



CASTLE MEAD
ACADEMY

Exam Contingency Plan
2025-26

Policy Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

The policy will be promoted and implemented throughout the academy. The Local Governing Body will review the policy, unless there are significant changes in the interim period.

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Ratified by:	Miss C French
Date ratified:	06/10/2025
Review date:	October 2026

Key staff involved in the policy

Version:	Date:	Author:	Summary of Changes:
1.0	04.09.2023	Miss A Thorley	New Policy
2.0	23/02/2024	Miss A Thorley	Further guidance added to inform procedures and implement contingency planning
3.0	19/09/2024	Miss Thorley	Reviewed
4.0	06/10/2025	Mr Gilbert	Reviewed – Further guidance added to inform contingency planning procedures
Centre Name		Castle Mead Academy	
Centre Number		25361	
Date policy first created		13/09/2023	
Current policy approved by		Miss C French	
Current policy reviewed by		Miss C French	
Date of next review		01/10/2026	
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Purpose of the Plan

This plan examines potential risks and issues that could cause disruption to the exam process.

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 at Castle Mead Academy.

Alongside internal processes this plan is informed by the Ofqual Exam system contingency plan: England, Wales and Northern Ireland which provides guidance in the publication, 'What centres 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 (Effective from 1 September 2024).

This plan details how Castle Mead Academy complies with the JCQ's General Regulations for Approved Centres (section 5.3, Centre management) by having in place a written examination contingency plan which covers all aspects of examination administration and delivery. This will allow members of the senior leadership team to act immediately in the event of an emergency or where the head of centre, examinations officer or SENCo is absent at a critical stage of the examination cycle. The examination contingency plan should reinforce procedures in the event of the centre being unavailable for examinations, or on results day, owing to an unforeseen emergency. The potential impact of a cyber-attack should also be considered.

National Centre Number Register and other information requirements

The head of centre will also ensure that as a contingency to enable the prompt handling of urgent issues only will respond 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. (GR 5.3)

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.

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

Where the head of centre may 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. SLT to take over the processes.

Possible Causes of Disruption to the Exam Process

1. Exams Officer extended absence at key points in the exam process (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 and trained.

Entries

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

Pre-exams

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

Exam time

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

The centre will: train staff cover for Exams Officer. In the case of absence, the Academy Manager will ensure staff are adequately trained to cover the Exams Officer Role. Help can be gained from experienced staff from within the trust. SLT to also provide support.

2. SENDCO extended absence at a critical stage of the exam cycle

Criteria for implementation of the plan

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

Planning

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

Pre-exams

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

Exam time

- access arrangement candidate support not arranged for exam rooms

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above.

- The centre will: Have staff cover for SENDCO. There is always more than one person who knows the testing process and is trained in Access Arrangements. We currently have three people trained in centre. The Exams Officer, Lead Teacher of SEND, Deputy SENDCO and Teaching Assistants can also work with SLT to identify students where applications for access arrangements may be required. Last resort: employ external agencies/professionals.

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 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 submission deadlines.

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above.

- The centre will: Have the Curriculum Leader who will always cover for absent staff in making entry decisions and work in liaison with the Exams Officer. Where this is not possible the Exams Officer will liaise with the relevant Awarding Body and act upon advice received.

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 listed above.

The centre will: In addition to the Invigilators we recruit specifically for exam seasons, have a number of permanent centre staff who receive the JCQ invigilator training every year. These staff will step in as and when required to ensure adequate cover at all times. The Examinations Officer will review the invigilation staffing at the start of each academic year to ensure sufficient staff are recruited and trained in a timely fashion.

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 listed above.

The centre will:

- (where main exam venue(s) unavailable due to an unexpected incident at exam time) where possible, make use of other available rooms within the centre, prioritising candidates whose progression will be severely delayed if they do not take their exam or timetabled assessment when planned.
 - We try to keep alternative rooms in a small cluster as they are easier to manage even if this sometimes means relocating existing classes.
 - Our main Sports Hall is separated from the main centre. If the Sports Hall was out of bounds, we would use the Theatre which is in the main block of the centre which would seat 120 scholars and we would then use classrooms as required on the second floor.
 - If there was an incident outside preventing access to the main entrance of the site, we have alternative entrances to the site.
 - In the event of a room not being available at very short notice, sufficient staff will be made available to ensure the security of the examination is not compromised whilst alternative rooming is sourced. The SLT will work with the Exams Officer at all times during such emergencies.
- identify whether the exam or timetabled assessment can be sat at an alternative venue, in agreement with the relevant awarding body.
- (where main exam venue(s) unavailable due to an unexpected incident at exam time) where possible, **move to alternative venue**, prioritising candidates whose progression will be severely delayed if they do not take their exam or timetabled assessment when planned.
 - If, for any extreme reason, the whole site was out of use, we would utilise the premises of other centres in our MAT. A Hall in one or two of the Primary centres can be used e.g. Abbey Mead Primary Academy and Knighton Mead Primary Academy
- communicate with candidates (and where appropriate, parents/carers) any changes to the exam or assessment timetable or to the venue.
 - Communication details: Staff will send out a text to all parents/carers of any changes to the exam's venue should it be off site, details to be confirmed.
- ensure the secure transportation of question papers or assessment materials to the alternative venue.
- (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.

