



# Exam Contingency Plan

## 2023/24

Approved/reviewed by	
Reviewed: Ziad Amjad	
Date of next review	1 <sup>st</sup> of October 2024

Exam contingency reviewed annually to ensure compliance with current regulations

## Key staff involved in contingency planning

<b>Role</b>	<b>Name(s)</b>
Head of centre	<b>Sabrina Hobbs</b>
Exams officer line manager (Senior Leader)	<b>Rachel Cooper</b>
Exams officer	<b>Ziad Amjad</b>
ALS lead/SENCo	<b>Heather Woodward / Samantha Thompson</b>
Senior leader(s)	<b>Toni Beardmore</b>

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## Purpose of the plan

This plan examines potential risks and issues that could cause disruption to the exams process at St Martins School. By outlining actions/procedures to be invoked in case of disruption, it is intended to mitigate the impact these disruptions have on our exam process.

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 and colleges and other centres should do if exams or other assessments are seriously disrupted and the **JCQ** Joint Contingency Plan in the event of widespread disruption to the Examination System in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

- This plan also confirms St Martins School is compliant with the JCQ regulation that the centre has in place 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 staff absence. The examination contingency plan should reinforce procedures in the event of the centre being unavailable for examinations, or on results day, owing to an unforeseen emergency.

## Possible causes of disruption to the exam process

### 1. Exam officer extended absence at key points in the exam process (cycle)

#### Criteria for implementation of the plan

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

#### *Planning*

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

#### *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**

- *In a period of extended absence the Deputy Head Teacher would take responsibility for carrying out the duties of the Exams Officer and would work in consultation with Head Teacher. Appropriate back-filling of responsibilities would then be decided upon by the Head Teacher. The exams assistant will support the Deputy Head Teacher to carry out the responsibilities.*

**2. ALS lead/SENCo extended absence at key points 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*
- *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 extended absence of the SENCO, appropriate back-filling of responsibilities would be decided upon by the Head Teacher who is the Head of Centre.*

**3. Teaching staff extended absence at key points in the exam cycle**

**Criteria for implementation of the plan**

*Key tasks not undertaken including:*

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

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

*Non-examination assessment tasks not set/issued/taken by candidates as scheduled*

*Candidates not being informed of centre assessed marks before marks are submitted to the awarding body and therefore not being able to consider appealing internal assessment decisions and requesting a review of the centre's marking*

*Internal assessment marks and candidates' work not provided to meet awarding body submission deadlines*

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- *In the event of a period of extended absence of a member of the teaching staff, the Deputy Head Teacher and Key Stage Leaders would arrange teaching cover from within the staff team and/or the wider staffing establishment at the school. New staff providing cover would be briefed as part of their induction process on arrangements for assessment and examinations.*

**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

- *All invigilators undergo online training arranged by the exams team. They are permitted to work independently once they have passed all sections of the online training, and the Exams Officer is happy that they are competent and confident in processes and procedures. Annual training sessions are held in the autumn term for all invigilators in order to refresh their knowledge, communicate JCQ regulation changes, and update local information.*

**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

- *The majority of exams are accommodated in standard size classrooms/ICT suites and the exam team works closely in order to utilise rooms effectively.*

**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

- **To maintain an effective secure network in partnership with our ICT support team – Lead IT services**
- **Ensure up to date anti-virus software and firewall is active**
- **Ensure all exams related files are backed up and accessible in case of a cyber-attack**

**7. Failure of IT systems**

Criteria for implementation of the plan

*MIS system failure at final entry deadline*

*MIS system failure during exams preparation*

*MIS system failure at results release time*

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- *Currently an MIS system is not used for any part of exam entries. All entries are completed manually.*

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

Criteria for implementation of the plan

*Whole centre evacuation (or lock down) 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

- *Candidates will be instructed to remain silent. Candidates will be asked to leave the centre by the nearest exit a row at a time and when told to do so. They will be escorted to the assembly point by an invigilator/SLT/Exams officers. Candidates will be asked line up according to the seating plan for that particular examination. When assembled invigilators will take the examination register to ensure that all candidates are present.*
- *When safe and possible the Head Teacher, Senior Leadership Team and Exams Officer will communicate with each other appropriately and/or contact the emergency services if deemed necessary. At the end of the emergency the Exams Officer and Senior Leadership Team will inform the candidates when to return to the examination room.*
- *The invigilators will remind candidates that they are still under examination conditions and under no circumstances should they talk to one another whilst returning to the exam room. Invigilators will undertake a head count/register and confirm attendance with the exams officer/SLT.*

**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 the centre to prepare students, as usual, for examinations. In 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 unable to take examinations because of a crisis – centre remains open**

Criteria for implementation of the plan

*Candidates are unable to attend the examination centre to take examinations as normal*

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- **Students do not turn up for exam**

