



Cirencester Kingshill School

EXAM CONTINGENCY PLAN 2024-2025

Policy/Procedure creator: Penny Clarke

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Key staff involved in the procedure

Role	Name/s
Head of Centre	Mrs J. Lindley, Head of Centre
Senior leader(s)	Mr D. Stillman, Assistant Head of Centre/ Head of Exams
Exams officer	Mrs P. Clarke
SENCo	Mr D. Radbourne

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Aims of the Exam Contingency Plan

The Exam Contingency Plan is designed to ensure a consistent and effective response in the event of major disruption to the examination system at Kingshill School affecting candidates across several awarding organisations and allow members of the Senior Leadership Team to act immediately in the event of an emergency or staff absence, whereby exams or other assessments might be seriously disrupted.

Awarding organisations are required to have their own well-established contingency plans in place to respond to disruptions. This plan takes into account these processes and procedures and is there to compliment them, not replace them.

The plan will be implemented in the event of major disruptions to the system, such as widespread illness, travel disruption, bad weather or power failures. Any actions taken will be subject to the advice of the official agencies dealing with the specific circumstances being faced. 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 which provides guidance in the publication “What schools and colleges and other centres 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.”

Implementing the plan will safeguard the interests of candidates whilst maintaining the integrity of the examination system and safeguarding qualification standards.

The priority when implementing contingencies will be to maintain 4 principles:

- Delivering assessments to published timetables
- Delivering results to published timetables
- Complying with regulatory requirements in relation to assessment, marking and standards
- Minimising disruption and anxiety to pupils

If the situation cannot be resolved, the Senior Leadership Team will meet to agree further actions.

This plan complies with JCQ general regulations (section 5.3) in that:

The centre agrees to “have in place a written examination contingency plan/examinations policy 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.

Communications

In the event of local disruption communication to teachers and students will take place through the Exams Officer and SLT following agreement with the Headteacher.

In the event of more widespread disruption, communication with staff/parents and pupils will take place via the ‘Parent Mail’ messaging service and be sent by a member of Finance Team.

In the event of major disruption, details of specific contingencies agreed across organisations involved in the examinations process will be confirmed on the Ofqual website and proactively communicated to relevant stakeholders.

This includes communications between the organisations involved in the response and communications to stakeholders such as centres, candidates, parents or carers and the public.

www.ofqual.gov.uk/

The organisations involved in this Joint Contingency Plan are committed to:

- Sharing timely and accurate information as required to meet the aims of the plan.
- Communicating with stakeholders so they are aware of disruption to the exams, the contingency measures being implemented and any actions required of them as a result.
- Ensuring that any messages to the public are clear and accurate

Operating across more than one centre

This does not apply to this Centre

National Centre Number Register and other information requirements

The head of centre will also ensure that 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. (GR 5.3)

1. Disruption of teaching time – school closed for an extended period

If Kingshill School is 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. It is the responsibility of the School to prepare students, as usual, for examinations.

- Pupils will be able to access their learning through the shadow curriculum or, in case of more prolonged disruption, via MS Teams and Show my Homework. Pupils will have been offered the opportunity to have a school laptop on loan for the duration of the closure to facilitate this form of remote learning.
- If the School has plans to facilitate teaching and learning at an alternative location it will communicate with parents, carers and students about the potential disruption to teaching time and plans to redress this.

Guidance on emergency planning, with advice on severe weather, is available on the Department for Education website:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/emergencies-and-severe-weather-schools-and-early-years-settings>

2. Disruption in the distribution of examination papers

- The awarding organisations would provide the School with electronic access to examination papers via a secure external network. The Exams Officer will ensure that copies are received, made and stored under secure conditions. Awarding organisations would provide 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.

3. Candidates unable to take examinations because of a crisis - centres remain open

If candidates are unable to attend to take examinations as normal.

The centre 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 questions 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

- The School to communicate with relevant awarding organisations at the outset to make them aware of the issue. The School to communicate with parents, carers and candidates regarding solutions to the issue.
- The School can liaise with candidates to identify whether the exam can be sat at an alternative venue in agreement with the relevant awarding body. JCQ guidance on alternative site arrangements can be accessed through the JCQ website –

[JCQ ICE Booklet 2024-25](#)

- The School can offer candidates an opportunity to sit any exams missed at the next available series. The School can apply to awarding organisations for special consideration for candidates where they have met the minimum requirements. Candidates are only eligible if they have been fully prepared and covered the whole course but are affected by adverse circumstances beyond their control.

JCQ guidance on special consideration can be accessed through the JCQ website:

[JCQ SPECIAL CONSIDERATION 2024-25](#)

4. Centre unable to open as normal during the exams period

If in the unlikely event of Kingshill School being unable to open as normal for scheduled examinations it must inform each awarding organisation with which examinations are due to be taken as soon as is possible. The responsibility for deciding whether it is safe for the School to open lies with the Headteacher. The Headteacher is responsible for taking advice, or following instructions from relevant local or national agencies in deciding whether they are able to open. Cirencester Kingshill School is fortunate that its examinations take place in the Sports Hall, which is a separate building sited away from the main school. It is therefore unlikely that the School would not be available as an examination centre. This contingency only applies if Kingshill School becomes closed due to extreme issues on the school site e.g. Fire.

Key Points

- The School should open for examinations and examination candidates only if possible
- The School should use alternative venues in agreement with relevant awarding organisations (e.g. share facilities with other centres or use other public building, if possible)
- Locations identified where exams could possibly be relocated to include:
- Cirencester College, The Royal Agricultural University, The Cirencester Methodist Church. In the event of a change of venue, the centre will communicate with candidates (and where appropriate parents/ carers) any changes to the exam or assessment timetable or to the venue.
- The School may offer candidates an opportunity to sit any examinations missed at the next available series
- The School can apply to awarding organisations for special consideration for candidates where they have met the minimum requirements

5. Disruption to the transportation of completed examination scripts

If there is a delay in normal collection arrangements for completed examination scripts.

- The School will seek advice from the awarding organisations. The School must not make arrangements for transportation unless told to do so by the awarding body
- The School must ensure secure storage of the completed exam scripts until collection

6. Assessment evidence is not available to be marked

If there has been large scale damage to, or destruction of, completed examination scripts/assessment evidence before it can be marked:

- It is the responsibility of the Head of Centre to communicate this immediately to the awarding organisations who should generate candidate marks for affected assessments based on other appropriate evidence of candidate achievement as defined by the awarding organisations in consultation with the regulators
- It is the Head of Centre's responsibility to also contact the students and their parents/carers
- The candidates should retake affected assessment at subsequent assessment window if appropriate

7. Markers unable to mark examination scripts according to marking schedules

If the Exam Board markers are unable to mark examination scripts resulting in a risk to the delivery of results by scheduled dates.

- The awarding organisations should re-allocate scripts to available markers
- The awarding organisations to recruit, train or re-standardise qualified new markers and prioritisation of marking to be based on results dates

8. Disruption to the scanning process – where completed examination scripts are being scanned in preparation for onscreen marking

If the examination boards scanning process is disrupted, resulting in a risk to the delivery of results by scheduled dates.

- The awarding organisations should implement their existing contingency plans for disruption to onscreen marking process
- The awarding organisations should revert to traditional form of marking
- The awarding organisations should recruit, train or re-standardise qualified markers

9. Awarding Organisation – unable to issue results as planned

Inability of awarding organisations (including the case of a single awarding organisation) to either meet planned schedule for issue of results, or to issue results as planned due to a systems failure. If the awarding organisation(s) faces a delay in meeting the planned schedule for issuing results: -

- The awarding body should establish priorities for processing results, implement existing contingency plans for disruption to the schedule for issuing results.
- If awarding organisation(s) face difficulty in issuing results as planned due to a systems failure: in consultation with regulators, assess the level of disruption and consider alternative options for issuing results dependent upon the nature of the particular systems failure, the awarding organisations and regulators to liaise with relevant institutions (i.e. local post-16 providers) regarding process of candidate progression to further and higher education.

10. Awarding organisations unable to issue accurate results

Due to system error/failure or attack on systems means significant numbers of results cannot be validated as accurate or are issued and found to be inaccurate:

- The candidates, School and stakeholders will be informed of any incorrect results
- The awarding organisations will re-validate results
- The awarding organisations to re-issue results, via alternative format if necessary

11. Centre unable to distribute results as normal or facilitate Post Result Services

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

– The School should contact the awarding organisations about alternative options:

- The School will make arrangements to access results at an alternative site
- The School will make arrangements to coordinate access to post result services from an alternative site
- The School will share facilities with other centres where appropriate
- Kingshill School has the ability to access MIS remotely offsite and set at an alternative venue
- The School will distribute the results direct to the students' school email addresses

12. SENCo extended absence at key points in the exam cycle

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Key tasks required in the management and administration of the 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

Other criteria:

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

If the SENCo is absent from the school at key points in the academic calendar, responsibility for the assessing of pupils and processing of Access Arrangements Online (AAO) shall fall to the Deputy SENCo and other qualified approved assessors in line with JCQ requirements. The Deputy SENCo will advise the Exams Officer of any Access Arrangements granted for provision in Exams.

Should no-one in the School be suitably qualified:

- The School will make arrangements with an alternative external assessor to carry out assessment

- The School will recruit and train a suitable member of staff to obtain necessary qualifications in line with JCQ regulations

13. Failure of IT systems

Should the School MIS system fail at key deadlines and the IT Department unable to correct the fault:

- The Exams Officer will contact the awarding organisations immediately to consult with them and seek alternative methods
- Where possible arrangements to be made to upload entries/access system from an alternative venue via the School's 'Remote' server.
- Sufficient planning in advance and not leaving final entries until the deadline to be implemented as part of normal routine
- Kingshill School has the ability to access MIS remotely offsite and set at an alternative venue
-

14. Cyber Attack

- Where a cyber attack may compromise any aspect of exams delivery, Kingshill School have a procedure in place to deal with any cyber attacks
- We have full IT support staff who would be contacted immediately
- The Exams Officer would advise all exam boards if solution not available immediately
- Kingshill IT has put stringent firewalls in place to minimise the possibility of a cyber attack and will ensure that this is kept at the highest level at all times
- In the event that the firewall is breached, then remote working will be arranged and we will liaise with local schools to access their facilities

15. Exams Officer extended absence at key points in the exam process

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 post-results services

Other criteria:

No other criteria identified

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed

Should the Exams Officer be unable to come to work due to illness, injury or other crisis –

- Assistant Head is able to fulfil the duties of the Exams Officer with the assistance of members of the Senior Leadership Team
- Data Manager has been trained to undertake key roles of the Exams Officer if required
- The Assistant Head will enlist the support of an external organization to provide specialist support and guidance (eg The Exams Officers and Data Solutions Ltd)
- The previous Exams Officer is still known to the School
- Seasonal task list to be made available in Exam Policy Folder
- Spare full set of Exams Office Keys are held in the Site Manager's Office in a Key Safe, to be accessed by Assistant Head
- Awarding Organisations contact list available at end of policy
- Where possible Exams Officer will work from home and access Kingshill via the remote server
- If absent on Exam Day, then copy of Exam Plan and Seating Plan is available on SIMS and from the Invigilators Binders

16. Escalation process in absence of Head of Centre/Assistant Head of Centre/SLT with exam admin oversight

- In the absence of the Assistant Head (Mr D. Stillman), the responsibility for overseeing the exams will be delegated to Mr T. Lee, Deputy Head with full support from the Head of Centre.

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

- If the School fails to recruit and train sufficient invigilators to conduct exams - contact to be made with existing invigilators to request potential availability for following exams series in November annually
- Liaise with SENCo to ascertain number of candidates requiring Access Arrangements and availability of suitably trained TAs to invigilate
- If necessary, in liaison with HR Manager, recruitment drive to be undertaken. Training sessions to be arranged for new/existing invigilators
- If shortage on exam days due to cancellation, members of SLT/Exams Officer/Teaching Assistants to invigilate exams

18. 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
- Other criteria:
Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above
- The centre will: refer to and invoke its (exams) emergency evacuation policy/procedure in line with JCQ's 'Centre emergency evacuation procedure' (or its (exams) 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

Summary of School responsibilities in the event of disruption to examinations:

Preparing plans for any disruption to exams as part of centre's general emergency planning.

Preparing candidates for examinations.

Ensuring examinations and assessments are taken under the conditions prescribed by awarding organisations.

Ensuring, where relevant, that assessment materials and candidate work are stored under secure conditions.

Deciding whether the centre can open for examinations as scheduled and informing relevant awarding organisations if the centre is unable to open.

Exploring the opportunities for alternative arrangements if the centre cannot open for examinations and agreeing such arrangements with the awarding organisations.

Assessing and liaising with awarding organisations in the event of disruption to the transportation of papers

The distribution of exam results to candidates

Awarding Organisations are responsible for:

Ensuring centres receive exam materials for scheduled exams.

Advising centres on possible alternative exam arrangements and declining/approving proposals for alternative exam arrangements.

Marking, moderating and grading candidate work. Issuing results to centres on scheduled dates

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 July 2024 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.

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 2025. 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 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.

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/

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

Guidance for centres on cyber security (Effective from November 2024) www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations/

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/

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](#)