

USE OF WORD PROCESSORS

The use of a word processor has changed significantly over the years. Current Regulations state that a candidate is allowed to use a word processor, with spelling and grammar check facility (predictive text) disabled, where it is their normal way of working within the Centre.

It is permissible for candidates to type longer answers in addition to hand-write short answers.

There are some caveats to the use of word processors alongside the provision of other exam concessions, which must be considered very carefully.

Every setting must have a word processor in exams policy, which must comply with current JCQ Regulations and which must be followed within the setting. The word processor policy must therefore be reviewed annually in September after the release of the JCQ Regs.

The following caveats must be borne in mind:

1. A word processor should always be considered where a candidate's handwriting is very slow (i.e. with a standard score below 85), if the candidate is proficient in the use of a word processor and it is their normal way of working within the centre.
2. Where a word processor is provided for slow handwriting only, the word processor overcomes the substantial disadvantage and therefore the candidate cannot be awarded extra time alongside the word processor, unless there is evidence of additional needs.
3. Where a candidate experiences illegible handwriting or poor coordination leading to illegible handwriting, the use of a word processor should be considered, if the candidate is proficient in its use and it is the normal way of working within the Centre. Where a candidate experiences poor coordination leading to poor typing skills, a scribe or voice activated software, might be considered, where this is the candidate's normal way of working within the Centre
4. Where a candidate experiences poor written organisation, a word processor might be considered, provided this is the candidate's normal way of working. In this case, the word processor overcomes the candidate's substantial disadvantage and therefore they do not require additional access arrangements, such as extra time.

Essentially, the word processor must be the candidate's normal way of working within the Centre, as evidenced through use. This can be for some of the work (such as for homework) or all of the work. The candidate must be confident in the use of a word processor, and should have opportunity to use a word processor during internal exams. The word processor must not be considered at the last minute and, where the word processor is considered to overcome the substantial disadvantage, the candidate cannot receive additional concessions, such as extra time, for the same disadvantage, as this would be viewed as conveying an unfair advantage.



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The rule of thumb is in the answers to the following questions:

	Yes	No
1. Is the candidate's handwriting illegible (as evidenced by his/her teachers)?	Go to 5	Go to 2
2. Is the candidate's handwriting slow (as evidenced by a below 85 standard score in a handwriting test delivered by a specialist assessor)?	Go to 5	Go to 3
3. Does the candidate experience poor written organisation (as evidenced from his/her teachers)?	Go to 5	Go to 4
4. Does the candidate experience a weak working memory impacting upon their written expression (as evidenced through a standard score of below 85 in a working memory/auditory processing test delivered by a specialist assessor)?	Go to 5	Go to 6
5. Does the candidate receive extra time for slow handwriting?	Do not allow extra time and word processor	Go to 6
6. Is a word processor the candidate's normal way of working within the Centre?	Go to 7	Go to 7
7. Is the candidate proficient and confident in the use of a word processor	Allow the use of a word processor	Do not allow the use of a word processor

Note:

New Regulations state that a candidate must experience at least one below average (below 85) standard score and one low or below average (below 89) standard score in order to receive extra time. Where one of these scores is taken from a slow handwriting speed, then extra time and a laptop cannot be offered.

Where extra time and the use of a laptop are to be considered, a candidate must experience one speed-related score within the below average range (below 85) and one within the low or below average range (below 89) **in addition to** a slow or illegible handwriting speed. **For example, any two of the following:**

- Cognitive processing speed (verbal or visual processing)
- Working or short-term memory
- Reading speed, efficiency or fluency
- Reading comprehension speed
- Visual perceptual skills
- Phonological awareness skills