Exam Contingency Plan and Escalation Process 2023/2024

Policy Information	
Policy Owner	Exams Officer
Issue Version	3.1
Approving Committee	ACE Schools SLT and CPG
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Review Cycle	Annual
Last Review Date	January 2024
Next Review Date	January 2025

Adoption of the Policy

This Policy has been adopted and reviewed by the Trustees of Transforming Futures Trust

Signed: D. Furze   **Date:** 18.03.24

(Chair of CPG)

Version Control Amendments

Version No	Date	Summary of Changes
2.0	01.02.2023	Compliance with JCQ Review date changed to align with annual review of regulations.
3.0	18.10.2023	Updates in line with new JCQ publications
3.1	03.01.2024	Updated to include Head of Centre and Exams Officer covering more than one exam centre. Naming of public locations that may be used as alternative sites. Escalation process updated to include additional JCQ requirements, new SLT and CEO.

Contents

Key staff involved in contingency planning:

Role	Name(s)		
Head of centre	Ruth Westwood		
Exams officer line manager (Senior leader)	Tim Mathias		
SENCo	Rachel Crozier		
Exams Officer	Vickie Keast		
Exams Assistants	Aislinn Wenham (54424 Bretonside) Sue Taylor (53849 Redruth) Andrew Prattent (53645 Bodmin)		
Key holders	Bretonside 54424	Bodmin 53645	Redruth 53849
	Ruth Westwood Vickie Keast Clare Preece Mary Tapscott-Nott Aislinn Wenham	Vickie Keast Pippa Counter Becky Guilbert Andrew Prattent	Vickie Keast Sue Taylor Lisa Baxter Vicky Moon
Head of Department	Abigail Richards – English Helen Cumming – Maths Claire Miller – Science Sarah Bird – DT & Art Laura Kirk-Potter – PSHE & Citizenship Steve Sampson - Humanities Dan Clift - PE		
Head of Provision	Tim Mathias – Secondary Intervention & Reintegration (Bretonside) Lise Albert – ACE Cornwall (Bodmin, Redruth, Launceston) Sarah Dodds – WRAP Plymouth and Primary (North Hill, Exeter, Ford) Kirsty Lambert – Dover, Plymbridge House, Terraces, Derriford		

Purpose of the plan

This plan examines potential risks and issues that could cause disruption to the exams process at Ace Schools. 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 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 in the event of widespread disruption to 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 Ace Schools compliance with the JCQ's **General Regulation 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.

Operating across more than one centre

With reference to General Regulations for Approved Centres, section 2.6

As the head of centre and exams officer operate across more than one centre, the head of centre will ensure there is suitable senior leadership team support in place, so they can meet their obligations across all centres for which they are responsible in relation to recruitment, selection, training and support of staff. The arrangements covered in this contingency plan relate to the following centres:

- Ace Schools 54424
- Ace Schools Bodmin 53645
- Ace Schools Redruth 53849

National Centre Number Register and other information requirements

The head of centre will also ensure that Ace Schools as a contingency to enable the prompt handling of urgent issues only, 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.

Possible causes of disruption to the exam process

1. 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 trained.*

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

- The Examination Assistants at each centre can be called upon to take over.
- The Examinations Officer of another school within the Trust can be requested to provide assistance.
- The SLT should nominate a 'Deputy' to cover a role or task.
- Key documents should be saved to share point so that access is not interrupted.
- Consideration should be given to Work Shadowing.
- All procedures should be documented – there are templates etc available via;

  o   The Key Tasks section of The Exams Office website.
  o   The Examinations Administration section of the DFE website.
  o   Examination Board helplines.
  o   The Exams Office section of the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) website.

2. 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

- Request Assistant SENCo(s) (Xanthe Bulley / Roberta Lewin) take over until SENCo returns.
- Assistant SENCo(s) to identify any candidates not yet approved by Awarding Bodies and complete necessary applications.
- Examinations Officer to identify any shortfalls in invigilation requirements and ensure that gaps are filled.
- Once gaps are filled, Examinations Officer to arrange suitable rooms and Assistant SENCo(s) to provide training.

