



Woodhey High School Exam Contingency Plan 2024/25

This policy is reviewed annually to ensure compliance with current regulations

Approved/reviewed by	
Reviewed by: Exams Officer Approved by: Gary Holden (Assistant Headteacher)	
Date of next review	September 2025

Key staff involved in contingency planning

Role	Name(s)
Head of Centre	Dean Watson
Data and Examinations Manager – line manager	Gary Holden (AHT)
Data & Exams Officer	Alison Abbott
Exams Officer	Claire Baker
SENCo Line Manager/SENCo	Clare Lomax (DHT) Carla Fleming
Lead Invigilator	Helen Chadderton
IT Technician	Chris Greenwood

Contents

Key staff involved in contingency planning	3
Purpose of the plan	4
Possible causes of disruption to the exam process	4
1. Exam Officer extended absence at key points in the exam process (cycle)	4
2. SENCo Line Manager/SENCo extended absence at key points in the exam cycle Error! Bookmark not defined.	
3. Teaching staff extended absence at key points in the exam cycle	7
4. Invigilators - lack of appropriately trained invigilators or invigilator absence	7
5. Exam rooms - lack of appropriate rooms or main venues unavailable at short notice.....	8
6. Cyber Security	8
7. Failure of IT systems	9
8. Emergency evacuation of the exam room (or centre lock down)	10
9. Disruption of teaching time in the weeks before an exam – centre closed for an extended period..	10
10. Candidates unable to take examinations because of a crisis – centre remains open.....	11
11. Centre unable to open as normal during the examination period	11
12. Disruption in the distribution of examination papers	11
13. Disruption to the transportation of completed examination scripts	12
14. Assessment evidence is not available to be marked	12
15. Centre unable to distribute results as normal or facilitate post results services	13
16. Disruption due to Adverse Weather.....	13
Further guidance to inform procedures and implement contingency planning	
Ofqual	15
Widespread national disruption to the taking of examinations / assessments	16
JCQ.....	17
GOV.UK	20
National Counter Terrorism Security Office	21

Purpose of the plan

This plan examines potential risks and issues that could cause disruption to the exams process at Woodhey 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 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 for the Examination System in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and the JCQ document Preparing for disruption to examinations (Effective from 1 September 2023).

This plan also confirms Woodhey's compliance with JCQ's General 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 where the head of centre, examinations officer or SENCo is absent at a critical stage of the examination cycle.

Operating across more than one centre

This does not apply to our centre.

National Centre Number Register and other information requirements

The head of centre will also ensure that as a contingency to enable the prompt handling of urgent issues only, responds to the awarding bodies' request for information regarding the contact details of a senior member of staff (which might include a personal mobile number and/or email address). This will ensure that any urgent matters which might adversely affect candidates which arise outside of term time, and which potentially put qualification awards at risk, can be addressed by awarding bodies with the support of that member of staff. Heads of centre should ensure that this member of staff has the necessary authority to mobilise resources to provide this support, which might include resolving issues within the centre itself. (GR 5.3)

Possible causes of disruption to the exam process

1. Exam Officer extended absence at a critical point 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
- changes to JCQ and awarding body regulations not identified and the necessary actions implemented

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
- modified exam paper order deadline missed

Pre-exams

- policies and other documentation not updated in-line with current JCQ, awarding body and Ofqual/government regulations/guidance and school's working practices
- invigilators not trained or updated on changes to instructions for conducting exams
- invigilators not trained to support/invigilate access arrangement facilitators
- exam timetabling, rooming allocation; and invigilation schedules not prepared
- alternative site and requests for timetable variations not completed and submitted by awarding body deadlines
- 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
- internal assessment marks and moderation samples of students work not submitted to awarding bodies/external moderators

Exam time

- secure exam materials not handled and logged as prescribed by the JCQ and awarding bodies
- 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

- results and post results procedures not updated to meet any last-minute changes put in place by JCQ/ Ofqual/ government/awarding bodies
- 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
- Gary Holden (Assistant Head Teacher) line manages the Exams Officer (EO).
- The EO produces an of overview of the year which includes key dates and tasks to ensure Gary Holden (Assistant Head Teacher) is aware of key areas of the exam planning cycle.
- In the event the need to self-isolate the EO and Gary Holden (Assistant Head Teacher) can access the school systems and work remotely.
- The Lead Invigilator (LI) would be contracted to work additional hours. The LI could work alongside the EO from Tottington to complete key tasks.
- The LI is fully trained on how to administer/run exams on exam days and currently leads some of the exam sessions in school. The LI is required to keep up-to-date

on the relevant JCQ regulations/guidance. The thorough training and experience to date would ensure that all exams are taken under prescribed conditions.

