



Exam Contingency Plan Policy

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Reviewed by	Academic Standards, SEN and Educational Trips Committee

Signed:.....

Dated: 5/10/2023

Chair of Governors

Signed:.....

Dated: 5/10/2023

Principal

Contents

Key staff involved in the plan	3
Purpose of the plan	3
Escalation Process	4
Possible causes of disruption to the exam process.....	6
Exam officer extended absence at key points in the exam process (cycle)	6
SEnCo extended absence at key points in the exam cycle	7
Quality Nominee (QN) extended absence at key points in the exam cycle	8
Teaching staff extended absence at key points in the exam cycle	8
Invigilators - lack of appropriately trained invigilators or invigilator absence.....	9
Exam rooms - lack of appropriate rooms or main venues unavailable at short notice	9
Cyber-attack.....	10
Failure of IT systems	10
Emergency evacuation of the exam room (or centre lock down).....	10
Disruption of teaching time – centre closed for an extended period	11
Candidates unable to take examinations because of a crisis – centre remains open	11
Centre unable to open as normal during the exams period (including in the event of the centre being unavailable for examinations owing to an unforeseen emergency)	12
Disruption in the distribution of examination papers.....	12
Disruption to the transportation of completed examination scripts	13
Assessment evidence is not available to be marked.....	13
Centre unable to distribute results as normal or facilitate post results services (including in the event of the centre being unavailable on results day owing to an unforeseen emergency).....	14
Further guidance to inform procedures and implement contingency planning.....	14
Ofqual.....	14
JCQ	16
GOV.UK	18
Protect UK.....	18
National Cyber Security Centre	18

Key staff involved in the plan

Role	Name(s)
Head of centre	Francis Galbraith
Exams officer line manager (Senior Leader)	Sarah Thomas
Exams officer	Jodi Henderson
SENCo	Sailesh Roopnarain
SLT member(s)	Will Atkinson
	Leanne Chapman
	Martyn Latchman
	Vicky Andrews
	Mike Birchall

Purpose of the plan

This plan examines potential risks and issues that could cause disruption to the exams process at Goldington Academy. By outlining actions/procedures to be invoked in case of disruption it is intended to mitigate the impact these disruptions have on our exam process.

Alongside internal processes, this plan is informed by the Ofqual (and Northern Ireland Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment) **Exam system contingency plan: England, Wales and Northern Ireland** which provides guidance in the publication *What schools and colleges and other centres should do if exams or other assessments are seriously disrupted* and the **JCQ Joint Contingency Plan** for the Examination System in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and the JCQ document **Preparing for disruption to examinations** (Effective from 1 September 2023).

This plan also confirms Goldington Academy's compliance with JCQ's **General Regulations for Approved Centres** (section 5.3) that the centre has in place:

- a written examination contingency plan which covers all aspects of examination administration. This will allow members of the senior leadership team to act immediately in the event of an emergency or where the head of centre, examinations officer or SENCo is absent at a critical stage of the examination cycle. The examination contingency plan should reinforce procedures in the event of the centre being unavailable for examinations, or on results day, owing to an unforeseen emergency. The potential impact of a cyber-attack should also be considered.

National Centre Number Register and other information requirements

The head of centre will also ensure that Goldington Academy has a contingency to enable the prompt handling of urgent issues only and responds to the awarding bodies' request for information regarding the contact details of a senior member of staff (which might include a personal mobile number and/or email address). This will ensure that any urgent matters which

might adversely affect candidates which arise outside of term time, and which potentially put qualification awards at risk, can be addressed by awarding bodies with the support of that member of staff. Heads of centre should ensure that this member of staff has the necessary authority to mobilise resources to provide this support, which might include resolving issues within the centre itself.

Escalation Process

To confirm the main duties and responsibilities to be escalated should the head of centre, or a member of the senior leadership team with oversight of examination administration, be absent.

Planning

In the event of the absence of the head of centre, responsibility for implementing JCQ regulations and requirements relating to activity prior to examinations will be escalated to Sarah Thomas, Assistant Headteacher (Exams Officer line manager).

In the event of the absence of the member of senior leadership with oversight of examination administration, responsibility for implementing JCQ regulations and requirements relating to activity prior to examinations will be escalated to Leanne Chapman, Vice Principal.