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

<u>Criteria for implementation of the plan</u>

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

<u>Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption</u>

- SLT to ensure departmental continuity by requesting an alternative member of the department takes responsibility for the actions above
- Provide all Heads of Department and key teaching staff with secure tools for working from home

4. Invigilators - lack of appropriately trained invigilators or invigilator absence

<u>Criteria for implementation of the plan</u>

Failure to recruit and train sufficient invigilators to conduct exams

Invigilator shortage on peak exam days

Invigilator absence on the day of an exam

<u>Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption</u>

- Exams Officer to maintain a list of trained invigilators
- All staff to be Invigilation trained using The Exams office online training modules
- All staff receive annual update training in invigilation and access arrangements
- SLT / Exams Officer to review training procedures regularly and put on additional training as required
- Trust staff and staff from other schools within the Trust receive training and assist

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

<u>Criteria for implementation of the plan</u>

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
- Maintain floor plans of all Ace Schools sites. Candidates may be transferred to use facilities at another Ace Schools site as a last resort   - Maintain relationships with Quaker House and Hamoaze House as additional alternative sites   - Liaise with SLT and Heads of Provision to identify alternative site availability during exam seasons   - Thorough pre-planning for every exam series   - Head of centre to take all decisions on safe opening of school site(s)   - Head of centre/SLT take advice and follow instructions from local and national agencies in deciding whether centre is able to open   - Exams Officer to apply for alternative site permissions as required   - In the event of candidates being unable to sit some examinations, Exams Officer to apply to awarding bodies or special consideration where candidates have met the minimum requirements

6. 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
- Ace Schools holds and maintains Cyber Essentials Accreditation to minimise the risk of cyber attack   - Restrict execution of known malware and untrusted software, to prevent harmful code from causing damage or accessing sensitive data   - detecting and disabling malware before it causes harm (anti-malware)   - executing only software that you know to be worthy of trust (allow listing) by actively approving applications before deploying them to devices   - executing untrusted software in an environment that controls access to other data (sandboxing)
- Ensure that devices and software are not vulnerable to known security issues for which fixes are available. All software on devices must be licenced and supported, have automatic updates enabled, apply manual updates as required.   - Daily data back ups   - Promptly report any incidents to the relevant awarding body/bodies which might compromise any aspect of assessment delivery and follow advice given by the AO's

7. Failure of IT systems

Criteria for implementation of the plan
MIS system failure at final entry deadline
MIS system failure during exams preparation
MIS system failure at results release time

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption
- EO has access to all awarding body secure sites for making entries directly where these cannot be completed via EDI   - IT services to be available during all exam series   - Exams Officer to liaise with awarding bodies for alternative methods of entry/results as required   - Continuous IT support from Delt Services

8. 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
- Copy of emergency evacuation procedure available in all exam rooms   - All disruptions to recorded in the incident log (Invigilators Report)   - Exams Officer to liaise with awarding bodies regarding special consideration where required

9. Disruption of teaching time in the weeks before an exam – 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
- HoDs have plans to deliver learning remotely using both on and offline methods   - SLT communicate with parents, carers and students about plans for remote learning as required   - Conduct survey to ascertain student access to IT facilities at home   - https://www.gov.uk/guidance/emergencies-and-severe-weather-schools-and-earlyyears-settings

10. Candidates may not be able to take examinations – 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
>
> - Make use of alternative site where appropriate. This may be an alternative Ace Schools or Trust site or a public facility including Quaker House or Hamoaze House.
> - SLT to communicate with parents, carers and students regarding possible solutions
> - Exams Officer to liaise with awarding bodies for advice and alternative site arrangements
> - Exams Officer to submit applications for special consideration where candidates have been adversely affected and have met the minimum requirements.

11. 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
>
> - Make use of alternative site where appropriate. This may be an alternative Ace Schools or Trust site or a public facility including Quaker House or Hamoaze House
> - Exams Officer to apply for alternative site approvals as required
> - DfE Exam support service to be used to identify alternative sites where Ace School sites are not available

12. 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
>
> - Awarding organisations to provide centres with electronic access to examination papers via a secure external network.
> - Exams Officer to ensure that copies are received, made and stored under secure conditions
> - Exams Officer to liaise with Awarding organisations for guidance on the conduct of examinations in such circumstances.
> - As a last resort, and in close collaboration with centres and regulators, awarding organisations to consider scheduling of the examination on an alternative date)

13. Disruption to the transportation of completed examination scripts

> Criteria for implementation of the plan
>
> *Delay in normal collection arrangements for completed examination scripts/assessment evidence*

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption
• Where examinations are part of the national 'yellow label' service or where awarding organisations arrange collections, Exams Officer will seek advice from awarding organisations and will not make their own arrangements for transportation unless told to do so by the awarding organisation.
• For any examinations where centres make their own arrangements for transportation, the Exams Officer will investigate alternative dispatch options that comply with the requirements detailed in the JCQ Instructions for Conducting Examinations.
• Exams officer to ensure secure storage of completed examination scripts until collection.

