St Mary's School
CAMBRIDGE

Examinations Contingency Policy

This policy is the responsibility of the Exams Officer.

This policy is updated annually in line with JCQ General Regulations.

Last reviewed: October 26

Next Review: October 27

Purpose of the Plan

This plan examines potential risks and issues that could cause disruption to the examination and assessment process at St Mary's School. By outlining actions/procedures to be invoked in case of disruption it is intended to mitigate the impact these disruptions have on our processes.

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

This plan also confirms St Mary's School compliance with JCQ's *General Regulations for Approved Centres* (GR 5.3) that:

- the Centre has in place for inspection a contingency plan which covers all aspects of examination/assessment administration and delivery that must be reviewed and updated annually by a member of the senior leadership team and communicated within the Centre
- the Centre's contingency planning must include succession arrangements for members of staff involved in examination and assessment administration

Contingency arrangements

In accordance with the regulations (GR 3.31-36), St Mary's School **must** have in place and at all times comply with 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.

St Mary's School **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.

St Mary's School **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.

National Centre Number Register and other information requirements

In accordance with the regulations (GR 5.3), the Head of Centre will ensure that St Mary's School 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.

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

Where the Head of Centre/senior leader may be absent at a critical stage of the examination cycle, main duties and responsibilities will be escalated in accordance with the Centre's written escalation process.

Possible Causes of disruption to the exam process

1. Exam 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 awardingbodies/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 e.g. very late arrival, suspected malpractice, special consideration;
- candidates' scripts not dispatched as required to awarding bodies.

Results and post-results

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

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- Exams Officer's line manager, Emma Hall (Deputy Head: Data and Operations),to delegate the roles above to appropriate members of staff.

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

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Key tasks required in the management and administration of the access arrangements process within the exam cycle not undertaken, including:

Planning

- candidates not tested/assessed to identify potential access arrangement requirements;
- Centre fails to recognise its duties towards disabled candidates as defined under the terms of the Equality Act 2010
- evidence of need and evidence to support normal way of working not collated;

Pre-exams

- approval for access arrangements not applied for to the awarding body;
- Centre-delegated arrangements not put in place;
- modified paper requirements not identified in a timely manner to enable ordering to meet external deadline;
- staff (facilitators) providing support to access arrangement candidates not allocated and trained.

Exam time

- access arrangement candidate support not arranged for exam rooms.

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption:

- SENCo's line manager to liaise with Exams Officer over SENCo absence;
- SLT to arrange a cover for the SENCO to complete the tasks above.

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

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Key tasks not undertaken including:

- early/estimated entry information not provided to the 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 (including controlled assessments and coursework) tasks not set/issued/taken by candidates as scheduled;
  - candidates not being informed of Centre assessed marks before marks are submitted to the awarding body and therefore not being able to consider appealing internal assessment decisions and requesting a review of the Centre's marking;
  - internal assessment marks and candidates' work not provided to meet submission deadlines.

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption:

- line Manager and Exams Officer to liaise with remaining teaching staff.

4. Invigilators - lack of appropriately trained invigilators or invigilator absence

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- failure to recruit and train sufficient invigilators to conduct exams;
- invigilator shortage on peak exam days;
- invigilator absence on the day of an exam.

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption:

- recruitment and training is done in advance;
- Exams Officer and Senior Invigilator to cover absences or shortages by liaising with 'staffcover' and teachers of examination classes. NB: Must make sure that these staff have all been invigilator trained.

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

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- Exams Officer unable to identify sufficient/appropriate rooms during exams timetable planning;
- insufficient rooms available on peak exam days;
- main exam venues unavailable due to an unexpected incident at exam time.

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption:

- in an emergency the Sports Hall and appropriate classrooms could be utilised for examination purposes;
- for smaller exams Mary Ward House could be used;

- The Head of Centre/Exams Officer will liaise with other local schools re availability of their rooms.

6. Cyber-security

Criteria for implementation of the plan

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

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption:

This will include the required arrangements for cyber security.

- (GR 3.38) Ensure there are procedures in place to maintain the security of user accounts by:

a) ensuring that all members of Centre staff who access awarding bodies' online systems undertake annual cyber security training.The training must include:

  - the importance of creating strong, unique passwords for all accounts;
  - keeping all account details strictly confidential;
  - the critical role of Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) in protecting against unauthorised access;
  - how to properly set up and use MFA for both Centre and awarding bodies' systems;
  - an awareness of all types of social engineering/phishing attempts;
  - the importance of staff quickly reporting any suspicious activity, events, incidents and encouraging a safe and supportive reporting culture.