To support understanding of the regulations and requirements, the following JCQ publications will be referenced:

- General Regulations for Approved Centres
- Instructions for conducting examinations
- Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments
- Instructions for conducting coursework
- Instructions for conducting non-examination assessments
- Suspected Malpractice – Policies and Procedures
- A guide to the special consideration process

Main duties and responsibilities relate to:

- Third party arrangements
- Centre status
- Confidentiality
- Communication
- Recruitment, selection and training of staff
- Internal governance arrangements
- Delivery of qualifications
- Public liability
- Conflicts of interest
- Controlled assessments, coursework and non-examination assessments
- Security of assessment materials
- National Centre Number Register
- Centre inspections

Additional JCQ publication for reference:

- JCQ Centre Inspection Service Changes
- Policies available for inspection

Specific JCQ publications for reference:

- General Regulations for Approved Centres (section 5)
- Instructions for conducting examinations (section 25)
- Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments (section 5)
- Personal data, freedom of information and copyright

Additional JCQ publication for reference:

- Information for candidates – Privacy Notice

Centre-specific information for reference

- Refer to the Goldington Academy Exam Policy

Entries and Pre-exams

In the event of the absence of the head of centre, responsibility for implementing JCQ regulations and requirements relating to activity prior to examinations will be escalated to Sarah Thomas, Assistant Headteacher (Exams Officer line manager).

In the event of the absence of the member of senior leadership with oversight of examination administration, responsibility for implementing JCQ regulations and requirements relating to activity prior to examinations will be escalated to Leanne Chapman, Vice Principal.

To support understanding of the regulations and requirements, sections of relevant JCQ publications will be specifically referenced including:

- General Regulations for Approved Centres (section 5)
- Instructions for conducting examinations (sections 1-15)
- Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments (sections 6-8)
- Main duties and responsibilities relate to:
 - Access arrangements and reasonable adjustments
 - Entries
- Additional JCQ publications for reference:
 - Key dates
 - Guidance Notes for Transferred Candidates
 - Alternative Site guidance notes
 - Guidance notes for overnight supervision of candidates with a timetable variation
- Centre assessed work
- Additional JCQ publication for reference:
 - Guidance Notes – Centre Consortium Arrangements
- Candidate information
- Additional JCQ publications for reference:
 - Information for candidates' documents
 - Exam Room Posters

Exam Time

In the event of the absence of the head of centre, responsibility for implementing JCQ regulations and requirements relating to activity prior to examinations will be escalated to Sarah Thomas, Assistant Headteacher (Exams Officer line manager).

In the event of the absence of the member of senior leadership with oversight of examination administration, responsibility for implementing JCQ regulations and requirements relating to activity prior to examinations will be escalated to Leanne Chapman, Vice Principal

To support understanding of the regulations and requirements, sections of relevant JCQ publications will be specifically referenced including:

- General Regulations for Approved Centres (sections 3, 5)
- Instructions for conducting examinations (sections 16-31)
- Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments (section 8)
- A guide to the special consideration process (sections 2-7)
- Main duties and responsibilities relate to:
 - Conducting examinations and assessments
- Additional JCQ publication for reference:

- Guidance Notes – Very Late Arrival
- Malpractice
- Retention of candidates' work

Results and Post-Results

In the event of the absence of the head of centre, responsibility for implementing JCQ regulations and requirements relating to activity prior to examinations will be escalated to Sarah Thomas, Assistant Headteacher (Exams Officer line manager).

In the event of the absence of the member of senior leadership with oversight of examination administration, responsibility for implementing JCQ regulations and requirements relating to activity prior to examinations will be escalated to Leanne Chapman, Vice Principal.