- Message to Reception to ring home. Students can be admitted into the exams room up to 1 hour after published start of exam when the exam is over 1 hr duration. If they cannot attend the exam students can be given the opportunity to sit the exam at the next available series and/or special consideration can be applied if the adverse circumstances are beyond their control and if the student has met the minimum requirements
- **Students turn up who are not entered**
  - Check with Subject leader/Key Stage Leader. Find a paper, seat them, amend attendance list and make entry. Late charge fee will be applied
- **Students are entered for the wrong paper**
  - Subject leader / Key Stage Lead contacted to confirm error. Contact Awarding Body for copy of paper if necessary. Provide exam paper, seat and amend entry.
- **Student taken ill during exam**
  - Invigilator ring reception/on-call to contact first aider. Special Consideration for student(s)
- **Awarding Body communications systems fail**
  - on line exams Contact awarding body immediately

### **11. Centre unable 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 unable to open as normal for scheduled examinations*

#### **Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption**

- The Exams Officer will contact the relevant Awarding Bodies to discuss alternative arrangements and liaise with the Head of Centre to take appropriate action.

### **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 organisations 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 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 to consider scheduling of the examination on an alternative date)



### 13. Disruption to the transportation of 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 organisations arrange collections, centres should seek advice from awarding organisations and should not make their own arrangements for transportation unless told to do so by the awarding organisation.
- For any examinations where centres make their own arrangements for transportation, centres should investigate alternative dispatch options that comply with the requirements detailed in the JCQ Instructions for Conducting Examinations.
- Centres to ensure secure storage of completed examination papers until collection.

### 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

- **Distribution of results:**
  - Centre to make arrangements to access its results at an alternative site, in agreement with the relevant awarding organisation
  - Centres to make arrangements to coordinate access to post results services from an alternative site
  - Centres to share facilities with other centres if this is possible, in agreement with the relevant awarding organisation.
- **Facilitation of post results services:**
  - Centre to make arrangements to make post results requests at an alternative location
  - Centres to contact the relevant awarding organisation if electronic post results requests are not possible)



## Further guidance to inform procedures and implement contingency planning

### Ofqual

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

#### 1. Contingency planning

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

When drafting contingency plans, you should consider the following guidance...

#### 2. 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

#### 3. Steps you should take

##### 3.1 Exam planning

Review 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.

##### 3.2 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 parents, carers and students any changes to the exam or assessment timetable or to the venue.
7. Communicate with any external assessors or relevant third parties regarding any changes to the exam or assessment timetable.

##### 3.3 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 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.

#### 4. Steps the awarding organisation should take

##### 4.1 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.

##### 4.2 In the event of disruption

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

#### 4.3 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.

#### **5. 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.

See also:

- [JCQ's guidance on special considerations](#)

#### **6. Wider communications**

The regulators, [Ofqual](#) in England, [Qualifications Wales](#) in Wales and [CCEA](#) in Northern Ireland, will share timely and accurate information, as required, with awarding organisations, government departments and other stakeholders.

The [Department for Education](#) 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.

#### **7. Widespread national disruption**

In the event of widespread sustained national disruption, the 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.

(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 02 March 2020) <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

15.1 The qualification regulators, JCQ 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 Centres should prepare plans for any disruption to examinations as part of their general emergency planning. It is important to ensure that relevant centre staff are familiar with the 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 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.

15.5 The awarding bodies will designate 'contingency days' for examinations, summer 2023. 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 a 'contingency day' 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 2023, 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 this contingency arrangement so that they may take it into account when making their plans for the summer. However, the awarding bodies will not insist upon candidates being available throughout the entire timetable period as a matter of course.

(JCQ guidance above taken directly from Instructions for Conducting Examinations 2022-2023  
<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)

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: Severe weather; Exam disruption [www.gov.uk/guidance/emergencies-and-severe-weather-schools-and-early-years-settings](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/emergencies-and-severe-weather-schools-and-early-years-settings)

Opening and closing local-authority-maintained schools [www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-organisation-maintained-schools](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-organisation-maintained-schools)

Dispatch of exam scripts guide: Ensuring the service runs smoothly; Contingency planning  
<https://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 in extremely bad weather [gov.wales/opening-schools-extremely-bad-weather-guidance-schools](http://gov.wales/opening-schools-extremely-bad-weather-guidance-schools)

## **Northern Ireland**

Exceptional closure days [www.education-ni.gov.uk/articles/exceptional-closure-days](http://www.education-ni.gov.uk/articles/exceptional-closure-days)

Checklist for Principals when considering Opening or Closure of School [www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/checklist-exceptional-closure-schools](http://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/checklist-exceptional-closure-schools)

School closures [www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/school-closures](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/school-closures)

## **National Counter Terrorism Security Office**

Procedures for handling bomb threats [www.gov.uk/government/publications/bomb-threats-guidance/procedures-for-handling-bomb-threats](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/bomb-threats-guidance/procedures-for-handling-bomb-threats)