6. Cyber-attack

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- Where a cyber-attack may compromise any aspect of delivery at any point via:
 - Malware Attack
 - Phishing Attack
 - Password
 - Insider
 - Man in the middle

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above:

- The Exam Manager, in consultation with the SLT, will make entries from another venue direct to the Awarding Bodies(AB). Results may also be accessed directly from the AB. At all times during the system failure the EM will liaise with the AB to minimise disruption and costs incurred.
- The centre has checked and secured all accounts and systems relating to exam information with multifactor authentication
- Any cyber-attack will be reported to the NCSC and the Trust IT team in conjunction with the centre will contact local law enforcement and Action Fraud. We will also inform the DfE by emailing: sector.securityenquiries@education.gov.uk
- The Trust IT system additionally subscribes to the Cyber Essentials Plus government backed certification scheme. Refer **GR3.21**

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

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above.

This will include the security arrangements put in place which protect candidates' work – refer to GR 3.19).

The centre has:

- excellent off-site support for our MIS system from Bromcom
- remote access for working off-site.
- All software for result downloads placed on an encrypted laptop so can be completed offsite.
- The Exams Officer to contact Awarding Bodies directly to arrange alternative methods of information exchange.
- Results that may also be accessed directly from the Awarding Bodies.
- At all times during the system failure the Exams Officer will liaise with the Awarding Bodies to minimise disruption and costs incurred.
- Head of Centre to be informed.

8. Emergency evacuation of the exam room (or centre lock down)

Criteria for implementation of the plan:

- Whole centre evacuation (or lock down) during the 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 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 exam board as soon as possible for further guidance.
- (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.
- where accommodation is limited, prioritise candidates whose progression will be severely delayed if they do not take their exam or timetabled assessment when planned.

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 listed above

The centre will:

- Invoke the Business Continuity Plan. Whilst this was being put in place, study guides, revision work and appropriate course work would be posted online via 'Satchel One'.
- Have the exams Officer contact the Awarding Bodies for advice on special consideration, alternative arrangements for conducting examinations that may be available and on the options for candidates who have not been able to take scheduled examinations.
- If applicable, advise candidates, where appropriate, of the opportunities to take their exam or assessment at a later date
- SLT to manage all such incidents.
- recognise it remains the responsibility of the centre to prepare students, as usual, for examinations.
- facilitate alternative methods of learning.
- communicate with candidates (and where appropriate, parents/carers) information relating to alternative methods of learning.
 - Communication details:
Parents/carers will be sent an e-mail text or letter informing them of the disruption, with details to be confirmed.

10. Candidates unable to take examinations because of a crisis – centre remains open

Criteria for implementation of the plan

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

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above.

The centre will:

- focus on options that enable candidates to take their examinations (referencing the JCQ document [Preparing for disruption to examinations](#))
- 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: Staff will send out a text to all parents/carers of any changes to the exam's venue should it be off site, details to be confirmed.
- 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
- liaise with SLT to take appropriate action.
- Possible invigilation at home for a small number of students along with special consideration
- With a larger number of students, we would actively encourage them to sit the exam with the offer of pastoral support and application for special consideration.
- Inform students to follow government guidance if an infectious disease was the crisis.

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

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

Criteria for implementation of the plan

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

A centre which is unable to open as normal for examinations must inform each awarding organisation with which examinations are due to be taken as soon as is possible. [JCP Scenario 5]

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above.

The centre will:

- focus on options that enable candidates to take their examinations (referencing the JCQ document [Preparing for disruption to examinations](#))
- take advice, or follow instructions, from relevant local or national agencies in deciding whether the centre is able to open.
- contact the relevant awarding body as soon as possible and
 - follow its instructions.