To support understanding of the regulations and requirements, sections of relevant JCQ publications will be specifically referenced including:

- General Regulations for Approved Centres (section 5)

Main duties and responsibilities relate to:

- Results
- Additional JCQ publication for reference:
 - Release of Results notice
- Post-results services and appeals
- Additional JCQ publications for reference:
 - Post-Results Services (Information and guidance to centres)
 - JCQ Appeals Booklet (A guide to the awarding bodies' appeals processes)
- Certificates

Possible causes of disruption to the exam process

Exam officer extended absence at a critical stage of the exam cycle

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Key tasks required in the management and administration of the exam cycle not undertaken including:

Planning

- annual data collection exercise not undertaken to collate information on qualifications and awarding body specifications being delivered
- annual exams plan not produced identifying essential key tasks, key dates and deadlines
- sufficient invigilators not recruited

Entries

- awarding bodies not being informed of early/estimated entries which prompts release of early information required by teaching staff
- candidates not being entered with awarding bodies for external exams/assessment
- awarding body entry deadlines missed or late or other penalty fees being incurred

Pre-exams

- invigilators not trained or updated on changes to instructions for conducting exams
- exam timetabling, rooming allocation; and invigilation schedules not prepared
- candidates not briefed on exam timetables and awarding body information for candidates
- confidential exam/assessment materials and candidates' work not stored under required secure conditions

- internal assessment marks and samples of candidates' work not submitted to awarding bodies/external moderators

Exam time

- exams/assessments not taken under the conditions prescribed by awarding bodies
- required reports/requests not submitted to awarding bodies during exam/assessment periods, for example very late arrival, suspected malpractice, special consideration
- candidates' scripts not dispatched as required for marking to awarding bodies

Results and post-results

- access to examination results affecting the distribution of results to candidates
- the facilitation of the post-results services

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- Making reference to roles, responsibilities and processes in the centre's Exams policy where the exams officer role may need to be covered by another person
 - Production of an exams officer handbook, exams calendar, annual exams plan, step by step exam guide, exam day checklist, exam room checklist etc.
- SLT to nominate a 'deputy' to cover a role/task
- Work shadowing; job rotation; staff development sessions; briefing sessions
- Buddying up; networking with staff from a local centre; sharing expertise with a local centre
- Refer to www.theexamsoffice.org for detailed instructions on all exam procedures.
- Always report long term absence to the Exam Boards

SENCo extended absence at a critical stage of the exam cycle

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Key tasks required in the management and administration of the access arrangements process within the exam cycle not undertaken including:

Planning

- candidates not tested/assessed to identify potential access arrangement requirements
- centre fails to recognise its duties towards disabled candidates as defined under the terms of the Equality Act 2010
- evidence of need and evidence to support normal way of working not collated

Pre-exams

- approval for access arrangements not applied for to the awarding body
- centre-delegated arrangements not put in place
- modified paper requirements not identified in a timely manner to enable ordering to meet external deadline
- staff (facilitators) providing support to access arrangement candidates not allocated and trained

Exam time

- access arrangement candidate support not arranged for exam rooms

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- Seeking/following awarding body guidance/instructions
- SLT to nominate a 'deputy' to cover a role/task

- Work shadowing; job rotation; staff development sessions; briefing sessions
- Buddying up; networking with staff from a local centre; sharing expertise with a local centre

Quality Nominee (QN) extended absence at key points in the exam cycle

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Key tasks required in the management and administration of the BTEC quality assurance process within the exam cycle not undertaken including:

Planning

- Programme teams not monitored or supported
- No point of contact for the Centre Quality Reviewer or Standards Verifier
- Effective management of BTEC programmes and good practice within the centre

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- Seeking/following awarding body guidance/instructions
- SLT to nominate a 'deputy' to cover a role/task
- Work shadowing; job rotation; staff development sessions; briefing sessions
- Buddying up; networking with staff from a local centre; sharing expertise with a local centre

Teaching staff extended absence at a critical stage of the exam cycle

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Key tasks not undertaken including:

Early/estimated entry information not provided to the exams officer on time; resulting in pre-release information not being received

Final entry information not provided to the exams officer on time; resulting in candidates not being entered for exams/assessments or being entered late/late or other penalty fees being charged by awarding bodies

Non-examination assessment tasks not set/issued/taken by candidates as scheduled

Candidates not being informed of centre assessed marks before marks are submitted to the awarding body and therefore not being able to consider appealing internal assessment decisions and requesting a review of the centre's marking

Internal assessment marks and candidates' work not provided to meet awarding body submission deadlines

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- Seeking/following awarding body guidance/instructions
- Communicating with parents/carers and students and keeping them informed regarding solutions to the disruption
- Buddying up; networking with staff from a local centre; sharing expertise with a local centre
- Curriculum leaders should take responsibility for any missing entries, coursework marks and any assessment marks in the absence of a member of teaching staff.
- Entries must be made on time to meet deadlines and avoid late fees. Amendments can always be made at a later date to confirm final entries.

