Contingency Plan

Cambian Devon School

Contingency Plan

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Key staff involved in the plan

Role	**Name**
Head of centre	Abbi Salisbury
Senior leader(s)	Claire Benjafield
Exams officer	Samantha Carrington
SENCo (or equivalent role)	Claire Benjafield
Other staff (if applicable)	

This plan is reviewed and updated annually to ensure that contingency planning at Cambian Devon School is managed in accordance with current requirements and regulations.

Purpose of the plan

This plan examines potential risks and issues that could cause disruption to the examination and assessment process.

By outlining actions/procedures to be invoked in case of disruption it is intended to mitigate the impact these disruptions have on processes at Cambian Devon School.

Alongside internal processes this plan is informed by the Ofqual **Exam system contingency plan: England, Wales and Northern Ireland** which provides guidance in thedocument 'What schools and colleges and other centres should do if exams or other assessments are seriously disrupted', the **JCQ Joint Contingency Plan** for the Examination System in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and the JCQ document **Preparing for disruption to examinations**.

This plan details how Cambian Devon School complies with the JCQ's **General Regulations for Approved Centres** (5.3 *Centre management*) by having in place for inspection that must be reviewed and updated annually by a member of the senior leadership team and communicated within the centre:

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

Contingency arrangements

The centre **must** have an up to date written contingency plan.

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

The plan **must** cover the following scenarios:

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

As part of the contingency plan the centre **must** identify an alternative site or alternative sites which can be used if examinations cannot be conducted at the registered address. Larger centres may require more than one potential alternative site or different sites for different year groups.

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

The centre **must** ensure where candidates' work is produced electronically it is backed-up and should consider the contingency of candidates' work being backed-up on two separate devices, including one off-site back-up via the Cloud. Appropriate security arrangements must be implemented which protect candidates' work in the event of IT system corruption and cyber-attacks. (GR 3.17-19)

Operating across more than one centre

This does not apply to our centre, though we have two sites. All examinations take place on the Paignton site where the Head of Centre and Examination Officer are based.

National Centre Number Register and other information requirements

The head of centre will ensure that the centre completes the National Centre Number Register annual update by the end of October every year (even if there are no changes to centre details) which includes providing senior designated contact details (this might include a personal mobile number and/or email

address). These must be the contact details of someone who can be reached in an emergency if the centre is closed over the summer and who can mobilise resources to respond to the issue. (GR 5.3)

Head of centre/senior leader(s) with oversight of examination and assessment adminstration absence at a critical stage of the exam cycle

Where the head of centre may be absent at a critical stage of the examination cycle, main duties and responsibilites will be escalated in accordance with the centre's written escalation process.

Possible causes of disruption to the exam process

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

Criteria for implementation of the plan

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

Planning

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

Entries

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

Pre-exams

- invigilators not trained or updated on changes to instructions for conducting exams
- exam timetabling, rooming allocation; and invigilation schedules not prepared
- candidates not briefed on exam timetables and awarding body information for candidates
- confidential exam/assessment materials and candidates' work not stored under required secure conditions
- internal assessment marks and samples of candidates' work not submitted to awarding bodies/external moderators

Exam time

- exams/assessments not taken under the conditions prescribed by awarding bodies
- required reports/requests not submitted to awarding bodies during exam/assessment periods, for example very late arrival, suspected malpractice, special consideration
- candidates' scripts not dispatched as required for marking to awarding bodies

Results and post-results

- access to examination results affecting the distribution of results to candidates
- the facilitation of post-results services

Other criteria:

No other criteria identified

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

1. Planning

- Annual data collection exercise not undertaken:

  Action: Immediately initiate an urgent data collection process, ensuring all staff involved in delivering qualifications are informed and engaged. Consider automating data collection in future to avoid delays.

- Annual exams plan not produced:

  Action: Quickly draft a detailed exam plan, even if delayed. Focus on key milestones and deadlines and communicate this plan to all relevant staff. In the future, schedule early planning sessions to ensure timeliness.

- Sufficient invigilators not recruited:

  Action: Conduct a fast-track recruitment process for invigilators. Leverage temporary agencies or internal staff if needed and ensure minimum requirements are met. Develop a rolling recruitment process to avoid shortages in future cycles.

2. Entries

- Awarding bodies not informed of early/estimated entries:

  Action: Contact awarding bodies immediately to inform them of any missed early/estimated entries, and request flexibility or extensions where possible. Set up reminders to ensure future deadlines are met.

- Candidates not entered with awarding bodies:

Action: Conduct an emergency check of all candidates and submit entries urgently, liaising with awarding bodies to minimize penalties. Implement an automated tracking system for future entries.

- Missed awarding body entry deadlines:

  Action: Negotiate with awarding bodies for reduced or waived fees where possible. Consider implementing a robust deadline tracking system to ensure that all future deadlines are met.

3. Pre-exams

- Invigilators not trained or updated:

  Action: Organize urgent training sessions for invigilators, either through in-person workshops or online platforms. Ensure all updates to exam regulations are disseminated in a clear and concise format. Create a plan for ongoing invigilator development.

- Exam timetabling, rooming, and invigilation schedules not prepared:

  Action: Prepare these schedules as a priority. Use timetabling software if available, and ensure that exam rooms and invigilators are allocated. Communicate these schedules to staff and candidates as soon as possible.

- Candidates not briefed on exam timetables:

  Action: Distribute exam timetables to candidates immediately via email, school platforms, or notice boards. Organize a briefing session, even if delayed, to ensure all candidates are aware of key information.

- Confidential exam materials not stored securely:

  Action: Conduct a review of the secure storage and ensure that all exam materials are stored in compliance with awarding body regulations. If storage breaches have

occurred, report this to the awarding bodies immediately.