- discuss possible 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).)
- 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.
- (where main exam venue(s) unavailable due to an unexpected incident at exam time) where possible, **move to alternative venue**, prioritising candidates whose progression will be severely delayed if they do not take their exam or timetabled assessment when planned.
 - If, for any extreme reason, the whole site was out of use, we would utilise the premises of other centres in our MAT. A Hall in one or two of the Primary centres can be used. could be best (Transport issues to be addressed) as the other Secondary centres would presumably also have exams going on.
- communicate with candidates (and where appropriate, parents/carers) any changes to the exam or assessment timetable or to the venue.
 - Communication details: Staff will send out a text to all parents/carers of any changes to the exam's venue should it be off site, details to be confirmed.
- Ensure the Exams officer liaises with the SLT to take appropriate action.
- deployed to the alternative provision already identified.
- Exams Officer would log into the relevant awarding bodies secure site to download the papers. These would be photocopied for the required numbers.
- 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 listed above.

The centre will:

- log into and 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
- Print or photocopy the required numbers and 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 listed above.

The centre will:

- where examinations are part of the national 'yellow label' service or where awarding organisations arrange collections, seek advice from the relevant awarding organisations and will not make its own arrangements for transportation unless told to do so by the awarding organisation.
- for any examinations where the centre makes its own arrangements for transportation, investigate alternative dispatch options that comply with the requirements detailed in the JCQ Instructions for conducting examinations.
- ensure the secure storage of completed examination scripts until collection.
- Last resort- if advised by the AB, the Exams Officer would deliver to the post office.

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 listed above.

The centre will:

- notify the relevant awarding bodies and seek advice. All assessments are marked periodically, and details are kept on subject marksheets on the central MIS system/student files.
- 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.
- It is the responsibility of the Principal to communicate this immediately to the relevant awarding organisation(s) and subsequently to scholars and families [JCP Scenario 6].
- AB to generate candidate marks for affected assessments based on other appropriate evidence of candidate achievement as defined by the AB.
- where marks cannot be generated by awarding body, inform candidates they may need to retake the affected assessment in a subsequent assessment series.
- The EO will always ensure proof of postage.
- The EO will notify Curriculum Leader a second sample of work may be required.

15. Centre unable to distribute results as normal (including in the event of the centre being unavailable on results day owing to an unforeseen emergency) 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 to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above.

The centre will:

- make arrangements to access its results at an alternative venue/share facilities with another centre if this is possible, in agreement with the relevant awarding body.
- The Exams Officer or Head of Centre to contact AB about alternative options [JCP Scenario 11].
- make arrangements to coordinate access to post-results services from an alternative venue.
- An alternative venue e.g., Rushey Mead Academy would be set up and this communicated to scholars and families, in agreement with the relevant AB.
- make arrangements to make post-results requests at an alternative location
- contact the relevant awarding body 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.
 - Communication details: to be confirmed, details sent out via text, e-mail.

Causes 7-13 – all scenarios, criteria and specific communications have been taken directly from the Joint contingency plan in the event of widespread disruption to the examination system in England, Wales and Northern Ireland

Further guidance to inform procedures and implement contingency planning

DfE

Meeting digital and technology standards in schools and colleges

Cyber Security Standards in schools and colleges (www.gov.uk/guidance/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

(www.gov.uk/government/publications/indicators-of-potential-fraud-learning-institutions/guide-on-cyber-crime-and-cyber-security-for-education-providers)

DfE Cyber Security Guidance - March 2023 ([/www.theexamsoffice.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/DfE-Cyber-Security-Guidance-March-2023.pdf](http://www.theexamsoffice.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/DfE-Cyber-Security-Guidance-March-2023.pdf))

Ofqual

Ofqual guidance extract 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

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

"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

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

- Communicate with any external assessors, invigilators or relevant third parties regarding any changes to the exam or assessment timetable.

After the exam

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

Steps the awarding organisation should take

Exam planning

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

In the event of disruption

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

After the exam

- Consider any requests for special consideration for affected students; for example, those who may have lost their internally assessed work or whose performance in assessments or exams could have been affected by the disruption.
- If any students miss an exam or are disadvantaged by the disruption
- If some of the students have been adversely affected by the disruption, you should ask the awarding organisation about applying for special consideration.
- Decisions about special consideration, when it is or is not appropriate, is for each awarding organisation to make. Their decisions might be different for different qualifications and for different subjects, 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.

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"

JCQ

JCQ guidance taken directly from [Instructions for conducting examinations 2024-2025](#) section 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: 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* - 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 in the event of national or significant local disruption to examinations. It is part of the awarding bodies' standard contingency planning for examinations.
- 5.7 In the event that there is 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 was agreed to reschedule the examinations and the affected candidates will be expected to make themselves available in such circumstances. The decision regarding the re-scheduling 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. However, the awarding bodies will not insist upon candidates being available throughout the entire timetable period as a matter of course."