Invigilators - lack of appropriately trained invigilators or invigilator absence

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Failure to recruit and train sufficient invigilators to conduct exams

Invigilator shortage on peak exam days

Invigilator absence on the day of an exam

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- Invigilation is planned well in advance and always with reserve staff allocated
- Seeking/following awarding body guidance/instructions
- Plans and procedures are in place to recruit appropriately and to deliver formal initial training sessions as well as 2 'update' sessions for existing invigilators and TAs cover the above scenario.
- Furthermore, contingency arrangements to call in invigilators on stand-by and /or to use trained admin staff are also in place. If all fails we will rely on teachers from another subject from the one being examined to fill in any major shortage of invigilators
- Prioritising candidates whose progression will be severely delayed if they do not take their exams when planned
- Entering candidates for the next available exam series (where available)
- Buddying up; networking with staff from a local centre; sharing expertise with a local centre

Exam rooms - lack of appropriate rooms or main venues unavailable at short notice

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Exams officer unable to identify sufficient/appropriate rooms during exams timetable planning

Insufficient rooms available on peak exam days

Main exam venues unavailable due to an unexpected incident at exam time

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- The majority of exams are accommodated in the Sports Barn and standard size classrooms/ICT suites and the exam team works closely in order to utilise rooms effectively.
- Regardless of the situation the running of exams in the right conditions will always prevail over other existing rooming arrangements
- Senior Invigilators will assist the Exams Officer in maintaining the security of exam papers should a venue be changed a very short notice.
- Exams Officer to ensure that any late-notice rooms comply with regulations as set out in the JCQ ICE book.
- Sourcing alternative venues/facilities - Alternative venue/facilities are available at Castle Newnham School (reciprocal arrangement organised by HOC). Castle Newnham - 01234 303403
- In the event of using Castle Newnham School, Goldington Academy will provide the exam equipment and invigilators. If there is insufficient space to accommodate our cohort for the timetabled examination, the Exams Officer will apply for a variation in timetable with the examining board. Candidates will be supervised from the time the examination was due to begin.
- Applying for special consideration for candidates

- Applying for alternative site arrangements

Cyber-attack

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Where a cyber-attack may compromise any aspect of delivery

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- Refer to the IT Services Network – Security Policy (2022) for the Cyber Response Plan
- All staff to complete the NCSC ‘Cyber-Security training for school staff’ module annually
- Seeking/following awarding body guidance/instructions
- Taking advice/instructions from relevant local or national agencies
- Promptly report any incidents to the relevant awarding body / bodies which compromise any aspect of assessment delivery
- Applying for special consideration in the event of lost NEA work

Failure of IT systems

Criteria for implementation of the plan

MIS system failure at final entry deadline

Power outage immediately prior to or during an on-screen test

MIS system failure during exams preparation

MIS system failure at results release time

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- Seeking/following awarding body guidance/instructions
- Taking advice/instructions from relevant local or national agencies
- All Exam entries should be made well in advance of the deadline to avoid any issues.
- Access SIMS through another computer i.e. from home, or another SIMS user – local School.
- Ensure that the IT department are aware of the exam results days to ensure smooth running of downloads.

Emergency evacuation of the exam room (or centre lockdown)

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Whole centre evacuation (or lockdown) during exam time due to serious incident resulting in exam candidates being unable to start, proceed with or complete their exams

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- Vice Principal, SLT, Exams Officer and Invigilators, to ensure emergency evacuation plan is followed, maintaining the integrity of the exam
- Candidates to be held separately, avoiding contact with other pupils, and ensuring that candidates do not talk to one another until they have been relocated to another venue wherever possible
- Seeking/following awarding body guidance/instructions
- Applying for special consideration for candidates
- Keeping question papers and exam materials secure

