



# CONTINGENCY PLAN

## 2025/26

This plan is reviewed annually to ensure compliance with current regulations

Approved/reviewed by	
Date of next review	

## Key staff involved in the plan

Role	Name(s)
Head of centre	<b>Clare Batson</b>
Senior leader(s)	<b>Jonny Galbraith</b>
Exams officer	<b>Sarah Adamson</b>
SENCo (or equivalent role)	<b>Lisa Williams</b>

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## Purpose of the plan

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

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 publication *What schools and colleges and other centres should do if exams or other assessments are seriously disrupted*, the **JCQ Joint Contingency Plan** for the Examination System in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and the JCQ document **Preparing for disruption to examinations** (Effective from 1 September 2024).

This plan also confirms Parklands High School'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:

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

## Contingency arrangements

In accordance with the regulations (GR 3.17-19), Parklands High School **must** have an up to date written contingency plan.

The contingency plan **must** cover all aspects of examination/assessment administration and delivery. Senior leaders **must** have robust contingency arrangements in place that will minimise the risk to examination/assessment administration and delivery and any adverse impact on candidates.

The plan must cover the following scenarios:

- the head of centre, relevant senior leader(s) with oversight of examination and assessment administration, SENCo (or equivalent role), examinations officer or any other key staff essential to the examination process being absent at a critical stage of the examination cycle
- the potential impact of other events such as flooding which could lead to all or parts of the centre becoming unavailable
- potential issues with the centre's IT systems

As part of the contingency plan the centre **must** identify an alternative site 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.

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

Parklands High School **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 Parklands High School responds to the National Centre Number Register annual update by the end of October every year which includes providing senior designated contact details (this might include a personal mobile number and/or email address). These must be the contact details of someone who can be reached in an emergency if the centre is closed over the summer and who can mobilise resources to respond to the issue.

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

Where the head of centre may absent at a critical stage of the examination cycle, main duties and responsibilities will be escalated to one of the below assistant heads

- Gillian Aspinall
- Helen Partington
- Lucy Pilkington

## Possible causes of disruption to the exam process

### 1. Exam officer extended absence at a critical stage of the exam cycle

#### Criteria for implementation of the plan

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

#### *Planning*

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

#### *Entries*

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

#### *Pre-exams*

- *invigilators not trained or updated on changes to instructions for conducting exams*
- *exam timetabling, rooming allocation, and invigilation schedules not prepared*
- *candidates not briefed on exam timetables and awarding body information for candidates*
- *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

Note on all of the above – as a school/MAT we have ex exams officers (Vicky Calvert) who is able to assist if and when required should the exams officer be absent at any point during the exams cycle. We also have access to the Exams Officer, Lindsay Crozier from Walton le Dale High School who are part of our MAT. The SLT for exams (Jonny Galbraith) is also the second admin for all awarding body sites and is able to access and deal with anything which arises for exams.

#### *Planning*

- *Estimated entries for all subjects is collated at the beginning of each academic year to ensure that all subjects and approximate numbers are sent to the exam boards well in advance of the exam season*
- *Rolling month by month exams plan printed to ensure that key tasks and dates are met*

- Invigilators are recruited each year to ensure that there is enough – should we require more SLT and some staff are trained on invigilation

### *Entries*

- After the collation from the curriculum leaders in September estimated entries are added to the relevant awarding body's secure site – how to guide in file
- The process of entry marksheets is triplicated to ensure that no students are missed from the list. Should a student arrive at school after the entry deadline date then they will be added as a late entry or a transfer candidate form would be completed from the previous school to ensure the student can still sit their exams.

### *Pre-exams*

- Invigilators are trained annually on any changes to the ICE documents (existing) and full training on regulations (new). They also complete the Exams Office online Invigilator training to gain certification. During their training annual safeguarding and access arrangements are covered by the Designated Safeguarding and SENCo
- Exam rooming is done in preparation for the mock exams and carries through to the summer season. Invigilation schedules are completed well in advance of any exam season to ensure that all rooms are covered and any shortages can be sorted prior to the exam season starting
- All candidates are sent all relevant JCQ documentation at the beginning of the academic year when in year 11. They also complete and sign a candidate declaration to ensure they have received, read and understood the regulations. Timetables are given out in advance of the exam season and are also available to candidates online
- Internal assessment marks are input by the curriculum leaders for the relevant subjects. Any samples are uploaded with the curriculum leader and/or the exams officer

### *Exam time*

- All exams are undertaken under full JCQ regulated conditions along with the correct number of invigilators required (1-30 for written exams/1-20 for any computer based exams) along with a minimum of 2 in any additional rooms
- All forms for very late arrival, suspected malpractice and special consideration are completed on the day the incident happened apart from the special consideration – these are completed at the end of the exam season as the candidate may require special consideration for more than one exam.
- All exam scripts are collected on by courier on the day the exam takes place. This is after they have all been collated and placed in the sealed awarding body exam bags along with the registers. Should the collection have taken place before an exam has finished then the papers will be collated and sealed and placed in the secure safe overnight until the courier arrives the next day. Should the courier not turn up then the sealed exam papers can be taken to the post office for posting. All dispatch logs are completed for any papers being collected and are stored in the main reception signed by the courier or post office.

