POLICY TITLE		DATE OF APPROVAL
NCG Word Processor Policy		May 2024
APPROVED BY	**VERSION NO.**	**VALID UNTIL**
Executive Board	1	May 2027

OWNER	Assistant Director of Quality TLA
GROUP EXECUTIVE LEAD	Executive Director of Quality
DOCUMENT TYPE	Policy ☒ Group Procedure ☐ Local Procedure ☐
PURPOSE	The purpose of the policy is to ensure candidates are not disadvantaged during assessment and examination in comparison to their peers. All JCQ and awarding body guidelines are clearly followed in the use of word processors.
APPLICABLE TO	The policy applies to all learners undertaking a further education or training course within the colleges of NCG and staff members who are involved in, or have overall responsibility for, the preparation and running of examinations and assessments within their college.
EQUALITY ANALYSIS COMPLETED [POLICIES ONLY]	Yes ☒
	(If EA not applicable, please explain)
KEY THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT THIS POLICY	1. The policy requirements and NCG access arrangements with a word processor associated with assessment. 2. Mandatory/recommended requirements when planning the use of a word processor in examinations and assessment. 3. How the policy applies to staff in their particular role.
EXPECTED OUTCOME	Readers are expected to understand the organisational position on the use of word processors in examinations and assessment, know their responsibilities in relation to the policy and comply with the terms of the policy.

(Note: The EQUALITY ANALYSIS row additionally shows: No ☐ | N/A ☐ across columns)

MISCELLANEOUS	
LINKED DOCUMENTS	• NCG Non-examination policy • NCG Malpractice policy • NCG Tutorial, Progress and Attainment Policy • NCG TLA Policy • NCG Staff Code of Conduct

	• NCG Exams Procedure • JCQ Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments
KEYWORDS	• Examination • Word processor • Access arrangement

Equality Impact Assessment

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT	Yes	No	Explanatory Note if required
EIA 1 - Does the proposed policy/procedure align with the intention of the NCG Mission and EDIB Intent Statement in Section 2?	☒	☐	The answer to this must be YES
EIA 2 - Does the proposed policy/procedure in any way impact unfairly on any protected characteristics below?	☐	☒	
Age	☐	☒	The answer to this must be NO
Disability / Difficulty	☐	☒	The answer to this must be NO
Gender Reassignment	☐	☒	The answer to this must be NO
Marriage and Civil Partnership	☐	☒	The answer to this must be NO
Race	☐	☒	The answer to this must be NO
Religion or Belief	☐	☒	The answer to this must be NO
Sex	☐	☒	The answer to this must be NO
Sexual Orientation	☐	☒	The answer to this must be NO
EIA3 - Does the proposed policy/processes contain any language/terms/references/ phrasing that could cause offence to any specific groups of people or individuals?	☐	☒	The answer to this must be NO
EIA4 - Does the policy/process discriminate or victimise any groups or individuals?	☐	☒	The answer to this must be NO
EIA 5 - Does this policy/process positively discriminate against any group of people, or individuals?	☐	☒	The answer to this must be NO
EIA 5 - Does this policy/process include any positive action to support underrepresented groups of people, or individuals?	☐	☐	The answer to this could be yes or no as positive action is lawful. However, an explanation must be provided for clarity.
EIA 6 - How do you know that the above is correct?	This policy has been reviewed by the QTLA Forum and exam leads, prior to approval by NCG Executive.		

1.   GENERAL POLICY STATEMENT

1.1   NCG, and its constituent colleges, are committed to a curriculum that supports the Group's mission of 'Enabling social mobility and economic prosperity through exceptional education.'

1.2   NCG has a duty to provide reasonable adjustments for our learners with disabilities and learning difficulties to support their access to education, and ensure they are not disadvantaged during teaching, learning and assessment in comparison to their peers. Initial assessment must identify any reasonable adjustments to be implemented in all learning environments and activities, including taught sessions, workshops, work placements, assessments and examinations. These should reduce the effects that a learner's disability or difficulty may have on their learning or access to education. High needs learners will receive high quality learning and wellbeing support which is in line with the needs identified in their support plan.