- Internal assessment marks and samples not submitted:

  Action: Submit all internal assessment marks and samples to the awarding bodies urgently. Liaise with moderators to explain any delays and request deadline extensions if necessary.

4. Exam Time

- Exams not conducted under awarding body conditions:

  Action: Review and immediately correct any breaches in exam conditions. Ensure all future exams are conducted in strict compliance with awarding body regulations. If breaches occurred, report them to the awarding bodies to mitigate consequences.

- Required reports not submitted to awarding bodies:

  Action: Identify any missed reports and submit them as a matter of priority. Set up an internal checklist to ensure all necessary reports (e.g., suspected malpractice, special consideration requests) are submitted on time in future exam periods.

- Candidates' scripts not dispatched for marking:

  Action: Arrange urgent dispatch of any outstanding scripts to awarding bodies. Use secure courier services and keep detailed records of dispatch dates. Set up tracking mechanisms to ensure timely dispatch in future exam cycles.

5. Results and Post-Results

- Access to exam results delayed:

  Action: Contact awarding bodies and IT staff to resolve any issues with access to exam results as quickly

as possible. Prepare contingency plans for alternative access methods to ensure prompt distribution of results to candidates.

- Post-results services not facilitated:

  Action: Immediately communicate to candidates the availability of post-results services (e.g., reviews of marking, appeals). Extend the deadline for requests if possible, and ensure staff are available to process requests quickly.

Additional Mitigation Strategies:

Communication and Contingency Planning: Ensure clear and constant communication with all stakeholders, including staff, candidates, and parents. Set up a crisis management team to address disruptions and maintain open channels with awarding bodies to handle any ongoing issues.
Automation and Digital Tools:
Where possible, automate key administrative tasks such as entries, deadline tracking, and script dispatch. Use software to generate alerts for important deadlines and tasks.
Staff Training and Development:
Regularly train exam staff and invigilators to ensure familiarity with processes and deadlines. Implement ongoing professional development to mitigate future risks.

2. SENCo (or equivalent role) **extended absence at a critical stage of the exam cycle**

<u>Criteria for implementation of the plan</u>

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

Other criteria:

No other criteria identified

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

Criteria for Implementation of the Plan:

The plan should be implemented if:

- The SENCo (or equivalent) is absent at a key stage of the exam cycle (e.g., during planning, pre-exams, or exam time).
- Key tasks related to the management and administration of access arrangements are not being undertaken as outlined.
- The absence threatens the centre's compliance with awarding body requirements or the provision of support to candidates with access arrangements.

Key Centre Actions to Mitigate the Impact:

1. Planning Stage

Candidates not tested/assessed to identify potential access arrangement requirements:

- Action: Assign an alternative qualified staff member (e.g., Deputy SENCo or external assessor) to assess and identify potential access arrangement requirements for candidates. This should be a priority to avoid delays in identifying needs.
- Centre fails to recognise its duties under the Equality Act 2010:

  Action: Ensure that the senior leadership team (SLT) is fully aware of the centre's legal obligations towards disabled candidates. Appoint an interim staff member to oversee these duties in the absence of the SENCo. Regular training for all staff on the Equality Act 2010 should be a part of this mitigation strategy.
- Evidence of need and normal way of working not collated:

Action: Ensure that
evidence of need (e.g., medical reports, educational psychologist assessments) and evidence supporting the normal way of working (classroom practices, history of support) are collated by teachers, support staff, and any interim SENCo. These documents must be securely stored and easily accessible.

2. Pre-Exams Stage
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- Approval for access arrangements not applied for to the awarding body:

  Action: Immediately
  assign a staff member familiar with the application process for access arrangements (e.g., exams officer or a trained administrative staff) to complete and submit applications to awarding bodies. Ensure that all necessary documentation is compiled and sent before deadlines. Use the awarding bodies' online systems to track application progress.

- Centre-delegated arrangements not put in place:

  Action: For
  centre-delegated arrangements (e.g., extra time, rest breaks), ensure that interim arrangements are put in place by another trained staff member. Work closely with teachers to understand candidates' needs and ensure these arrangements are communicated to invigilators and facilitators.

- Modified paper requirements not identified in time:

  Action: Conduct an urgent
  review of all candidates requiring modified papers (e.g., Braille, large print). Work with teaching staff and the exams officer to identify these needs and place orders with the awarding bodies immediately. In the future, set earlier internal deadlines to avoid missing external deadlines.

- Staff providing support to access

arrangement candidates not allocated and trained:

Action: Quickly recruit
and assign staff (facilitators) to support candidates, ensuring that they are briefed on their roles. If possible, use experienced staff members who have provided access arrangements in previous years. Conduct emergency training sessions to ensure they are familiar with current regulations and candidate needs.

3. Exam Time Stage

- Access arrangement candidate support not
arranged for exam rooms:

  Action: Ensure that all
access arrangements (e.g., readers, scribes, extra time) are in place on the day of the exam. This requires close coordination between the exams officer and allocated facilitators. A contingency plan should be in place to address any last-minute staffing shortages or issues. Ensure that invigilators are briefed about the specific access arrangements for each candidate.

Additional Centre Actions and Contingency Planning:

- Appoint an Acting SENCo/External
Support:

  If
possible, appoint an acting SENCo, such as a deputy SENCo or experienced support staff member, who can step in during the SENCo's absence. Alternatively, engage an external specialist or consultant to assist with critical tasks.

- Collaboration with Exams Officer and
SLT:

  The
exams officer and senior leadership team must take an active role in overseeing the access arrangements process. Regular meetings should be held to monitor progress and address any emerging issues.

- Document and Communicate Plans:

  Develop
  a clear action plan that outlines tasks, responsible staff, and deadlines for managing access arrangements. This plan should be communicated to all staff involved in the exam cycle, including teachers, invigilators, and facilitators.

