Appendix 1 – Exam Contingency Plan

This plan is reviewed annually to ensure compliance with current regulations

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Purpose of the Plan

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

Alongside internal processes, this plan is informed by the Ofqual (and Northern Ireland Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment) **Exam system contingency plan: England, Wales and Northern Ireland** which provides guidance in the 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 Sir Christopher Hatton Academy's compliance with JCQ's **General Regulations for Approved Centres** (GR 5.3) that:

- The centre has in place for inspection that must be reviewed and updated annually by a member of the senior leadership team and communicated within the centre a contingency plan which covers all aspects of examination/assessment administration and delivery

The centre's contingency planning **must** include succession arrangements for members of staff involved in examination and assessment administration

Contingency arrangements

In accordance with the regulations (GR 3.31-36), Sir Christopher Hatton Academy **must** have in place, and at all times comply with, 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.

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

Sir Christopher Hatton Academy **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

National Centre Number Register and other information requirements

In accordance with the regulations (GR 5.3), the head of centre will ensure that Sir Christopher Hatton Academy completes the National Centre Number Register annual update by the end of October every year (even it 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.

Head of Centre Absence and Escalation Process

In the event that the Head of Centre, Senior Leader with responsibility for examinations, Examinations Officer, SENCo or other key member of staff is absent at a critical stage of the examination cycle, responsibilities will be delegated in accordance with the Academy's escalation process below. The delegated member of staff will assume responsibility for all examination-related decisions, communications with awarding bodies and compliance with JCQ regulations until the postholder returns or alternative arrangements are established.

Post Holder Absent	**Responsibility Escalated to**
Head of Centre	Co-Principal / Vice Principal
Senior Leader with oversight of exams	Another SLT member or Head of Centre
Examinations Officer	Exams and Data Team Member
SENCo	Vice Principal
Head of Department	Line Manager or designated SLT Member
Teaching Staff	Head of Department

Possible Causes of Disruption to the Exam Process

1. **Exam Manager/Officer extended absence at a critical stage of the exam cycle**

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Key tasks required in the management and administration of the exam cycle not undertaken including:

Planning

- *annual data collection exercise not undertaken to collate information on qualifications and awarding body specifications being delivered*
- *annual exams plan not produced identifying essential key tasks, key dates and deadlines*
- *sufficient invigilators not recruited*

Entries

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

Pre-exams

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

Exam time

- *exams/assessments not taken under the conditions prescribed by awarding bodies*
- *required reports/requests not submitted to awarding bodies during exam/assessment periods, for example very late arrival, suspected malpractice, special consideration*
- *candidates' scripts not dispatched as required for marking to awarding bodies*

Results and post-results

- *access to examination results affecting the distribution of results to candidates*
- *the facilitation of the post-results services*

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- the exams and data office operate as a team of three this is to provide adequate cover in the event of absence
- in the event the entire team are absent the head of centre and senior leadership team will identify and provide support needed. They will:

a) Liaise with examination boards to advise them of the situation and provide them with alternative contact email address for communication, if required.
b) Determine tasks that need to be completed and prioritise.
c) Direct support staff provided.
d) Be aware of contact details for Invigilators
e) Liaise with senior invigilators to extend their roles to include issue and return of seating cards, packaging and despatch of Exam scripts.

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

- in the event of the SENDCo absence their assistant will assist with the implementation of the plan with support from the Senior Leadership Team and the exams team.
- In the event of the entire SENCo team being absent the head of centre, with support from the Senior Leadership team will:

a) Liaise with examination boards to advise them of the situation and provide them with alternative contact email address for communication, if required.
b) Determine tasks that need to be completed and prioritise.
c) Direct support staff provided.
d) Be aware of and have access to the JCQ Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments documentation

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 (including controlled assessments and coursework) not set/issued/taken by candidates as scheduled* *Candidates not being informed of centre assessed marks before marks are submitted to the awarding body and therefore not being able to consider appealing internal assessment decisions and requesting a review of the centre's marking* *Internal assessment marks and candidates' work not provided to meet awarding body submission deadlines*
Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption • head of department and senior leaders to ensure deadlines set by the exams officer are met • In the event of teacher absence, the head of department will be required to undertake the key tasks or the senior leaders in their absence

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 • regularly review and train a team of invigilators, recruiting as necessary • provide annual training to key internal support staff members • in the event of absence arrange cover by contacting the team of invigilators • head of centre and senior leadership team to provide support