- Keeping scripts secure

Disruption of teaching time – centre closed for an extended period

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Centre closed or candidates are unable to attend for an extended period during normal teaching or study supported time, interrupting the provision of normal teaching and learning

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- Invoking actions as detailed in DfE statutory guidance
- Taking advice/instructions from relevant local or national agencies
- Communicating with parents/carers and students and keeping them informed regarding solutions to the disruption
- Posting information on the centre's website; updates on local radio etc.
- Sourcing alternative venues/facilities - Alternative venue/facilities are available at Castle Newnham School (reciprocal arrangement organised by HOC). Castle Newnham - 01234 303403
- In the event of using Castle Newnham School, Goldington Academy will provide the exam equipment and invigilators. If there is insufficient space to accommodate our cohort for the timetabled examination, the Exams Officer will apply for a variation in timetable with the examining board. Candidates will be supervised from the time the examination was due to begin.
- Applying for special consideration for candidates
- Applying for alternative site arrangements
- Prioritising candidates whose progression will be severely delayed if they do not take their exams when planned
- Entering candidates for the next available exam series (where available)
- Keeping question papers and exam materials secure
- Keeping scripts secure
- Where there is disruption to teaching time and students miss teaching and learning, it remains the responsibility of centres to prepare students, as usual, for examinations - in the case of modular courses, centres may advise candidates to sit examinations in an alternative series (centres should have plans in place to facilitate alternative methods of learning.)

Candidates may not be able to take examinations because of a crisis – centre remains open

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Candidates may not be able to attend the examination centre to take examinations as normal

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- Prioritise the use of the Sports Barn and other large rooms for exam use over timetabled classes
- Seeking/following awarding body guidance/instructions
- Invoking actions as detailed in DfE statutory guidance
- Taking advice/instructions from relevant local or national agencies
- Communicating with parents/carers and students and keeping them informed regarding solutions to the disruption

- Posting information on the centre's website; updates on local radio etc.
- Sourcing alternative venues/facilities - Alternative venue/facilities are available at Castle Newnham School (reciprocal arrangement organised by HOC). Castle Newnham - 01234 303403
- Applying for special consideration for candidates
- Applying for alternative site arrangements
- Prioritising candidates whose progression will be severely delayed if they do not take their exams when planned
- Entering candidates for the next available exam series (where available)
- Keeping question papers and exam materials secure
- Keeping scripts secure

Centre may not be able to open as normal during the examination period (including in the event of the centre being unavailable for examinations owing to an unforeseen emergency)

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Centre may not be able to open as normal for scheduled examinations

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- Seeking/following awarding body guidance/instructions
- Invoking actions as detailed in DfE statutory guidance
- Taking advice/instructions from relevant local or national agencies
- Communicating with parents/carers and students and keeping them informed regarding solutions to the disruption
- Posting information on the centre's website; updates on local radio etc.
- Sourcing alternative venues/facilities - Alternative venue/facilities are available at Castle Newnham School (reciprocal arrangement organised by HOC). Castle Newnham - 01234 303403
- Applying for special consideration for candidates
- Implementing alternative arrangements for the conducting of examinations and notifying the JCQ Centre Inspection Service of an alternative site arrangement by submitting the JCQ Alternative Site form online, using the Centre Admin Portal (CAP).
- Applying for transferred candidate arrangements
- Prioritising candidates whose progression will be severely delayed if they do not take their exams when planned
- Entering candidates for the next available exam series (where available)
- Keeping question papers and exam materials secure
- Keeping scripts secure

Disruption in the distribution of examination papers

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Disruption to the distribution of examination papers to the centre in advance of examinations

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- Seeking/following awarding body guidance/instructions

- Communicating with parents/carers and students and keeping them informed regarding solutions to the disruption
- Posting information on the centre's website; updates on local radio etc.
- Applying for special consideration for candidates
- Entering candidates for the next available exam series (where available)
- Awarding organisations to provide centres with electronic access to examination papers via a secure external network. The centre would need to ensure that regulations regarding printing question papers are adhered to
- Consider applying for a timetable variation if question papers require printing in the centre, particularly where the whole cohort are entered for the examination
- As a last resort, and in close collaboration with centres and regulators, awarding organisations to consider scheduling of the examination on an alternative date