### *Results and post-results*

- All students wherever possible attend school to collect their results on results day. If they are unable to attend then a completed signed form is given to the exams officer to allow for results to be emailed to the student or for a third party to collect and sign for them. Should there be any issues on results download day then there are backups in place to ensure that the results can still be accessed and distributed

## 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

#### *Planning*

- All students are tested/assessed to identify their access arrangements in year 10 if not before. Should the SENCo be absent for a period of time then the assistant SENCo, Zoe Featonby along with Deputy Head, Helen Partington, will be able to deal with any issues which may arise.
- All relevant JCQ Access arrangement forms and evidence of need is kept online to ensure that these can be accessed should the SENCo be absent

#### *Pre-exams*

- All access arrangements are applied for before the awarding body deadline dates each year unless they is an emergency application required (e.g. a new pupil to the school or a late diagnosis of a student)
- All staff facilitators providing support to access arrangement candidates are trained annually alongside any invigilators overseeing the access arrangements.

#### *Exam time*

- All access arrangements are put into place for the mock exams each year and continue for the student during the main exam season. Should any emergencies arise then there the assistant SENCo, Zoe Featonby along with Deputy Head, Helen Partington, who can step in.

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

### Criteria for implementation of the plan

*Key tasks not undertaken, including:*

*Early/estimated entry information not provided to the exams officer on time; resulting in pre-release information not being received*

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

*Non-examination assessment (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

- All estimated entries are completed by the curriculum leaders/exams officer and submitted to the relevant awarding body in September/October – should the curriculum leader be absent then this would be picked up by the the assistant curriculum leader or SLT to complete with the exams officer
- Final entry information is completed a week before the deadline date to ensure the deadline is met. This also allows time for any last minute changes to be done if necessary.
- Non exam assessments are completed by the curriculum leader for the relevant subject as scheduled. Should the curriculum leader be absent then this would be picked up by the assistant curriculum leader or SLT to complete with the exams officer
- Candidates are informed of the centre assessed marks before they are submitted to the relevant awarding body. This is done by the teacher or curriculum leader.

**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

- Advertisements for Invigilators are done at the beginning of each academic year to ensure that there are enough to cover the rooms during exam periods. If there are any shortages we have members of SLT/staff trained in invigilation who can cover
- If an invigilator is absent on the day of exam then emergency invigilation from SLT/trained staff who do not teach the relevant subject can be put into place

**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

- All rooms required for the use of any exam season are set up during the mock season and continue through to the summer exam season. This also included a contingency room for emergencies such as a student who is sick and still wants to sit the exam. Emergency invigilation would be available for this from SLT/staff who are trained and do not teach the relevant subject.
- Should the exam hall not be available due to an unexpected incident then the alternative sites would be:

Alternative site(s) details:

Elizabeth (Lis) Lever / Natalia Halton, St Micheals High School, Chorley, Lancashire

## 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

- Procedures are 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.  
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*

*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

- All systems are fully backed up twice per day which includes all candidates work. Once a day the backup is also copied off site to ensure should any incidents happen where school cannot open the work is still there.
- All backups are fully encrypted
- If there is a full MIS failure we have full MIS support contract in place with ESS SIMS who will have agreed timescale to fix any issues
- We always have spare exam laptops ready to go should there be an issue during the exam. The laptops used for exams backup every 60 seconds to ensure the candidates are never able to lose more than a minutes work

- If the power outage was just in one room when an on-screen test is taking place then we have other rooms which can be used. Candidates would be escorted in silence to the new room and the time would be restarted to ensure full amount given. The awarding body would be informed and all relevant paperwork completed

## **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

- If the exam has started all candidates will be asked to stop writing and close their answer and question paper booklets
- The invigilators will collect the exam room registers in order to ensure all candidates are present should the room need to be evacuated
- Invigilators will stop the clock and turn on their contact radio where they will receive instructions as to if they need to evacuate or just wait where they are with all candidates still under exam conditions
- Should an evacuation be necessary invigilators will escort the candidates to the muster point in silence and keep them separate from any other students whilst under supervision
- A note will be made of the time of the disruption and how long it lasted
- If the exam can be resumed then candidates will be given the remaining time of the exam once it resumes
- The exams officer will contact the awarding body to seek advise as soon as possible - especially if the exam is unable to continue
- If it is a small exam which cannot be continued at the centre the exams officer will look at moving the small group to another venue under supervision to continue the exam
- Special consideration will be applied to via the awarding body secure sites where any candidates have been disadvantaged

## **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 examination • 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)

## **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

Parklands High School contingency plans should focus on options that enable candidates to take their examinations

This would include

- Consideration to move the starting time of the examination for all candidates
- The relevant awarding body paper would be completed for very late arrivals
- Special consideration would be an option where a candidate is unable to sit the examination
- The relevant awarding body should be contacted if additional support or guidance in the event of disruption to examinations is required

### **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

Parklands High School contingency plans focus on enabling candidates to take their examinations if the centre is at risk of not being able to open as normal

This could include 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).

