

**Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority**  
**2025 HKDSE**  
**Special Examination Arrangements for Candidates with Special Needs**

**Guidelines to Centre Supervisors for**  
**Candidates using Screen Reader in Examinations**

**Prior to the examination**

***Checking Computer Hardware and Screen Reader Software***

1. Ensure that preliminary checking and preparatory work have been properly performed (see the steps and details in **Annexes 1 and 2**) and system updates (if any) made before the examination.

***Important:***

***The preliminary checking should be conducted by early March in the examination year (around 1 month before the start of the written exam) to ensure that any maintenance work of computer hardware and screen reader software could be arranged, if necessary***

2. Download the sample files in .docx format under ‘Services to Special Needs Candidates’ from the HKEAA website ([http://www.hkeaa.edu.hk/tc/Candidates/special\\_needs\\_candidates/hkdse.html](http://www.hkeaa.edu.hk/tc/Candidates/special_needs_candidates/hkdse.html)) and save them on the desktop. Try out the functions of the screen reader software.

***Remarks: Requests for the provision of examination papers in .doc format will **NOT** be entertained. Schools and candidates are requested to make sure that the computer used for the examination can read the docx files.***

3. All the computer hardware and software should also be checked on the day before the examination (repeat **Steps 1 and 2**) to ensure that they are working properly (***Important: schools should prepare an external CD Drive to read the CD for Screen Reader if there is no CD Drive in the computer.***).

**On the day of the examination**

***Checking Computer Hardware and Screen Reader Software***

4. Check that all the necessary hardware and software comply with the examination requirements (repeat **Steps 1 and 2**) and they are working properly for the smooth conduct of the examination. Ensure that the Screen Reader software functions properly on MS Word with sound emitting via the earphones.
5. Check that the computer is not connected to any network and all the relevant templates and document files have been removed from the drives of the computer (except the sample files).
6. The CS/Invigilator should sign on the ‘Report on Checking Equipment and Facilities’ (**Annex 3**) to confirm their compliance with the checking procedures. A separate form should be completed for each subject and returned to the HKEAA at the end of each examination day (see **Step 15**).

### ***Receiving Examination Materials***

7. Receive the following items for individual candidates being approved to use Screen Reader for each paper concerned:
- (a) normal question paper;
  - (b) special question paper (if applicable) in a sealed envelope; and
  - (c) \*softcopy of the question paper in .docx format (Word 2010 file format).

***\* Starting from the 2025 HKDSE, a sealed envelope containing several Examination CDs storing the softcopy of the question paper in .docx format will be distributed to individual examination centres. The CS/invigilator should save the softcopy of the question paper in the computer of individual candidates. Please refer to para.9 for details. No extra reserve Examination CD will be provided.***

#### ***Note:***

***For individual candidates using screen reader who have also been granted other special question papers (e.g. braille question paper, exemptions from questions, abridgement of question paper and plain-text labels), a special question paper envelope containing a specialized examination CD and the reserve one will be provided.***

### **Admission of Candidates**

8. Follow the procedures in the CS Handbook (SEN centres) regarding:
- (a) admission of candidates;
  - (b) advising candidates to put away their personal belongings, switch off their mobile phones/electronic devices, etc.;
  - (c) unsealing the question paper packets and the envelope of the Examination CD containing the softcopy of the question paper;
  - (d) checking the number of pages/questions of the printed copy and softcopy of the question paper; and
  - (e) distributing the question papers.
9. Before announcing the start of the examination, the CS/invigilator should:
- (a) ask candidates to set the reading mode/functions of the Screen Reader according to their own preference with the use of the sample files (in .docx format);
  - (b) allow candidates to practise the operation of the Screen Reader for a short while (e.g. 10-15 minutes) before the examination starts;
  - (c) assist candidates in deleting the sample files and empty Recycle Bin after practice;
  - (d) around 15 minutes before the start of the examination, insert the Examination CD in the computer and open the MS Word file containing the question paper when the screen reader is ready (*Note: It is possible that a whole set of the question paper is divided into several files, each containing a certain part of the question paper*);
  - (e) save the question paper in the computer, and check and ensure that the file(s) is/are not corrupted and can be opened properly (***Note: candidates are not allowed to read the question paper with the screen reader at this juncture***);
  - (f) remind the candidates that **they are only allowed to use the screen reader software in the computer to read the question papers, and they MUST NOT open any other software or internet browser during the examination.** Any misuse of the allowable ancillary aids during the examination will risk a mark penalty; and
  - (g) contact the HKEAA (tel: 3628 8917) if there is any problem.

