

# EXAM CONTINGENCY PLAN

## 2024 / 2025

**Key staff  
involved in the  
policy:**

R McGinty - Head of Centre  
C Hobbs - Senior Leader  
C Inman – SENCo  
E Seddon - Exams Officer

**Date Approved:  
Next Review  
date:**

January 2025  
January 2026

"EVERYONE EXCELS EVERYDAY"

## CONTENTS

Key staff involved .....	2
Purpose of the plan .....	3
Possible causes of disruption to the exam process .....	4
1. Exams manager extended absence at a critical stage of the exam cycle .....	4
2. SENDCo extended absence at a critical stage in the exam cycle .....	4
3. Teaching staff extended absence at a critical stage in the exam cycle .....	5
4. Invigilators - lack of appropriately trained invigilators or invigilator absence .....	6
5. Exam rooms - lack of appropriate rooms or main venues unavailable at short notice .....	6
6. Cyber-attack.....	6
7. Failure of IT systems.....	7
8. Emergency evacuation of the exam room (or centre lockdown) .....	7
9. Disruption of teaching time in the weeks before an exam – centre closed for an extended period.....	7
10. Candidates may not be able to take examinations - centre remains open .....	8
11. Centre may not be able to open as normal during the examination period.....	8
12. Disruption in the distribution of examination papers.....	8
13. Delay in collection arrangements for completed examination scripts .....	9
14. Assessment evidence is not available to be marked.....	9
15. Centre unable to distribute results as normal or facilitate post results services .....	9
Further guidance to inform procedures and implement contingency planning .....	10
Ofqual .....	10
JCQ .....	12
GOV.UK .....	14
National Cyber Security Centre .....	14

### KEY STAFF INVOLVED IN PROCEDURE

NAME:	JOB ROLE:
Mr R McGinty	Head of centre
Miss E Seddon	Exams and Data Manager
Ms C Hobbs	Exams Manager Line Manager/ Senior leader
SENDCO	Ms C Inman
Mr C Williamson / Mr K Clark	Senior Leader(s)
Mrs B Hesletine	Other members of staff

## PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

This plan examines potential risks and issues that could cause disruption to the examination/assessment process at Hollingworth 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 Exam system contingency plan: England, Wales and Northern Ireland which provides guidance in the publication what schools/academies 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
- The JCQ document Preparing for disruption to examinations (Effective from 1 September 2024)

This plan also confirms Hollingworth Academy's compliance with JCQ's General Regulations for Approved Centres (GR 5.3) that the centre has a written contingency plan which covers all aspects of examination/assessment administration in place for inspection that must be reviewed and updated annually.

## CONTINGENCY ARRANGEMENTS

In accordance with the regulations (GR 3.17-19), Hollingworth Academy 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, SENDCO (or equivalent role), examinations manager 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 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.

Hollingworth 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.

Hollingworth Academy must ensure that candidates' work is backed-up and should consider the contingency of candidates' work being backed-up on two separate devices, including one off-site back-up. 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 Hollingworth Academy 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 this person should have the ability to mobilise resources to respond to the issue promptly.

## HEAD OF CENTRE ABSENCE AT A CRITICAL STAGE OF THE EXAM CYCLE

Where the Head of Centre may be 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.

## POSSIBLE CAUSES OF DISRUPTION TO THE EXAM PROCESS

### 1. EXAMS MANAGER 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

- Exams Manager SLT line manager to be released from other teaching and SLT duties as necessary to fulfil the role of Exams Manager with support from the Lead Invigilator and Senior Leader responsible for the Year 11 strategy.
- Awarding bodies to be contacted for advice as necessary.

### 2. SENDCO EXTENDED ABSENCE AT A CRITICAL STAGE IN THE EXAM CYCLE

#### CRITERIA FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLAN

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

#### **PLANNING**

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

#### **PRE-EXAMS**

- Approval for access arrangements not applied for to the awarding body.
- Centre-delegated arrangements not put in place.
- Modified paper requirements not identified in a timely manner to enable ordering to meet external deadline.

#### **EXAM TIME**

- Access arrangement candidate support not arranged for exam rooms.

#### **CENTRE ACTIONS TO MITIGATE THE IMPACT OF THE DISRUPTION**

- Head of Centre responsible for ensuring position is filled should absence have the potential to disrupt exam preparation.
- Exams Manager to ensure access arrangements are in place by the spring term for all Year 10 students, where possible.
- Exams Manager to plan access arrangements for exam days in advance of the summer series, in consultation with SENDCO and Specialist Assessor.

