

# Exam Contingency Plan

## 1 Purpose of the plan

This plan examines potential risks and issues that could cause disruption to the exams process at the centre. 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 - 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 The Acorns School is compliant with the JCQ Regulations for Approved Centres (section 5.3) 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.*

## 2 Possible causes to disruption to the exam process

### 2.1 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 disruption

#### **General**

The Exams Officer maintains a schedule of tasks that need to be completed. This can be accessed by the Head of Centre at any time. The Exams Officer uses relevant manuals that might be required at any time throughout the year. These can be accessed by the Head of Centre at any time.

#### **Making Entries**

The Exams Officer or the Head of Centre have access to Sims Exams Organiser software in order to make entries. Subject leaders will be asked to check entries in good time of entry deadlines.

#### **Coursework**

Where applicable the subject leader is aware of the deadline and the data that has to be submitted. The exams administrator or Head of Centre will submit coursework marks and check that coursework samples are sent by subject leaders by the required dates.

#### **Exam Period**

In case of absence, the Examinations Officer will inform the Head of Centre in good time so that the smooth running of examinations can be ensured. A folder will be made up during each exam period detailing which exams are taking place and when with seating plans, access arrangements information, rooms, candidate lists, attendance registers and invigilator lists and can be found in the exams office clearly labelled.

#### **Exam Papers**

The Examinations Officer or the Head of Centre have access to the keys to the secure exam storage cupboard. Exam papers are set out in the secure storage cupboards in date order so that the following day's exam papers are always easily found. Exam packets may need to be opened and re-packed if an exam is taking place in more than one room. This must be witnessed by a 2<sup>nd</sup> person to check that the correct envelope is being opened – check JCQ guidelines for how far in advance of the exam this may be done.

#### **Script despatch**

Scripts must be packed and either taken to reception for collection in the afternoon or locked up in the exams storage room in the secure cupboards (if it is too late for that day's collection). Parcelforce collect scripts between 12.30 pm and 4.00 pm

The exam board attendance registers are stored in exam room drawers – these must be completed and signed. One copy goes into the envelope with the scripts, the other is kept for our own records. Script envelopes need to be used to dispatch the scripts – these are also kept in the exam drawers.

A yellow label must be stuck on the envelope – these are stored with exam board registers. A Parcelforce despatch form must be completed for each collection, they must be signed by the driver on collection.

#### **Results**

The Head of Centre will access results using the manuals in the exams office.

## **2.2 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 disruption**

The Exams Officer will closely monitor the access arrangement process in the event of the SENCo having an extended absence. The Head of Centre and centre staff regarding the identification and approval of access arrangements and collation of evidence. Specialist advice will be sought from outside agencies if the need arises.

### 2.3 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 disruption**

The Exams Officer will closely monitor the key tasks undertaken by teaching staff and will liaise with the Head of Centre and other centre staff regarding entry information. The Head of Centre will monitor the progress of non examination tasks, coursework marks and internal assessment marks and ensure steps are put in place to complete these and inform candidates of these within the appropriate timescales. Awarding bodies will be informed of any potential issues as soon as possible.

### 2.4 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 disruption

In the unforeseen event of the centre is unable to recruit or train sufficient invigilators, support staff within school are trained and released to conduct exams

Invigilators are given their timetables in advance and should all report to the exams office on arrival. The folder will detail where they are meant to be and with which candidates. Invigilators' hours are organised by the SENCO. If an invigilator does not turn up for any reason a member of SLT will stand in for them.

### 2.5 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 disruption

If the exams officer is unable to identify sufficient/appropriate rooms during the planning period, timetable changes will be made to ensure that appropriate rooming is in place. This is also the case on peak exam days.

If there is an unexpected incident at exam time preventing the use of a room, the Head of Centre will liaise with other local schools to accommodate the exam – St Bedes School, Ormskirk School  
Special consideration will be applied for and the students kept secure for the duration of the delay.

### 2.6 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 disruption

In the event of a MIS system failure at crucial times during the exam cycle the ICT Manager (Blue Orange or BTLS) will be informed as soon as possible and every step will be taken to reinstate the MIS to working condition. Exam boards will be notified in good time and steps will be taken to continue proceedings using manual systems.