### **During the examination**

10. Candidates are NOT allowed to use the computer to type the answers or save any information/data from the file(s) of the Examination CD to the computer.
11. Candidates are expected to operate the software on their own during the examination. Candidates can turn off/on the Screen Reader to suit their own needs.
12. 15 minutes and 5 minutes before the end of the examination, the CS/Invigilator should gently remind the candidates about the examination time left with the Time Reminder Notices.
13. In the event of software problems/computer breakdown that necessitates the computer to be re-booted or replaced OR the software to be re-started, the CS/Invigilators should confirm whether the candidate will choose:
  - (a) to continue reading the printed copy of the question paper and answer with NO time compensation being given; **OR**
  - (b) to pause the examination during the re-start/re-boot period until the software/computer is available for use again, and continue the examination after the technical problem is fixed. If the problem still persists, the candidate should continue the examination and read the printed copy of the question paper. The CS/Invigilator should record the duration of pause(s). Before asking the candidate to resume working, the CS/Invigilator should adjust the examination finishing time based on the duration of pauses) and write down the actual examination finishing time on the candidate's examination timetable.

*Note: The CS should contact the HKEAA (Tel: 3628 8917) and the incident should be reported in Report Form SR4g.*

### **End of examination**

14. The CS/Invigilators should collect and seal the answer scripts following the procedures stated in the CS Handbook (SEN centres).
15. Return the following materials to the HKEAA after the end of each examination day:
  - (a) answer scripts and Annex 3 sealed in the **Answer Script Envelope**;
  - (b) any (printed) rough works in the **Rough-work Sheet Envelope**;
  - (c) all the CDs containing the softcopy of the question papers in the original **CD Envelope** (candidates are not allowed to take away any CDs);
  - (d) Special Report forms (if any) in the **Envelope for Special Reports & Related Scripts/Answer Sheets**; and
  - (e) Other examination materials as listed in the CS Handbook (SEN centres).

### **Other points to note**

16. The use of screen readers is NOT allowed in the following language papers or section of language papers in which comprehension skills are tested. These will be excluded from the Examination CD. Candidates should refer to the printed copy or braille version (if applicable) of the Question Papers for the content.

- Chinese Language Paper 1 (Reading)
  - English Language Paper 1 (Reading)
  - English Language Paper 3 (Listening and Integrated Skills) – Data File
17. Candidates are reminded that the Screen Reader software still has its constraints. Most mathematical formulae and numbers in papers such as Mathematics cannot be read. If certain Chinese characters and/or special symbols (such as ‘ $\alpha$ ’ and ‘ $\beta$ ’) cannot be displayed in the softcopy of the question paper or read out by the software, the CS/Invigilators should instruct the candidates concerned to refer to the printed copy or braille version (if applicable) of the question paper for information.
18. Under special circumstances, candidates with severe visual disabilities are allowed to read their own scripts typed by the word processor with the braille display function of the Screen Reader.
19. If a candidate with specific learning disability is also allowed to use the speech-to-text (STT) software in the examination, only standard extra time allowance (ETA) of 25% will be given. NO additional ETA will be provided for using both speech-to-text software and screen reader. The candidate may read the question paper and ‘read back’ his/her answers with the text-to-speech function of the MacBook Air. He/she may operate both software on the same computer with sufficient training/practice given by the school but he/she is strongly advised to use separate computers in order to lower the chance of technical problem or human error. For details about the use of STT software, please refer to **SEN-OP04 ‘Guidelines to Centre Supervisors for Candidates using Speech-to-text Software in the Examinations’**.
20. Enquiry: SEN hotline (tel: 3628 8917)

## Annex 1

### Recommended Computer Facilities and Configuration for using Screen Reader Software

#### 1. Hardware

- CPU: 1Ghz or higher
- RAM: 1GB RAM or higher
- Free Disk Space: 16GB or higher
- CD Drive
- Sound Card
- Keyboard & Mouse
- Earphones