Links to other JCQ documentation

[JCQ Joint Contingency Plan](#)

[JCQ Preparing for disruption to examinations](#)

[General Regulations for Approved Centres](#)

[Guidance notes on alternative site arrangements](#)

[Guidance notes for transferred candidates](#)

[Instructions for conducting examinations](#)

[A guide to the special consideration process](#)

[Guidance for centres on cyber security](#)

[Information for centres affected by RAAC – the delivery of non-examination assessments and the special consideration process](#)

[Further clarification for centres affected by RAAC, Caledonian Modular or similar building issues – March 2024](#)

GOV.UK

[Emergency planning and response](#): Exam and assessment disruption

[Dispatch of exam scripts guide](#): Ensuring the service runs smoothly; Contingency planning

Wales

[School closures: examinations](#)

[Opening schools in extremely bad weather and extreme hot weather](#)

Northern Ireland

[Exceptional closure days - Northern Ireland](#)

[Checklist - exceptional closure of schools](#)

National Cyber Security Centre

[Cyber Security for Schools](#)

[Cyber security training for school staff](#)

Changes 2024/2025

(Changed) Document name changed to Contingency Plan.

(Changed) Any reference to ALS Lead/SENCo changed to SENCo (or equivalent role).

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

(Added) A new sub-heading under Purpose of the plan: Contingency arrangements and added a new field containing associated text taken from General Regulations for Approved Centres (3.17-19).

(Changed) The content of the text under the heading National Centre Number Register and other information requirements:

From) 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)

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

(Added) Under 3. Teaching staff extended absence at a critical stage of the exam cycle reference to controlled assessment and coursework.

(Changed) Reference changed from 'Alternative venue details' to Alternative site(s) details.

(Added) Under 6. Cyber-attack added a prompt in the insert text field under Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above: (This will include the required arrangements for cyber security – refer to GR 3.21).

(Added) Under 7. Failure of IT systems added a further example of criteria for implementation of the plan: IT system corruption affecting candidates' work. Added a prompt in the insert text field under Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above: (This will include the security arrangements put in place which protect candidates' work – refer to GR 3.19).

(Added) Under 10. Candidates may not be able to take examinations - centre remains open additional text to the 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. New bullet point added under Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above: (focus on options that enable candidates to take their examinations).

(Added) Under point 11. Centre may not be able to open as normal during the examination period new bullet point under Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above: (focus on enabling candidates to take their examinations).

(Changed) point 13 title (From) Disruption to transporting completed examination scripts (To) Delay in collection arrangements for completed examination scripts.

(Updated) Under the heading below Further guidance to inform procedures and implement contingency planning, relevant links and information has been updated and outdated links/information removed.

Centre-specific changes

Upon review in September 2024, no centre-specific updates or changes were applicable to the document. The above policy details have been amended.

Exams Day Contingency Plan – Centre

If Bejal Shah is not in by 7 am, the Anna Thorley to start the exam process by 7:20

Exam Item	Location / Holders Name	Responsibility
Keys to Secure Storage for exam papers and exam stationery-	Keys in key safe in DG's office. Spare key to safe with Ruth in the safe)	
Exams Office - Centre Timetable / Rooming Timetable	In EO office/ SH	
Seating Plans	In EO office – Files on table	
Exam Desk Labels/Cards	In EO Office – Box lids with individual years on shelf	
Setting out of Exams Room	Invigilators to set up rooms under guidance of EO	EO/SLT/HOC
Notices – Warning to candidates / No Mobile Phones, No Watches. ICE Booklet. Clocks.	All in separate exam store in ready-made packs and additional equipment	EO/SLT/HOC
Exam Registers	In EO office – Expandable file on table	EO/SLT/HOC
Invigilator Timetable	In EO office	
Register of Invigilators and contact details	In EO office	
Register of Access Arrangements	Files on shelf in SENCO office	
Access Arrangements Script Cover Sheets	To be downloaded prior to exams	EO/SLT//HOC
Script Envelopes	All in EO secure office	
Examiner Address Labels	In EO office – Expandable file on table	
AB stationery booklet	All in secure store on shelves	
Exam clash chart and candidate quarantine details	In EO office – Files on table	EO/SLT/HOC
Collection of Scripts	All bags scripts to be given to reception and kept secure prior to collection	EO/SLT/HOC
Collation of Scripts	All scripts collated by EO/SLT for exams	EO/SLT//HOC
Completion of Proof of Posting Form	Parcelforce collection form by EO/SLT for exams	EO/SLT/HOC

Postage of Scripts	Only with the failure of Parcelforce – take to post office	EO/SLT/HOC
Awarding Body Tel. Numbers:		
AQA	0161 953 1180	
OCR	01223 553 998	
Edexcel	0344 463 2535	
WJEC	02920 265 000	