### **3. TEACHING STAFF EXTENDED ABSENCE AT A CRITICAL STAGE IN THE EXAM CYCLE**

#### **CRITERIA FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLAN**

Key tasks not undertaken including:

- Early/estimated entry information not provided to the exams manager on time, resulting in pre-release information not being received.
- Final entry information not provided to the exams manager 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 (including controlled assessments and coursework) tasks not set/issued/taken by candidates as scheduled.
- Candidates not being informed of centre assessed marks before marks are submitted to the awarding body, and therefore, not being able to consider appealing internal assessment decisions and requesting a review of the centre's marking.
- Internal assessment marks and candidates' work not provided to meet awarding body submission deadlines.

#### **CENTRE ACTIONS TO MITIGATE THE IMPACT OF THE DISRUPTION**

- Exams Manager to liaise with Heads of Department and/or SLT to ensure all necessary deadlines are adhered to. Any omissions to be referred to Head of Centre. If this is not possible, the Exams M will liaise with the awarding bodies and act upon advice received.
- Centre responsible for ensuring the priority for teaching is the examination cohort and staff will be covered in good time, by trained professionals, in all circumstances.

## 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

- Exams manager will review invigilation staffing at the start of each academic year to ensure sufficient staff are recruited and trained in a timely fashion.
- Other Hollingworth staff will be trained and ready for invigilation duties at short notice and at peak times if required.

## 5. EXAM ROOMS - LACK OF APPROPRIATE ROOMS OR MAIN VENUES UNAVAILABLE AT SHORT NOTICE

### CRITERIA FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLAN

- Exams manager 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

- Exams Manager will organise rooming before Easter holidays, ensuring sufficient time is available to identify appropriate rooms.
- In the event of a room not being available at very short notice, Exams Manager and SLT Line Manager will work together to ensure that sufficient staff are available to ensure the security of the examination is not compromised, whilst alternative rooming is sourced.
- Alternative venue details: Loud Studios, Milnrow

## 6. CYBER-ATTACK

### CRITERIA FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLAN

- Where a cyber-attack may compromise any aspect of delivery.

### CENTRE ACTIONS TO MITIGATE THE IMPACT OF THE DISRUPTION

The Exams Manager will work with their SLT Line Manager and the Network Manager, to make immediate contact with the awarding bodies to seek further guidance and support. The Senior Leadership Team will work with the Exams Manager to take as action as determined by the relevant awarding bodies.

- Back-ups are taken daily of the MIS and the data is stored offline.
- The systems for restoring the data are reliable and robust.
- The academy will contact the police and Action Fraud.
- The academy will contact the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC).
- The academy will inform the Department for Education (GR 3.21).
- Ensure there are procedures in place to maintain the security of user accounts by:
  - a) Providing training for authorised staff on the importance of creating strong unique passwords and keeping all account details secret.
  - b) Providing training for staff on awareness of all types of social engineering/phishing attempts.
  - c) Enabling additional security settings wherever possible.
  - d) Updating any passwords that may have been exposed.
  - e) Setting up secure account recovery options.

- f) Reviewing and managing connected applications.
- g) Monitoring accounts and regularly reviewing account access, including removing access when no longer required.
- h) 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.

## 7. FAILURE OF IT SYSTEMS

### CRITERIA FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLAN

- MIS system failure at final entry deadline.
- MIS system failure during exams preparation.
- Power outage immediately prior to or during an on-screen test.
- MIS system failure at results release time.

### CENTRE ACTIONS TO MITIGATE THE IMPACT OF THE DISRUPTION

- The Exams Manager, in consultation with SLT, will make entries from another venue direct to the awarding bodies. Results may also be accessed directly from the Exam Board. At all times during the system failure the Exams Manager will liaise with the Exam Board to minimise disruption and costs incurred.
- (GR 3.19) Ensure that candidates' work is backed-up and should consider the contingency of candidates' work being backed-up on two separate devices, including one off-site back-up. 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

- Evacuation procedures to be implemented.
- Exams Manager to ensure all Invigilators are aware of the evacuation procedures.
- Exams Manager to inform awarding bodies at the earliest convenience.

## 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

Where there is disruption to teaching time and students miss teaching and learning, it remains the responsibility of centres to prepare students, as usual, for examinations.

- In the case of modular courses, centres may advise candidates to sit examinations in an alternative series.



- Centres should have plans in place to facilitate alternative methods of learning, for example, candidates may be taught remotely or at an alternative venue.

## **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**

- 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.
- The Exams Manager will consider moving the start time of the examination for all candidates, provided they are kept in supervision from the correct time.
- The Exams Manager will be aware of the rules for very late arrivals.
- If additional support is required, the Exams Manager will contact the relevant Exam Board to discuss alternative arrangements and liaise with SLT to take appropriate action.

## **11. CENTRE MAY NOT BE ABLE TO OPEN AS NORMAL DURING THE EXAMINATION 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.