- The HoC and Gary Holden (Assistant Head Teacher) support the EO on results days. With support from the EO from Tottington High School or another school within SET, we could ensure results and post-results are unaffected by any absence of the EO.

2. SENDCo 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
- access arrangement facilitators not trained or updated on changes made to JCQ Instructions for Conducting Exams and JCQ Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments
- staff (facilitators) providing support to access arrangement candidates not allocated

Exam time

- access arrangement candidate's support not arranged for exam room

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- The SENDCo Line Manager/SENDCo works to ensure candidates access arrangements are determined, assessed/tested and approved to meet JCQ and awarding body deadlines.
- Teachers and TAs report back concerns in subject areas to the SENCo Line Manager/SENCO to ensure testing happens. The 'Curriculum Support Pupil Referral Form' is utilised to assure assessments are completed in-line with JCQ regulations.
- Pupil progress is monitored and students identified from assessment data, including reading and spelling ages, to inform the SENCo Line Manager/SENCO which students require testing. All this happens well in advance of the external exam process.
- The SENCo Line Manager/SENCO ensures, if testing cannot be completed internally, a qualified external assessor is bought in (see Access Arrangements Policy).
- The SENCo Line Manager/SENCO and the EO ensure the overall list of students with access arrangements is kept up-to-date and the information is communicated to all staff.
- Liaison between EO and SENCo Line Manager/SENCO following each internal exam series to produce a report which details how the students have utilised their access arrangements. The report also highlights students potentially needing assessing/testing by the SENCo Line Manager/SENCO.
- All testing is completed to ensure deadlines are met for the SENCo Line Manager/SENCO to apply for access arrangements and to enable the EO to apply for modified papers. □ All staff involved in exams receive training and annual update training.
- Staff are trained/qualified to support the full range of access arrangements needed during each exam season.

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 EO on time; resulting in prerelease information not being received
- JCQ regulations for NEA/coursework and awarding body regulations/guidance not communicated to cover staff
- Non-examination assessment tasks not set/issued/taken by candidates as scheduled
- Final entry information not provided to the EO 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
- 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

- Extended absence would be covered by long term supply and any exam data would be monitored by the Director of Faculty (DoF) to ensure deadlines are met.
- DoF would ensure JCQ regulations for NEA/coursework and any awarding body regulations/guidance are communicated to cover staff
- DoF to ensure NEA's and coursework is completed and marks issued to candidates in time to ensure there an internal appeal can take place prior to the submission of marks to the awarding body.
- If the DoF is absent for a period of time a temporary internal promotion would take place to fill their role. As part of their remit the temporary internal promotion would oversee exam administration, including non-examination assessments/coursework.
- AHT would support departments which have staff absent for long periods to ensure all exam deadlines are met.
- EO produces a calendar of exam key dates and tasks to ensure all parties are aware of important deadlines.

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 exams are planned early in the academic year. The number of invigilators required can be assessed, based on current access arrangements.
 - Recruitment of new invigilators takes place to ensure there is time for full training to be completed. If necessary, external advertisements are placed.
 - Job descriptions of TAs, English and Maths Intervention Officers and Cover Supervisors include 'emergency invigilation'. These staff receive appropriate invigilator training/update training.
- ☐ If there are any shortages, we would buy in from an agency, as we have done in the past, if there is an unforeseen circumstance. The HoC ensures the agency provides invigilators who have received up-to-date training.
- ☐ In the event of the previous actions being followed and there is still a shortage of invigilators the trained members of the Admin Team will be used to invigilate exams.