Disruption to the transportation of completed examination scripts

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Delay in normal collection arrangements for completed examination scripts

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- Ensure scripts are stored securely until collection
- Where examinations are part of the national 'yellow label' service or where awarding organisations arrange collections, centres should seek advice from awarding organisations and should not make their own arrangements for transportation unless told to do so by the awarding body
- For any examinations where centres make their own arrangements for transportation, centres should investigate alternative dispatch options that comply with the requirements detailed in the JCQ *Instructions for conducting examinations*

Assessment evidence is not available to be marked

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Large scale damage to or destruction of completed examination scripts/assessment evidence before it can be marked or completed examination scripts/assessment evidence does not reach awarding organisations

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- Seeking/following awarding body guidance/instructions
- Awarding bodies to generate candidate marks for affected assessments based on other appropriate evidence of candidate achievement as defined by the awarding organisations. Where marks cannot be generated by awarding organisations candidates may need to retake affected assessment in a subsequent assessment series
- Candidates to retake affected assessment at subsequent assessment window if possible
- Applying for special consideration for candidates
- Keeping question papers and exam materials secure
- Keeping scripts secure

Centre unable to distribute results as normal or facilitate post results services (including in the event of the centre being unavailable on results day owing to an unforeseen emergency)

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Centre is unable to access or manage the distribution of results to candidates, or to facilitate post-results services

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- Seeking/following awarding body guidance/instructions
- Communicating with parents/carers and students and keeping them informed regarding solutions to the disruption
- Arrange to access results at an alternative site, in agreement with the relevant awarding organisation
- Arrange to email results out to students
- Posting information on the centre's website; updates on local radio etc.
- Make arrangements to coordinate access to post result services from an alternative site - alternative venue/facilities are available at Castle Newnham School (reciprocal arrangement organised by HOC). Castle Newnham - 01234 303403

Further guidance to inform procedures and implement contingency planning

Ofqual

What schools and colleges and other centres should do if exams or other assessments are seriously disrupted

You should prepare for possible disruption to exams and other assessments and make sure staff are aware of these plans.

General contingency guidance

- [Emergency planning and response](#) from the Department for Education in England
- [Opening and closing local-authority-maintained schools](#) from the Department for Education in England
- [Procedures for handling bomb threats](#) from Protect UK
- [police guidance](#) from National Counter Terrorism Security Office and partners on preparing for threats

Disruption to assessments or exams

In the absence of any instruction from the relevant awarding organisation, you should make sure that any exam or timetabled assessment takes place if it is possible to hold it. This may mean relocating to alternative premises.

You should discuss alternative arrangements with your awarding organisation if:

- the exam or assessment cannot take place
- a student misses an exam or loses their assessment due to an emergency, or other event, outside of the student's control

See also:

- [JCQ's notice to centres on exam contingency plans](#)
- [JCQ's notice on preparing for disruption to examinations](#)

Steps you should take

Exam planning

Review contingency plans well in advance of each exam or assessment series. Consider how, if the contingency plan is invoked, you will comply with the awarding organisation's requirements.

In the event of disruption

- Contact the relevant awarding organisation and follow its instructions.
- Take advice, or follow instructions, from relevant local or national agencies in deciding whether your centre is able to open.
- Identify whether the exam or timetabled assessment can be sat at an alternative venue, in agreement with the relevant awarding organisation, ensuring the secure transportation of questions papers or assessment materials to the alternative venue.
- Where accommodation is limited, prioritise students whose progression will be severely delayed if they do not take their exam or timetabled assessment when planned.
- In the event of an evacuation during an examination please refer to JCQ's [Centre emergency evacuation procedure](#).
- Communicate with parents, carers and students any changes to the exam or assessment timetable or to the venue.
- Communicate with any external assessors or relevant third parties regarding any changes to the exam or assessment timetable.

After the exam

- Consider whether any students' ability to take the assessment or demonstrate their level of attainment has been materially affected and, if so, apply for special consideration.
- Advise students, where appropriate, of the opportunities to take their exam or assessment at a later date.
- Ensure that scripts are stored under secure conditions.
- Return scripts to awarding organisations in line with their instructions. Never make alternative arrangements for the transportation of completed exam scripts, unless told to do so by the awarding organisation.