#### 2. Software

- Windows 7 or higher
- Microsoft Word 2010 (or above) for viewing the softcopies of the question papers
- Acrobat Reader XI or above
- HKEAA pre-approved Screen Reader software [i.e. Windows Light/Windows Light (Read Assist), Text-to-speech function in Penpower Chinese Writing Pad, NVDA, text-to-speech function in MacBook Air (or MacBook Pro) and 'Speak' command in MS Word 2010 (or above)]

#### 3. Configuration

Computer used for examination should be

- disconnected from any network and connections, including wired/wireless connection (e.g. un-plug and remove the network cable attached to the computer; stop/disable the Network Adapter(s) from Control Panel);
- disabled for Spell Check, Dictionary, Translation and Auto-correct functions;
- cleared from unnecessary document files and templates (i.e. search and delete all .doc, .docx and .dot files except 'Normal.dot' and empty the Recycle Bin);
- set with 'Always ON' under Windows Power Options and screen saver inactivated; and.
- refer to the Hong Kong Supplementary Character Set (HKSCS) documents ([https://www.ogcio.gov.hk/en/our\\_work/business/tech\\_promotion/ccli/download\\_area/](https://www.ogcio.gov.hk/en/our_work/business/tech_promotion/ccli/download_area/)) if necessary. Note that Microsoft Windows Vista or later versions are already bundled with HKSCS.

#### 4. Special Notes

- Download the sample document in .docx format (Word 2010 file format) from the HKEAA webpage and save them on the desktop.  
([http://www.hkeaa.edu.hk/tc/Candidates/special\\_needs\\_candidates/hkdse.html](http://www.hkeaa.edu.hk/tc/Candidates/special_needs_candidates/hkdse.html))
- Open the sample document in .docx format with MS Word.
- Ensure the Screen Reader software functions properly with sound emitting via the earphones.
- If any Chinese characters cannot be read out by the Screen Reader software, candidates should refer to the printed copy of the question paper for information.
- Spare computer (with the same configuration) and earphones should be set up for contingency arrangement.
- To avoid possible collusion among candidates, computers should be placed in such a way that the screen of each candidate cannot be seen by other candidates.
- A minimum of 2 feet distance between candidates' seats is required.

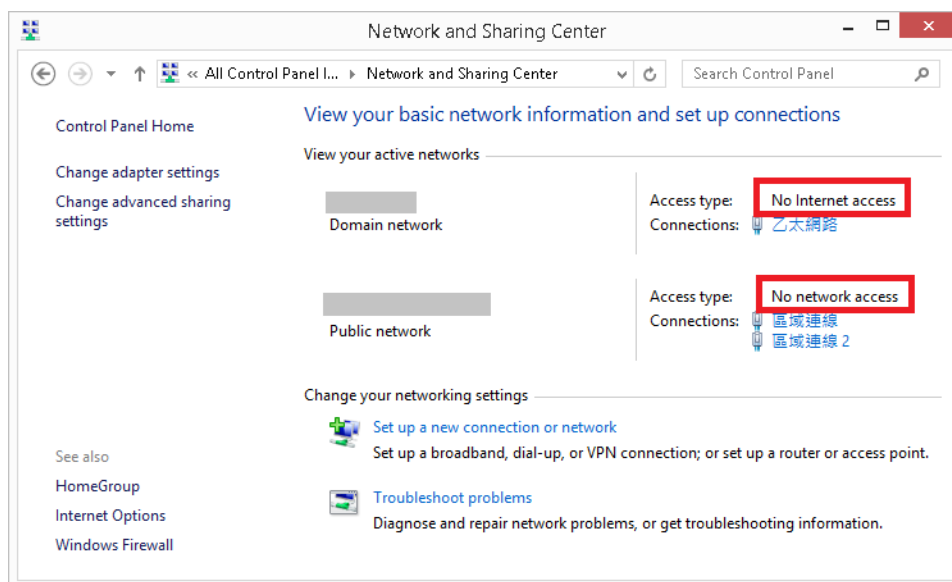
## Annex 2

### Suggested Steps for Checking Equipment and Facilities

1. For each computer checked, fill in the details required on the 'Report on Checking Equipment and Facilities'.
2. Open the sample document and switch on the Screen Reader, highlight the words in the document and listen to the sound emitted via the earphones. Repeatedly highlight different words to make sure both the Screen Reader and the earphones function properly.
3. Check the networks to ensure that candidates are unable to communicate with each other using the computers (with or without internet connection).

