

# Use of a Word Processor in Exams Policy 2025-2026



## Ysgol Bryn Castell

This policy is reviewed annually to ensure compliance with current regulations

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## Introduction

This policy on the use of word processors in examinations and assessments is reviewed and updated annually, upon publication of updated JCQ regulations and guidance on Access Arrangements, and instructions for conducting exams. References in this policy to AARA and ICE relate to/are directly taken from the **Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments (AARA) 2025-2026** and **Instructions for Conducting Examinations (ICE) 2025-2026** publications (see links below):

- [https://www.jcq.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/JCQ-AARA-2025\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.jcq.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/JCQ-AARA-2025_FINAL.pdf)
- [https://www.jcq.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/JCQ-Instructions-for-conducting-examinations-2025\\_6\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.jcq.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/JCQ-Instructions-for-conducting-examinations-2025_6_FINAL.pdf)

## Purpose of the Policy

*“Centres are allowed to provide a word processor with the spelling and grammar check facility/predictive text disabled (switched off) to a candidate where it is their normal way of working within the centre and is appropriate to their needs”.*

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

## Principles for Using a Word Processor

Ysgol Bryn Castell complies with AA Chapter 4 *Adjustments for candidates with disabilities and learning difficulties* regulations and guidance as follows:

### **(AARA 4.2.1)**

- The use of a word processor is permitted in order to remove barriers to assessment for a disabled candidate which prevents him/her from being placed at a substantial disadvantage as a consequence of persistent and significant difficulties.
- The use of a word processor 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 assessment may vary leading to different demands of the candidate, the need for the use of a word processor is considered on a subject-by-subject basis.

#### **(AARA 4.2.4)**

- The need for use of a word processor is normally considered and agreed where appropriate at the start of the course, based on evidence gathered that firmly establishes the candidate's needs and 'normal way of working' in the classroom, internal tests/exams, mock exams etc.
- Arrangements are normally considered and agreed where appropriate at the start of the course providing the centre has 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 controlled assessments/coursework.

#### **(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' within the centre, which is defined as, support:
  - In the classroom (where appropriate);
  - Working in small groups for reading and/or writing;
  - Literacy support sessions;
  - Literacy intervention strategies;
  - In internal school test/examinations;
  - In mock examinations

This is commonly referred to as 'normal way of working'.

### **Exceptions**

The only exception to the above where the use of a word processor would be considered for a candidate would be:

#### **(AARA 4.2.4)**

- In the event of 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/at the time of an exam or assessment

#### **(AARA 5.8.4)**

- where a subject within the curriculum is delivered electronically and the centre provides word processors to all candidates.

### **Centre Specific Processes**

Ysgol Bryn Castell is an alternative/special provision school and as such, it is recognised that a high proportion of students have complex/multiple additional learning needs. Correspondingly, a high proportion of students will use a word processor routinely in class as their *normal way of working* to enable them to access the learning and examination system.

Use of a word processor will not be granted just because a candidate prefers to use one instead of writing. Instead, the following criteria will be used to determine which candidates would be eligible for the use of a word processor.

**Ysgol Bryn Castell will:**

**(AARA 5.8.1)**

- allocate the use of a word processor to a candidate where it is their normal way of working within the centre

**(AARA 5.8.4)**

- Award the use of a word processor to a candidate if it is appropriate to their needs. Eligible candidates may include a student:
  - with a learning difficulty which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to write legibly;
  - who has a medical condition whereby it is uncomfortable and/or painful for them to write for extended periods;
  - with a physical disability which affects their ability to write;
  - with a sensory impairment;
  - who experiences planning and organisational problems when writing by hand;
  - with poor handwriting that is illegible/incomprehensible.

This list is not exhaustive.

## **The Use of a Word Processor**

In compliance with JCQ regulations for Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments (Chapter 5) and Instructions for Conducting Examinations (ICE) (Chapter 14), Ysgol Bryn Castell will:

**(AARA 5.8.1)**

- Provide a word processor with the spelling and grammar check facility/predictive text disabled (switched off)
- Only grant the use of a word processor to a candidate where it is their normal way of working (see 4.2.5 above) within the centre
- 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 braille and tablets.*

**(AARA 5.8.2)**

- Provide access to word processors to candidates in non-examination assessment (including controlled assessments or coursework) components as standard practice unless prohibited by the specification

### **(AARA 5.8.3)**

- Allow candidates to use a word processor in an examination to type certain questions i.e. those requiring extended writing, and handwrite shorter answers
- Maintain awareness 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
- Maintain awareness that 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 computer screen.

### **(AARA 5.8.4)**

- In all cases, ensure that where it is required by an awarding body, a word-processor cover sheet is completed and included with each candidate's typed script (refer to the instructions issued by the individual awarding body)
- Ensure in Functional Skills English (Reading and Writing components) the use of a word processor with the spell check facility switched on is permitted for all candidates
- NOT simply grant the use of a word processor to a candidate because he/she prefers to type rather than write in examinations or can work faster on a keyboard, or because he/she uses a laptop at home.