Steps the awarding organisation should take

Exam planning

- Establish and maintain, and at all times comply with, an up-to-date, written contingency plan.
- Ensure that the arrangements in place with centres and other third parties enable them to deliver and award qualifications in accordance with their conditions of recognition.

In the event of disruption

- Take all reasonable steps to mitigate any adverse effect, in relation to their qualifications, arising from any disruption.
- Provide effective guidance to any of their centres delivering qualifications.
- Ensure that where an assessment must be completed under specified conditions, students complete the assessment under those conditions (other than where any reasonable adjustments or special considerations require alternative conditions).
- Promptly notify the relevant regulators about any event which could have an adverse effect on students, standards or public confidence.
- Coordinate its communications with the relevant regulators where the disruption has an impact on multiple centres or a wide range of learners.

After the exam

Consider any requests for special consideration for affected students. For example, those who may have lost their internally assessed work or whose performance in assessments or exams could have been affected by the disruption.

If any students miss an exam or are disadvantaged by the disruption

If some of the students have been adversely affected by the disruption, you should ask the awarding organisation about applying for special consideration.

Decisions about special consideration, when it is or is not appropriate, is for each awarding organisation to make. Their decisions might be different for different qualifications and for different subjects.

See also:

- [JCQ's guidance on special considerations](#)

Wider communications

The regulators, [Ofqual](#) in England, [Qualifications Wales](#) in Wales and [CCEA](#) in Northern Ireland, will share timely and accurate information, as required, with awarding organisations, government departments and other stakeholders.

The [Department for Education](#) in England, the [Department of Education](#) in Northern Ireland and the [Welsh Government](#) will inform the relevant government ministers as soon as it becomes apparent that there will be significant local or national disruption; and ensure that they are kept updated until the matter is resolved.

Awarding organisations will alert the [Universities and Colleges Admissions Service](#) (UCAS) and the [Central Applications Office](#) (CAO) about any impact of the disruption on their deadlines and liaise regarding student progression to further and higher education.

Awarding organisations will alert relevant professional bodies or employer groups if the impact of disruption particularly affects them.

Widespread national disruption to the taking of examinations / assessments

As education is devolved, in the event of any widespread sustained national disruption to examinations or assessments, national government departments will communicate with regulators, awarding organisations and centres prior to a public announcement. Regulators will provide advice to government departments on implications for exam timetables.

[Ofqual](#) has published [Guidance for schools, colleges and other exam centres on gathering evidence of student performance](#) for students entering GCSEs, AS and A levels, the Advanced Extension Award and Project qualifications to support resilience in the exam system in England in 2023.

The Department for Education has updated its guidance on [handling strike action in schools](#) in England in light of the industrial action in 2023. The guidance recommends schools should prioritise the running of examinations and assessments on any strike days, and should review their contingency plans to make this happen. Schools, colleges and other exam centres should speak to the relevant awarding organisations if they are expecting any disruption that might affect the sitting of exams and assessments.

(Ofqual guidance extract above taken directly from the Exam system contingency plan: England, Wales and Northern Ireland - What schools and colleges and other centres should do if exams or other assessments are seriously disrupted (updated 18 January 2023)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/exam-system-contingency-plan-england-wales-and-northern-ireland/what-schools-and-colleges-should-do-if-exams-or-other-assessments-are-seriously-disrupted>)

JCQ

15.1 The qualification regulators, awarding bodies and government departments responsible for education have prepared and agreed information for schools and colleges in the event of examinations being seriously disrupted. This jointly agreed information will ensure consistency of

response in the event of major disruption to the examinations system affecting significant numbers of candidates.

Further information may be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/exam-system-contingency-plan-england-wales-and-northern-ireland>

15.2 In addition, awarding bodies have their own well-established contingency plans in place to respond to disruptions. It is important that exams officers who are facing disruption liaise directly with the relevant awarding body/bodies.

15.3 All centres must have a written examination contingency plan which covers all aspects of examination administration. This will allow members of the senior leadership team to act immediately in the event of an emergency or where the head of centre, examinations officer or SENCo is absent at a critical stage of the examination cycle. The examination contingency plan should reinforce procedures in the event of the centre being unavailable for examinations owing to an unforeseen emergency.