14. 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
Completed examination scripts/assessment evidence does not reach awarding organisations

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption
• Exams Officer and SLT to communicate issues immediately to Awarding bodies
• SLT to communicate issues and resolutions to parents, carers and students
• 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

15. 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 postresults services

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption
• Exams Officer to make arrangements to access results at an alternative site or remotely, in agreement with the relevant awarding organisation
• Exams officer maintains capacity to work remotely for all aspects of results processing
• SLT to make arrangements to coordinate access to post results services from an alternative site within the school or trust
• Centres to share facilities with other centres if this is possible, in agreement with the relevant awarding organisation.
• SLT to make arrangements to make post results requests at an alternative location within the school or trust
• Exams Officer to contact the relevant awarding organisation if electronic post results requests are not possible

Escalation Process

Purpose of the process

In terms of internal governance arrangements, it is the responsibility of the head of centre to ensure that Ace Schools has in place a written escalation process should the head of centre, or a member of the senior leadership team with oversight of examination administration, be absent.

This process confirms the main duties and responsibilities to be escalated.

This process also supports Ace Schools being able to confirm to an awarding body the external governance arrangements so that the awarding body has confidence in the integrity of centre activities such as the delivery of qualifications and the conducting of examinations and assessments.

Before examinations (Planning)

In the event of the absence of the head of centre or 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 Rachel Crozier - Assistant Headteacher, Christine McNamara - Assistant Headteacher, Matt Sambrook- CEO.

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, training and support

- External and 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) o Instructions for conducting examinations (section 25) o Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments (section 5)

- Personal data, freedom of information and copyright

    Additional JCQ publication for reference:
    - Information for candidates – Privacy Notice

Before examinations (Entries and Pre-exams)

In the event of the absence of the head of centre or the member of senior leadership with oversight of examination administration, responsibility for implementing JCQ regulations and requirements relating to entries and exam preparation will be escalated to Rachel Crozier - Assistant Headteacher, Christine McNamara - Assistant Headteacher, Matt Sambrook- CEO

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 (including ensuring appropriate controls are in place which allow accurate entries to be submitted to the awarding bodies)

    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 (including ensuring appropriate controls are in place which allow accurate internally assessed marks to be submitted to the awarding bodies)

    Additional JCQ publication for reference:
    - Guidance Notes – Centre Consortium Arrangements

- Candidate information

  Additional JCQ publications for reference:
    - Information for candidates documents
    - Exam Room Posters

During examinations (Exam time)

In the event of the absence of the head of centre or the member of senior leadership with oversight of examination administration, responsibility for implementing JCQ regulations and requirements relating to during exam time will be escalated to Rachel Crozier - Assistant Headteacher, Christine McNamara - Assistant Headteacher, Matt Sambrook- CEO.

The centre also has in place has in place a member of the senior leadership team who will provide support and guidance to the examinations officer and ensure that the integrity and security of examinations and assessments is maintained throughout an examination series.

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:

  o Guidance Notes – Very Late Arrival

- Malpractice

- Retention of candidates' work

After examinations (Results and Post-Results)

As a contingency to enable the prompt handling of urgent issues only, the centre 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. The head of centre will 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 (GR 5.3).

In the event of the absence of the head of centre or the member of senior leadership with oversight of examination administration, responsibility for implementing JCQ regulations and requirements relating to after examinations will be escalated to Rachel Crozier - Assistant Headteacher, Christine McNamara - Assistant Headteacher, Matt Sambrook- CEO

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

Further guidance to inform procedures and implement contingency planning

DfE

Meeting digital and technology standards in schools and colleges
> Cyber Security Standards for schools and colleges
> Cyber crime and cyber security: a guide for education providers
> DfE Cyber Security Guidance – March 2023

Ofqual

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

This document was updated in October 2023 to include Ofqual's final decisions on long-term resilience arrangements, and the Department for Education (DfE)'s guidance for education settings with confirmed reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC),

In addition to this guidance, you will need to be aware of your specific responsibilities for local and national school preparations and contingencies. You should also follow advice from relevant public health bodies.

Contingency planning

Awarding organisations are required to establish, maintain and comply with an up-to-date detailed written contingency plan, to mitigate any incident they have identified may occur. This includes having communication plans for external parties (Ofqual General Condition of Recognition A6). Schools and colleges should also be prepared for possible disruption to exams and assessments and make sure staff are aware of these plans.

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

You may also wish to see the JCQ's notice to centres on exam contingency plans and JCQ's notice on preparing for disruption to examinations in England, Wales and Northern Ireland for qualifications within its scope.