## **2.7 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 disruption

If the fire alarm sounds the exams officer will immediately enter the main (Technology suite) and note the time of the alarm. The head of centre will liaise with the exams officer regarding the necessity for stopping the exam and evacuating the building. If the need arises for an evacuation, the normal school Fire Evacuation Procedures for examinations will apply:

#### **A) THE SCHOOL HALL**

1. Candidates will stop writing and close their answer booklets.
2. The Exams Officer will remind the candidates of the need to remain in silence and not communicate with any other candidate.
3. Candidates will evacuate the room one row at a time via the fire exit door.
4. One invigilator will go with the first group of students and the second (if available) will go with the second group of students. The first invigilator will take the internal attendance register with him/her.
5. The Exams Officer will be the last to leave the room, having secured the evacuation of all candidates and the room.
6. Candidates will proceed to the front lawn and line up in exam room order, leaving adequate space between rows and columns to maintain the security of the exam.
7. The first invigilator will take the register and remind candidates not to communicate with the rest of the school who will be lined up on the lawn next to them.
8. The Exams Officer will report to the Head of Centre when all students are accounted for

#### **Returning to the Exam Room:**

9. Candidates will return to the exam room. The Exams Officer will go with the first group of students and the other invigilators (if available) will go with the rest of the group of candidates.
10. In assessing whether or not to continue the exam the Exams Officer will liaise with the Head of Centre (or his/her nominated deputy) as to whether or not the session will continue. The Head of Centre (or his/her nominated deputy) will take the following factors into consideration:
  - The length of time that has passed since the official start time
  - Whether the minimum time for remaining the examination has passed to maintain the integrity of the exam.
  - The amount of time left to complete the exam(s)
  - Whether there is sufficient time to complete the exam before another session starts.
  - Whether continuing the exam will take candidates over the session limit of 3 hours, taking particular care to consider candidates with access arrangements which include extra time.

If the Head of Centre (or his/her nominated deputy) are satisfied that the above conditions have not been breached he/she will ask the Exams Officer to continue the exam.

11. The Exams Officer will ask all candidates to mark their work with an Asterisk (star) so that the exam board can identify where the candidates' concentration was disturbed.
12. The candidates will continue with the exam and be given the full allocated amount of time (including stoppage) for the completion of the exam.
13. Scripts will be submitted to the exam board in the usual manner at the end of the exam.
14. The Exams Officer will apply for special consideration for all affected candidates.
15. If the above conditions cannot be met the Exams Officer will liaise with the Head of Centre regarding a decision to abandon the session.

**If the session is to be abandoned, this will be either:**

- Because of consideration of the criteria above,
- Because re-entry to the premises cannot be secured
- Because the risk of communication between candidates, the validation of the exam cannot be guaranteed

16. The Exams Officer will contact the Exam Board at the first opportunity and then apply for Special Consideration of all affected candidates.
17. Partially completed papers will be sent to the exam board by the usual means if requested.

**If Evacuation is unnecessary:**

The Exams Officer will apply procedures (11) – (15) above providing the conditions in (10) above can be guaranteed.

**B) All OTHER EXAM ROOMS IN USE AT THE SAME TIME**

1. The Invigilator in charge of the room will follow procedures (1) – (7) above, immediately evacuating the room and accompanying the candidates to the front lawn.
2. The Invigilator will wait for further instruction from the Exams Officer who will communicate with the Invigilator at the earliest opportunity.
3. The Exams Officer will apply procedures (8) and (10) – (17) above.

If the lock down command is used the full policy will be adhered to and students will be kept in the exam rooms, away from doors and windows. A note of the time will be taken and the exam board will be notified as soon as it is safe to do so.

## **2.8 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 closed interrupting the of normal teaching and learning

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of 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.

The local schools will have been contacted before exam series if needed. St Bedes High School and Ormskirk Grammar School.

## 2.9 Candidates unable to take examinations because of a crisis – centre remains open

### Criteria for implementation of the plan

- Candidates do not turn up for an exam
- Candidates turn up for an exam that they are not entered for
- Candidates are entered for the wrong paper
- Candidates are taken ill during an exam
- Awarding Body communications systems fail – online exams

### Centre actions to mitigate the impact of 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. Find a paper, seat them, amend attendance list and make entry. If recurring problem see SLT.