All relevant centre staff must be familiar with the examination contingency plan. Consideration should be given as to how these arrangements will be communicated to candidates, parents and staff should disruption to examinations occur.

15.4 In the event that the head of centre decides the centre cannot be opened for scheduled examinations, the relevant awarding body must be informed as soon as possible. Awarding bodies will be able to offer advice regarding the alternative arrangements for conducting examinations that may be available and the options for candidates who have not been able to take scheduled examinations.

15.5 The awarding bodies will designate 'contingency sessions' for examinations, summer 2024. This is consistent with the qualification regulators' document *Exam system contingency plan: England, Wales and Northern Ireland*: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/exam-system-contingency-plan-england-wales-and-northern-ireland>

The designation of 'contingency sessions' within the common examination timetable is in the event of national or significant local disruption to examinations. It is part of the awarding bodies' standard contingency planning for examinations.

In the event of national disruption to a day of examinations in summer 2024, the awarding bodies will liaise with the qualification regulators and government departments to agree the most appropriate option for managing the impact. As a last resort the affected examinations will be rescheduled. Although every effort would be taken to keep the impact to a minimum, it is possible that there could be more than one timetable date affected following the disruption, up to and including the last contingency day. Centres will be alerted if it is agreed to reschedule the examinations and the affected candidates will be expected to make themselves available in such circumstances. The decision regarding the rescheduling of examinations will always rest with the awarding body. The centre must conduct the examination on the scheduled date unless instructed to do otherwise by the awarding body.

Where candidates choose not to be available for the rescheduled examination(s) for reasons other than those traditionally covered by special consideration, they will not be eligible for enhanced grading arrangements. Centres must therefore ensure candidates and parents are aware of the contingency arrangements so that they may take them into account when making their plans for the summer.

(JCQ guidance above taken directly from Instructions for Conducting Examinations 2023-2024 <http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/ice---instructions-for-conducting-examinations>, section 15, Contingency planning)

JCQ Joint Contingency Plan www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/other-documents

JCQ Preparing for disruption to examinations www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/other-documents

JCQ Notice to Centres - Examination contingency plan/examinations policy

www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations/notice-to-centres--exam-contingency-plan/

General Regulations for Approved Centres www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations

Guidance notes on alternative site arrangements www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/online-forms

Guidance notes for transferred candidates www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/online-forms

Instructions for conducting examinations www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/ice---instructions-for-conducting-examinations

A guide to the special consideration process www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-special-consideration/regulations-and-guidance

GOV.UK

Emergency planning and response: Exam and assessment disruption

www.gov.uk/guidance/emergencies-and-severe-weather-schools-and-early-years-settings

Dispatch of exam scripts guide: Ensuring the service runs smoothly; Contingency planning

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dispatch-of-exam-scripts-yellow-label-service>

Protect UK

www.protectuk.police.uk

National Cyber Security Centre

The NCSC's free [Web Check](#) and [Mail Check](#) services can help protect schools from cyber-attacks. Two NCSC cyber security services, which are already helping thousands of organisations to protect their websites and email servers from cyber-attacks, are now available to **all UK schools**. Both tools are available free of charge, are quick to set up, and thereafter run automatically. More information is available from the [NCSC website](#).

The Department for Education has been asking centres to review **National Cyber Security Centre advice** following increasing number of cyber-attacks involving ransomware infections. The NCSC information supports centres in cyber security preparedness and mitigation work.

Ransomware attacks continue and the Department is reminding centres to review the NCSC advice and to take precautions. This includes ensuring that you have backups in place for your key services and data.

For ease of reference, the Department has highlighted key links relating to the NCSC cyber security guidance below:

1. [Further ransomware attacks on UK education by cyber criminals - NCSC.GOV.UK](#)
2. [Mitigating malware and ransomware attacks](#)
3. [Offline backups in an online world](#)
4. [Backing up your data](#)
5. [Practical resources to help schools improve their cyber security](#)
6. [Building Resilience: Ransomware, the risks to schools and ways to prevent it](#)
7. [School staff offered training to help shore up cyber defences - NCSC.GOV.UK](#)