5. Exam rooms - lack of appropriate rooms or main venues unavailable at short notice

Criteria for implementation of the plan

EO 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 exams are planned well in advance so that we can plan for any 'busy' days with regard to rooming.
- If due to emergency access arrangements a new separate venue is required there is the potential to use an office area e.g. Director of Progress.
- Our main room is the FB Hall and, if there were a sudden closure of this room, we could utilise the Sports Hall and re-route PE classes from there. We may have to keep students under 'Exam Conditions', utilising classrooms, with invigilator supervision, whilst the re-desking is completed. The EO to contact the awarding bodies to inform them of the disruption to the exam.
- If there was a whole-school closure, preventing access to the site, we have an arrangement with 3 local primary schools to utilise their centre (Holcombe Brook, Hazlehurst and St. Andrew's). The EO to inform the awarding bodies and will complete any necessary paperwork.
- If the whole school closure was prolonged, we would investigate using an alternative venue, e.g. local hotel with a conference hall and arrange coaches to 'bus' students who could not arrange transport to the venue. The EO would inform the awarding bodies and complete any necessary paperwork

6. Cyber Security

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

- All data is backed up onto the 'CLOUD'.
- The data systems are protected by encrypted passwords which are kept securely in the school main safe.
- In the event of a cyber security attack/threat the following actions would be taken:
 - Enact our incident development plan
 - Contact the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC)
 - Contact our local law enforcement and Action Fraud
 - Inform the Department for Education by emailing: sector.securityenquiries@education.gov.uk

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

Power, network and IT room failure on exam days

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- All entries are completed well in advance of deadlines to minimise risk of system failure affecting entries. If MIS system failed preventing any entries, log an urgent call to SIMS. If internal IT failure then alert IT Technician. Alert awarding bodies and take their advice as to how best to ensure entries are received.

- System failure during exam preparation may delay the production of seating plans.

Again, this is all planned well in advance so that any issues should be resolved before the exam date. If necessary, exam seating plans would be produced manually.

- At results release time, the EO and Network Manager test SIMS, the internet and associated IT equipment are working, the day before the electronic results download day.

Any SIMS issues would be referred to Capita. □ Our local high school who we have a working relationship with, Tottington, would be contacted to see if their systems are working, if they are, then we would re-locate for the electronic results download day so we could compile the data. THE EO would inform the awarding bodies as required

- NEA marks are entered in advance of the awarding body deadline date to minimise the risk of a system failure.
 - If necessary, results data would be downloaded from each exam site and then collated for each pupil.
 - The deadline date for receipt of post results requests is set to allow time for a MIS or other IT failure.
- In the event of a power failure, network failure, IT room failure on an exam day the following actions would be taken:

- Power failure – The candidates will be held under exam conditions until either
The network is reset and the computers and associated printer are available or
Candidates write their answers/use a Scribe (if this is an approved option) and special considerations are applied for
- Network failure - The candidates will be held under exam conditions until either
The network is reset and the computers and associated printer are available or
If the number of candidates allow, laptops are provided and a standalone printer is used
or Candidates write their answers/use a Scribe (if this is an approved option) and special considerations are applied for
- IT room failure – the candidates would be moved to another IT room

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

- In the event of an emergency evacuation of the exam room the Exam Emergency Evacuation Procedure will be followed.
- In the case of a centre lock down the Lock Down policy (exams) will be followed.
- An examinations evacuation/lock down folder is held in the exams office and each main exam room, which includes awarding body contact numbers, alternative site contact number, candidate details, access arrangements, invigilator details etc.
- During an evacuation/lock down candidates will be fully supervised and will be kept under examination conditions.
- In the event of a lock down the F.B. Hall (the main examination room) entrance will be locked and all curtains over the fire exits will remain closed. The lead invigilator will log on to SIMS. Communications/instructions will take place via SIMS/telephone/walkie talkie. Students to carry on with exams and unless necessary will not be made aware of the issue.
- In the event it is not possible for candidates to start, proceed or complete their examinations. The EO will contact the awarding body and inform them of the situation. Where practicable the HoC and EO will implement the contingency plan to use another school's facilities (see section 10). Parents/Carers will be informed of the situation and what actions school has/will take as soon as is practicable.