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

- (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
- identify whether the exam or timetabled assessment can be sat at an alternative venue, in agreement with the relevant awarding body

Alternative site(s):

- consider the use of other trust schools, source a local hall or temporary structure
- apply for alternative site arrangements with the exam boards
- communicate with candidate (and where appropriate, parents/carers) any changes to the exam or assessment timetable or venue
- ensure secure transportation of question papers or assessment material to 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

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

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

a) advise the relevant exam boards as a priority
b) follow any guidance provided from the exam boards
c) try to establish an independent way of working, establishing an internet connection via a suitable and secure portable device
d) This will include the required arrangements for cyber security)

(GR 3.38) Ensure there are procedures in place to maintain the security of user accounts by:

e) ensuring that all members of centre staff who access awarding bodies' online systems undertake annual cyber security training...

... The training must include:

a. the importance of creating strong, unique passwords for all accounts;
b. keeping all account details strictly confidential;
c. the critical role of Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) in protecting against unauthorised access;
d. how to properly set up and use MFA for both centre and awarding bodies' systems;
e. an awareness of all types of social engineering/phishing attempts;...
f. the importance of staff quickly reporting any suspicious activity, events, incidents and encouraging a safe and supportive reporting culture.

Certificates of completed staff cyber training must be downloaded and held on file for inspection. The NCSC training resource provides a certificate of completion of cyber training.

f) developing and maintaining a comprehensive cyber security policy for the centre. The National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) provides resources to assist centres in creating such policies;

g) implementing and enforcing robust security measures, including:
   a. where available, MFA must be used for all accounts and systems containing exam-related information, including those that interface between awarding body and centre systems, to enhance security and protect sensitive data. Where MFA is not available on the centre's systems, an equivalent multi-layered security approach must be in place. For example, strong log-in controls, access and monitoring controls and secure storage so that exam-related data is protected in line with cyber security best practice.
   b. regularly reviewing and updating security settings to align with current best practices;

h) regularly reviewing and updating security settings to align with current best practices; updating any passwords that may have been exposed

i) setting up secure account recovery options

j) reviewing and managing connected applications

k) monitoring accounts and regularly reviewing account access, including removing access when no longer required

l) ensuring authorised members of staff securely access awarding bodies' online systems in line with awarding body regulations regarding cyber security and the JCQ document *Guidance for centres on cyber security*

Authorised staff will have access, where necessary, to a device which complies with awarding bodies' multi-factor authentication MFA requirements.

m) reporting any actual or suspected compromise of an awarding body's online systems immediately to the relevant awarding body

7. Failure of IT systems

Criteria for implementation of the plan

IT system corruption affecting candidates' work

MIS system failure at final entry deadline

MIS system failure during exams preparation

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

MIS system failure at results release time

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- advise the relevant exam boards of the difficulties incurred
- try to establish an internet connection via a suitable and secure portable device
- (This will include the security arrangements put in place which protect candidates' work)

  (GR 3.36) Ensure where candidates' work is produced electronically that 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... Implement appropriate security arrangements which protect candidates' work in the event of IT system corruption and cyber-attacks.

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

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Whole centre evacuation (or lockdown) during exam time due to serious incident resulting in exam candidates being unable to start, proceed with or complete their exams
Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption • refer to and invoke its (exams) emergency evacuation policy/procedure in line with the JCQ's 'Centre emergency evacuation procedure' or its lockdown policy • contact the relevant awarding body as soon as possible and follow their instructions • where accommodation is limited, prioritise candidates whose progression will be severely delayed if they do not take their exam or timetabled assessment when planned • (after the exam) consider whether any candidate's ability to take the assessment or demonstrate their level of attainment has been materially affected and, if so, apply for special consideration

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 • 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 • 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 may not be able to take examinations – 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 • Centres' contingency plans should focus on options that enable candidates to take their 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

- Consider the starting time of the examination for all candidates (see section 6.2 of the JCQ document *Instructions for conducting examinations*)
- Be aware of the rules for very late arrivals (see section 21 of the JCQ document *Instructions for conducting examinations*)
- Wherever possible, it is always in the best interest for candidates to sit the examination. However, special consideration is an option where a candidate is unable to sit the examination (see Chapter 4 of the JCQ document *A guide to the special consideration process*)
- The relevant awarding body should be contacted if additional support or guidance in the event of disruption to examinations is required
- 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
- consider whether any candidates' ability to take the assessment or demonstrate their level of attainment has been materially affected and, if so, apply for special consideration

