CASTLE MEAD
ACADEMY

Exam Contingency Plan
2026-27

Policy Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

The policy will be promoted and implemented throughout the academy. This plan will be reviewed and updated at least annually by the designated senior leader with oversight of examination and assessment administration and approved in accordance with the Academy's governance arrangements. It will also be reviewed following any significant incident, material change to examination arrangements or relevant change to JCQ requirements.

Key staff involved in the policy

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	01/10/2027
Key staff involved in the policy- Senior leader(s) Role	Name(s)
Head of Centre	Miss C French
Principal	Miss C French
Vice Principal, Behaviour	Mr T Worn
Head of Safeguarding	Mr A Hernandez-Evora
Academy Manager	Mrs R Sharp
Assistant Principal, Belonging	Mr T Gardner
Vice Principal, Teaching and Learning	Miss A Harris
Head of Behaviour	Mr L Mayes
Assistant Principal, Character	Miss J Simpkin
Assistant Principal, Achievement	Ms M Thornhill & Ms L Woods
Assistant Principal, Logistics and Assessment	Mr D Gilbert
ALS lead/SENCo	Mrs V Dakin
Exams Manager	Bejal Shah

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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 (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 and the JCQ guidance Preparing for disruption to examinations.

This plan also confirms how Castle Mead Academy complies with the current JCQ General Regulations for Approved Centres by maintaining an up-to-date written contingency plan covering all aspects of examination and assessment administration and delivery. The plan is reviewed and updated annually by a member of the senior leadership team, communicated to relevant staff and includes succession arrangements for members of staff involved in examination and assessment administration.

Contingency arrangements

The centre 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 alternative sites which can be used if examinations cannot be conducted at the registered address. Larger centres may require more than one potential alternative site or different sites for different year groups.

The centre 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.

The centre must ensure where candidates' work is produced electronically it is backed-up and should consider the contingency of candidates' work being backed-up 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. (GR 3.17-19)

National Centre Number Register and other information requirements

The head of centre will ensure that the centre completes the National Centre Number Register annual update by the end of October every year (even if there are no changes to centre details) 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)

Head of centre/senior leader(s) with oversight of examination and assessment administration 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.

Primary cover: Assistant Principal – Logistics and Assessment
Secondary cover: Academy Manager
Additional support: suitably experienced examinations staff within the Trust.

2. SENCo (or equivalent role) 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: Where the SENCo is absent, appropriately trained staff will maintain operational access-arrangement processes. Any assessment, evidence or approval activity requiring a specific qualification or SENCo responsibility will only be undertaken by a person meeting the current JCQ requirements. External appropriately qualified support will be commissioned where necessary.

3. Teaching staff (or other key staff essential to the examination process) 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.
    - Primary alternative examination site: Abbey Mead Primary Academy
      Secondary alternative site: Knighton Mead Primary Academy
      Additional capacity where required: Brook Mead 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.
    - The designated senior leader will coordinate communications. Candidates and parents/carers will normally be contacted using the Academy's mass communication system, with email and the Academy website used where appropriate. Staff, invigilators and other relevant parties will be contacted through established internal communication channels
- 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 Security

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- A cyber incident affects or threatens access to awarding-body systems, candidate data, examination materials, the MIS, centre networks, electronic assessment systems or other systems required for examination administration and delivery.

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.
- Cyber incidents will be escalated immediately to the Trust IT team and designated senior leader. The centre will follow the Academy/Trust Cyber Security Incident Response arrangements and notify awarding bodies, the DfE, NCSC, Action Fraud, the ICO or other relevant organisations where appropriate to the nature and severity of the incident
- The Trust IT system additionally subscribes to the Cyber Essentials Plus government backed certification scheme. Refer GR3.38
- Where account credentials may have been compromised, affected accounts will be secured immediately in liaison with the Trust IT team. Passwords will be reset and active sessions/tokens revoked where appropriate. Awarding bodies will be notified immediately where their systems or accounts may have been compromised.7. Failure of IT systems
- Candidate work produced electronically will be backed up in accordance with the Academy's IT and Cyber Security arrangements. The centre will maintain appropriate secure off-site/cloud backup and recovery arrangements and will test its ability to restore examination-related information as part of its business-continuity arrangements

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
- Technical failure or power outage immediately prior to or during an on-screen examination

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:

- 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. The designated senior leader will coordinate communications. Candidates and parents/carers will normally be contacted using the Academy's mass communication system, with email and the Academy website used where appropriate. Staff, invigilators and other relevant parties will be contacted through established internal communication channels
- take advice offered by the awarding body regarding alternative arrangements for conducting examinations that may be available
- take advice offered by the awarding body on the options for candidates who have not been able to take scheduled examinations
- advise candidates, where appropriate, of the opportunities to take their exam or assessment at a later date

