

Purpose of the plan

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

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', 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 Sep 2023).

This plan details how we comply with the JCQ's General Regulations for Approved Centres (section 5.3, Centre management) by having in place a written examination contingency plan which covers all aspects of examination administration. This will allow members of the SLT to act immediately in the event of an emergency or where the head of centre, Exams & Data Manager or SENDCo 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, or on results day, owing to an unforeseen emergency. The potential impact of a cyber-attack should also be considered.

Possible causes of disruption	Possible remedial action		Staff
	Forward planning	Action	
Timetabling			
Exams clash with other activities	Establish provisional exam timetables for candidates as soon as they are published by awarding bodies	Complete the exams column on the school calendar.	Exams & Data Manager SLT
Exam clashes	Make appropriate supervision arrangements in the spring term.	Advise candidates in writing of the arrangements.	Exams & Data Manager HAT/Invigilation Team
Extreme weather	Ensure Site Team and SLT take public examinations into account when deciding on school closures. Mock examinations would be rearranged.	Where possible local candidates will be able to sit external examinations, if local invigilators can get in. Notify Awarding Organisations. Consider moving the start time.	Site Team SLT Exams & Data Manager Invigilators

	Exams & Data Manager to be able to contact Invigilators at home. Snowline	Consider Special Consideration	
Access Arrangements not provided.	Students identified as needing AA should be tested at the start of KS4.	SENDCo to arrange testing and apply for AA. Then liaise with Exams and Data Manager to provide readers/scribes for examinations as required.	SENDCo Exams & Data Manager

Possible causes of disruption	Possible remedial action		Staff
	Forward planning	Action	
Extended Absence of Exams and Data Manager During Planning Stage			
Annual data collection exercise not undertaken to collate information on qualifications and specifications being delivered.	Collect the information from Curriculum Leaders in the summer term prior to teaching starting.	Keep an up-to-date database of qualifications being offered. Post 16 qualifications must be updated on Post 16 course directory	Exams & Data Manager Data Assistant CLs and VP
Sufficient Invigilators not recruited and trained.	Invigilators should be recruited and in place for Y11 mocks. IMA to be trained how to timetable invigilators	Mock timetable to be finalised before October half term to ensure enough invigilators. Cover Manager will employ agency	Exams & Data Manager IMA

Estimated entries not done so pre-release materials are not received	Make sure estimated entries are completed before awarding organisation deadlines. IMA to be trained how to do estimated entries	Curriculum Leaders to check estimated entries have been done if no pre-release materials are received. .	Exams & Data Manager IMA Curriculum Leaders
Candidates not entered for external exams/assessments or deadlines missed and penalties incurred.	Initial entries are sent well ahead of deadlines. Aim to have entries finalised end of Autumn term and seating finished end of Spring term.	IMA to be trained how to do exam entries and assist with seating labels. Contact EIMS for assistance. Keep contact details of recently retired Exams Officers.	Vice Principal Exams & Data Manager IMA Curriculum Leaders
Invigilators not trained or updated on changes to ICE.	Use TEO online training where possible. IMA can assist with arrangements for a training session. ISAs can do AA facilitator training during INSET.	Plan a training session for all invigilators before the mocks each year. Any who can't attend face to face should complete TEO.	Exams & Data Manager IMA Invigilators ISAs
Major disruption to teaching in the weeks before exams.	The centre remains responsible to prepare students remotely for examinations. Possibly using alternative method of learning.	Consider moving exam series for modular qualifications.	Vice Principal CLs Exams & Data Manager

Possible causes of disruption	Possible remedial action		Staff
	Forward planning	Action	
Online Examinations			
IT system unavailable on day of examination.	Download tasks ahead of scheduled examination date where permitted.	Book IT equipment well ahead and download tasks before scheduled date of examination if permitted.	Exams & Data Manager Curriculum Leaders Network Manager Operations Manager
Candidates unable to access task details.	Test secure access rights ahead of schedule every year and every session	Ensure teaching staff have access rights for correct area of awarding organisation secure extranet sites ahead of time. Have technical assistance for all online examinations.	Subject Teachers Exams & Data Manager Network Manager
Cyber-attack Where a cyber-attack may compromise any aspect of delivery or results	Constant review of risks and weak points in security measures Increasing staff awareness of data security through training Results can be accessed from awarding body websites and printed.	Containment may include isolating/closing a compromised section of the network. Attempt to recover any losses and limit the damage. Identify any affected data and notify organisations as appropriate. Move MIS to Arbor (cloud based). Keep network security up to date. Ensure the Exams & Data Manager has access to awarding body sites from home.	Data Protection Officer Network Manager Exams & Data Manager