#### **Students are entered for the wrong paper**

Subject leader 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/or Exam Officers mobile number. Special Consideration for student(s)

#### **Awarding Body communications systems fail – on line exams**

Contact awarding body immediately

## 2.10 Centre unable to conduct exams because of a power outage – centre remains open

### Criteria for implementation of the plan

- Candidates are unable to site their exam due to a power outage in the exam room

### Centre actions

Site Manager informed as soon as possible. Re-room the exam to rooms with power if possible. Start the exam late within JCQ regulations if power is restored. Special consideration to be applied for only if external examinations cannot be taken, and it is the final exam opportunity for the students concerned before cash-in. To be completed within 7 days of exam date.

## 2.11 Centre unable to open as normal during the examination period (including in the event of the centre being unavailable for examinations owing to unforeseen emergency)

### Criteria for implementation of the plan

- Centre unable to open as normal for scheduled examinations

### Centre actions to mitigate the impact of disruption

If there are timetabled examinations scheduled on a day when the Head Teacher decides that the school should be closed to staff and students, the following procedures will be implemented:

The school has a team of staff who, should conditions allow, are able to come to school to ensure that timetabled exams may go ahead. In such an eventuality, the school as an examination centre will only open to candidates sitting timetabled GCSE written examinations. In order that the school can ensure the correct administration of exams, the team has to include the Exams Officer or a suitably trained member of leadership team. If these members of staff are not able to get into school the scheduled exam(s) will not run. In line with JCQ (Joint Council for Qualifications) guidance, the school will endeavour to be open and, where conditions allow, timetabled examinations will go ahead. If the start of the exam is delayed candidates will be isolated and the exam board will be notified. Special consideration may be applied.

Advice and recommendations from the JCQ state:

*“Wherever possible, the examinations should be conducted according to the centre’s published examination timetable” and “it is important to note that rescheduling the examinations is not an option due to the consequences that it would have across the system”*

In the event that weather is adverse and the school is closed on a day of a scheduled public examination the Head Teacher will assess the possibility of key staff being able to attend. If she is confident that key staff are able to be in attendance and that the exam will run. The school website will be updated to show timetabled examinations are still going ahead and advising of any revised start times. Start times may be delayed for morning exams if a number of candidates are late (permission will be sought from relevant awarding bodies). All candidates are expected to make the effort to come in and sit their examination. The decisions regarding travelling to school for an exam rest with individual families taking consideration of the weather and road conditions locally to them. If a candidate is unable to get into school on an exam day as a result of inclement weather, it is imperative that families contact the school as soon as possible to explain that this has occurred. If the head teacher were to take a decision that the school has to close, as it is unsafe to open, we would notify the exam board that we had been unable to run the exams that were scheduled for that day.

If the school has to be closed for a prolonged period of time which may affect more than one examination, students may need to sit the exam at an alternative venue. The agreed venue for this is St Bedes High School. Transport for students will be arranged as soon as possible, along with necessary other arrangements such as exam desks and secure transportation of papers.

In the event of the centre having to partially close they will:

- consider opening school for examinations and examination candidates only
- use alternative venues in agreement with relevant awarding organisations (e.g. share facilities with other centres or use other public buildings if possible)
- apply to awarding organisations for special consideration for candidates where they have met the minimum requirements
- offer candidates an opportunity to sit any examinations missed at the next available series, if possible

## **2.12 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 disruption

The centre will contact the awarding organisation to:

- source alternative couriers for delivery of hard copies
- provide centres with electronic access to examination papers via a secure external network
- fax examination papers to centres if electronic transfer is not possible

The examinations officer would 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.

## **2.13 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 disruption

The centre to communicate with relevant awarding organisations at the outset to resolve the issue

The centre will, in the first instance, seek advice from awarding organisations and their normal collection agency regarding collection

The centre will not make their own arrangements for transportation without approval from awarding organisations

The centre will ensure secure storage of completed examination scripts until collection

## **2.14 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 bodies

### Centre actions to mitigate the impact of disruption

If possible, the candidate will retake the assessment that has been affected at a subsequent assessment window

The awarding organisations can be asked to generate candidate marks for affected assessments based on other appropriate evidence of candidate achievement, as defined by the awarding organisations in consultation with the regulators

It is the responsibility of the head of centre to communicate this immediately to the relevant awarding organisation(s) and subsequently to students and their parents or carers

