



MARLBOROUGH COLLEGE

Policy on Word Processing in Public Examinations

Access Arrangements are reasonable adjustments made for examination candidates who are disabled under the terms of the Equality Act 2010, and who would otherwise be at substantial disadvantage in comparison to those who are not disabled, when sitting an examination.

The coordination of the assessment of pupils for the purpose of applying for Access Arrangements in public examinations is the responsibility of the Learning Support Department (LSD) and is governed by guidelines published every year by the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) and Cambridge Assessment International Education (formerly CIE). Further information can be found at: www.jcq.org.uk and www.cie.org.uk. This policy refers, specifically, to applications for the use of word processing during written examinations.

Although JCQ have no requirement for us to process an application for word processing, CIE require notification and/or permission depending on the circumstances and needs of the candidate. This arrangement is then authorised and recorded by them. Either way, College must have a policy which details the criteria used to award and allocate word processors for examinations. Principally, permission to use a word processor cannot be granted to a candidate simply because he or she prefers to type rather than to write, or because he or she can work faster on a keyboard, or because he or she uses a laptop in House or at home. The use of a word processor must reflect the candidate's normal way of working within the centre, but this by itself is not enough for permission to use a word processor to be granted.

The Examination Boards may ask to see a history of identification and support, together with samples of handwriting and typing. Subject beaks are always consulted with regard to the need for access arrangements in exams, in line with current exam board guidance.

Reasons for which the use of a word processor might be granted include:

- An Educational Psychologist's report has diagnosed a specific learning difficulty and has recommended the use of a word processor.
- A pupil has been assessed internally by LSD and the results shows a below-average handwriting speed.
- A number of Beaks have commented on the illegibility of, or difficulty reading, a pupil's handwriting and this has been investigated and reviewed by LSD.
- A candidate has a medical condition which impacts on his or her ability to write by hand (e.g. hypermobility). There should be documentation on file from a relevant medical professional.

Conditions for use of a word processor:

- The College is satisfied that there is a valid need, as in the examples above, for the candidate to use a word processor.
- The use of a word processor is the pupil's current and normal way of working, and that this has been the case for at least two academic terms prior to the proposed use in external examinations. (Requests to type in exams must therefore be made by the end of the Michaelmas Term in the year preceding the examination - all students in examination year groups are contacted with information about the deadline.)
- The pupil presents to LSD, as requested, samples of typed and handwritten work.
- The pupil should be able to type proficiently (with a suggested minimum speed of 30 words per minute with 90% accuracy).
- Pupils must consistently use their laptops in lessons for the subjects in which they will type their examinations.
- The use of the laptop must be agreed by the College, the beak, LSD and the pupil to be appropriate to the need of the pupil, and not against the spirit of the guidance given by JCQ and CIE.

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Last Reviewed: Michaelmas 2018
Next Review: Michaelmas 2019

Appendix:

Rationale for encouraging pupils with specific learning differences to word process their work:

Though such pupils may be intelligent and articulate, they may, nevertheless, have a fundamental difficulty with words. There is a wide range of skill disabilities associated with this basic difficulty. These include problems with speed of information-processing, short-term working memory, visual and auditory perception, organising and sequencing of letters, words and thoughts. These difficulties become apparent in disorganised management of work, illegible or irregular script, poor spelling, untidy presentation and minimal, rambling or disorganised writing.

Written work in such cases fails to represent true ability and causes bewilderment, disappointment and frustration to pupils, teachers and parents. The consequence of a mismatch between ability and achievement can be a dispiriting mixture of underachievement, low morale and disaffection with academic matters.

Word processing, in place of handwriting, reduces this difficulty in the following ways:

Technical advantages

- Typing makes communication legible and attractive; meaning is given full impact.
- Touch-typing increases speed of production to match speed of thought (load on short-term memory reduced).
- It improves spelling through repeated finger patterns.
- Spell-checker (not usually available in examinations) further reduces number of spelling mistakes (as mistakes are made obvious, inhibition regarding choice of vocabulary is eliminated).
- Editing facilities improve expression, sequencing, structure and punctuation.
- On-screen filing simplifies organisation and encourages storage systems.
- Drawing packages provide alternatives to presentation by hand.

Advantages to quality of work, morale and motivation

- Self-confidence is much enhanced (tension, anxiety, frustration all reduced).
- True ability, hitherto masked by technical difficulties, revealed.
- Speed of thought more nearly matched by speed of writing, hence greater fluency and willingness to provide detail.
- Non-automatic writing skill replaced by automatic typing skill (brain space freed up to think about content).
- Reluctance to write eased.
- Ability to copy and take notes transformed (able to keep up, notes easy to read and re-organise and are therefore worth keeping).
- Pride in presentation of work often a new experience.
- Understanding, curiosity and initiative no longer inhibited by lack of technical skill.