A record of completed cyber security training must be held on file for inspection. This record could take the form of a certificate, a paper checklist, a spreadsheet-based checklist or a Learning Management System (LMS) report.

b) developing and maintaining a comprehensive cyber security policy for the Centre. The National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) provides resources to assist Centres in creating such policies;

c) implementing and enforcing robust security measures, including:
  - where available,MFA must be used for all accounts and systems containing exam-related information, including those that interface between awarding body and Centre systems, to enhance security and protect sensitive data. Where MFA is not available on the Centre's systems, an equivalent multi-layered security approach must be in place. For example, strong log-in controls, access and monitoring controls and secure storage so that exam-related data is protected in line with cyber security best practice.
  - regularly reviewing and updating security settings to align with current best practices

d) updating any passwords that may have been exposed

e) setting up secure account recovery options

f) reviewing and managing connected applicationsmonitoring accounts and regularly reviewing account access, including removing access when no longer required

g) ensuring authorised members of staff securely access awarding bodies' online systems in line with awarding body regulations regarding cyber security and the JCQ document *Guidance for Centres on cyber security.* Authorised staff will have access, where necessary, to a device which complies with awarding bodies' multi-factor authentication (MFA) requirements.

h) reporting any actual or suspected compromise of an awarding body's online systems immediately to the relevant awarding body.

- iSAMS, now cloud hosted, is backed up every hour of every day, 52 weeks a year, with backups stored onsite and offsite for an added layer of security;
- Network Manager/IT department to facilitate the restoring of the backups;
- systems for restoring services and recovering data from the backups are tested and reliable;

- in the event of an attack the Centre will enact the 'Crisis Management Plan';
- contact the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC);
- contact the local law enforcement and Action Fraud;
- inform the DfE by emailing: securityenquiries@education.gov.uk.

7. Failure of IT systems

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- IT system corruption affecting candidates' work
- MIS system failure at final entry deadline
- MIS system failure during exams preparation
- Technical failure or power outage immediately prior to or during an on-screen examination
- MIS system failure at results release time

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption:

This will include the security arrangements put in place which protect candidates' work.

- (GR 3.36) Ensure where candidates' work is produced electronically that 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. Implement appropriate security arrangements which protect candidates' work in the event of IT system corruption and cyber-attacks.
- iSAMS, now cloud hosted, is backed up every hour of every day, 52 weeks a year, with backups stored onsite and offsite for an added layer of security;
- Exams Officer and IT Manager to liaise with awarding organisations as to appropriate action.
- IT department to be aware of the exam results days to ensure smooth running of downloads.

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.

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption:

- invigilators and Exams Officer to ensure emergency evacuation plan is followed, maintaining the integrity of the exam (See Emergency Evacuation Policy);
- candidates to be held separately avoiding contact with the main body of pupils, thus ensuring that candidates do not communicate with one another. The Exams Officer and invigilators to maintain security of candidates throughout the evacuation or the relocation to another venue;
- Exams Officer to liaise with Head of Centre and to inform awarding bodies;
- arrangements made for examinations to be moved to Mary Ward House.

9. Disruption of teaching time in the weeks before an exam – Centre closed for an extended period

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- Centre closed or candidates are unable to attend for an extended period during normal teaching or study supported time, interrupting the provision of normal teaching and learning.

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- Headmistress, Governors, SLT to take necessary action;
- Centre to communicate with parents, carers and students about the disruption to teaching time and provide appropriate work;
- Centre to revert back to remote learning over Teams.

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.

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption:

- The Centre's contingency plans will focus on options that will enable candidates to take their examinations
- Centre will consider moving the starting time of the examination for all candidates (see section 6 of the JCQ document *Instructions for conducting examinations*) and will be aware of the rules for very late arrivals (see section 21 of the JCQ document *Instructions for conducting examinations*)
- Centre will communicate with relevant awarding organisations to make them aware of the issue and to seek additional support or guidance, if needed
- Where appropriate, the Centre will consider the option of conducting the exam at the candidate's home through an alternative site arrangement (see the JCQ document *Guidance notes on alternative site arrangements*)
- Wherever possible, it is always in the best interest for the candidates to sit the exam. However, special consideration is an option where a candidate is unable to sit the examination. Consideration would be given on an individual basis as to why they were unable to attend the examination Centre (see Chapter 4 of the JCQ document *A guide to the special consideration process*)

11. Centre may not be able to open for examinations

(including in the event of the Centre being unavailable for examinations owing to an unforeseen emergency)

Criteria for implementation of the plan

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

examinations.

