UTC South Durham

Word Processor Policy

2026 - 2027

Introduction

This policy on the use of word processors in examinations and assessments is reviewed and updated annually, on the publication of updated JCQ regulations and guidance contained in the publications Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments and Instructions for conducting examinations.

References to 'AARA' relate to JCQ *Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments*, *March 2026 updated* and 'ICE' to JCQ *Instructions for conducting examinations, 1 September 2026*.

Purpose of the policy

This policy details how UTC South Durham manages and administers the use of word processors (including laptops and tablets) in examinations and assessments.

Principles for using a word processor

UTC South Durham complies with AARA chapter 4 *Adjustments for candidates with disabilities and learning difficulties* regulations and guidance as follows:

(AARA 4.2.1)

- Candidates with access to word processors are allowed to do so in order to remove barriers for disabled candidates which prevent them from being placed at a substantial disadvantage as a consequence of persistent and significant difficulties.
- The use of word processors is only permitted whilst ensuring that the integrity of the assessment is maintained, at the same time as providing access to assessments for a disabled candidate.

(AARA 4.2.2)

- The use of a word processor is not granted where it will compromise the assessment objectives of the specification in question.

(AARA 4.2.3)

- Candidates may not require the use of a word processor in each specification. As subjects and their methods of assessments may vary, leading to different demands of our candidates, the need for the use of a word processor is considered on a subject-by-subject basis.

(AARA 4.2.4)

- The use of a word processor is normally considered and agreed where appropriate at the start of the course once we have firmly established a picture of need and normal way of working for a candidate.
- Candidates are made aware when they will have the use of a word processor for timetabled examinations and non-examination assessments.

(AARA 4.2.5)

- The use of a word processor for candidates is only granted if it reflects the support given to the candidate as their 'normal way of working', which is defined as support:
    - in the classroom (where appropriate); or
    - working in small groups for reading and/or writing; or
    - literacy support lessons; or
    - literacy intervention strategies; and/or
    - in internal tests/examinations
    - mock examinations

The only exceptions to the above would be 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.

The use of a word processor

There is no requirement to process an application for a word processor (spell and grammar check disabled) using Access Arrangements online, and no evidence is needed to support it's use.

UTC South Durham complies with AARA chapter 5 *Access arrangements available* as follows:

(AARA 5.8.1)

- We provide a word processor with the spelling and grammar check facility/predictive text disabled (switched off).
- We only grant the use of a word processor to a candidate where it is their normal way of working (see 4.2.5 above).
- We only grant the use of a word processor to a candidate if it is appropriate to their needs (for example, the quality of language significantly improves as a result of using a word processor due to problems with planning and organisation when writing by hand).
  (The above also extends to the use of electronic braillers and tablets).

(AARA 5.8.2)

- We provide access to word processors to candidates in non-examination assessment components as standard practice unless prohibited by the specification.

(AARA 5.8.3)

- We allow candidates to use a word processor in an examination to type certain questions, i.e. those requiring extended writing, but they may hand write shorter answers.
- We recognise that examinations 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. Examinations which require more simplistic answers are often easier to handwrite within the answer booklet. The candidate avoids the difficulty of visually tracking between the question paper and screen.

(AARA 5.8.4)

- Where it is required, we ensure that a word processor cover sheet is completed and included with each candidate's typed script (according to the instructions issued by the individual awarding body).