- Build Capacity in the Team:

  Train
  a broader team of staff to understand and handle aspects of the access arrangements process, creating resilience in case of future disruptions. Key areas to focus on include identifying candidates' needs, submitting applications, and facilitating arrangements during exams.

- Monitoring and Review:

  Throughout
  the process, the centre should continuously monitor the implementation of access arrangements. Any issues or missed tasks should be escalated to the senior leadership team immediately. After the exam cycle, a review of the situation should be conducted to improve future planning and responses to unexpected absences.

By implementing these measures, the centre can ensure that the access arrangements process continues smoothly despite the SENCo's absence and that candidates receive the support they are entitled to under the Equality Act 2010 and awarding body regulations.

3. Teaching staff (or other key staff essential to the examination process) **extended absence at a critical stage of the exam cycle**

<u>Criteria for implementation of the plan</u>

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 (including controlled assessment and coursework) 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

Other criteria:

No other criteria identified

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

Criteria for Implementation of the Plan:

The plan should be implemented if:

- Teaching staff are absent at a critical stage of the exam cycle.
- Key tasks related to exam entries, assessments, and internal marking are not being completed on time.
- The absence threatens the centre's ability to meet awarding body deadlines or the rights of candidates to fair and timely assessment.

Key Centre Actions to Mitigate the Impact:

1. Early/Estimated Entry Information Not Provided

- Issue: Early or estimated entry information is not provided to the exams officer on time, leading to delays in receiving pre-release materials.
- Action:

  Assign an alternative staff member (e.g., head of department or deputy) to gather and submit early/estimated entry information to the exams officer urgently.
  Ensure the exams officer communicates directly with the relevant awarding bodies to negotiate extensions or manage any potential delays in receiving pre-release information.
  Implement a tracking system for entry deadlines to ensure that estimated entries are recorded promptly in future cycles.

2. Final Entry Information Not Provided

- Issue: Final entry information is not submitted to the exams officer on time, resulting in candidates not being entered for exams or assessments or being entered late, potentially incurring late fees.
- Action:

  Immediately escalate the task to the head of department or another senior staff member to gather and submit final entry information to the exams officer. This process should be expedited, and any omissions should be identified and corrected.
  Contact awarding bodies to explain the situation and request fee waivers or extensions for missed deadlines where applicable.
  Set up automated deadline reminders for staff to ensure future compliance with entry timelines.

3. Non-examination Assessment (NEA) Tasks Not Set/Issued/Completed

- Issue: Non-examination assessments (including controlled assessments and coursework) are not set, issued, or completed by candidates as scheduled due to the absence of teaching staff.
- Action:

  Allocate another qualified staff member or teaching assistant to oversee the issuing and completion of non-examination assessments. Use existing assessment materials and guidelines where possible to ensure consistency.
  If necessary, extend the deadlines for students to complete the assessments, and communicate this extension clearly to students, parents, and relevant staff.
  Work with subject leaders or external assessors (if required) to ensure that the assessments meet the criteria set by the awarding bodies.

4. Candidates Not Informed of Centre-Assessed Marks

- Issue: Candidates are not informed of their centre-assessed marks before submission to the awarding body, thus missing the opportunity to appeal internal assessments or request a review of the centre's marking.
- Action:

  Ensure that an interim staff member (e.g., head of department or exams officer) reviews the marks and communicates them to candidates in line with the centre's policy and awarding body requirements.
  Establish a process for candidates to be informed of their marks as soon as possible, providing them with the opportunity to appeal or request a review within the required timeframe.
  Set up contingency procedures for informing students of marks well in advance of submission deadlines to avoid this issue in future cycles.

5. Internal Assessment Marks and Work Not Submitted to Awarding Bodies on Time

- Issue: Internal assessment marks and candidates' work are not submitted to the awarding bodies by the required deadlines, risking penalties or disqualification.
- Action:

  Appoint an alternative member of staff (e.g., exams officer, deputy head) to collect, verify, and submit the internal assessment marks and work to the awarding bodies.
  Contact the awarding bodies immediately to explain any delays and request extensions if possible.
  Create a system for tracking internal assessment submission progress to ensure future deadlines are consistently met.

Additional Centre Actions and Contingency Planning:

1. Appointing Temporary Teaching or Administrative Support:

Action: If the absent teaching staff member's duties are not covered internally, consider

appointing temporary staff or external subject specialists to assist with key tasks. This will ensure continuity in setting assessments, marking, and communicating with students.

2. Increased Involvement from Senior Leadership Team (SLT):

Action: The SLT should closely monitor the progress of all key tasks and deadlines in the exam cycle. Regular meetings with the exams officer and heads of department should be held to ensure that essential exam-related tasks are being completed.

3. Collaboration with Exams Officer:

Action: The exams officer should work in close collaboration with the head of department and SLT to ensure that all exam entries and assessments are completed on time. They should also be responsible for liaising with awarding bodies if any adjustments or extensions are needed.

4. Regular Communication with Candidates and Parents:

Action: Ensure that candidates and parents are regularly updated about any delays or changes to the exam and assessment process. Transparent communication helps manage expectations and minimize anxiety for students affected by staff absences.

5. Establishing a Task-Tracking System:

Action: Implement a digital task-tracking system that clearly outlines deadlines, responsible staff, and progress for all key exam cycle tasks. This will enable the centre to quickly identify gaps caused by staff absence and assign alternative personnel to complete those tasks.

6. Cross-Training of Staff:

Action: Train multiple staff members in key aspects of the exam cycle to build flexibility and resilience in case of future absences. For example, have more than one staff member trained in managing exam entries, assessments, and coursework submissions.