Possible causes of disruption	Possible remedial action		Staff
	Forward planning	Action	
Absence			
Candidates absent for all or part of assessment (various reasons)	Give candidates access to examination timetables well in advance.	Notify awarding organisations and claim special consideration where appropriate. Send registers to office once the examination has started so absent students can be contacted.	Exams & Data Manager Absence Officer Pastoral Managers
Candidates at risk of being unable to take examinations – centre remains open	Good communication with the bus company	Consider moving the start time. If possible, allow candidates to sit the exam. Ensure Invigilators are aware of the rules for very late arrivals (JCQ ICE) Notify awarding organisations and claim special consideration where appropriate.	Exams & Data Manager Absence Officer Pastoral Managers
Candidates late for examination i.e. transport issues	Good communication with the bus company	Consider delaying the start time depending on number of candidates involved. Ensure invigilators are aware of the rules for very late arrivals (JCQ ICE)	Exams & Data Manager Absence Officer Pastoral Managers
Exams and Data Manager absent on exam day	Contact list to be kept at Exam & Data Manager's house.	Notify Operations Manager and Lead Invigilator. Secure storage can be opened by Site Manager and spare safe key is kept in the key safe. Code is known to HoC and VP. Lead Invigilator and IMA know the layout.	Exams & Data Manager Operations Manager Lead Invigilator / IMA HoC, Site Manager

SENDCo extended absence	<p>Aim to have assessments completed in Summer term of Y9.</p> <p>Both SENDCo and Exams & Data Manager to have access to online arrangements.</p> <p>Employ SEND Admin Assist.</p>	<p>Contact LA for assistance with testing.</p> <p>Learning Support Operations Manager</p>	<p>Vice Principal</p> <p>Exams & Data Manager</p> <p>SENDCo</p>
Invigilator absence	<p>Book Invigilators well in advance to be sure they are available. Book 1 extra invigilator each session to act as a runner.</p>	<p>Unplanned absence will be covered by the Operations Manager.</p>	<p>Exams & Data Manager</p> <p>Operations Manager</p>
Head of Centre absence at a critical stage of the examinations cycle	<p>Responsibility for implementing JCQ regulations and requirements relating to examinations will be escalated to the Vice Principal.</p>	<p>Escalation Policy.</p>	<p>Vice Principal</p>

	Possible remedial action		Staff
	Forward planning	Action	
During the Examination			
Wrong paper is given to candidates.	Seat candidates in order and print out seating plans and registers in advance of the start of the examination series.	Lead Invigilator to check papers on desks, Exams & Data Manager to ask candidates to check they have the right paper at the start of the examination. If the candidate completes the wrong paper amend the entries. Advise the awarding organisation and if appropriate apply for special consideration.	Exams & Data Manager Lead Invigilator
Not all invigilators arrive.	Book invigilators well in advance.	If possible, call in additional invigilators if no more are available the Operations Manager will arrange cover.	Exams & Data Manager Operations Manager
Candidates are not given extra time.	Show AA on seating plans and highlight extra time candidates.	Put an extra time card on the desk so invigilators know who has extra time. If a candidate is refused in error, contact awarding organisation and apply for special consideration if appropriate.	Invigilators Exams & Data Manager
Alarm is activated during an exam.	Invigilator Training session to include showing the panels in main block for M1 and PE reception for SH.	Stop exam. Find out where alarm has been activated, do not evacuate if not in the same block. Keep candidates under exam conditions await further instructions from Site	Exams & Data Manager Site Manager, SLT Lead Invigilator

		Manager/Exams & Data Manager/SLT. Restart exam if possible, allowing full time.	
Possible causes of disruption	Possible remedial action		Staff
	Forward planning	Action	
Security of materials			
Exam papers/answer books not kept secure before assessment	Make sure there is sufficient space in the secure cupboard well in advance of the summer examination series. Brief office staff of the security arrangements including the log.	2 people to check papers before they are opened. If a mistake is made collect the papers, return to secure storage and advise the awarding organisation immediately.	Exams & Data Manager Lead Invigilator Office Staff
Candidates' work not kept secure after assessment or dispatched on time.	Book yellow label pick up in advance. Have space to store afternoon scripts overnight in the safe.	Lead Invigilators to ensure all scripts are either dispatched or returned to the safe after each exam session. Complete the yellow label dispatch log.	Exams & Data Manager Lead Invigilators Office Staff
Disruption to transporting completed scripts	Have contact details for yellow label collections and book slot in advance.	Take parcels to Post Office. Store in safe and contact the awarding body for further advice.	Exams & Data Manager
Controlled Assessment / NEA			
Deadlines not met by candidates	Ensure all candidates are briefed on deadlines/penalties for not meeting them	Mark what candidates have produced by deadline and seek guidance from awarding organisation on further action.	Subject Teachers Curriculum Leaders