Word processors and their programmes

UTC South Durham complies with ICE 14.25 *Word processors* instructions by ensuring:

a) must be used as a typewriter, not as a database, although standard formatting software is acceptable;

b) must have been cleared of any previously stored data, as must any portable storage medium used. An unauthorised memory stick must not be used by a candidate. When needed, the centre must provide a memory stick, which is cleared of any previously stored data, to the candidate;

c) must be in good working order at the time of the examination;

d) must be accommodated in such a way that other candidates are not disturbed and cannot read the screen. Where a candidate using a word processor is accommodated in another room, a separate invigilator will be required;

e) must either be connected to a printer so that a script can be printed off, or have the facility to print from a portable storage medium. This must be done after the examination is over or when specified by the exam. The candidate must be present to verify that the work printed is his or her own. Word processed scripts must be attached to any answer booklet which contains some of the answers;

f) must be used to produce scripts under secure conditions, otherwise they may be refused;

g) must not be used to perform skills which are being assessed;

h) must not give the candidate access to other applications such as a calculator (where prohibited in the examination), email, the Internet, social media sites or spreadsheets;

i) must not include graphic packages or computer aided design software unless permission has been given to use these;

j) must 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;

k) must not include computer reading (text to speech) software unless the candidate has permission to use a computer reader;

l) must not include speech recognition technology unless the candidate has permission to use a scribe (a scribe cover sheet must be completed);

m) must not include AI tools;

n) must not be used on the candidate's behalf by a third party unless the candidate has permission to use a scribe.

Laptops and tablets

UTC South Durham further complies with ICE instructions by ensuring that we follow the following:

14.20

Centres can provide a word processor (e.g. computer, laptop or tablet), with the spelling and grammar check/predictive text disabled, to a candidate where it is their normal way of working within the centre, unless an awarding body's specification says otherwise. For example, where the curriculum is delivered electronically and the centre provides word processors to all candidates. This also includes an electronic brailler or a tablet.

14.21

Tablets are designed to run for a long period of time once fully charged. Their purpose is to be 'free-standing'. The battery capacity of a laptop or a tablet must be checked before the candidate's examination(s) and the centre must ensure that the battery is sufficiently charged for the entire duration of the examination.

The use of a fully-charged laptop or tablet will allow centres to seat a candidate within the main examination hall without the need for separate invigilation and power points.

14.22

Candidates must be 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.

If a candidate is using the software application Notepad or Wordpad these do not allow for the insertion of a header or footer. In these instances, once the candidate has completed the examination and printed off his/her typed script, he/she must handwrite their details as a header or footer. The candidate must be supervised to ensure that he/she is solely performing this task and not re-reading their answers or amending their work in any way.

14.23

Each page of the typed script must be numbered, e.g. page 1 of 6.

14.24

Invigilators must remind candidates to save their work at regular intervals. Alternatively, an IT technician can set up 'autosave' on each laptop/tablet. This will ensure that if there is a complication or technical issue, the candidate's work is not lost.

Accommodating word processors in examinations

Candidates using word processors (including laptops or tablets) are internally accommodated in the following manner:

- At the back or side of the exam hall away from the main body of candidates, near to a power point.
- If there are more than 2 candidates using word processers, where possible they will be accommodated in one of the exam online assessment computer rooms which are set up to adhere to exam conditions.

Invigilation arrangements relating to the use of word processors include the following:

- If accommodated separately to the exam hall an invigilator is assigned to them for the duration of the examination.
- If they are accommodated in the main hall invigilators are posted in positions that ensure the screen and candidates are visible to the invigilators at all times during the examination.

Other arrangements relating to the use of word processors include:

- The word processors used in examinations will come from the Exams Officer's stock of college laptops only and will be logged in using the specially set up exam.user profile.

Appendix 1

UTC South Durham uses the following criteria to award and allocate word processors for examinations

UTC South Durham Statement:

Awarding word processors

A candidate may be **awarded** 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 would be at a substantial disadvantage to other candidates.

Exceptions might include where a candidate has, for example:

- 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 that is so **illegible** that it is unable to be read by a third party
- a candidate has approval for the use of a scribe, but prefers to use a word processor and this is their normal way of working

Allocating word processors

The allocation of appropriate exam-compliant word processors will be made by the exams officer, with the support of the IT Technician. 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 published start time. The security of the exam will be maintained at all times and candidates will be supervised in line with section 7.2 of ICE.

Statement produced by: Jak Heslop SENCO
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