7. Review and Improve Planning:

Action: After the disruption has been mitigated, conduct a thorough review of the situation to identify areas for improvement. Adjust future planning and policies to

ensure that similar disruptions are less impactful.

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

Other criteria:

No other criteria identified

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

Criteria for Implementation of the Plan:

The plan will be implemented if:

- The centre has failed to recruit and/or train a sufficient number of invigilators to cover exam requirements.
- A shortage of invigilators is identified on peak exam days.
- An invigilator is absent on the day of an exam, leading to inadequate supervision.

Key Centre Actions to Mitigate the Impact:

1. Failure to Recruit and Train Sufficient Invigilators

- Issue: Not enough invigilators are recruited and/or trained to conduct exams as required.
- Action:

  Deploy Internal Staff:
  Use a pre-established list of teaching and non-teaching staff who can be called upon to act as invigilators in an emergency. Ensure that they are aware of this responsibility and have access to the necessary training materials.
  Fast-Track Training:
  Since all staff have accounts on the exams office website and invigilator training has been assigned, ensure that untrained invigilators quickly complete their online training. Monitor progress daily to ensure that

those identified for emergency coverage are fully trained before the exam period.
Outsource or Hire Temporary Invigilators:
Reach out to local agencies that specialize in providing temporary invigilators or part-time staff. Create a pool of on-call invigilators that can be accessed in case of shortages.
Cross-Training Staff:
Provide cross-training to support staff, administrative staff, and other personnel to ensure that they can step in to support invigilation duties as a last resort.

2. Invigilator Shortage on Peak Exam Days

- Issue: Insufficient invigilators are available to cover all exam rooms during peak exam periods.
- Action:

Flexible Scheduling:
Adjust the timetable where possible to stagger exams or consolidate smaller exam groups into fewer rooms, reducing the number of invigilators required on peak exam days.
Deploy Senior Staff:
Temporarily assign senior staff (e.g., members of the senior leadership team, heads of departments) to invigilation duties during peak periods, ensuring that enough invigilators are present. These staff should be fully briefed on invigilation duties beforehand.
Prioritize Exams:
Identify critical exams that require the strictest supervision and allocate trained invigilators to those. For less complex assessments, consider using teaching assistants or administrative staff under the supervision of experienced invigilators.
On-Call System: Set up an "on-call" system where trained invigilators can be summoned at short notice if the centre faces an invigilator shortage on the day of the exam.

3. Invigilator Absence on the Day of an Exam

- Issue: An invigilator is absent or fails to report on the day of an exam, leading to insufficient coverage in the exam room.
- Action:

Immediate Replacement: Contact
staff members or invigilators from the pre-identified on-call pool to step in. If no replacements are available, quickly reallocate invigilators from rooms with a lower student count, ensuring all rooms still comply with the required invigilator-to-student ratios.
Utilize Senior Staff or Volunteers:
Assign senior leadership members or other available staff to temporarily cover the invigilator's absence. Ensure they are briefed on key procedures such as the start of the exam, invigilation rules, and handling candidate queries.
Combine Small Exam Groups:
Where appropriate, combine smaller groups of candidates into a single exam room to reduce the number of invigilators required. Ensure the room setup maintains the necessary exam conditions.
Plan for Breaks: Adjust
break schedules or rotations to ensure remaining invigilators can manage larger groups if necessary, without violating exam conditions.

Additional Centre Actions to Mitigate Disruption:

1. Pre-exam Contingency
Planning:

Action: In advance of the
exam period, review the invigilator schedule to identify any high-risk periods (e.g., peak exam days). Create a backup list of staff who can step in as invigilators if needed. Ensure that all invigilators and backup staff are trained and available for assignment.
Early Warning System: Set
up an early warning system for invigilator absences. For example, require invigilators to confirm their availability 24 hours before their assigned exam. This will allow for swift reallocation of staff if an absence is anticipated.

2. Training and Communication:

Action: Ensure that all
staff (teaching, support, and administrative) have completed the invigilator training assigned to them on the exams office website. Regularly remind staff of their potential role as backup invigilators.
Clear Communication:
Maintain clear communication channels with all invigilators, including backup staff, to confirm their schedules and availability. Use tools such as group messaging, email reminders, or shared calendars to keep all relevant staff updated.

3. Monitoring and Support
During Exams:

Action: During exam days,

ensure that the exams officer or a senior member of staff monitors the invigilation in progress. They should be prepared to step in and support invigilators if issues arise (e.g., absences or emergencies).
Support for New/Untrained Invigilators:
If staff members who are not typically involved in invigilation duties are required to step in, ensure that experienced invigilators or the exams officer are available to provide guidance and oversight in real time.

4. Long-Term Recruitment Strategy:

Action: Implement a longer-term recruitment strategy to prevent invigilator shortages in the future. This could include year-round recruitment efforts, offering flexible working arrangements, or creating incentives (e.g., bonuses or additional training opportunities) for invigilators to remain on-call throughout the exam season.

5. Review and Feedback Post-Exams:

Action: After the exam period, conduct a review of the invigilation process to identify areas for improvement. Gather feedback from invigilators and staff involved to improve contingency planning for future exams. Adjust recruitment, training, and scheduling processes as needed to avoid similar issues in the future.

By implementing these actions, the centre can minimize the impact of invigilator shortages or absences, ensuring that exams are conducted in compliance with awarding body regulations and that candidates experience minimal disruption.