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 would be an option if all other avenues have been exhausted and candidates meet the published criteria for this

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:

Natalia Halton, St Micheals High School, Chorley, Lancashire

Walton le Dale High School, Walton le Dale, Preston – this school forms part of our MAT

### **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

- Should there be an issue with the awarding body providing the exam papers in time for the exam season the awarding body will provide us with electronic access to examination papers via a secure external network.
- The exams officer would 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 awarding bodies and exam regulators, awarding organisations may consider rescheduling the examination on an alternative date (contingency)

### **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

- Should the courier not turn up to collect the sealed exam scripts on the day of the exam the scripts would be stored in the secure safe until collection the following day. Alternatively if there is an issue with the courier then the packed sealed scripts can be taken to the post office for collection there.
- Assessment evidence is stored securely and uploaded to the relevant awarding bodies secure site. Should hard copies be sent to the moderator they will be sealed and sent 1<sup>st</sup> class proof of postage with a tracking number to ensure delivery can be verified

### **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

- The exams officer keeps a dispatch log for all collections of sealed, completed exam scripts to enable proof of collection/delivery with the courier/awarding body
- In some cases the awarding organisations would generate candidate marks for any affected assessments based on other appropriate evidence of candidate achievement as defined by the awarding organisations (e.g. if 1 paper lost out of 3 papers an average grade may be given based on the 2 completed papers)
- 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

Distribution of results:

- The exams officer and IT to make arrangements to access results at an alternative site, in agreement with the relevant awarding organisation
- The exams officer and IT would make arrangements to coordinate access to post results services from an alternative site
- If required the exams officer and IT would share our facilities with other centres if this is possible and in agreement by the relevant awarding organisation.

Facilitation of post results services:

The exams officer and IT would make arrangements to make post results requests at an alternative location

The exams officer would contact the relevant awarding organisation if electronic post results requests are not possible

Alternative site(s) details:

Elizabeth (Lis) Lever / Natalia Halton, St Micheals High School, Chorley, Lancashire

## 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 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 [Department of Education 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

(Ofqual guidance extract above taken directly from the Exam system contingency plan: England, Wales and Northern Ireland - **What schools and colleges and other centres should do if exams or other assessments are seriously disrupted** (last updated 7 May 2024) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/exam-system-contingency-plan-england-wales-and-northern-ireland/what-schools-and-colleges-should-do-if-exams-or-other-assessments-are-seriously-disrupted>)

## JCQ

### 15. 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/bodies.

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

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

15.4 In the event that the head of centre decides the centre cannot be opened for scheduled examinations, the centre's contingency plan must be invoked, utilising the centre's alternative site(s) and the relevant awarding bodies must be informed as soon as possible. Awarding bodies will be able to offer advice regarding the alternative arrangements for conducting examinations that may be available and the options for candidates who have not been able to take scheduled examinations.

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

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

15.7 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.

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

(JCQ guidance above taken directly from **Instructions for conducting examinations** 2024-2025

<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/)

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)

Guidance for centres on cyber security (Effective from November 2023) [www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations/](http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations/)

5 tips to get exam ready and stay cyber safe! [www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/blogs/](http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/blogs/)

Information for centres affected by RAAC – the delivery of non-examination assessments and the special consideration process [www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/non-examination-assessments/](http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/non-examination-assessments/)

Further clarification for centres affected by RAAC, Caledonian Modular or similar building issues – March 2024 [www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/non-examination-assessments/](http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/non-examination-assessments/)

## GOV.UK

Emergency planning and response: Exam and assessment disruption

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

Dispatch of exam scripts 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)

## Wales

School closures: examinations [gov.wales/school-closures-examinations](http://gov.wales/school-closures-examinations)

Opening schools as well as childcare and play settings in extreme bad weather and extreme hot weather:

[www.gov.wales/opening-schools-well-childcare-and-play-settings-extreme-bad-weather-and-extreme-hot-weather](http://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](http://www.education-ni.gov.uk/articles/exceptional-closure-days)

Checklist - exceptional closure of schools [www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/checklist-exceptional-closure-schools](http://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/checklist-exceptional-closure-schools)

## **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>