1.3   This policy details how the centre manages and administers the use of word processors (including laptops) in examinations and assessments. The policy is edited using the most recent publication of JCQ's regulations and guidance [Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments (AARA)](#) for conducting examinations. All colleges must comply with these regulations and have local processes for implementing the policy.

2.   POLICY DEFINITIONS and ROLES

DEFINITIONS

- **Access Arrangements** - they allow candidates with specific needs, such as special educational needs, disabilities or temporary injuries to access the assessment and show what they know and can do without changing the demands of the assessment.

- **Centre -** refers to the location where learning delivery and examinations take place within a college and the Awarding Organisation is the body that awards qualifications through a process of assessment and examinations.

- **College examination lead/teams** - includes any member of staff with responsibility for the management, administration and conducting of examinations and regulation of non-examination assessments.
- **Head of Centre** - is the individual who is accountable to the awarding bodies for ensuring that the centre is always compliant with the published JCQ regulations and awarding body requirements to ensure the security and integrity of the examinations/ assessments.
- **Head of Department** - the appointed leader of the school, faculty, curriculum or department.
- **Learner / Student / candidate** - used interchangeably and includes all learners, whether young people, learners with specific high needs, adult learners, or higher education students. Apprentices, as employees of a third party, will follow guidance set out in the NCG Apprenticeship Policy and associated Staff Handbook.
- **SENCo** – Special Educational Needs Coordinator The term 'SENCo' used throughout this document refers to the appointed/designated or equivalent person by the head of centre to coordinate the access arrangements process within the centre.
- **Staff** - refers to all NCG staff in the organisation, including volunteers, sessional workers, and agency staff.
- **Teacher** - used to describe all teaching and training staff, including teachers, lecturers, Instructors, skills trainers, learning support practitioners, coaches/mentors, work experience coaches and teachers in managing positions.
- **Word Processor** - a device or computer program that provides for input, editing, formatting, and output of text, often with some additional features.

2.1 The head of centre must ensure that the SENCo (or the person designated in that role) has sufficient time to both manage the access arrangements process within the centre and are familiar with the JCQ document Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments. The head of centre / designated SENCo must work with the college examination lead, teaching staff, support staff (such as Learning Support Assistants and Teaching Assistants) to ensure that approved access arrangements/reasonable adjustments are put in place for examinations.

Therefore, any issues raised in relation to the use of word processors are not done so in a negative manner or to block progression, but to ensure that the regulations are adhered to.

3. ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS

3.1 Access arrangements for word processors are agreed before an assessment and in line with JCQ regulations. They allow candidates with specific needs, such as special educational needs, disabilities, poor handwriting or temporary injuries to access the assessment and show what they know and can do without changing the demands of the assessment. The intention behind an access arrangement is to meet the needs of an individual candidate without affecting the integrity of the assessment. Access arrangements are the principal way in which awarding bodies comply with the duty under the Equality Act 2010 to make 'reasonable adjustments'. Access arrangements and reasonable adjustments should be processed at the start of the course.

3.2 The use of word processors in examinations and assessments is an available access arrangement, where the integrity of the assessment is maintained. The centre (college) must follow the JCQ regulations for requesting and/or implementing access arrangements for word processors. SENCOs must ensure all relevant evidence is kept and made available for inspection. A word processor cannot simply be granted to a candidate because the learner wants to type rather than write in examinations or can work faster on a keyboard, or because they use a laptop at home. The use of a word processor must reflect the candidate's normal way of working within the centre or because of a temporary injury (AARA 5.8). The use of a word processor in exams should only be applied for where it is a reasonable adjustment for a candidate with persistent and significant difficulties and the use of the word processor/laptop is to address the identified need. For example, a candidate with (this is not an exhaustive list):

- 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.

3.3   NCG require local processes to identify learners who require access to use a word processor in examinations and communicate these to exam teams. This is based on evidence gathered that firmly establishes the candidates' needs and 'normal way of working' in the classroom, reading and/or writing; literacy intervention strategies; extended writing and examinations. Exams team and heads of centre / designated SENCOs need to agree internal deadlines and work towards examination deadlines. 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, access arrangements should be applied for as soon as is practicable. Exams team will ensure access arrangements approved and confirmed by heads of centre / designated SENCOs are in place and conducted according to the relevant regulations such as: JCQ Access Arrangements, Reasonable Adjustments and Special Consideration.

