



POLICY ON THE USE OF LAPTOPS AND WORD PROCESSORS (YEARS 7 TO 13)

At Dulwich College, pupils in the Senior School are generally expected to record their work in lessons and to complete tests and examinations by hand.

We recognise, however, that a pupil who has difficulties with handwriting and/or problems with processing information can find that using a laptop or word processor enables clear and legible writing, helps the pupil to express their ideas more freely, helps to overcome feelings of frustration and tiredness, and enables the pupil to become a more independent learner. Therefore, in certain circumstances (see below), a pupil may be permitted to use a laptop as his normal way of working in lessons, with a view to the use of a word processor becoming his normal way of working in tests and examinations.

The fact that a pupil uses a laptop to record work in lessons does not in itself qualify that pupil to use a word processor in internal or public examinations, for which specific criteria apply (see below).

Please note that a pupil who is given permission to use a laptop in lessons will normally be required to bring his own device into school to work on. A candidate who has permission to use a word processor during end of year school examinations and public examinations (GCSEs and A Levels) will be accommodated in a computer room, using a school PC to type his answers. In these examinations, it is not permitted for candidates to use personal laptops or accessories such as keyboards which they have brought from home.

Who may use a laptop or word processor as their normal way of working?

As stated in the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) regulations, the use of a word processor cannot simply be granted to a pupil because he prefers to type rather than handwrite, or can work faster on a keyboard, or because he uses a laptop at home.

In line with the JCQ regulations, some of the reasons why the College will allow a pupil to use a laptop or word processor as his normal way of working and in examinations include the fact that the pupil has:

- An identified specific learning difference which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his ability to write legibly;
- A medical condition;
- A physical disability;
- A sensory impairment;

These reasons will be supported by a report from a suitably qualified professional.

- Planning and organisational problems when writing by hand;

- Poor handwriting.

For these reasons, school-based evidence will be gathered as detailed below in order that an informed decision can be made on whether to allow the use of a laptop or word processor.

School-based evidence

Concerns about a pupil's handwriting may come from teachers, parents or a pupil himself, or arise following a timed test or examination.

Any concerns about a pupil's handwriting should be reported to a member of the Learning Support Department, who will:

- Gather information from teachers;
- Arrange to meet the pupil to discuss the issue and carry out a handwriting assessment test;
- Contact the pupil's parents by email to present the above information and seek their views.

Following the actions outlined above, if the pupil is identified as having significant difficulty with legibility and/or speed in longer or timed pieces of writing and therefore meets the criteria for word processor use, a recommendation will be made that he undertakes a touch-typing course. In order for a pupil to be able to use a word processor in tests and examinations, he must be able to type faster than he can handwrite.

If, when a pupil's handwriting is assessed, additional concerns are noted concerning slow processing in other areas, the Learning Support Department may undertake further screening tests which may lead to a recommendation of an independent specialist assessment.

The pupil may then be given permission to use a laptop as his normal way of working in the classroom, with a view to using a word processor in internal and public examinations. The individual pieces of work for which a pupil uses a laptop in a lesson are at the discretion of the subject teacher; for example, it may not be appropriate for the pupil to type a short piece of work or one which contains diagrams.

Any pupil given permission to use a laptop in the classroom will be expected to abide by guidelines on its responsible use, which will be explained to him by a member of the Learning Support Department.

Using a word processor in examinations

A pupil who uses a laptop as his normal way of working in school (according to the criteria above) and has had practice in the use of a word processor in timed conditions may use a word processor in examinations. In this case the pupil will use a school PC for internal and public examinations.

The Head of Learning Support or Examinations Officer will make contact with the candidate to arrange the specific examinations in which they wish to use a word processor (for example, it is not normally appropriate to type Maths papers).

Pupils will receive instructions informing them how to set up documents in the correct format and print their work at the end of an examination. During examinations, pupils should save their work regularly. Scripts will be printed out on school printers as soon as the examination ends. Pupils must be present to check that all pages have been printed and to complete a cover sheet.

In accordance with JCQ regulations, spelling and grammar check facilities will be disabled, as will any connection to the internet.

Deadlines

Any request for a pupil to use a word processor in public examinations must be received by the Learning Support Department by 30th November* of Year 11 or Year 13 at the latest. This is to allow time to arrange for the pupil to use a word processor in his mock GCSE or A level examinations, which take place in January and February each year. If a pupil has not used a word processor in his mock examinations, he will not be permitted to use one in the summer examinations, because it will not be considered by the JCQ to be his normal way of working in examinations.

The only exception made will be for requests for the use of a word processor for medical reasons (e.g. a broken arm) which emerge after this deadline. In this case, the request must be accompanied by appropriate evidence such as a doctor's note.

Any request for a pupil to use a word processor in internal examinations (Years 7, 8, 9, 10 and 12) must be received by the Learning Support Department by 1st March* of that year at the latest. This is to allow time for the appropriate arrangements to be made.

*Or the Friday before 30th November or 1st March, if either of these dates falls on a weekend.

Reviewed September 2019