Deadlines for marking and/or paperwork not met by teaching staff	Ensure teaching staff are given clear deadlines (prior to awarding organisation ones) to complete marking/paperwork so the exams office can process and send off marks ahead of AO deadlines	Seek guidance from awarding organisation.	Curriculum Leaders Exams & Data Manager SLT
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Example risks and issues	Possible remedial action		Staff
	Forward planning	Action	
Accommodation			
Insufficient space in Sports Hall for candidates	Once numbers are known at the start of the year, flag instances where additional space is required.	Use M011/M013 in addition to SH. Make sure we have sufficient desks.	Exams & Data Manager Site Team Operations Manager
Insufficient ICT facilities for all candidates	Careful planning ahead and booking of rooms / ICT facilities	Multiple sittings where necessary if permitted.	Exams & Data Manager Curriculum Leaders Network Manager Operations Manager
Unable to use Sports Hall	N/A	If possible, move to M011/M013 and H030/H126 Keep candidates under supervision and seek advice from awarding organisation. Consider Special Consideration	Exams & Data Manager Site Team Operations Manager

Power Failure	N/A	Written exams to be completed if enough natural light. If unable to use ITC facilities contact awarding organisation for guidance. Keep candidates supervised and delay the start time if the exam hasn't started. Consider Special Consideration	Exams & Data Manager Site Team Network Manager
Centre at risk of being unable to open as normal for scheduled examinations		Contact awarding bodies for advice. HOC to liaise with outside agencies re safety of opening the centre. Consider moving the start time. Consider re-entering, if not terminal exams.	Exams & Data Manager HOC Site Team
Centre closure due to fire	Purchase fire resistant secure safe for exam papers. Liaise with BCP re emergency exam accommodation.	Contact Awarding Organisations for assistance. Have invigilator contact numbers off site. Contact Phoenix if required for the secure storage.	Principal Exams & Data Manager

Possible causes of disruption	Possible remedial action		Staff
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Results			
Technical problems prevent downloading results on pre-release day	Check SIMS and A2C before pre-release day. Make sure Network Manager has covered both results days.	Contact EIMS if it's a SIMS issue. Contact relevant awarding organisation (s) Contact AVCO for A2C issues. Use Exams Officers FB page to contact AO reps urgently	Exams and Data Manager Network Manager
Unable to manage the distribution of results to candidates on results day.	Make sure summer works are planned with Hall access taken into account on results days. Liaise with Site Team.	Contact awarding organisations if unable to distribute results. Use Exams Offices FB page to contact AO reps urgently. Use Insight to distribute results electronically.	Site Team Post 16 Team Exams and Data Manager
Unable to facilitate post results services for candidates.	Liaise with Network Manager to make sure the awarding body secure sites can be accessed. Make sure post result services are published in advance on website and links emailed to all candidates. Check enough subject staff will be in on results day to offer support and guidance to candidates.	Contact awarding organisations if unable to facilitate post results services. Use Exams Offices FB page to contact AO reps urgently. Collect consent forms and payments if relevant and process requests from another site.	HoC Exams and Data Manager Post 16 Team Network Manager Website Manager

Further guidance to inform procedures and implement contingency planning

DfE

Meeting digital and technology standards in schools and colleges

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

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 (last updated 5 October 2023)

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 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 AO 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, will share timely and accurate information, as required, with awarding organisations, government departments and other stakeholders. The DfE 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, AOs 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.

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

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/emergency-planning-and-response-for-education-childcare-and-childrens-social-care-settings>

handling strike action in schools from the DfE in England

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/handling-strike-action-in-schools>

school organisation: local-authority-maintained schools

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-organisation-maintained-schools>

from the DfE in England reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete: guidance for education settings with confirmed RAAC from the DfE in England

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reinforced-autoclaved-aerated-concrete-guidance-for-responsible-bodies-and-education-settings-with-confirmed-raac>

police guidance from National Counter Terrorism Security Office and partners on preparing for threats

<https://www.protectuk.police.uk/>

cyber security guidance for schools and colleges from the National Cyber Security Centre"

<https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/section/education-skills/cyber-security-schools>