5. Exam rooms - lack of appropriate rooms or main venue(s) 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

Other criteria:

No other criteria identified

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

- (where main exam venue(s) unavailable due to an unexpected incident at exam time) where possible, make use of other available rooms within the centre, prioritising candidates whose progression will be

severely delayed if they do not take their exam or timetabled assessment when planned

- identify whether the exam or timetabled assessment can be sat at an alternative venue, in agreement with the relevant awarding body
- (where main exam venue(s) unavailable due to an unexpected incident at exam time) where possible, move to alternative venue, prioritising candidates whose progression will be severely delayed if they do not take their exam or timetabled assessment when planned
- **Alternative site**(s) details:
  Project Compass, The Sports Pavillion, Oakland Road, Buckfastleigh, TQ11 0BW
- communicate with candidates (and where appropriate, parents/carers) any changes to the exam or assessment timetable or to the venue
- **Communication** details:
  Parents and carers will be notified of any examination timetable changes via email. Additionally, a printed letter will be sent home with the pupil to communicate both upcoming adjustments and any urgent changes.
- ensure the secure transportation of question papers or assessment materials to the alternative venue
- (after the exam) consider whether any candidate's ability to take the assessment or demonstrate their level of attainment has been materially affected and, if so, apply for special consideration

Other centre actions:

No other action identified

6. Cyber security

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- Where any incidents might compromise any aspect of assessment delivery, such as a cyber-attack

Other criteria:

No other criteria identified

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

Criteria for Implementation of the Plan:

The plan
will be implemented if a cyber-attack compromises any aspect of the exam cycle,
including:

- Exam administration systems
  (e.g., exam entries, timetabling, or communications).
- Access to exam materials,
  including secure storage of exam papers.
- Communication with awarding
  bodies or candidates.
- The centre’s ability to

store, process, or submit candidate data and results.

Key Centre Actions to Mitigate the Impact:

Immediate Response to a Cyber-Attack:

- Isolate Affected Systems: Immediately disconnect compromised systems from the network to prevent further damage or spread of the attack. Involve IT support to assess the extent of the breach and start recovery efforts.
- Notify Key Stakeholders: Inform the senior leadership team (SLT), IT department, exams officer, and awarding bodies about the attack and its potential impact on exam processes.
- Implement Backup Plans: Switch to manual or paper-based processes for critical tasks such as exam entries, timetables, and candidate communications if electronic systems are inaccessible.

Exam Entries and Candidate Data:

- Use Backup Systems: If exam entry and candidate data are compromised, revert to offline backups. The exams officer should ensure that all entries, personal data, and key deadlines are retrievable from secure backups or paper records.
- Communicate with Awarding Bodies:
  Notify awarding bodies of the situation and request extensions for any upcoming deadlines if required. Use alternative methods (e.g., phone or secure email) to confirm key exam details and candidate entries.

Access to Exam Materials:

- Secure Alternative Access: If the cyber-attack affects access to secure exam materials, work with awarding bodies to arrange for alternative delivery methods. This may include paper delivery or temporary electronic access via secure channels.
- Physical Security: Ensure that any physical exam materials, such as printed exam papers, remain secure in line with awarding body regulations, unaffected by the cyber-attack.

Communication with
Candidates and Parents:

- Manual Communication
  Channels: If
  digital systems (e.g., email, website) are compromised, switch to
  alternative methods for communicating with candidates and parents. This
  could include printed letters, phone calls, or in-person briefings at the
  centre.
- Provide Timely Updates: Keep students and parents
  informed about any changes to exam schedules or procedures due to the
  cyber-attack, ensuring clarity and minimizing confusion.

Submission of Assessments
and Results:

- Manual Submission
  Processes: If
  the cyber-attack compromises online systems used to submit candidate work
  (e.g., coursework or internal assessments), liaise with awarding bodies
  to arrange manual or alternative submission methods, such as using
  physical media.
- Secure Data Recovery: Ensure IT support
  prioritizes recovery of assessment marks and any other critical
  exam-related data. If necessary, recreate or verify this data using paper
  records or previous backups.

Post-Attack Recovery:

- Restore Systems: Work with IT and
  cyber-security experts to restore systems, ensuring that all
  vulnerabilities are identified and patched before resuming normal
  operations.
- Review and Report: After the incident,
  conduct a thorough review of the centre's response, identify any
  weaknesses, and report the cyber-attack to the relevant authorities
  (e.g., Data Protection Officer, ICO if required).
- Strengthen Cyber-Security: Implement additional
  cyber-security measures to prevent future attacks, including staff
  training, regular system backups, and improved monitoring of network
  activity.

By
following these actions, the centre can mitigate the impact of a cyber-attack
and ensure that exams proceed with minimal disruption to candidates and staff.

7. Failure of IT systems

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- IT system corruption affecting candidates' work
- MIS/IT system failure at final entry deadline
- MIS/IT system failure during exams preparation
- MIS/IT system failure at results release time

Other criteria:

No other criteria identified

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

Criteria for Implementation of the Plan:

The plan will be implemented if an IT system failure or corruption impacts critical points of the exam cycle, including:

- Corruption or loss of candidates' work stored on IT systems.
- IT system failure at final entry deadline, affecting submission to awarding bodies.
- IT system failure during exam preparation, impacting timetabling, invigilation scheduling, or exam room allocations.
- IT system failure at results release time, affecting access to results and communication with candidates.

Key Centre Actions to Mitigate the Impact:

1. IT System Corruption
Affecting Candidates' Work

- Issue: Corruption or loss of candidate work stored on the centre's IT system may result in incomplete coursework or other exam-related tasks being unavailable for submission.
- Action:

  Recover Work from Backups:
  Work with the IT department to retrieve lost work from system backups or cloud storage. Ensure that frequent backups of candidate work are part of regular IT processes.
  Request Extensions:

Contact the awarding body immediately to inform them of the situation and request an extension for the submission of affected coursework or assessments.
Alternative Submission:
Allow candidates to resubmit their work through alternative means (e.g., USB drives, hard copies). Support candidates in recreating any lost work if it is irretrievable.
Manual Storage Systems: For future prevention, store critical student work both digitally and physically (if appropriate) or use cloud-based solutions with automatic versioning to avoid data corruption.