### **CENTRE ACTIONS TO MITIGATE THE IMPACT OF THE DISRUPTION**

- The focus is on enabling candidates to take their examinations. 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 the candidates meet the published criteria.
- The Exams Manager will contact the relevant Exam Board to discuss alternative arrangements and liaise with SLT to take appropriate action.
- If appropriate, the Exams Manager will notify the JCQ Inspection Service of an alternative site arrangement by submitting the JCQ Alternative Site Form online, using the Centre Admin Portal (CAP).
- Alternative venue details: Loud Studios, Milnrow

## **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**

- Exams Manager to liaise with awarding organisations to get electronic access to examination papers via a secure external network.
- Exams Manager to ensure that copies are received, made and stored under secure conditions.



- Awarding organisations would provide guidance on the conduct of examinations in such circumstances. As a last resort, and in close collaboration with centres and regulators, awarding organisations would 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, the Exams Manager will contact the relevant awarding bodies for advice and instructions and will not make their own arrangements for transportation unless told to do so by the awarding body.
- For any examinations where the centre makes its own collection arrangements, the Exams Manager will investigate alternative options that comply with the requirements detailed in the JCQ document Instructions for conducting examinations.
- Exams Manager to ensure secure storage of completed examination scripts until as close to the collection time as possible.

### **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**

- Exams manager will contact the awarding bodies immediately to notify them of any such incidents and act upon advice given.
- Exams Manager/Head of Centre to communicate with parents/carers of affected candidates
- Marks may be able to be generated by awarding bodies for the affected assessments base on other appropriate evidence of candidate evidence, as defined by the awarding organisations.
- Where marks are unable to 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**

- Exams Manager will liaise with SLT to access the results/post-results services at an alternative site, in agreement with the relevant awarding organisation, or to send them electronically if appropriate. The EM will contact the awarding body to notify them where appropriate.
- For post-results services, the Exams Manager will work from home.

- Alternative venue details: Loud Studios, Milnrow

## **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**

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**

Awarding organisations are required to establish, maintain and comply with an up-to-date detailed written contingency plan, to mitigate any incident they have identified may occur. This includes having communication plans for external parties (Ofqual General Condition of Recognition A6). Schools and colleges should also be prepared for possible disruption to exams and assessments and make sure staff are aware of these plans.

### **DISRUPTION TO ASSESSMENTS OR EXAMS**

In the absence of any instruction from the relevant awarding organisation, you should make sure that any exam or timetabled assessment takes place if it is possible to hold it. This may mean relocating to alternative premises. You should discuss alternative arrangements with your awarding organisation if:

- The exam or assessment cannot take place.
- A student misses an exam or loses their assessment due to an emergency, or other event, outside of the student's control.
- You may also wish to see the JCQ's notice to centres on exam contingency plans and JCQ's notice on preparing for disruption to examinations in England, Wales and Northern Ireland for qualifications within its scope.

### **STEPS YOU SHOULD TAKE:**

#### **EXAM PLANNING**

Review your contingency plans well in advance of each exam or assessment series. Consider how, if the contingency plan is invoked, you will comply with the awarding organisation's requirements.

Schools, colleges and other exam centres must speak to the relevant awarding organisations as soon as possible if they are expecting any disruption that might affect the sitting of exams and assessments.

#### **IN THE EVENT OF DISRUPTION**

1. Contact the relevant awarding organisation and follow its instructions.
2. Take advice, or follow instructions, from relevant local or national agencies in deciding whether your centre is able to open.

3. Identify whether the exam or timetabled assessment can be sat at an alternative venue, in agreement with the relevant awarding organisation, ensuring the secure transportation of questions papers or assessment materials to the alternative venue.
4. Where accommodation is limited, prioritise students whose progression will be severely delayed if they do not take their exam or timetabled assessment when planned.
5. In the event of an evacuation during an examination please refer to the centre's 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.
3. In the event of disruption
4. Take all reasonable steps to mitigate any adverse effect, in relation to their qualifications, arising from any disruption.
5. Provide effective guidance to any of their centres delivering qualifications.
6. 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).
7. Promptly notify the relevant regulators about any event which could have an adverse effect on students, standards or public confidence.
8. 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**

1. 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.
2. If any students miss an exam or are disadvantaged by the disruption.
3. If some of the students have been adversely affected by the disruption, you should ask the awarding organisation about applying for special consideration.
4. 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.

5. See also JCQ's guidance on special consideration

## WIDER COMMUNICATIONS

The regulators, Ofqual, will share timely and accurate information, as required, with awarding organisations, government departments and other stakeholders.

The DfE 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.

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.
- Police guidance from National Counter Terrorism Security Office and partners on preparing for threats.
- Cyber security guidance for schools and colleges from the National Cyber Security Centre.