*Suggested steps for checking:*

- ✧ Open 'Network and Sharing Center' in 'Control Panel', and make sure 'No internet access' and 'No network access' are shown under the section 'View your active networks'

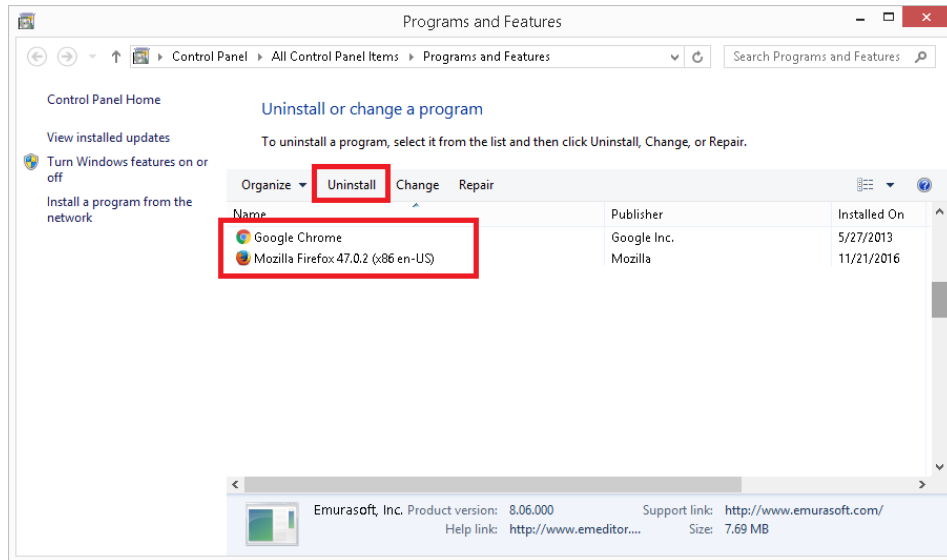


- ✧ Share a file at the teacher's computer and record the path  
(e.g. Network Neighbourhood → CS1-11a → Desktop → test → test.doc)
- ✧ In the word processing application of the candidate's computer
  - Click File → Open → type the path of the shared file
  - A failure message should appear

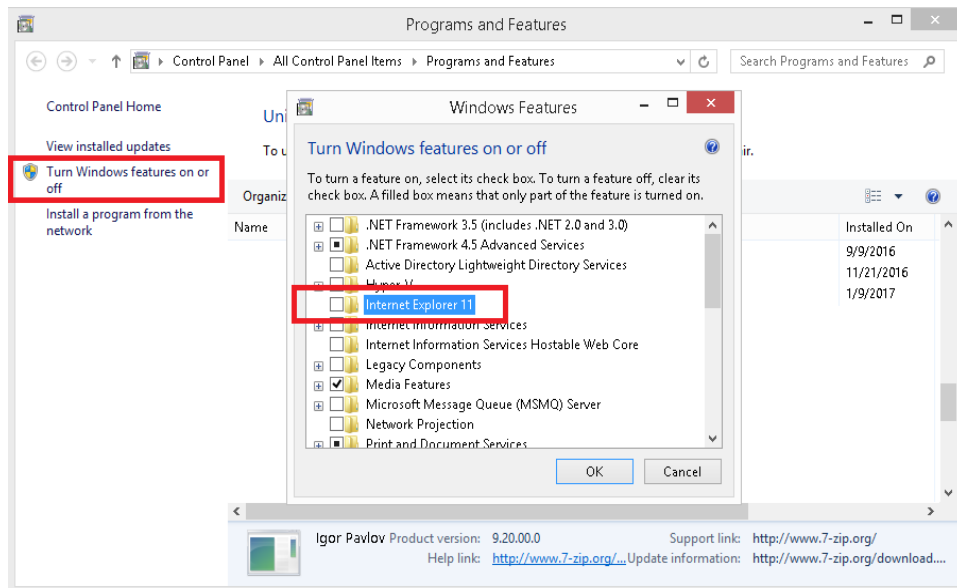
4. Uninstall/Disable internet browser(s) and undesirable software in the computer.