Steps you should take

Exam planning
Review your 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.

Schools, colleges and other exam centres must speak to the relevant awarding organisations as soon as possible if they are expecting any disruption that might affect the sitting of exams and assessments.

In the event of disruption
1. Contact the relevant awarding organisation and follow its instructions.
2. Take advice, or follow instructions, from relevant local or national agencies in deciding whether your centre is able to open.
3. 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.
4. Where accommodation is limited, prioritise students whose progression will be severely delayed if they do not take their exam or timetabled assessment when planned.
5. In the event of an evacuation during an examination please refer to JCQ's Centre emergency evacuation procedure.
6. Communicate with students, parents and carers any changes to the exam or assessment timetable or to the venue.
7. Communicate with any external assessors or relevant third parties regarding any changes to the exam or assessment timetable.

After the exam
1. Consider whether any students' ability to take the assessment or demonstrate their level of attainment has been materially affected and, if so, apply to the relevant awarding organisation for special consideration.
2. Advise students, where appropriate, of the opportunities to take their exam or assessment at a later date.
3. Ensure that scripts are stored under secure conditions.
4. 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

1. Establish and maintain, and at all times comply with, an up-to-date, written contingency plan.
2. 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
1. Take all reasonable steps to mitigate any adverse effect, in relation to their qualifications, arising from any disruption.
2. Provide effective guidance to any of their centres delivering qualifications.
3. Ensure that where an assessment must be completed under specified conditions, students are able to complete the assessment under those conditions (other than where any reasonable adjustments or special considerations require alternative conditions).
4. Promptly notify the relevant regulators about any event which could have an adverse effect on students, standards or public confidence.
5. 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, depending on their specific policies.

See also JCQ's guidance on special consideration

Wider communications

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

The DfE in England, the DfE 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 or 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 examinations and assessments, including exam timetables.

In September 2023, Ofqual and the DfE published joint consultation decisions on long-term resilience arrangements. As in 2023, Ofqual has provided guidance on collecting evidence of student performance to ensure resilience in the qualifications system for students entering GCSEs, AS and A levels, the Advanced Extension Award and Project qualifications. For VTQs and other qualifications used alongside or instead of GCSEs, AS and A levels, awarding organisations will provide guidance where needed and will contact schools and colleges with more information.

In December 2022, Qualifications Wales published guidance for contingency assessment arrangements for GCSEs, AS and A levels and Skills Challenge Certificates in the event that a national decision is made to cancel exams. This guidance is still relevant for the current academic year.

The DfE 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 must speak to the relevant awarding organisations if they are expecting any disruption that might affect the sitting of exams and assessments.

The DfE has also issued guidance for education settings with confirmed reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) in their buildings. It includes the need for contingencies for possible disruption to examinations and links to the existing emergency planning guidance.

We will update this page as necessary, with any further relevant links, should national disruption occur.

General contingency guidance
- emergency planning and response for education, childcare and children's social care settings from the DfE in England
- handling strike action in schools from the DfE in England
- school organisation: local-authority-maintained schools from the DfE in England
- reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete: guidance for education settings with confirmed RAAC from the DfE in England
- exceptional closure days from the Department of Education in Northern Ireland
- checklist - exceptional closure of schools from the Department of Education in Northern Ireland
- school terms and school closures from NI Direct
- opening schools as well as childcare and play settings in extreme bad weather and extreme hot weather - guidance for schools from the Welsh Government
- emergency planning and response guidance for education and childcare settings- guidance for schools and education settings from the Welsh Government
- police guidance from National Counter Terrorism Security Office and partners on preparing for threats
- cyber security guidance for schools and colleges from the National Cyber Security Centre

(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** (last updated 5 October 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 examination**s 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/general-regulations/

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/government/publications/emergency-planning-and-response-for-education-childcare-and-childrens-social-care-settings

Dispatch of exam scripts guide: Ensuring the service runs smoothly; Contingency planning www.gov.uk/government/publications/dispatch-of-exam-scripts-yellow-label-service

Wales

School closures: examinations gov.wales/school-closures-examinations

Opening schools in extremely bad weather and extreme hot weather: www.gov.wales/opening-schools-well-childcare-and-play-settings-extreme-bad-weather-and-extreme-hot-weather

Northern Ireland

Exceptional closure days www.education-ni.gov.uk/articles/exceptional-closure-days

Checklist for Principals when considering Opening or Closure of School - exceptional closure of schools www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/checklist-exceptional-closure-schools

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 risk to schools and ways to prevent it

School staff offered training to help shore up cyber defences - NCSC.GOV.UK