11. Centre may not be able to open for examinations

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

Criteria for implementation of the plan

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

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- (Centres' contingency plans must focus on enabling candidates to take their examinations if the centre is at risk of not being able to open as normal)
- take advice, or follow instructions, from relevant local of 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 alternative arrangements with the awarding body if the exam or assessment cannot take place
- follow guidance provided by the awarding body on the conduct of examination in such circumstances
- where accommodation, it limited, prioritise candidates whose progression will be severely delayed if they do not take their exam or timetabled assessment when planned
- communicate with candidates (and where appropriate, parents/carers) any changes to the exam or assessment timetable or to the venue
- consider whether any candidates' ability to take the assessment or demonstrate their level of attainment has been materially affected and, if so, apply for special consideration
- consider an alternative venue for the examination to take place, making use of facilities available within the Hatton Academies Trust
- The decision on whether it is safe for a centre to open lies with the head of centre who is responsible for taking advice or following instructions from relevant local or national agencies

- Special consideration is an option if all other avenues have been exhausted and candidates meet the published criteria
- The relevant awarding body should be contacted if additional support or guidance in the event of disruption to examinations is required
- Alternative site(s) details:

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

- awarding body to provide centres with electronic access to examination papers via a secure external network. Centres would need to ensure that copies are received, made and stored under secure conditions and should have plans in place to facilitate such an action.
- awarding body would provide guidance on the conduct of examinations in such circumstances.
- as a last resort, and in close collaboration with centres and regulators, awarding organisations to consider scheduling of the examination on an alternative date

13. Delay in collection arrangements for completed examination scripts

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Delay in normal collection arrangements for completed examination scripts/assessment evidence

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- where examinations are part of the national 'yellow label' service or where awarding bodies arrange collections, centres should contact the relevant awarding bodies for advice and instructions
- for examinations where centres make their own collection arrangements, they should investigate alternative options that comply with the JCQ document *Instructions for conducting examinations*
- centres to ensure secure storage of completed examination scripts until as close to the collection time as possible – ensuring script packages are not left unattended at the collection area

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

- awarding organisations to generate candidate marks for affected assessments based on other appropriate evidence of candidate achievement as defined by the awarding organisations
- where marks cannot be generated by awarding organisations candidates may need to retake affected assessment in a subsequent assessment series.

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

(Including in the event of the centre being unavailable on results day owing to an unforeseen emergency)

Criteria for implementation of the plan

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

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- make arrangements to access its results at an alternative site, in agreement with the relevant awarding organisation
- make arrangements to coordinate access to post results services from an alternative site
- share facilities with other centres if this is possible, in agreement with the relevant awarding organisation
- consider an alternative venue, making use of facilities available within the Hatton Academies Trust
- contact the relevant awarding organisation if electronic post-results requests are not possible

Alternative site(s) details:

Trust primaries within walking distance of the Academy; Oakway Academy and Victoria Primary Academy.

Further guidance to inform procedures and implement contingency planning

DfE

Meeting digital and technology standards in schools and colleges

Cyber security: core standard

Ofqual

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

This document was updated in October 2023 to include Ofqual's final decisions on long-term resilience arrangements, and the Department for Education (DfE)'s guidance for education settings with confirmed reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC),

In addition to this guidance, you will need to be aware of your specific responsibilities for local and national school preparations and contingencies. You should also follow advice from relevant public health bodies.

Contingency planning

You should prepare for possible disruption to exams and other assessments and make sure staff are aware of these plans.

- emergency planning and response from the Department for Education in England
- school organisation: local-authority-maintained schools from the Department for Education in England
- exceptional closure days from the Department of Education in Northern Ireland
- checklist - exceptional closure of schools from the Department of Education in Northern Ireland
- school terms and school closures from NI Direct

- opening schools in extremely bad weather - guidance for schools from the Welsh Government
- procedures for handling bomb threats from the National Counter Terrorism Security Office

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

See also the JCQ Joint Contingency Plan for the Examination System in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Steps you should take

Exam planning

Review your contingency plans well in advance of each exam or assessment series. Consider how, if the contingency plan is invoked, you will comply with the awarding organisation's requirements. Schools, colleges and other exam centres must speak to the relevant awarding organisations as soon as possible if they are expecting any disruption that might affect the sitting of exams and assessments.