*Suggested steps for compliance:*

- ✧ Open 'Programs and Features' window in 'Control Panel', select installed browsers such as Chrome or Firefox, and click 'Uninstall'



- ✧ Click 'Turn Windows features on or off', then un-check 'Internet Explorer' box in 'Windows Features' dialog. Click 'OK' to restart your PC

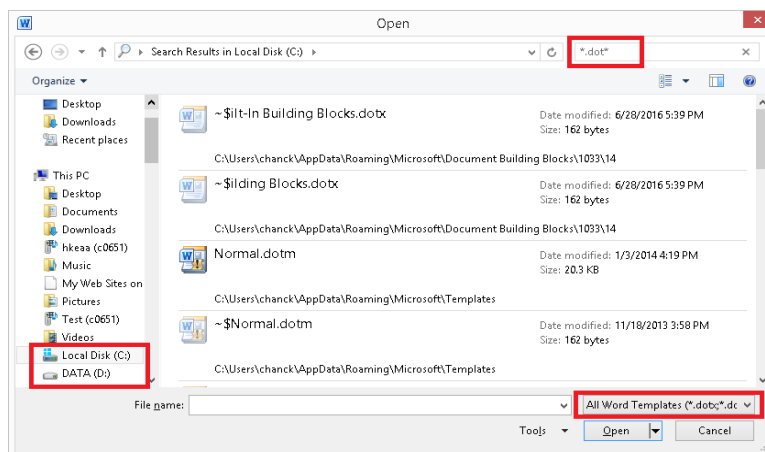


5. Check that no templates except the normal/blank one exist in any disk drives accessible by the candidates.

*Suggested steps for checking:*

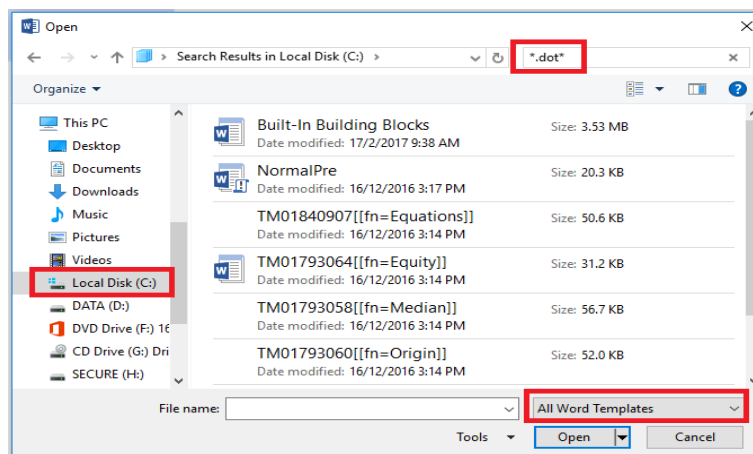
MS Word 2013

- ✧ Click File → Open → click **All Word Templates** for Files of type: option box
- ✧ Select any disk drive (e.g. C: or D:) accessible by candidate → type the **\*.dot\*** at the search box (top right hand corner) → check any files with extension **\*.dot\*** are displayed



MS Word: 2016, 2019, 2021

- ✧ Click File → Open → Browse → click **All Word Templates** for Files of type: option box
- ✧ Select any disk drive (e.g. C: or D:) accessible by candidate → type the **\*.dot\*** at the search box (top right hand corner) → check any files with extension **\*.dot\*** are displayed



*Suggested steps for compliance:*

- ✧ Locate the folder of word processing applications' templates
  - Open the File explorer → select the disk drive → type **\*.dot\*** at the search box → Press 'Enter' to search the files
  - The folder is usually located at c:\Program Files\Microsoft Office\Templates or c:\Program Files\Microsoft Office\root\Templates
- ✧ Delete All **\*.dot\*** files except **normal.dot / normal.dotm / normal.dotx**
- ✧ Empty Recycle Bin



6. Check that no document files exist in any disk drives accessible by the candidates.

*Suggested steps for checking:*

- ✧ Same as the steps in (5) above except that **Word Documents** should be chosen for file type
- ✧ No document file should be listed