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

- If the centre is closed for an extended period of time, the SET/Local Authority would be contacted to support us in finding an alternative venue.
 - Where there is disruption to teaching time and students miss teaching and learning, we are aware it remains the responsibility of centres to prepare students, as usual, for examinations therefore:
 - If the venue was to be closed for a relatively short period of time or, if only part access to the site was available, we would put plans in place to facilitate alternative methods of learning. We would ensure the teaching of Years 10 and 11 would take priority.
 - If the centre was to be closed for a longer period, the SET/Local Authority would co-ordinate a move to an alternative site. Parents/Carers would be informed in writing as to the situation and the actions school was taking.
- ☐ In the case of modular courses, candidates may be advised to sit examinations in an alternative series.

10. Candidates may not be able to take examinations – 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

- The EO to contact the awarding body, explaining the reason and take advice. The EO will arrange an emergency invigilator to attend and to administer an exam at the pupil's home, hospital etc. The HoC and AHT will be kept updated.
- The HoC/AHT/EO ensure the candidate is supervised in accordance with JCQ and awarding body regulations until the emergency plan can be put in place.
- The EO will inform parents of the outcome of discussions with the awarding board.
- If required the completion of the JCQ Alternative Site paperwork is completed by the EO via the JCQ Centre Admin Portal which is accessed via an awarding bodies secure website area.

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 unable to open as normal for scheduled examinations

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- Contact SET/Local Authority so they could co-ordinate the movement of the whole school to an alternative site. We have a working arrangement with 3 local Primary Schools (Holcombe Brook, Hazlehurst and St. Andrew's) to use their hall facilities for exams and would arrange for this to continue for the foreseeable future and inform students and Parents/Carers
 - If part access to the site was available, we would close the school to other year group and utilise the areas we could to administer the exams.
 - If the centre was to be closed for a longer period, SET/Local Authority would coordinate a move to an alternative site. Parents/ Carers would be informed in writing as to the situation and the actions school was taking.
- The EO would contact the awarding bodies and would ensure that all necessary paperwork is completed and permission obtained.

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

- ☐ On receipt of examination papers, the EO checks against invoice and also against the centre requirements. A log is kept which clearly shows the number of examination papers received.
- ☐ If a package is lost in transit the EO contacts the awarding body. Also, if late entries/tier changes occur which cause a shortfall of examination papers the EO contacts the awarding body to ensure sufficient papers are received.
- ☐ If examination papers have not been received by our centre at least one week prior to the examination taking place the EO contacts the awarding body.

- ☐ Postal strikes etc. are outside of our control but school would expect the awarding body to use an alternative postal distribution service if their contracted provider could not provide the service.
- ☐ If our site was closed as in scenario 7 & 10 then we would inform the awarding body as to the details of our alternative venue.
- ☐ Electronic download of papers – In the event of a lack of exam papers awarding organisations to provide centres with electronic access to examination papers via a secure external network. If this option is required EO/HoC/AHT/LI ensure copies are downloaded, copied and stored under secure conditions (see JCQ Instructions for Conducting Examinations).
- ☐ 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

- The awarding body would be informed as to the delay in collection and the centre would await their instruction as to what to do next. All completed scripts would be kept in the safe in the Exams Secure Storage until collected.
See below for more information:
 - where examinations are part of the national 'yellow label' service or where awarding organisations arrange collections, we would seek advice from awarding organisations and would not make our own arrangements for transportation unless told to do so by the awarding organisation.
- for any examinations where we make our own arrangements for transportation, we would investigate alternative dispatch options that comply with the requirements detailed in the JCQ Instructions for Conducting Examinations.