## **Word Processors and their Programmes**

Ysgol Bryn Castell complies with Instructions for Conducting Examinations (commonly known as the ICE document) guidance (<https://www.icq.org.uk/exams-office/ice---instructions-for-conducting-examinations>), section 14.25 *Word Processors* instructions by ensuring:

- Word processors are used as a typewriter, not as a database, although standard formatting software is acceptable
- Word processors have been cleared of any previously stored data, as well as any portable storage medium used
- an unauthorised memory stick is not permitted for use by a candidate
- where required, candidates are provided with a memory stick, which has been cleared of any previously stored data, by a nominated member of centre staff
- word processors are in good working order at the time of the examination
- word processors are 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 separately, a separate invigilator is used
- Word processors are either connected to a printer so that a script can be printed off, or have the facility to print from a portable storage medium
- documents are printed after the examination is over
- candidates are present to verify that the work printed is their own

- Word-processed scripts are attached to any answer booklet
- Word processors are used to produce scripts under secure conditions, and if they are not then the centre is aware that they may be refused by the awarding body
- Word processors are not used to perform skills which are being assessed
- Word processors are not connected to an intranet or any other means of communication
- candidates are not given access to other applications such as a calculator (where prohibited in the examination), spreadsheets etc when using a word processor
- graphic packages or computer aided design software is not included on a word processor unless permission has been given to use these
- predictive text software or an automatic spelling and grammar check is disabled unless the candidate has been permitted a scribe or is using voice recognition technology (the script must have a completed scribe cover sheet included), or the awarding body's specification permits the use of automatic spell checking
- voice recognition technology is not included on word processors unless the candidate has permission to use a scribe or relevant software
- word processors are not used on the candidate's behalf by a third party unless the candidate has permission to use a scribe
- must not include AI tools

## **Laptops and Tablets**

Ysgol Bryn Castell further complies with ICE instructions (Chapter 14) by ensuring:

- tablets used during examinations/assessments are designed to run for a long period of time once fully charged and are 'free-standing'
- the battery capacity of all laptops and/or tablets is checked before the candidate's examination(s) with the battery sufficiently charged for the entire duration of the examination
- candidates with fully charged laptops or tablets are given the opportunity to be seated within the main examination hall without the need for separate invigilation and power points
- candidates are reminded that their centre number, candidate number and the unit/component code must appear on each page as a header or footer
- candidates using Notepad or WordPad software (which do not allow for the insertion of a header or footer) are instructed to handwrite their details as a header or footer once they have finished the examination and printed off their typed script; candidates are also supervised to ensure that they are solely performing this task and not re-reading their answers or amending their work in any way
- candidates are instructed to appropriately number each page
- candidates are instructed to use a minimum 12pt font and double spacing
- invigilators remind candidates to save their work at regular intervals
- where it is possible 'autosave' is set up on each laptop/tablet
- candidates are present at the end of the examination when their script is printed off so they can verify that the work printed is their own

## **Accommodating Word Processors in Examinations**

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

- Where possible, candidates using word processors will be seated in the main exam hall/allocated room alongside the wall with the easiest accessible power sockets at the rear of the room so they cannot be overlooked by other candidates
- If this is not possible then they will be seated together in a separate room within the school
- Where candidates are permitted to do so, they may sit their exam in a separate room to the other candidates
- The candidates will be seated at the appropriate distances apart as designated in the ICE regulations
- The charging leads will be connected to ensure that the word processor does not run out of battery during the exam
- Power extension leads will be used if necessary to ensure that every candidate can charge their computer and that they can be seated appropriately in line with regulations
- Any leads/wires that trail along the floor will be secured to ensure that they do not pose a trip hazard and that they pay due regard to any other health and safety regulations
- The word processors will be checked to ensure they are in full working order prior to the exam and they will be set up and ready to go at the start of the exam

## **Invigilation Arrangements Relating to the Use of Word Processors in Exams**

Invigilators have a key role in upholding the integrity of the external examinations/ assessment process.

- The centre is responsible for ensuring that use of a word processor will not cause distraction for other students and that the screen is not overlooked or accessible to be read by others
- Where a scribe/speech recognition technology is being used it must not be overheard by or cause distraction to other candidates
- The head of centre must ensure that all persons appointed as invigilators are responsible adults, are appropriately trained in line with current regulations and fully understand the rules of the access arrangements being used
- Yearly training sessions must be organised for invigilators and those facilitating an access arrangement for a candidate under exam conditions
- A record of training given to invigilators and those facilitating an access arrangement for a candidate under exam conditions must be retained on file until the deadline for enquiries about results has passed or until any appeal, malpractice or other results enquiry has been completed
- Invigilators must be familiar with the JCQ ICE document and fully understand their role and what is and what is not permissible in the examination room

## **Word Processor Cover Sheet**

- A word processor cover sheet will be handed to the invigilator at the beginning of each exam for each student using a word processor.
- A cover sheet must be completed during the course of the examination and attached to the script, where required to do so, by an awarding body.

### **The Criteria Ysgol Bryn Castell Uses to Award and Allocate Word Processors for Examinations**

The 'normal way of working' for exam candidates at Ysgol Bryn Castell, as directed by the head of centre, is that candidates handwrite their exams. An exception to this is where a candidate may have an approved access arrangement in place, for example the use of a scribe/speech recognition technology.

### **Awarding Word Processors**

There are also exceptions where 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 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/impairment
- a sensory impairment
- Planning and organisational problems when writing by hand – this may stem motor planning issues such as Dyspraxia or alternatively language processing issues
- Poor/illegible handwriting

It is permissible for a candidate using a word processor in an examination to type certain questions i.e. those requiring extended writing, and handwrite shorter answers.

The need to use a word processor may be considered on a subject-by-subject basis as some examinations require more simplistic answers and are often easier to handwrite within the answer booklet.

Conversely, other examinations require a significant amount of writing or place a greater demand on the need to organise thought and plan extended answers and these are where candidates will frequently need to type.

### **Allocating Word Processors**

Appropriate exam-compliant word processors will be allocated by the IT department in liaison with the Access Arrangements Officer and the Exams Officer.