*Suggested steps for compliance:*

- ✧ Click Start → Find → File or Folder → type '\*.doc'/\*.docx'
- ✧ Delete all '\*.doc'/\*.docx' files found
- ✧ Empty Recycle Bin

7. Check that no mistyped or misspelled text is put in the Autocorrect list.

*Suggested steps for checking:*

- ✧ Click the File menu → Options
- ✧ In the Word Options dialog box, click Proofing, and then click AutoCorrect Option
- ✧ Scroll up and down to locate mistyped or misspelled autotext
- ✧ No texts such as 'usually' should appear on the list

*Suggested steps for compliance:*

- ✧ Click the File menu → Options
- ✧ In the Word Options dialog box, click Proofing, and then click AutoCorrect Option
- ✧ Scroll up and down to locate mistyped or misspelled autotext (for example, look for mistyped or misspelled autotext like 'usualyl' which will be corrected automatically to 'usually')
- ✧ Delete all mistyped or misspelled autotext from the list

8. Check that no English-Chinese and/or Chinese-English dictionary/translation is installed.

*Suggested steps for checking:*

- ✧ Click the File menu → Options
- ✧ In the Word Options dialog box, click Proofing, and then click Custom Dictionaries Option
- ✧ Select the unnecessary dictionary and click 'Remove' button

*Suggested steps for compliance:*

- ✧ Click Start → Settings → Control Panel → Add/Remove Programs
- ✧ Look for any program on English-Chinese or Chinese-English dictionary/translation
- ✧ Click the 'Remove' button if any is found

9. Check that no proof-reading / spell check / grammar check / thesaurus function is available.

*Suggested steps for compliance:*

- ✧ Change or re-install the Microsoft Office to disable the proof-reading function

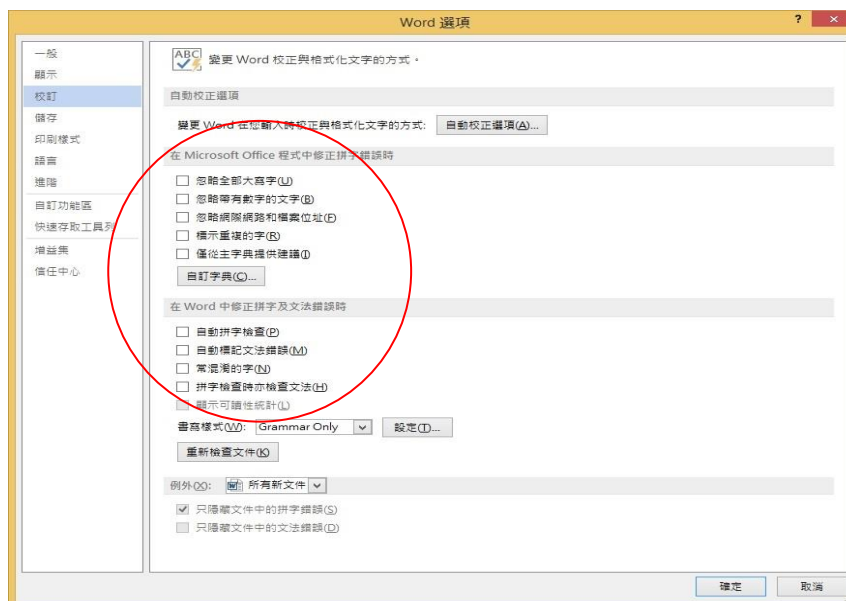
#### Microsoft Office: 2010, 2013, 2016



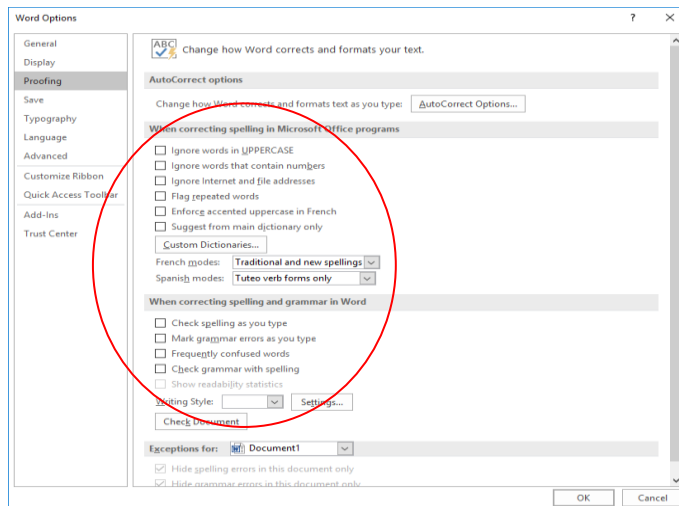
(Note: the change (自訂) function is not available for Microsoft Office 2019. Please uncheck all boxes to turn off the proof-reading function as illustrated on page 11.)