2. IT System Failure at Final Entry Deadline

- Issue: A failure of the IT system may prevent the centre from submitting final entries to the awarding bodies by the deadline.
- Action:

Manual submission of Entries:
Switch to manual or paper-based entry submission processes if the IT systems fail. Contact awarding bodies directly to confirm the manual submission of candidate entries, ensuring that deadlines are met.
Inform Awarding Bodies:
Alert the awarding bodies immediately of the IT failure, providing details on the affected entries. Request deadline extensions or waivers of penalty fees where necessary.
Backup Entry Data: Ensure that all exam entries are backed up regularly to an alternative system (such as an offline or cloud-based spreadsheet) so that entries can still be submitted in case of an failure.

3. IT System Failure During Exams Preparation

- Issue: IT systems may fail during the exam preparation phase, affecting exam timetabling, rooming allocation, and invigilation scheduling.
- Action:

Use Backup Systems:
Ensure all timetabling and invigilation schedules are backed up to alternative platforms (e.g., printed copies or cloud storage) that can be accessed if IT systems are down.
Manual Scheduling: If the system failure is prolonged, prepare and allocate rooms and invigilators

manually using available backup data or printed schedules. Prioritize critical exams that need immediate attention.
Communicate with Staff and Candidates:
Inform staff and candidates of any necessary changes to exam arrangements due to the IT failure, ensuring that all parties are aware of their responsibilities.
Restore IT Systems: Work closely with the IT department to prioritize the restoration of systems essential for exams, ensuring minimal disruption to preparation.

4. IT System Failure at Results Release Time

- Issue: IT system failure at results release time may prevent the centre from accessing and distributing examination results to candidates.
- Action:

Alternative Access to Results:
Contact awarding bodies to obtain results through alternative means (e.g., secure emails or paper copies) if the centre's system is unavailable. Arrange for results to be printed or manually distributed to candidates.
Manual Results Distribution:
Set up a manual process for releasing results to candidates (e.g., in-person collection, mailed results) if electronic systems remain down.
Keep Candidates Informed:
Communicate clearly with candidates and parents about any delays or alternative arrangements for results distribution. Use multiple channels such as email, text messages, or printed notices to ensure everyone receives the information.
Prioritize Restoration of Systems:
Ensure IT teams prioritize restoring access to the system to enable the timely release of results.

Additional Centre Actions to Mitigate the Impact:

1. Pre-emptive Data Backup:

Action: Ensure that critical data, including candidate entries, timetables, and results, are backed up regularly to cloud-based or offline storage systems. Test the integrity of backups to ensure they can be retrieved if needed.

2. Communication Plan:

Action: Develop a
communication plan to quickly inform relevant stakeholders (e.g., candidates, parents, staff, awarding bodies) of any disruptions caused by IT failures. Use alternative communication methods (e.g., phone, text, printed letters) if email or online communication systems are affected.

3. Manual
Systems for Critical Processes:

Action: Maintain manual
systems for key exam tasks, including candidate entries, exam schedules, invigilation lists, and results distribution, that can be used if IT
systems fail. Regularly review and update these manual systems to ensure accuracy.

4. Liaise
with Awarding Bodies:

Action: Establish open
lines of communication with awarding bodies to ensure that they are informed of any disruptions due to IT failures. This will allow the
centre to negotiate extensions or alternative submission methods where needed.

5. IT
Support and Recovery Protocols:

Action: Work closely with
the IT department to implement protocols for rapid recovery of systems in the event of failure. Ensure that critical systems related to exams are given priority for restoration.

6. Post-Failure
Review:

Action: After any IT
system failure, conduct a full review of the incident, identifying areas for improvement and implementing stronger safeguards to prevent future occurrences.

By following these actions, the centre can mitigate the impact of IT system

failures and ensure that exams proceed smoothly, with minimal disruption to candidates and compliance with awarding body regulations.

8. Emergency evacuation of the exam room (or centre lockdown)

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- Whole centre evacuation (or lockdown) during exam time due to serious incident resulting in exam candidates being unable to start, proceed with or complete their exams

Other criteria:

No other criteria identified.

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

- refer to and invoke its (exams) emergency evacuation policy/procedure in line with JCQ's 'Centre emergency evacuation procedure' (or its (exams) lockdown policy)
- contact the relevant awarding body as soon as possible and follow its instructions
- where accommodation is limited, prioritise candidates whose progression will be severely delayed if they do not take their exam or timetabled assessment when planned
- (after the exam) consider whether any candidate's ability to take the assessment or demonstrate their level of attainment has been materially affected and, if so, apply for special consideration

Other centre actions:

No other criteria identified.

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

Other criteria:

No other criteria identified.

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

- recognise it remains the responsibility of the centre to prepare students, as usual, for examinations
- facilitate alternative methods of learning
- communicate with candidates (and where appropriate, parents/carers) information relating to alternative methods of learning
- **Communication** details:
  Parents and carers will be notified of any examination timetable changes via email. Additionally, a printed letter will be sent home with the pupil to communicate both upcoming adjustments and any urgent changes.
- take advice offered by the awarding body regarding alternative arrangements for conducting examinations

that may be available

- take advice offered by the awarding body on the options for candidates who have not been able to take scheduled examinations
- advise candidates, where appropriate, of the opportunities to take their exam or assessment at a later date

Other centre actions:

No other criteria identified.

10. Candidates may not be able to take examinations - centre remains open

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- Candidates may not be able to attend the examination centre to take examinations as normal because of a crisis

Other criteria:

No other criteria identified.