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 listed above

- All completed exam scripts are kept in a secure location, in a safe in the exams store and this may protect them in the case of a fire/flood.
- Completed assessments (NEA/Coursework) are kept in a locked desk/cupboard/filing cabinet/store and this may protect them in a case of fire/flood.
- If there was large scale damage we would ensure the awarding organisation is informed and wait for their advice before contacting students and parents/carers to inform them of the outcome.
See below for more information:
 - 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

- We would inform the students and parents via the website.
- If possible, the results will be sent to a pupil's school email or uploaded onto to our secure online portal so students can collect them electronically.
- Our local high school who we have a working relationship with, Tottington, would be contacted to see if their systems were working. If they were, then with the awarding bodies permission, we would re-locate for the pre-exam results day so we could compile the data.
- We would utilise the working relationship we have with the local high school and arrange for our students to collect their results at the alternative venue.
- If the centre was not available for post-results again we would implement this system.
- We would contact the relevant awarding organisation if electronic post results requests are not possible.

16. Disruption due to Adverse Weather

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Localised Extreme Weather Warning Issued

Extreme Heat

- Relaxation of uniform to include wearing of PE kit.
- Water provided to all students.
- Provision of fans in smaller venues.

- Blinds closed.
- Awareness of any student medical conditions that are affected by the heat.

Extreme Cold Weather

- Appropriate heating for FB Hall and smaller venues.
- Relaxation of uniform to allow students to wear warm clothing.
- Hot drinks provided in the school canteen before and after exam.

Snow

- Clear entrance of snow near to FB Hall.
- If the site is deemed too dangerous to open the exam will be rerouted to one of our alternative sites, (Holcombe Brook, Hazlehurst and St. Andrew's), if timing allows. The EO to inform the awarding bodies and will complete any necessary paperwork.
- Communication with parents/carers/students/staff prior to exam day and on the exam day itself.

Exam system contingency plan: England, Wales and Northern Ireland

DfE

Meeting digital and technology standards in schools and colleges

- Cyber Security Standards in schools and colleges
- Cyber-crime and cyber security: a guide for education providers
- DfE Cyber Security Guidance - March 2023

Exam system contingency plan: England, Wales and Northern Ireland - What schools and colleges and other centres should do if exams or other assessments are seriously disrupted (updated 5 October 2023)

www.gov.uk/government/publications/exam-system-contingency-plan-england-wales-and-northern-ireland/whatschools-and-colleges-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.

General contingency guidance

- [Emergency planning and response](#) from the Department for Education in England
- [Opening and closing local-authority-maintained schools](#) from the Department for Education in England
- [Procedures for handling bomb threats](#) from the National Counter Terrorism Security Office.

Disruption to assessments or exams

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

You should discuss alternative arrangements with your awarding organisation if:

- the exam or assessment cannot take place
- a student misses an exam or loses their assessment due to an emergency, or other event, outside of the student’s control

See also:

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

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 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
 - 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.

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.

See also:

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

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.

Widespread national disruption to the taking of examinations / 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](#) 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 as well as 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
- [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"

JCQ

JCQ guidance taken directly from [Instructions for conducting examinations 2023-2024](#) section 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-walesand-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.

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 sessions' for examinations, summer 2024. This is consistent with the qualification regulators' document Exam system contingency plan: England, Wales and

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

In the event of national disruption to a day of examinations in summer 2024, 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 the contingency arrangements so that they may take them 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.

Links to other JCQ documentation

- JCQ Joint Contingency Plan
- JCQ Preparing for disruption to examinations
- JCQ Notice to Centres - exam contingency plan
- General Regulations for Approved Centres
- Guidance notes on alternative site arrangements
- Guidance notes for transferred candidates
- Instructions for conducting examinations
- A guide to the special consideration process
- Guidance for centres on cyber security (Effective from November 2023)
- Information for centres affected by RAAC – the delivery of non-examination assessments and the special consideration process

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

Opening and closing maintained local-authority-maintained schools www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-organisationmaintained-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>

National Cyber Security Centre

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

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

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

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

- [Further ransomware attacks on UK education by cyber criminals](#)
- [Ransomware advice and guidance for your IT teams to implement](#)
- [Offline backups in an online world](#)
- [Backing up your data](#)
- [Practical resources to help schools improve their cyber security](#)
- [Building Resilience: Ransomware, the risk to schools and ways to prevent it](#)
- [School staff offered training to help shore up cyber defences](#)