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. The designated senior leader will coordinate communications. Candidates

and parents/carers will normally be contacted using the Academy's mass communication system, with email and the Academy website used where appropriate. Staff, invigilators and other relevant parties will be contacted through established internal communication channels

- 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.
- Where an individual candidate cannot attend the centre because of exceptional circumstances, the Exams Manager will seek advice from the relevant awarding body before making any alternative examination arrangement. Where appropriate, an application for special consideration will be made
- 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. The designated senior leader will coordinate communications. Candidates and parents/carers will normally be contacted using the Academy's mass communication system, with email and the Academy website used where appropriate. Staff, invigilators and other relevant parties will be contacted through established internal communication channels
- 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:

- The Exams Manager will notify the relevant awarding body immediately and follow its instructions. The centre will provide any available evidence requested by the awarding body. Decisions about whether marks can be generated from alternative evidence, whether another sample is required or whether candidates must retake an assessment rest with the relevant 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].
- 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 awarding body if electronic post-results requests are not possible
- 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: 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 for schools and colleges

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 disruptedwww.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.

The Academy will follow current Ofqual guidance on collecting and retaining evidence of candidate performance for resilience purposes. Appropriate assessments, including mock examinations where applicable, will be conducted and retained in accordance with current guidance. Candidates will be informed where assessment evidence may be retained for this purpose.

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 examinationsin

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'sCentre 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.
- Completed scripts will remain securely stored until handed directly to the authorised collection service. They must not be left unattended in an unsecured reception area.
- 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,

Ofqualin England,

Qualifications Walesin Wales and

CCEA Regulationin 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: 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

Instructions for conducting examinations www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/instructions-for-conducting-examinations-ice/ (with particular reference to section 15, **Contingency planning**)

Preparing for disruption to examinations www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations/

General Regulations for Approved Centres www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations/

Guidance notes on alternative site arrangements www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/online-forms/

Guidance notes for transferred candidates www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/online-forms/

A guide to the special consideration process www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-reasonable-adjustments/

Guidance for centres on cyber security www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations/

Links to other JCQ documentation

JCQ Joint Contingency Plan

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

GOV.UK

Emergency planning and response:

Exam and assessment disruption www.gov.uk/government/publications/emergency-planning-and-response-for-education-childcare-and-childrens-social-care-settings

Dispatch of exam scripts guide:

Contingency planning

www.gov.uk/government/publications/dispatch-of-exam-scripts-yellow-label-service

Wales

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

Opening schools in extremely bad weather and extreme hot weather

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

Northern Ireland

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

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

National Cyber Security Centre

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

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

Changes effective from 1 September 2026

(Updated)

- Under heading Purpose of the plan updated wording to reflect changes in GR 3.31-36 and 5.3
- Under section Cyber security updated reference to GR 3.38
- Under section Failure of IT systems added reference to Technical failure or power outage immediately prior to or during an on-screen examination
- Under heading Further guidance to inform procedures and implement contingency planning updated various hyperlinks.

Exams Day Contingency Plan – Centre

If the Exams Manager is unexpectedly unavailable by 07:00 on an examination day, the Assistant Principal – Logistics and Assessment will initiate the Exam Day Contingency Procedure by 07:20.

Lead to take responsibility for room set up

Exam Item	Location / Holders Name	Responsibility
Keys to Secure Storage for exam papers and exam stationery-	**Authorised contingency key access arrangements are documented separately and are**	David Gilbert Bejal Shah
Exams Office - Centre Timetable / Rooming Timetable		David Gilbert Bejal Shah
Seating Plans		David Gilbert Bejal Shah
Exam Desk Labels/Cards		David Gilbert Bejal Shah

Setting out of Exams Room	**available only to authorised members of staff.**	EO/SLT/HOC
Notices – Warning to candidates / No Mobile Phones, No Watches. ICE Booklet. Clocks.		EO/SLT/HOC
Exam Registers		EO/SLT/HOC
Invigilator Timetable		Emailed to all staff
Register of Invigilators and contact details		All info on Bromcom
Register of Access Arrangements		All info on Bromcom
Access Arrangements Script Cover Sheets		EO/SLT//HOC
Script Envelopes		
Examiner Address Labels		
AB stationery booklet		
Exam clash chart and candidate quarantine details		EO/SLT/HOC
Collection of Scripts		EO/SLT/HOC
Collation of Scripts		EOSLT//HOC
Completion of Proof of Posting Form		EO/SLT/HOC
Postage of Scripts		EO/SLT/HOC
Awarding Body Tel. Numbers: AQA OCR Edexcel WJEC	 0161 953 1180 01223 553 998 0344 463 2535 02920 265 000	