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

- focus on options that enable candidates to take their examinations (referencing the JCQ document *Preparing for disruption to examinations*)
- take advice offered by the awarding body on the options for candidates who have not been able to take scheduled examinations
- discuss alternative arrangements with the awarding body if a candidate misses an exam or loses their assessment due to an emergency, or other event, outside of the candidate's control
- identify whether the exam or timetabled assessment can be sat at an alternative venue, in agreement with the relevant awarding body, ensuring the secure transportation of questions papers or assessment materials to the alternative venue
- communicate with candidates (and where appropriate, parents/carers) any changes to the exam or assessment timetable or to the venue
- **Communication** details:
  Parents and carers will be phoined and a follow up email will be sent.
- consider whether any candidates' ability to take the assessment or demonstrate their level of attainment has been materially affected and, if so, apply for special consideration

Other centre actions:

No other criteria identified.

11. Centre may not be able to open for examinations

(including in the event of the centre being unavailable for examinations owing to an unforseen emergency)

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- Centre may not be able to open as normal for scheduled examinations

Other criteria:

No other criteria identified.

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

- focus on enabling candidates to take their examinations
- take advice, or follow instructions, from relevant local or national agencies in deciding whether the centre is able to open
- contact the relevant awarding body as soon as possible and follow its instructions (This could include implementing alternative arrangements for the conducting of examinations and notifying the JCQ Centre Inspection Service of an alternative site arrangement by submitting the JCQ Alternative Site form online, using the Centre Admin Portal)
- contact the relevant awarding body as soon as possible and follow its instructions
- discuss alternative arrangements with the awarding body if the exam or assessment cannot take place
- follow guidance provided by the awarding body on the conduct of examinations in such circumstances
- where accommodation is limited, prioritise candidates whose progression will be severely delayed if they do not take their exam or timetabled assessment when planned
- communicate with candidates (and where appropriate, parents/carers) any changes to the exam or assessment timetable or to the venue
- **Alternative site**(s) details:
  Project Compass, The Sports Pavillion, Oakland Road,
  Buckfastleigh, TQ11 0BW
- **Communication** details:
  Parents and carers will be notified of any examination
  timetable changes via email. Additionally, a printed letter will be sent home
  with the pupil to communicate both upcoming adjustments and any urgent changes.
- consider whether any candidates' ability to take the assessment or demonstrate their level of attainment has been materially affected and, if so, apply for special consideration

Other centre actions:

No other criteria identified.

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

Other criteria:

No other criteria identified

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

- liaise with awarding bodies regarding the provision of electronic access to examination papers via a secure external network and will ensure when copies are received/made these are stored under secure

conditions

- follow guidance provided by the awarding body on the conduct of examinations in such circumstances
- understand that as a last resort, and in close collaboration with centres and regulators, awarding organisations will consider scheduling of the examination on an alternative date
- communicate with candidates (and where appropriate, parents/carers) any changes to the exam or assessment timetable or to the venue

Other centre actions:

No other criteria identified

13. Delay in collection arrangements for completed examination scripts

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- Delay in normal collection arrangements for completed examination scripts/assessment evidence

Other criteria:

No other criteria identified

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

- where examinations are part of the national 'yellow label' service or where awarding organisations arrange collections, seek advice from the relevant awarding organisations and will not make its own arrangements for transportation unless told to do so by the awarding organisation
- for any examinations where the centre makes its own arrangements for transportation, investigate alternative dispatch options that comply with the requirements detailed in the JCQ document *Instructions for conducting examinations*
- ensure the secure storage of completed examination scripts until as close to the collection time as possible

Other centre actions:

No other criteria identified

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

Other criteria:

No other criteria identified

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

- liaise with the awarding body to determine if candidate marks for affected assessments may be able to be

generated based on other appropriate evidence of candidate achievement as defined by the awarding body

- where marks cannot be generated by awarding body, inform candidates they may need to retake the affected assessment in a subsequent assessment series

Other centre actions:

No other criteria identified

15. Centre unable to distribute results as normal (including in the event of the centre being unavailable on results day owing to an unforseen emergency) or facilitate post-results services

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

Other criteria:

No other criteria identified

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

- make arrangements to access its results at an alternative venue/share facilities with another centre if this is possible, in agreement with the relevant awarding body
- make arrangements to coordinate access to post-results services from an alternative venue
- **Alternative site**(s) details:
  Project Compass, The Sports Pavillion, Oakland Road,
  Buckfastleigh, TQ11 0BW
- make arrangements to make post-results requests at an alternative location
- contact the relevant awarding body if electronic post-results requests are not possible
- inform candidates of any alternative arrangements in place for the distribution of results and the facilitation of post-results services
- **Communication** details:
  Parents and carers will be notified of any examination
  timetable changes via email. Additionally, a printed letter will be sent home
  with the pupil to communicate both upcoming adjustments and any urgent changes.

Other centre actions:

No
other criteria identified

16. Any other cause of disruption to the exam process

Cause of disruption

No
other criteria identified

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

Not applicable

Changes 2025/2026

(Changed) Under heading **Contingency arrangements** slight change of wording to reflect GR 3.17-19.

(Changed) Under heading **National Centre Number Register and other information requirements** slight change of wording to reflect GR 5.3.

(Changed) Heading **Head of centre/senior leader(s) with oversight of examination and assessment administration absence at a critical stage of the exam cycle**.

(Changed) Heading **3. Teaching staff** (or other key staff essential to the examination process) **extended absence at a critical stage of the exam cycle**

(Changed) Heading **6. Cyber security** and amended criteria for implementation of the plan.

(Changed) Heading **11. Centre may not be able to open for examinations**

(Updated) Under heading below **Further guidance to inform procedures and implement contingency planning**, relevant links and information has been updated and outdated links/information removed.

Centre-specific changes

Samantha Carrington as new Exams Officer and Abbi Walters is now Abbi Salisbury.

Further guidance to inform procedures and implement contingency planning

DfE

Meeting digital and technology standards in schools and colleges - Cyber security standards for schools and colleges

Ofqual

Ofqual guidance extract 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** 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

"This document was updated in October 2023 to include Ofqual's final decisions on long-term resilience arrangements, and the Department for Education (DfE)'s guidance for education settings with confirmed reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC).

In addition to this guidance, you will need to be aware of your specific responsibilities for local and national school preparations and contingencies. You should also follow advice from relevant public health bodies.

Contingency planning

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

Disruption to assessments or exams

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

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

You may also wish to see the JCQ's notice to centres on exam contingency plans and JCQ's notice on preparing for disruption to examinations in England, Wales and Northern Ireland for qualifications within its scope.

Steps you should take

Exam planning

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

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

In the event of disruption

- Contact the relevant awarding organisation and follow its instructions.
- Take advice, or follow instructions, from relevant local or national agencies in deciding whether your centre is able to open.
- 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.
- Where accommodation is limited, prioritise students whose progression will be severely delayed if they do not take

their exam or timetabled assessment when planned.

- In the event of an evacuation during an examination please refer to JCQ's Centre emergency evacuation procedure
- Communicate with students, parents and carers any changes to the exam or assessment timetable or to the venue.
- Communicate with any external assessors, invigilators or relevant third parties regarding any changes to the exam or assessment timetable.

After the exam

- Consider whether any students' ability to take the assessment or demonstrate their level of attainment has been materially affected and, if so, apply to the relevant awarding organisation for special consideration.
- Advise students, where appropriate, of the opportunities to take their exam or assessment at a later date.
- Ensure that scripts are stored under secure conditions.
- 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

- Establish and maintain, and at all times comply with, an up-to-date, written contingency plan.
- 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 are able to 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, depending on their specific policies.

See also JCQ's guidance on special consideration

Wider communications

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

The DfE in England, the DfE in Northern Ireland, and the Welsh Government will inform the relevant government ministers as soon as it becomes apparent that there will be significant local or national disruption, and ensure that they are kept updated until the matter is resolved.

Awarding organisations will alert the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) and the Central Applications Office (CAO) about any impact of the disruption on their deadlines and liaise regarding student progression to further and higher education.

Awarding organisations will alert relevant professional bodies or employer groups if the impact of disruption particularly affects them.

Widespread national disruption to the taking of examinations or assessments

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

In September 2023, Ofqual and the DfE published joint consultation decisions on long-term resilience arrangements. As in 2023, Ofqual has provided guidance on collecting evidence of student performance to ensure resilience in the qualifications system for students entering GCSEs, AS and A levels, the Advanced Extension Award and Project qualifications. For VTQs and other qualifications used alongside or instead of GCSEs, AS and A levels, awarding organisations will provide guidance where needed and will contact schools and colleges with more information.

In December 2022, Qualifications Wales published guidance for contingency assessment arrangements for GCSEs, AS and A levels and Skills Challenge Certificates in the event that a national decision is made to cancel exams. This guidance is still relevant for the current academic year.

The DfE has updated its guidance on handling strike action in schools in England in light of the industrial action in 2023. The guidance recommends schools should prioritise the running of examinations and assessments on any strike days, and should review their contingency plans to make this happen. Schools, colleges and other exam centres must speak to the relevant awarding organisations if they are expecting any disruption that might affect the sitting of exams and assessments.

The DfE has also issued guidance for education settings with confirmed reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) in their buildings. It includes the need for contingencies for possible disruption to examinations and links to the existing emergency planning guidance.

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

General contingency guidance

- emergency planning and response for education, childcare and children's social care settings from the DfE in England
- handling strike action in schools from the DfE in England
- school organisation: local-authority-maintained schools from the DfE in England
- reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete: guidance for education settings with confirmed RAAC from the DfE in England
- exceptional closure days: Northern Ireland from the Department of Education in Northern Ireland
- checklist - exceptional closure of schools from the Department of Education in Northern Ireland

- school terms and school closures from NI Direct
- opening schools, childcare and play settings in extreme bad weather and extreme hot weather - guidance for schools from the Welsh Government
- emergency planning and response guidance for education and childcare settings- guidance for schools and education settings from the Welsh Government
- protective security and preparedness for education settings from the DfE
- police guidance from National Counter Terrorism Security Office and partners on preparing for threats
- cyber security guidance for schools and colleges from the National Cyber Security Centre"

JCQ

JCQ guidance taken directly from Instructions for conducting examinations 2025-2026section 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: 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 or bodies.

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

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

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

15.5 The awarding bodies will designate 'contingency sessions' for examinations, summer 2026. This is consistent with the qualification regulators' document *Exam system contingency plan: England, Wales and Northern Ireland* - www.gov.uk/government/publications/exam-system-contingency-plan-england-wales-and-northern-ireland

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

15.7 In the event that there is national disruption to a day of examinations in summer 2026, 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 was agreed to reschedule the examinations and the affected candidates will be expected to make themselves available in such

circumstances. The decision regarding the re-scheduling of examinations will always rest with the awarding body. The centre must conduct the examination on the scheduled date unless instructed to do otherwise by the awarding body.

15.8 Where candidates choose not to be available for the rescheduled examination(s) for reasons other than those traditionally covered by special consideration, they will not be eligible for enhanced grading. 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

Preparing for disruption to examinations

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

GOV.UK

Emergency planning and response: Exam and assessment disruption

Dispatch of exam scripts guide: Contingency planning

Wales

School closures: examinations

Opening schools in extremely bad weatherand extreme hot weather

Northern Ireland

Exceptional closure days - Northern Ireland

Checklist - exceptional closure of schools

National Cyber Security Centre

Cyber Security for Schools

Cyber security training for school staff