## **2.15 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 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 disruption

The centre will make every effort to make arrangements to access results at an alternative site and/or share facilities with other schools and colleges if possible

The centre will also contact the awarding organisations about alternative options

The centre will arrange for the results to be collected from an alternative venue and communicate this to students via the school website and any other means possible

The centre will arrange to make post results requests at an alternative location and contact relevant awarding organisations if electric post results requests are not possible

## 3 Further guidance to inform procedures and implement contingency planning

### 3.1 Ofqual

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

#### **Contingency planning**

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

#### **Covid specific guidance:**

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

- [actions for schools during the coronavirus outbreak](#) from the Department for Education in England
- [actions for FE colleges and providers during the coronavirus outbreak](#) from the Department for Education in England
- [responsibility for exams](#) from the Department for Education in England
- [vocational, technical and other general qualifications in 2022](#) from Ofqual (regulator)
- [GCSE, AS and A level qualifications in 2022](#) from Ofqual (regulator)
- [education and childcare: coronavirus](#) from Welsh Government
- [Qualifications Wales homepage](#) from Qualifications Wales (regulator)
- [coronavirus \(COVID-19\): guidance for school and educational settings in Northern Ireland](#) from Department of Education in Northern Ireland
- [coronavirus \(COVID-19\) \(information from CCEA\)](#) – information on vocational, technical and general qualifications from CCEA Regulation

#### **General contingency guidance**

- [emergency planning and response](#) from the Department for Education in England
- [school organisation: local-authority-maintained schools](#) from the Department for Education in England
- [exceptional closure days](#) from the Department of Education in Northern Ireland
- [checklist - exceptional closure of schools](#) from the Department of Education in Northern Ireland
- [school terms and school closures](#) from NI Direct
- [opening schools in extremely bad weather](#) - guidance for schools from the Welsh Government
- [bomb threats](#) procedures for handling bomb threats from the National Counter Terrorism Security Office

#### **Disruption to assessments or exams**

In the absence of any instruction from the relevant awarding organisation, the school or college should assume that any exam or timetabled assessment should take place if it is possible for it to do so. This may mean having to locate alternative premises.

If the exam or assessment cannot take place, or if a student misses an exam or loses their assessment due to an emergency or other event outside the control of the school or college, you should discuss alternative arrangements with your awarding organisation.

See also:

- [JCQ Joint Contingency Plan for the Examination System in England, Wales and Northern Ireland](#)

#### **Steps you should take:**

##### **Exam planning**

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

##### **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.

#### **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.

#### **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 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 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 student misses 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](#)

### **Wider Communication**

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 [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.

### **Widespread national disruption to the taking of examinations or assessments**

The government's view across England, Wales and Northern Ireland is education should continue in 2021 to 2022 with schools remaining open and that examinations and assessments will go ahead in both autumn 2021 and summer 2022.

As education is devolved, in the event of any widespread sustained national disruption to examinations or assessments, national government departments will communicate with regulators, awarding organisations and centres prior to a public announcement. Regulators will provide advice to government departments on implications for exam timetables.

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

[Ofqual guidance extract above taken directly from the Exam system contingency plan: England, Wales and Northern Ireland - What schools and colleges and other centres should do if exams or other assessments are seriously disrupted, (updated September 2021) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/exam-system-contingency-plan><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>[england-wales-and-northern-ireland/what-schools-and-colleges-should-do-if-exams-or-other-assessments-are-seriously-disrupted](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)[disrupted](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)]

## **3.2 JCQ**

### **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><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>[england-wales-and-northern-ireland/what-schools-and-colleges-should-do-if-exams-or-other-assessments-are-seriously-disrupted](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)[seriously-disrupted](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)

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 a 'contingency day' for examinations, summer 2022. This is consistent with the qualification regulators' document Exam system contingency plan: England, Wales and Northern Ireland - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/examsystem-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 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 JCQ *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: Coronavirus (COVID 19) [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)

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

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: guidance for schools [gov.wales/opening-schools-extremely-bad](https://gov.wales/opening-schools-extremely-bad)  
<https://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 - 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 Counter Terrorism Security Office**

Guidance - Bomb Threats [www.gov.uk/government/publications/crowded-places-guidance/bomb-threats](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/crowded-places-guidance/bomb-threats)