- ✧ Uncheck all boxes as shown to turn off spell checking and dictionary functions within Microsoft Word

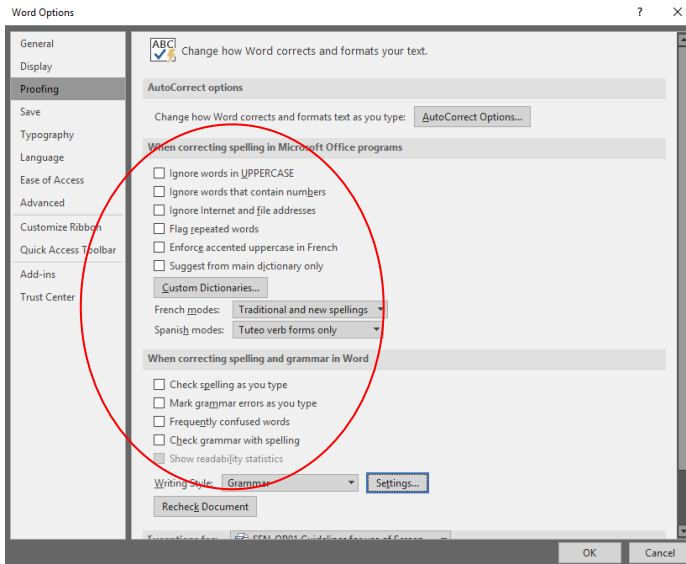
#### MS Word 2013



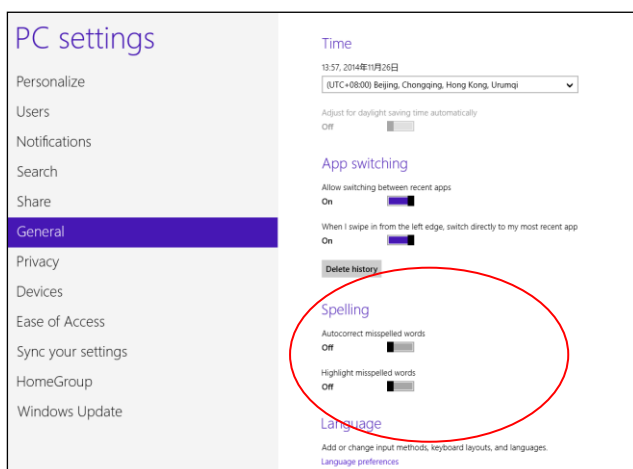
## MS Word 2016



## MS Word 2019 & 2021



## Windows 8 or above



**Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority**  
**2025 HKDSE**  
**Special Examination Arrangements for Candidates with Special Needs**

**Report on Checking of Equipment and Facilities**  
**(for candidates using Screen Reader in the examination)**

**(Please complete and return it to the HKEAA in the Answer Script Envelope at the end of each examination day.)**

Centre Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Centre: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Subject/Paper: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Exam Session: \_\_\_\_\_

**To be completed by Centre Supervisor and invigilator(s) (if any):**

I certify that

- (i) the functions of the Screen Reader and the earphones on reading an MS Word document (.docx. file) have been tested and they function properly;
- (ii) all networks have been checked to ensure that candidates are unable to communicate with one another using computers;
- (iii) all computers have been re-installed with the original, unamended version of the word processing applications;
- (iv) all templates (except the normal/blank one) and all the document files have been removed from disk drives accessible by the candidates; and
- (v) no English-Chinese, Chinese-English dictionary/translation and spell check/grammar check/thesaurus application have been installed.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Centre Supervisor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Invigilator

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature