



## EXAM CONTINGENCY PLAN

This policy is reviewed and updated annually by a member of the Senior Leadership Team to ensure compliance with current regulations

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## Purpose of the plan

This plan examines potential risks and issues that could cause disruption to the examination and assessment process at Blatchington Mill School. By outlining actions/procedures to be invoked in case of disruption it is intended to mitigate the impact these disruptions have on our processes and to minimise any adverse impact on candidates.

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 document *What schools and colleges and other centres should do if exams or other assessments are seriously disrupted*, the **JCQ Joint Contingency Plan** for the Examination System in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and the JCQ document **Preparing for disruption to examinations**.

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

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

## Communication of the plan

This plan is communicated to relevant centre staff:

- *via email to the Senior Leadership Team*
- *via the Staff Bulletin to all centre staff*
- *via the Exam Info shared drive (all staff)*

## Resilience arrangements

In the unlikely event that the government determines that examinations cannot go ahead, the centre will need evidence of candidate assessment performance to enable alternative methods of awarding grades.

In line with the Ofqual current guidance ([Guidance on collecting evidence of student performance to ensure resilience in the qualifications system - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-collecting-evidence-of-student-performance-to-ensure-resilience-in-the-qualifications-system)) and in accordance with JCQ General Regulations (GR 3.16) Blatchington Mill School's process is as follows:

- Students in Year 11 will sit formal mock examinations under full exam conditions at the end of Term 1.
- Mock examination papers will be retained by teachers and will be securely stored in lockable cupboards, store room or offices.
- Students may be given access to their papers under teacher supervision for example in lesson time.
- In the event that a student requires a copy of their exam papers then this will be provided either as a hard copy or in scanned form. This will be managed on a case-by-case basis.
- Evidence must be retained until all public examinations in the relevant qualification have taken place.

## Contingency arrangements

In accordance with the regulations (GR 3.17-19), Blatchington Mill School **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 leader(s) 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

- the 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 or sites if examinations cannot be conducted at the registered address.

Blatchington Mill School **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.

Blatchington Mill School **must** ensure that candidates' work, when produced electronically, is backed-up; ideally on two separate devices, including one off-site back-up via the Cloud. 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 Blatchington Mill School 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.

- **Senior Designated Contact for National Centre Number Register**
  - *Sarah Hextall (Business Manager) – email and mobile phone number provided to NCNR*

## Staff escalation

The below grid shows the nominated back-up person in the event that a member of staff with a key role in the administration and/or delivery of examinations is absent for an extended period. The responsibilities of the absent member of staff will be escalated to the back-up person with additional support being provided to ensure continuity of day-to-day activities.

Absent Member of Staff		Back-Up		Support	
Position	Name	Position	Name	Position	Name
Head of Centre	Kate Claydon	Assistant Head	Alexis Crawford	Deputy Head	Brandon Hughes
Assistant Head	Alexis Crawford	Head of Centre	Kate Claydon	Business Manager Exams Officer	Sarah Hextall Hilary Willmott
Exams Officer	Hilary Willmott	Assistant Head	Alexis Crawford	Exams Assistant	Rosie Tarry
Exams Assistant	Rosie Tarry	Exams Officer	Hilary Willmott	Assistant Head Lead Invigilators	Alexis Crawford Various
SEN Exams Coordinator	Marilyn Ahadzadeh	SEND K Lead	Sarah Colbert	SENCO Exams Officer	Claire Harrington Hilary Willmott

## Succession arrangements

Blatchington Mill School is committed to ensuring that the administration of examinations and assessments can be maintained in the event that key staff permanently leave their role.

The school's organisational structure, collaborative culture, open communication and shared leadership principles creates an environment which facilitates effective succession planning:

- Resilience and succession plans are inherent in the Senior Leadership Team's (SLT) matrix and hierarchical structure.
- Key knowledge within the Exams Office Team is passed on through mentorship and training.

- Effective use is made of digital platforms to share information and keep all resources in one central place (Exams Office and Exams Info shared drives, Exam Task List and Exams Webpages).

Role specific succession arrangements are outlined in the table below.

Position	Succession Plan
Head of Centre	Deputy Head
Assistant Head	Assistant Head / Extended SLT
Exams Officer	Exams Assistant
Exams Assistant	Admin Team / Senior Invigilators
SEN Exams Coordinator	SEND K Lead
SENCOS	Deputy SENCO

## Causes of potential 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*
- *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

- The Assistant Headteacher, who is responsible for the line management of the Exams Officer, will act as stand-in with administration support from the Exams Assistant
- The Assistant Headteacher and the Exams Officer will meet on a fortnightly basis to gain ongoing understanding of the progress through the exam cycle and the status of key tasks
- Support from the Local Network Group and The Exams Office of which we are members will be called upon
- MIS manuals, help-centre articles/videos and support can be used to enable processing of entries or results and to generate exam day documents as required.

## **2. SEN staff 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 providing support to access arrangement candidates not allocated and trained*

##### *Exam time*

- *access arrangement candidate support not arranged for exam rooms*

#### Centre actions

##### Planning

- In the event the assessor was unwell for an extended period of time, the local authority would organise for a temporary replacement
- In the event of absence of the SEN Exam Co-ordinator the SEND K Lead could collate the evidence to support need and the normal way of working

##### Pre exams

- The SEND K Lead and Exams Officer, working together, could apply for access arrangements to the awarding body.
- The SEND K Lead, Exams Officer and SEND administrator will be responsible for putting access arrangements in place.
- Modified papers are the responsibility of the Exams Office.
- The Exams Office will provide training to the Learning Support Assistants for access arrangement support.

#### Exam time

- SEND staff would ensure that suitable support arrangements are made for students with access arrangements.

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

#### Criteria for implementation of the plan

*Key tasks not undertaken including:*

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

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

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

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

#### Centre actions

- Exams Officer constantly checking that all information needed has been handed over. In the event of absence by the Head of Department the Exams Officer will liaise with the second in department/line manager to get the information necessary. Line Manager will be informed about non-examination assessments by Exams Officer or second in department.
- Internal assessment marks are recorded by teachers in shared department mark sheets. In the event a teacher is absent these can be accessed by the Head of Department so that candidates can be informed of their marks by the appropriate deadline. If required the Exams Officer may request a deadline extension from the relevant awarding body.

### **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

- Sufficient invigilators will be recruited and trained in order to-minimise the risk of a shortage
- Invigilators are advised to notify the Exams Officer a minimum of 30 minutes before their start time if they are not available so that a replacement invigilator can be found
- Cover Supervisors/Admin Staff can be called upon to invigilate in the event that none of the external invigilation team are able to cover the shortage. This may be for all or part of the duration of the exam.
- The Exams Officer and/or Exams Assistant can invigilate for short term shortages (such as to cover for late arrivals or whilst replacement staff are being arranged)

## 5. Exam rooms - lack of appropriate rooms or main venues unavailable

### 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

- Alternative venues at the centre would be identified by SLT and made available to meet examination needs. Other school activities would be cancelled, rescheduled or postponed as required.
- The candidates will be supervised in another area without mobile phones or electronic devices until there is a venue available.

### Alternatives to Main Exam Venues:

- At this centre: West Wing Gym, East Wing Gym, Drama Studio, Drama Hut, Dance Studio, Theatre Stage, AP Block

## 6. Cyber security\*

### Criteria for implementation of the plan

*Where any incidents might compromise any aspect of assessment delivery, such as a cyber-attack*

\*Information about Cyber Security measures to minise risk of such incidents can be found in the centre's Cyber Security policy.

### Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- Any cyber-attack will be reported to the National Cyber Security Centre (<https://report.ncsc.gov.uk/>). The school will contact local law enforcement and Action Fraud (<https://www.actionfraud.police.uk/>). We will also inform the DfE by emailing: [sector.securityenquiries@education.gov.uk](mailto:sector.securityenquiries@education.gov.uk)
- Exams Officer will work with IT and make contact with the relevant Awarding Bodies to seek further guidance
- Senior Leaders will monitor the situation and take any action required as directed by the Awarding Bodies

## 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*

*IT system corruption affecting candidates' work*

*Failure of Application used for candidates using Word Processors for exams*

### Centre actions

In the event of a school network failure:

- Entries can be made using a standalone computer with external internet access
- Exam day documents and labels can be created and printed using non-networked devices and external internet connections
- Students who use Word Processors for exams are not connected to the school network but via Trelson software an internet-based program
- Awarding bodies would be notified if failure persists and causes potential email communication issues

In the event of an MIS failure:

- Entries can be made directly via the Awarding Body online portals. These would be based on class lists (previously downloaded and accessible via Google Drive)
- Exam day documents (registers, seating plans etc.) can be created manually from the Awarding Body attendance registers
- Result can be downloaded from the Awarding Body online portals

In the event of Trelson (secure digital exam system):

- Failure during an exam – the candidate's work is automatically saved locally to the Chromebook. At the end of the exam, instead of submitting the work to Trelson they would wait for the file to be downloaded on to a USB stick and then printed by Network Services. Students would be taken to a classroom to wait for their printed work so that they can check and sign it.
- Failure at the start of the exam – Network services would switch-off Kiosk mode on the Chromebooks and candidates would login to own account. Internet access would not be restricted therefore we would increase the staffing ratio to 1:5. Each member of staff would supervise 5 candidates ensuring that at no point could they open an internet browser. This would be reported to the Awarding Body.

In the event that candidate's work has been corrupted or is rendered inaccessible:

- All NEA work is stored in at least two independent locations:
  - Google Drive (either through Google Classroom or on the teacher's Google Drive folders)
  - Head of Subject's network drive (N Drive) – this is back-up daily
  - Third party software for creative subjects such as Music and Media

## 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

- The candidates will be supervised without access to mobile phones and electronic devices while any short-term problem is solved, special consideration will be applied for
- If the problem is unable to be solved inform relevant awarding organisations as soon as it is possible and safe to do so and seek advice
- If students have been disadvantaged special consideration will be applied for
- Refer to emergency plans and/or health and safety policy where appropriate.
- Invigilators to follow the emergency evacuation procedure for examinations

## 9. Disruption of teaching time – centre closed for an extended period

Criteria for implementation of the plan

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

Centre actions

- Students will be able to access work via Google Classroom. The school will make parents aware of the situation and what the long-term plans will be for teaching and learning, alternative site etc.
- Remote teaching and learning protocols, as used during Covid-19, can be activated quickly if required

## **10. Candidates unable to take examinations – centre remains open**

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Candidates are unable to attend the examination centre to take examinations as normal

Centre actions

- Consider moving the starting time of the examination for all candidates (see section 6.2 of the JCQ document *Instructions for conducting examinations*). Candidates will need to be fully supervised between the published and actual start times of the exam.
- Communicate with relevant awarding organisations at the outset to make them aware of the issue and seek advice
- Communicate with parents, carers and candidates regarding any possible solutions/options to the issue
- Liaise with candidates to identify whether the examination can be sat at an alternative venue in agreement with relevant awarding organisations
- Offer candidates an opportunity to sit any examinations missed at the next available series
- Apply to awarding organisations for special consideration for candidates where they have met the minimum requirements

## **11. Centre unable to open for examinations**

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Centre unable to open as normal for scheduled examinations or the Main Venues rendered inaccessible for a prolonged period of time (including *centre being unavailable for examinations owing to an unforeseen emergency such as a fire*)

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

It is important to note that our site is very large with exam venues being situated at opposite ends of the building. We also have several large stand-alone spaces (Dance Studio, Drama Hut and the Alternative Provision Block) which could be used for exams if required.

All possible exam spaces being rendered inaccessible would only occur if there was a catastrophic event causing widespread destruction to the local area; in such a scenario the emergency services would lead the process with a focus on safety and preserving human life.

Centre actions

- Inform relevant awarding organisations as soon as possible and seek advice
- Open the centre for examinations and examination candidates only, if possible

- Contact will be made with local centre Hove Park School and/or to explore alternative accommodation options. If suitable venues cannot be found contact will be made with other venues, such as university and conference facilities, with spaces large enough to house our candidates
- Notify the JCQ Centre Inspection Service of an alternative site arrangement by submitting the JCQ Alternative Site form online, using the Centre Admin Portal (CAP)
- Special consideration is an option if all other avenues have been exhausted and candidates meet the published criteria

Alternatives Site Details:

- Nearby centre: Hove Park Valley Campus in Hangleton Way. Two large halls that could be used for exams. Contact: John Gaston (Exams Officer) [jgaston@hovepark.org.uk](mailto:jgaston@hovepark.org.uk)
- Other facilities: CityCoast Centre <https://www.citycoastcentre.co.uk/> and/or Withdean Sports Complex <https://www.freedom-leisure.co.uk/centres/withdean-sports-complex/>

## 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

- Communicate with awarding organisations to organise alternative delivery of papers
- Under certain circumstances awarding organisations could provide centre with electronic access to examination papers via a secure external network. These would be received, printed and stored under secure conditions. Awarding organisations should provide guidance on the conduct of examinations in such circumstances
- If disruption is widespread, 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. Delay in collection of completed examination scripts

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Delay in normal collection arrangements for completed examination scripts

Centre actions

- The scripts will be locked away in the secure store until alternative arrangements have been put in place:
  - where examinations are part of the national 'yellow label' service or where awarding organisations arrange collections, the Exams Officer will seek and follow advice from awarding organisations
  - for examinations where we make our own arrangements, they will be taken to a post office for sending

## 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 e.g. a fire at the centre

Completed examination scripts/assessment evidence does not reach awarding organisations

#### Centre actions

- Communicate this immediately to the relevant awarding organisation(s), candidates and their parents or carers
- Seek advice from awarding organisations on their procedures for dealing with such issues. Apply for Special Consideration if applicable and minimum requirements have been met
- Where partial assessments can be recovered these will be made available where appropriate
- Procedures to recover/re-complete work (e.g. IT data reconstruction for electronic work) will be employed where relevant
- Awarding organisations to generate candidate marks for affected assessments based on other appropriate evidence of candidate achievement as defined by the awarding organisations

### **15. Centre unable to distribute results as normal or facilitate post results services**

#### 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

- The action would differ depending on the root cause and extent of the issue. A range of solutions are possible such as:
  - IT technicians being on-call during results periods to resolve technical issues
  - Candidate Statements of Results can be accessed from awarding body websites and either printed or emailed
  - Results can be published to students via Edulink One (pupil/parent portal)
  - Results are sent via email using SIMS DMS and Edulink One
  - Access to internet and printing facilities can be arranged at an alternative location
- Communicate with parents, carers and candidates regarding any possible solutions/options to the issue.

# Further guidance to inform and implement contingency planning

## Ofqual

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

#### 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 [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 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

15.1 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 or 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 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. 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>

15.6 The designation of 'contingency sessions within the common examination timetable is for use 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 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. 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** <http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/ice---instructions-for-conducting-examinations>, section 15, Contingency planning)

## Other JCQ Guidance

- General regulations for approved centres: <http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations>
- Guidance on alternative site arrangements: <https://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/cap/>
- Instructions for conducting examinations: <http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/ice---instructions-for-conducting-examinations>
- A guide to the special consideration process: <http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-special-consideration/regulations-and-guidance>
- JCQ Joint Contingency Plan: [www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/other-documents](http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/other-documents)
- A guide to the special consideration process [www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-special-consideration/regulations-and-guidance](http://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](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/emergency-planning-and-response-for-education-childcare-and-childrens-social-care-settings)
- *Dispatch of exam scripts/Contingency planning:*  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dispatch-of-exam-scripts-yellow-label-service>
- *Statutory guidance on school closures:* <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-organisation-maintained-schools>

## Cyber Security

### JCQ

Guidance for centres on cyber security [www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations/](http://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/](http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/blogs/)

### 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](#)

### 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>