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption:

- Centre to open for examinations and examination candidates only, if possible;
- the decision on whether it is safe for a Centre to open lies with the Head of Centre who

is responsible for taking advice or following instructions from relevant local or national agencies

- Centre to use alternative venues in agreement with relevant awarding organisations, (e.g., Mary Ward House to be used as an exam venue), share facilities with other Centres or use other public buildings
- If an alternative site is used, Centre to notify the JCQ Centre Inspection Service of the use of an alternative site by submitting an alternative site form via the Centre Admin Portal (CAP)
- Centre may offer candidates an opportunity to sit any examinations missed at the next available series
- The relevant awarding organisation(s)will be contacted if additional support or guidance in the event of disruption to examinations is required
- If all other avenues have been exhausted, Centre to apply for special consideration for candidates where they have met the minimum requirements

12. Disruption in the distribution of examination papers

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- disruption to the distribution of examination papers to the Centre in advance of examinations.

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption:

- Centre to discuss alternative delivery of papers to the Centre;
- if this happens on the day of the exam, contact the relevant awarding organisation(s) immediately; awarding organisations to provide Centres with electronic access to examination papers via a secure external network;
- the Examinations Officer would need to ensure that copies are received, made and stored under secure conditions;
- Centre will check all exam papers upon arrival in school and will alert the appropriate awarding organisations of any discrepancies;
- as a last resort, and in close collaboration with Centres and regulators, awarding organisations to consider scheduling of the examination on an alternative date.

13. 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.

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption:

- where the examinations are part of the national 'yellow label' service or where the awarding bodies arrange collections, the Centre should seek advice from the relevant awarding bodies and will not make their own arrangements for transportation unless told to do so by the awarding body;

- for any examinations where the Centre makes their own collection arrangements, the Centre will investigate alternative dispatch options that comply with the requirements detailed in the JCQ *Instructions for conducting examinations*;

Centre will ensure secure storage of completed examination scripts in the secure room until as close to the collection time as possible, ensuring script packages are not left unattended at the collection area.

14. Assessment evidence is not available to be marked

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- large scale damage to or destruction of completed examination scripts/assessment evidence before it can be marked;
- completed examination scripts/assessment evidence does not reach awarding organisations.

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption:

- immediate communication to be made with relevant awarding organisation(s);
- students, parents and carers to be informed;
- awarding organisations may generate candidate marks for the affected assessments based on other appropriate evidence of candidate achievement as defined by the awarding organisations;
- where marks cannot be generated by awarding organisations, candidates may need to retake affected assessment in a subsequent assessment series.

15. Centre unable to distribute results as normal or facilitate post results services

(including in the event of the Centre being unavailable on results day owing to an unforeseen emergency)

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- Centre is unable to access or manage the distribution of results to candidates, or to facilitate post-results services.

Centre actions:

- Exams Officer to contact awarding bodies for advice;
- Centre to make arrangementsto access its results at an alternative site (e.g. home, Mary Ward House), in agreement with the awarding organisations unable to access results - Exams Officer will contact the awarding organisations regarding alternative options (e.g. download results from the awarding organisations' secure websites);
- unable to distribute results - the Centre will communicate with parents, carers, candidates and HoDs with details of alternative arrangements (e.g. alternative site – Mary Ward House or online);
- information to be posted on the school website/parent portal;
- alternative arrangements for post-results services to be communicated to parents, carers, candidates and HoDs.

Further guidance to inform procedures and implement contingency planning

DfE

GOV.UK

Emergency planning and response: Exam and assessment disruption
www.gov.uk/government/publications/emergency-planning-and-response-for-education-childcare-and-childrens-social-care-settings

Dispatch of exam scripts guide: Contingency planning www.gov.uk/government/publications/dispatch-of-exam-scripts-yellow-label-service

Wales

School closures: examinations gov.wales/school-closures-examinations

Opening schools in extremely bad weather and extreme hot weather: www.gov.wales/opening-schools-well- childcare-and-play-settings-extreme-bad-weather-and-extreme-hot-weather

Northern Ireland

Exceptional closure days www.education-ni.gov.uk/articles/exceptional-closure-days

Checklist for Principals when considering Opening or Closure of School
www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/checklist-exceptional-closure-schools

National Cyber Security Centre

Cyber Security for Schools https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/section/education-skills/cyber-security-schools
Cyber security training for school staff https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/information/cyber-security-training-schools

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

What schools and colleges and other Centres 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

See also 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 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

1. Contact the relevant awarding organisation and follow its instructions.
2. Take advice, or follow instructions, from relevant local or national agencies in deciding whether your Centre is able to open.
3. Identify whether the exam or timetabled assessment can be sat at an alternative venue, in agreement with the relevant awarding organisation, ensuring the secure transportation of questions papers or assessment materials to the alternative venue.
4. Where accommodation is limited, prioritise students whose progression will be severely delayed if they do not take their exam or timetabled assessment when planned.
5. In the event of an evacuation during an examination please refer to JCQ's **'Centre emergency evacuation procedure'**.
6. Communicate with parents, carers and students any changes to the exam or assessment timetable or to the venue.
7. Communicate with any external assessors, invigilators or relevant third parties regarding any changes to the exam or assessment timetable.