*Ofqual guidance extract above taken directly from the Exam system contingency plan: England, Wales and Northern Ireland - What schools and colleges and other centres should do if exams or other assessments are seriously disrupted. (Last updated 5<sup>th</sup> October 2023)*

## JCQ

15.1 The qualification regulators, awarding bodies and government departments responsible for education have prepared and agreed information for schools and colleges in the event of examinations being seriously

disrupted. This jointly agreed information will ensure consistency of response in the event of major disruption to the examinations system affecting significant numbers of candidates.

Further information may be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/exam-system-contingency-plan-england-wales-and-northern-ireland>

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.

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, Exams 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.

In the event that the Head of Centre decides the centre cannot be opened for scheduled examinations, the relevant awarding body must be informed as soon as possible. Awarding bodies will be able to offer advice regarding the alternative arrangements for conducting examinations that may be available and the options for candidates who have not been able to take scheduled examinations.

The awarding bodies will designate 'contingency sessions' for examinations, summer 2025. This is consistent with the qualification regulators' document Exam system contingency plan: England, Wales and Northern Ireland:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/exam-system-contingency-plan-england-wales-and-northern-ireland>

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

In the event of national disruption to a day of examinations in summer 2025, the awarding bodies will liaise with the qualification regulators and government departments to agree the most appropriate option for managing the impact. As a last resort, the affected examinations will be rescheduled. Although every effort would be taken to keep the impact to a minimum, it is possible that there could be more than one timetable date affected following the disruption, up to and including the last contingency day. Centres will be alerted if it is agreed to reschedule the examinations, and the affected candidates will be expected to make themselves available in such circumstances. The decision regarding the rescheduling of examinations will always rest with the awarding body. The centre must conduct the examination on the scheduled date unless instructed to do otherwise by the awarding body. Where candidates choose not to be available for the rescheduled examination(s) for reasons other than those traditionally covered by special consideration, they will not be eligible for enhanced grading arrangements. Centres must therefore ensure candidates and parents are aware of the contingency arrangements so that they may take them into account when making their plans for the summer.

*(JCQ guidance above taken directly from Instructions for Conducting Examinations)*

2023-2024 <http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/ice---instructions-for-conducting-examinations> , section 15, Contingency planning)

JCQ Joint Contingency Plan [www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/other-documents](http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/other-documents)

JCQ Preparing for disruption to examinations [www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations/](http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations/)

JCQ Notice to Centres - Examination contingency plan/examinations policy

[www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations/notice-to-centres--exam-contingency-plan/](http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations/notice-to-centres--exam-contingency-plan/)

General Regulations for Approved Centres [www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations](http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations)

Guidance notes on alternative site arrangements [www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/online-forms](http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/online-forms)

Guidance notes for transferred candidates [www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/online-forms](http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/online-forms)

Instructions for conducting examinations [www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/ice---instructions-for-conducting-examinations](http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/ice---instructions-for-conducting-examinations)

A guide to the special consideration process [www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-special-consideration/regulations-and-guidance](http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-special-consideration/regulations-and-guidance)

## GOV.UK

Emergency planning and response: Exam and assessment disruption

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/emergency-planning-and-response-for-education-childcare-and-childrens-social-care-settings](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/emergency-planning-and-response-for-education-childcare-and-childrens-social-care-settings)

18 Exam Contingency Plan (2024/2025)

Dispatch of exam scripts guide: Ensuring the service runs smoothly; Contingency planning  
[www.gov.uk/government/publications/dispatch-of-exam-scripts-yellow-label-service](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dispatch-of-exam-scripts-yellow-label-service)

National Cyber Security Centre

The NCSC's free Web Check and Mail Check services can help protect schools from cyber-attacks. Two NCSC cyber security services, which are already helping thousands of organisations to protect their websites and email servers from cyber-attacks, are now available to all UK schools. Both tools are available free of charge, are quick to set up, and thereafter run automatically. More information is available from the NCSC website.

The Department for Education has been asking centres to review National Cyber Security Centre advice following increasing number of cyber-attacks involving ransomware infections. The NCSC information supports centres in cyber security preparedness and mitigation work.

Ransomware attacks continue and the Department is reminding centres to review the NCSC advice and to take precautions. This includes ensuring that you have backups in place for your key services and data.

For ease of reference, the Department has highlighted key links relating to the NCSC cyber security guidance below:

1. Further ransomware attacks on UK education by cyber criminals - [National Cyber Security Centre - NCSC.GOV.UK](http://NationalCyberSecurityCentre-NCSC.GOV.UK).
2. Mitigating malware and ransomware attacks.
3. Offline backups in an online world.
4. Backing up your data.
5. Practical resources to help schools improve their cyber security.
6. Building Resilience: Ransomware, the risk to schools and ways to prevent it.
7. School staff offered training to help shore up cyber defences - [National Cyber Security Centre - NCSC.GOV.UK](http://NationalCyberSecurityCentre-NCSC.GOV.UK).