



Emerson Park Academy

Exam Policy

Contingency Plan

2024/25

Centre No. 12821

This plan is reviewed annually to ensure compliance with current regulations

Approved/reviewed by	
Date of next review	November 2025

Key staff involved in contingency planning

Role	Name(s)
Head of centre	Mr S McGuinness
Exams officer line manager (Senior leader)	Mr M Hope
Exams officer	Mrs T Whiting
Lead Practitioner for Inclusion/SENCo	Ms E Fuller
Senior leader(s)	Ms K Blaize – Deputy Head
	Mr N Giles – Assistant Head teacher
	Dr Crawley – Assistant Head teacher
	Mr J Maguire – Assistant Head teacher
	Ms C Amponsah – Business Manager
	Ms N Heatley – Assistant Head teacher
	Mr S Thurley – Assistant Head teacher

Contents

Key staff involved in the plan

Purpose of the plan

- Contingency arrangements
- National Centre Number Register and other information requirements
- Head of centre absence at a critical stage of the exam cycle

Possible causes of disruption to the exam process

- Exam officer extended absence at key points in the exam process (cycle)
- Lead Practitioner for Inclusion/SENCo extended absence at key points in the exam cycle
- Teaching staff extended absence at key points in the exam cycle
- Invigilators – lack of appropriately trained invigilators or invigilator absence
- Exam rooms – lack of appropriate rooms or main venues unavailable at short notice
- Cyber-attack
- Failure of IT systems
- Emergency evacuation of the exam room (or centre lockdown)
- Disruption of teaching time in the weeks before an exam – centre closed for an extended period
- Candidates may not be able to take examinations – centre remains open
- Centre may not be able to open as normal during the examination period
- Disruption in the distribution of examination papers
- Delay in collection arrangements for completed examination scripts
- Assessment evidence is not available to be marked
- Centre unable to distribute the results as normal or facilitate post results services

Further guidance to inform procedures and implement contingency planning

DfE
Ofqual
JCQ
GOV.UK
National Cyber Security Centre

Purpose of the plan

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

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 Emerson Park Academy compliance with JCQ's **General Regulations for Approved Centres** (section 5.3) that the centre has in place for inspection that must be reviewed and updated annually:

- a written contingency plan which covers all aspects of examination/assessment administration and delivery.

Contingency arrangements

In accordance with the regulations (GR 3.17-19), Emerson Park Academy **must** have an up to date written contingency plan.

The contingency plan **must** cover all aspects of examination/assessment administration and delivery. Senior leaders **must** have robust contingency arrangements in place that will minimise the risk to examination/assessment administration and delivery and any adverse impact on candidates.

The plan must cover the following scenarios:

- the head of centre, relevant senior leaders with oversight of examination and assessment administration, SENCo (or equivalent role), examinations officer or any other key staff essential to the examination process being absent at a critical stage of the examination cycle
- potential impact of other events such as flooding which could lead to all or parts of the centre becoming unavailable
- potential issues with the centre's IT systems

As part of the contingency plan the centre **must** identify an alternative site if examinations cannot be conducted at the registered address. Larger centres may require more than one potential alternative site or different sites for different Year Groups.

Emerson Park Academy **must** have at least one senior member of staff (senior designated contact) who is available to manage emergency requests from awarding bodies that are results related during the summer holidays. However, a number of contacts can be provided to reduce the risk of this falling on one individual throughout the summer holidays.

Emerson Park Academy **must** ensure that candidates' work is backed-up and should consider the contingency of candidates' work being backed-up on two separate devices, including one off-site back-up. Appropriate security arrangements must be implemented which protect candidates' work in the event of IT system corruption and cyber-attacks.

National Centre Number Register and other information requirements

In accordance with the regulations (GR 5.3), the head of centre will ensure that Emerson Park Academy responds to the National Centre Number Register annual update by the end of October every year which includes providing senior designated contact details (this might include a personal mobile number and/or email

address). These must be the contact details of someone who can be reached in an emergency if the centre is closed over the summer and who can mobilise resources to respond to the issue.

Head of centre absence at a critical stage of the exam cycle

Where the head of centre may be absent at a critical stage of the examination cycle, main duties and responsibilities will be escalated in accordance with the centre's written escalation process.

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 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

Planning

- Ensure HoFs or Subject Leaders provide specification details before September 30th to ensure EO can make 'intention to enter' number and 'estimated entries' by the awarding bodies deadlines. This will ensure any pre-release material is sent automatically and on time for HoFs
- Ensure an annual exams plan is produced and updated regularly and EO Line Manager is aware of plan

- Check invigilator availability for summer series by end of January for following summer series, enabling time to recruit if needed in advance of January training session.

Entries

- Refer to annual exams plan for deadlines and ensure HoFs or subject leaders provide details of estimated entries to meet awarding body deadlines
- Refer to annual exams plan for deadlines and ensure Exam Officer receives completed marksheets from HoFs or subject leaders to facilitate timely entries
- Exam Line Manager to check EO has submitted exam entries by the specified deadlines for each exam season to avoid late entry fees
- Contact awarding bodies to explain reason for missed deadlines and request leniency in relation to the imposition of late fees

Pre-exams

- Head of Centre signs off annual invigilator training register in January. Exams line manager to ensure EO has completed recruitment and training of invigilators for the academic year
- Whole school and individual timetables to be issued well in advance of each exam season along with invigilator work schedules and communicated to all staff and parents/carers
- EO Line Manager to hold pre-exam assembly for candidates to brief them on expectations and to reiterate examination rules and regulations
- EO to produce an annual Student Guide to Examinations and Assessments containing all information for candidates
- Refer to JCQ regulations regarding secure storage
- Refer to annual exams plan for deadlines and ensure HoFs or subject leaders provide details of internal assessment marks and samples of candidates' work for submission to awarding bodies/external moderators to meet awarding body deadlines
- All staff, including SLT are emailed the relevant JCQ documents regarding General Regulations, ICE, Access Arrangements, NEA's etc.
- Access Arrangements: Liaise with SENCo and contact awarding bodies. Ensure all appropriate paperwork in place including evidence to paint a picture of need and data release forms signed by students

Exam Time

- Ensure all invigilators and staff are trained and informed of JCQ regulations
- Log all incidents so that reports such as 'very late arrival', suspected malpractice can be submitted to exam boards along with special consideration requests
- Receipt and log all scripts in and out to ensure prompt and correct dispatch to awarding bodies

Results and post-results

- Prepare and agree in advance on how results will be issued
- Consult with LMS Team to facilitate successful results download and/or consult with ICT Technician if a system problem
- Exam Officer to facilitate post-results services
- Ensure contact with candidates and parents can be maintained after the issue of results for post-results services along with certificate collection

2. Lead Practitioner for Inclusion/SENCo extended absence at 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

Planning

- Refer to Head of Centre and SENCo's Line Manager

Pre-exams

- Refer to Head of Centre and liaise with Exam Officer (assisted by Assistant SENCo) to make applications based on information SENCo holds on file.
- Apply for modified papers and contact awarding body if after deadline to see if requests can be processed
- Exam invigilators to facilitate candidates with access arrangements as they are trained

Exam time

- Liaise with Exam Officer to assist with arrangements and HLTA's

3. 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 (including controlled assessments and coursework) 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

- Exam Officer to remind staff of important deadlines and key dates in the exam cycle so
- HOF's to sign off entry sheets so that there are no error or omissions, therefore avoiding late entry/amendment fees

- HOF's and teaching staff are regularly updated from awarding bodies, EO and informed of JCQ regulations with regards to NEA's and what is expected
- Candidates are informed that they will be told their centre assessed marks and that they have the right to appeal these before submission to awarding bodies in the Student Guide to Examinations and Assessments and the HOF and EO reminds teachers before submission of marks
- EO to liaise with HOF and contact awarding body to inform them regarding late submission request

4. 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

- Invigilator availability is requested early in the exam cycle and more required if required
- Additional invigilators are always scheduled to work in case of shortage and other on standby
- HTLA's are trained to invigilate. Agency staff will be used if necessary

5. 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

- EO will refer to Line Manager, SLT and Site Manager to identify appropriate room(s)
- EO will plan and book rooms in advance, including those that may be needed for emergency access arrangement candidates
- The Sports Hall is the main room but the Gym, combined with the Hall will be used as an alternative
- Seek to move to an alternative venue if EPA has to close, seeking agreement with the relevant awarding body and ensuring the secure transportation of question papers or assessment materials to the alternative site
- Inform all candidates of any changes to venue and time in order that they can take their exam or timetabled assessment when planned
- Consider whether any candidates ability to take the assessment or demonstrate their level of attainment has been materially affected and, if so, apply for special consideration
- Alternative site option – Drapers Academy

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 for Cyber-attack

(This will include the required arrangements for cyber security) (GR 3.21) Ensure there are procedures in place to maintain the security of user accounts by:

- A) Providing training for authorised staff on the importance of creating strong unique passwords and keeping all account details secret
 - B) Providing training for staff on awareness of all types of social engineering/phishing attempts
 - C) enabling additional security setting wherever possible
 - D) Updating any passwords that may have been exposed
 - E) setting up secure account recovery options
 - F) reviewing and managing connected applications
 - G) monitoring accounts and regularly reviewing account access, including removing access when no longer used
 - H) Ensuring authorised members of staff securely access awarding bodies' online systems in line with awarding body regulations regarding cyber security and the JCQ document *Guide for Centres on cyber security*. Authorised staff will have access, where necessary, to device which complies with awarding bodies' multi-factor authentication (MFA) requirements.
 - I) Reporting any actual or suspected compromise of an awarding body's online systems immediately to the relevant awarding body.
-
- Up to date Antivirus software and LGFL Firewall.
 - Off site (Cloud based) and onsite back up system. We also have patch management system for all PCs.
 - LGLF Web filtering system
 - Block run exe files by student and staff.
 - Internet monitoring system for staff and student.
 - I also sent Cyber security training link to all staff. Please see below
 - Please see the link below for Cyber security training for school staff. At the end of the training a link to a downloadable training certificate can be accessed.
<https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/information/cyber-security-training-schools>
 - Strong password for our Wi-Fi system.
 - Strong PC password policy for student and staff.
 - Files/Folder access permission for staff and student

7. Failure of IT Systems

Criteria for implementation of the plan

IT system corruption affecting candidates' work

MIS system failure of final entry deadline

MIS system failure during exams preparation

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

MIS system failure at results release time

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption for IT failure

- (This will include the required arrangements for cyber security)
(GR 3.21) Ensure there are procedures in place to maintain the security of user accounts by:
- Ensure final entries are made well in advance of the final entry deadline. In the event of a long period of MIS failure, make entries via exam board secure websites or use alternative IT hardware at another site/school.

- Ensure preparations are made well in advance. Produce paper copies of the exam timetables and Produce paper copies of seating plans and registers at the beginning of each exam week. Produce paper copies of invigilator timetable and display in exams office.
- Contact LMS team immediately for advice.
- Inform the awarding organisations of the system failure.

If necessary, download and print individual student results sheets from each of the awarding organisations secure websites to ensure timely issue of results to students.

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

- Refer and invoke exam emergency evacuation policy/procedure in line with JCQ's centre emergency evacuation procedure or lockdown policy
- Contact the relevant awarding body as soon as possible and follow its instructions
- Where accommodation is limited, prioritise candidates whose progression will be severely delayed if they do not take their exam or timetabled assessment when planned
- After the exam, consider whether any candidate's ability to take the assessment or demonstrate their level of attainment has been materially affected and, if so, apply for special consideration
- Communicate with candidates/parents/carers regarding solutions to the issue if a serious incident

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

Emerson Park Academy will:

- Recognise it remains the responsibility of the centre to prepare students, as usual, for examinations
 - Facilitate alternative methods of learning, such as online or alternative sites
 - Communicate with candidates (and where appropriate, parents/carers) information relating to alternative methods of learning
 - In the case of modular courses, centres may advise candidates to sit examinations in an alternative series
 - Request NEA/Coursework extensions from relevant exam boards if appropriate
- Communication details:
- Take advice offered by the awarding body regarding alternative arrangements for conducting examinations that may be available
 - Take advice offered by the awarding body on the options for candidates who have not been able to take scheduled examinations
 - Advise candidates, where appropriate, of the opportunities to take their exam or assessment at a later date
 - Keep academy website updated with latest news/information regarding closure

10. Candidates may not be able to take examinations – centre remains open

(including in the event of the centre being unavailable for examinations owing to an unforeseen emergency)

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Candidates may not be able to attend the examination centre to take examinations as normal because of a crisis

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

Centres' contingency plans should focus on options that enable candidates to take their examinations)

Consider moving the starting time of the examination for all candidates (see section 6.2 of the JCQ document *Instructions for conducting examinations*) Be aware of the rules for very late arrivals (see section 21 of the JCQ document *Instructions for conducting examinations*) Wherever possible, it is always in the best interest for candidates to sit the examination. However, special consideration is an option where a candidate is unable to sit the examination (see Chapter 4 of the JCQ document *A guide to the special consideration process*) The relevant awarding body should be contacted if additional support or guidance in the event of disruption to examinations is required

Emerson Park Academy will:

- Take advice offered by the awarding body on the options for candidates who have not been able to take scheduled examinations
- Discuss alternative arrangements with the awarding body if a candidate misses an exam or loses their assessment due to an emergency, or other event, outside of the candidate's control
- Identify whether the exam or timetabled assessment can be sat at an alternative venue, in agreement with the relevant awarding body, ensuring the secure transportation of question papers or assessment materials to the alternative venue
- Communicate with candidates (and where appropriate, parents/carers) any changes to the exam or assessment timetable or to the venue

Communication details:

- Consider whether any candidates' ability to take the assessment or demonstrate their level of attainment has been materially affected and, if so, apply for special consideration

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

- (Centres' contingency plans must focus on enabling candidates to take their examinations if the centre is at risk of not being able to open as normal)

(This could include 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).)