After the exam

1. Consider whether any students' ability to take the assessment or demonstrate their level of attainment has been materially affected and, if so, apply for special consideration.
2. Advise students, where appropriate, of the opportunities to take their exam or assessment at a later date.
3. Ensure that scripts are stored under secure conditions.
4. Return scripts to awarding organisations in line with their instructions. Never make alternative arrangements for the transportation of completed exam scripts, unless told to do so by the awarding organisation.

Steps the awarding organisation should take

Exam planning

1. Establish and maintain, and at all times comply with, an up-to-date, written contingency plan.
2. Ensure that the arrangements in place with Centres and other third parties enable them to deliver and award qualifications in accordance with their conditions of recognition.

In the event of disruption

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

After the exam

Consider any requests for special consideration for affected students. For example, those who may have lost their internally assessed work or whose performance in assessments or exams could have been affected by the disruption.

If any students miss an exam or are disadvantaged by the disruption

If some of the students have been adversely affected by the disruption, you should ask the awarding organisation about applying for special consideration.

Decisions about special consideration, when it is or is not appropriate, is for each awarding organisation to make. Their decisions might be different for different qualifications and for different subjects.

See also: JCQ's guidance on special considerations

Wider communications

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

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

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

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

Widespread national disruption to the taking of examinations or assessments

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 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

(Ofqual guidance extract above taken directly from the Exam system contingency plan: England, Wales and Northern Ireland - **What schools and colleges and other Centres should do if exams or other assessments are seriously disrupted** (last updated 7 May 2024) https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/exam-system-contingency-plan-england-wales-and-northern-ireland/what-schools-and-colleges-should-do-if-exams-or-other-assessments-are-seriously-disrupted)

JCQ

15. Contingency Planning

15.1 The qualification regulators, awarding bodies and government departments responsible for education have prepared and agreed information for schools and colleges in the event of examinations being seriously disrupted. This jointly agreed information will ensure consistency of response in the event of major disruption to the examinations system affecting significant numbers of candidates. Further information may be found at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/exam-system-contingency-plan-england-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 orbodies.

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 alternative 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*.

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 of 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 is agreed to reschedule the examinations and the affected candidates will be expected to make themselves available in such circumstances. The decision regarding the rescheduling of examinations will always rest with the awarding body. The Centre must conduct the examination on the scheduled date unless instructed to do otherwise by the awarding body.

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.

(JCQ guidance above taken directly from **Instructions for Conducting Examinations** 2024-2025 http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/ice---instructions-for-conducting-examinations, section 15, Contingency planning)

JCQ Joint Contingency Plan www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/other-documents

JCQ notice - Preparing for disruption to examinations www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations/

General Regulations for Approved Centres www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations

Guidance notes on alternative site arrangements www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/online-forms

Guidance notes for transferred candidates www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/online-forms

Instructions for conducting examinations www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/ice---instructions-for-conducting-examinations

A guide to the special consideration process www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-special-consideration/regulations-and-guidance

Guidance for Centres on cyber security (Effective from November 2023; Revised July 2025) www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations/

5 tips to get exam ready and stay cyber safe! www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/blogs/

GOV.UK

Emergency planning and response: Exam and assessment disruption www.gov.uk/government/publications/emergency-planning-and-response-for-education-childcare-and-childrens-social-care-settings

Dispatch of exam scripts guide: Contingency planning www.gov.uk/government/publications/dispatch-of-exam-scripts-yellow-label-service

Wales

School closures: examinations gov.wales/school-closures-examinations

Opening schools in extremely bad weather and extreme hot weather: www.gov.wales/opening-schools-well- childcare-and-play-settings-extreme-bad-weather-and-extreme-hot-weather

Northern Ireland

Exceptional closure days www.education-ni.gov.uk/articles/exceptional-closure-days

Checklist for Principals when considering Opening or Closure of School www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/checklist-exceptional-closure-schools

National Cyber Security Centre

Cyber Security for Schools https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/section/education-skills/cyber-security-schools

Cyber security training for school staff https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/information/cyber-security-training-schools