. For a candidate entitled to a scribe whose spelling has made them eligible for a scribe but who has elected to use a WP instead, use of a spell check enabled WP is allowed
f. 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, their 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 on the completed printed script under supervision to ensure they are solely performing this task and not re-reading their answers or amending their work in any way. Candidates must also take care to number each page, e.g. page 1 of 6, 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
- is not used to perform skills that are being assessed
- accommodated in such a way that other candidates are not disturbed and cannot read the screen

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- used as a typewriter, not as a database, although standard formatting software is acceptable
- not connected to the internet/intranet or 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
- Must not include AI tools
- not used on the candidate's behalf by a third party unless the candidate has permission to use a scribe

Colleges will ensure that any portable storage medium (e.g. a memory stick) is provided by the college and is cleared of any previously stored data.

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
- where an awarding body requires a cover sheet to be completed this is included with the candidate's typed script (according to the relevant awarding body's instructions)
- Electronic copies of word-processed scripts are securely retained in case a printed copy is lost and a duplicate is requested by an awarding body. Evidence the paper has been stored securely is produced for the awarding body if required

6. Staff Roles

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