4.   WORD PROCESSOR IN EXAMINATIONS AND ASSESSMENTS

4.1.   The use of word processors in non-examination assessment components will be considered standard practice unless prohibited by the specification.

4.2.   Candidates may not require the same access arrangements in each specification. Subjects and their methods of assessments may vary, leading to different demands of the candidate. Heads of department / designated SENCos must consider the need for access arrangements on a subject-by-subject basis.

4.3.   Candidates with access to word processors are allowed to type in order to ensure, where possible, that barriers to assessment are removed for candidates with learning difficulties and disabilities, preventing the learner from being placed at a substantial disadvantage.

4.4.   Centres are allowed to provide a word processor with the spelling and grammar check facility/predictive text switched off where it is the candidate's normal way of working within the centre. For example, the candidate's quality of language significantly improves when using a word processor due to problems with planning and organisation when writing by hand. (This also extends to the use of electronic braillers and tablets).

4.5. A candidate may use a word processor in an examination to type certain questions, i.e. those requiring extended writing, and handwrite shorter answers. For example, 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 as the candidate avoids the difficulty of visually tracking between the question paper and computer screen.

4.6. For the regulations on the use of word processors in written examinations, please see the [JCQ document Instructions for conducting examinations](#) (commonly known as the JCQ 'ICE' document).

5. EXAMINATION OF NEED

5.1. The evidence of need will vary depending on the disability and the access arrangement(s) being applied for. The student may also have access arrangements and reasonable adjustments who experience persistent and significant difficulties.

5.2. All students using a word processor in an exam must be assessed by an authorised member of staff to establish and document the reasons for use against the criteria in 3.2. Additional evidence, including one of more of the following where appropriate:

- Evidence from standardised assessments
- Evidence of difficulties producing handwritten work
- Medical evidence of need

The only exception to this procedure would be if this arrangement had to be put in place as a consequence of a temporary injury or impairment arising at the time of the exam.

5.3 Arrangements must always be internally approved before an examination by the Head of centre and exams teams. An adjustment will not be approved if it:

- involves unreasonable costs to the awarding body;
- involves unreasonable timeframes;
- affects the security and integrity of the assessment. This is because the adjustment is not 'reasonable'.

- The centre must also ensure that approved adjustments can be delivered to candidates.

5.4   An awarding body may require a word processor cover sheet to be completed, if this is the case the appropriate JCQ forms will be completed.

6.   STATEMENT ON POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

6.1   Upon approval, this policy will be uploaded to the policy portal and communicated to staff via The Business Round-Up.

6.2   Head of Centre / designated SENCo leads are responsible for ensuring that the policy is disseminated locally alongside locally agreed procedures.

7.   STATEMENT ON EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

7.1   NCG is committed to providing equality of opportunity. Further details or our aims and objectives are outlined in our [Equality Diversity Inclusion and Belonging Strategy](#).

7.2   This policy has been assessed to identify any potential for adverse or positive impact on specific groups of people protected by the Equality Act 2010 and does not discriminate either directly or indirectly. In applying this policy, we have considered eliminating unlawful discrimination, promoting equality of opportunity. Any issues highlighted in the assessment have been considered and incorporated into the policy and approved by the Lead Director and relevant committee.

8.   STATEMENT ON CONSULTATION

8.1.   This policy has been drafted in consultation with representatives from the NCG Quality and TLA Forum, High Needs / designated SENCo leads, Professional Services and NCG Executive.

8.2.   A summary of the consultation output and any subsequent amendments to the policy content was shared with the Policy Review Council as part of the policy approval process.

VERSION CONTROL				
Version No.	Documentation Section/Page No.	Description of Change and Rationale	Author/Reviewer	Date Revised
1	New policy	First publication at NCG level	Assistant Director of Quality TLA	May 2024