In the event of disruption

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

After the exam

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

Steps the awarding organisation should take

Exam planning

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

In the event of disruption

1. Take all reasonable steps to mitigate any adverse effect, in relation to their qualifications, arising from any disruption.
2. Provide effective guidance to any of their centres delivering qualifications.

3. Ensure that where an assessment must be completed under specified conditions, students are able to complete the assessment under those conditions (other than where any reasonable adjustments or special considerations require alternative conditions).
4. Promptly notify the relevant regulators about any event which could have an adverse effect on students, standards or public confidence.
5. Coordinate its communications with the relevant regulators where the disruption has an impact on multiple centres or a wide range of learners.

After the exam
Consider any requests for special consideration for affected students; for example, those who may have lost their internally assessed work or whose performance in assessments or exams could have been affected by the disruption.

If any students miss an exam or are disadvantaged by the disruption

If some of the students have been adversely affected by the disruption, you should ask the awarding organisation about applying for special consideration.
Decisions about special consideration, when it is or is not appropriate, is for each awarding organisation to make. Their decisions might be different for different qualifications and for different subjects depending on their specific policies.

See also JCQ's guidance on special consideration

Wider communications

The regulators, Ofqual in England, Qualifications Wales in Wales and CCEA Regulation in Northern Ireland, will share timely and accurate information, as required, with awarding organisations, government departments and other stakeholders.
The DfE in England, the 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 exam timetables.

We will update this page as necessary, with any further relevant links, should national disruption occur

(Ofqual guidance extract above taken directly from the Exam system contingency plan: England, Wales and Northern Ireland - **What schools and colleges and other centres should do if exams or other assessments are seriously disrupted** (updated 5 October 2023)
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/exam-system-contingency-plan-england-wales-and-northern-ireland/what-schools-and-colleges-should-do-if-exams-or-other-assessments-are-seriously-disrupted)

JCQ

15. CONTINGENCY PLANNING

15.1 The qualification regulators, awarding bodies and government departments responsible for education have prepared and agreed information for schools and colleges in the event of examinations being seriously disrupted. This jointly agreed information will ensure consistency of response in the event of major disruption to the examinations system affecting significant numbers of candidates. Further information may be found at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/exam-system-contingency-plan-england-wales-and-northern-ireland

15.2 In addition, awarding bodies have their own well-established contingency plans in place to respond to disruptions. It is important that exams officers who are facing disruption liaise directly with the relevant awarding body or bodies.

15.3 All centres must have a written examination contingency plan which covers all aspects of examination administration. This will allow members of the senior leadership team to act immediately in the event of an emergency or where the head of centre, examinations officer or SENCo is absent at a critical stage of the examination cycle. The examination contingency plan should reinforce procedures in the event of the centre being unavailable for examinations owing to an unforeseen emergency.

All relevant centre staff must be familiar with the examination contingency plan. Consideration should be given as to how these arrangements will be communicated to candidates, parents and staff should disruption to examinations occur.

15.4 If 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 2026. This is consistent with the qualification regulators' document *Exam system contingency plan: England, Wales and Northern Ireland*.

15.6 The designation of 'contingency sessions' within the common examination timetable is for use in the event of national or significant local disruption to examinations. It is part of the awarding bodies' standard contingency planning for examinations.

15.7 In the event of national disruption to a day of examinations in summer 2026, the awarding bodies will liaise with the qualification regulators and government departments to agree the most appropriate option for managing the impact. As a last resort, the affected examinations will be rescheduled. Although every effort would be taken to keep the impact to a minimum, it is possible that there could be more than one timetable date affected following the disruption, up to and including the last contingency day. Centres will be alerted if it is agreed to reschedule the examinations and the affected candidates will be expected to make themselves available in such circumstances. The decision regarding the rescheduling of examinations will always rest with the awarding body. The centre must conduct the examination on the scheduled date unless instructed to do otherwise by the awarding body.

15.8 Where candidates choose not to be available for the rescheduled examination(s) for reasons other than those traditionally covered by special consideration, they will not be eligible for enhanced grading. Centres **must**, therefore, ensure candidates and parents are aware of the contingency arrangements so that they may take them into account when making their plans for the summer.

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 (Effective from November 2023;) Revised July 2025) www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations/

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

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

National Cyber Security Centre

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

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

ProtectUK

www.protectuk.police.uk