The decision on whether it is safe for a centre to open lies with the head of centre who is responsible for taking advice or following instructions from relevant local or national agencies Special consideration is an option if all other avenues have been exhausted and candidates meet the published criteria The relevant awarding body should be contacted if additional support or guidance in the event of disruption to examinations is required

Alternative site(s) details: Draper Academy

Emerson Park Academy will:

- Take advice offered by the awarding body on the options for candidates who have not been able to take scheduled examinations
- Contact the relevant awarding body as soon as possible and follow its instructions
- Discuss alternative arrangements with the awarding body if the exam or assessment cannot take place
- Follow guidance provided by the awarding body on the conduct of examinations in such circumstances
- Where accommodation is limited, prioritise candidates whose progression will be severely delayed if they do not take their exam or timetabled assessment when planned
- Contact the Head of Centre and Exams SLT Line Manager for guidance to use an alternative venue. Emerson Park Academy have a reciprocal agreement with Drapers Academy to use their facilities in the event of not being able to use our venue for examinations.
- Communicate with candidates (and where appropriate, parents/carers) any changes to the exam or assessment timetable or to the venue
- Consider whether any candidates' ability to take the assessment or demonstrate their level of attainment has been materially affected and, if so, apply for special consideration

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

Emerson Park Academy will:

- Liaise with awarding bodies regarding the provision of electronic access to examination papers via a secure external network and will ensure when copies are received/made these are stored under secure conditions
- Follow guidance provided by the awarding body on the conduct of examinations in such circumstances
- Understand that as a last resort, and in close collaboration with centres and regulators, awarding organisations will consider scheduling of the examination on an alternative date
- Communicate with candidates (and where appropriate, parents/carers) any changes to the exam or assessment timetable or to the venue

13. Delay in collection arrangements for 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 bodies arrange collections, centres should contact the relevant awarding bodies for advice and instructions ☒ for examinations where centres make their own collection arrangements, they should investigate alternative options that comply with the JCQ document *Instructions for conducting examinations* ☒ centres to ensure secure storage of completed examination scripts until as close to the collection time as possible)

Emerson Park Academy will:

- Where examinations are part of the national 'yellow label' service or where awarding bodies arrange collections, contact the relevant awarding bodies for advice and instructions and will not make its own arrangements for transportation unless told to do so by the awarding body

- For any examinations where we make our own arrangements for transportation, we will investigate alternative dispatch options that comply with the requirement details in the JCQ *Instructions for conducting examinations*
- Ensure the secure storage of completed examinations 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

Emerson Park Academy will:

- Liaise with the awarding body to determine if candidate marks for affected assessments may be able to be generated based on other appropriate evidence of candidate achievement as defined by the awarding body
- Where marks cannot be generated by awarding body, inform candidates they may need to retake the 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 the 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

Distribution of results

- Arrange to access results at an alternative venue if this is possible, in agreement with the relevant awarding organisation.

If we have to use an alternative venue:

- Exam Officer to have school laptop with remote access
- Use Sims In Touch to send results electronically to parent/students
- Arrange to coordinate access to post results services from an alternative site
- Share facilities with other centre if this is possible, in agreement with the relevant awarding organisation

Facilitation of post results services:

- Arrange to make post results requests at an alternative location
- Contact the relevant awarding organisation if electronic post results requests are not possible
- Inform candidates of any alternative arrangements in place for the distribution of results and the facilitation of post-results services

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](#)

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, invigilators 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 [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 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: Northern Ireland](#) 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, 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
- [protective security and preparedness for education settings](#) from the DfE
- [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 7 May 2024) <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. CONTINGENCY PLANNING

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 centre's contingency plan must be invoked, utilising the centre's alternative site(s) and the relevant awarding bodies 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 2025. This is consistent with the qualification regulators' document *Exam system contingency plan: England, Wales and Northern Ireland*.

15.6 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.

15.7 In the event of national disruption to a day of examinations in summer 2025, 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.

15.8 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 2024-2025**

<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/

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

Guidance for centres on cyber security (Effective from November 2023) www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations/

5 tips to get exam ready and stay cyber safe! www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/blogs/

Information for centres affected by RAAC – the delivery of non-examination assessments and the special consideration process www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/non-examination-assessments/

Further clarification for centres affected by RAAC, Caledonian Modular or similar building issues – March 2024 www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/non-examination-assessments/

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 as well as childcare and play settings in extreme 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 – Northern Ireland www.education-ni.gov.uk/articles/exceptional-closure-days

Checklist - exceptional closure of schools www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/checklist-exceptional-closure-schools

National Cyber Security Centre

Cyber Security for Schools <https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/section/education-skills/cyber-security-schools>

Cyber security training for school staff <https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/information/cyber-security-training-schools>