

Exam Contingency Plan

Heles School

Exam Contingency Plan

Centre Name	Heles School
Centre Number	54435
Date plan first created	19/09/2023
Current plan approved by	Ms Emma Clapham
Current plan reviewed by	Kristina Packer - Exams Officer
Date of next review	19/09/2024

Key staff involved in the policy

Role	Name
Head of Centre	Miss Justine Mason
Senior leader(s)	Ms Emma Clapham - SLT Lead to Exams
Exams officer	Kristina Packer
ALS lead/SENCo	Mrs Angela Byrne
Other staff (if applicable)	Craig Maw - Deputy Exams Officer

This plan is reviewed and updated annually to ensure that exam contingency planning at Heles 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 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 at Heles School.

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 September 2023).

This plan details how Heles School complies 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 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, or on results day, owing to an unforeseen emergency. The potential impact of a cyber-attack should also be considered.

Operating across more than one centre

National Centre Number Register and other information requirements

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

Possible causes of disruption to the exam process

1. 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:

Invigilators not recruited. Needs to maintain a bank of suitably trained Invigilators. Recruitment commences in the Autumn term. Seating Plans completed in a timely fashion for both Invigilators and Candidates.

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

There are collection templates in the exams area for the collection of exam information from departments which in turn are recorded on a spreadsheet. There is an Exams Office Task Timetable which details which tasks need to be completed at specific times of the year – referral to this document is good practise. Using the JCQ key dates timetable will show entry deadlines, and results days. ICE booklet is available from the JCQ website and at the front It details any changes from the previous year. Using this book, the Invigilator area on the T: drive can be updated. There are PowerPoint presentations for each training session (Sept/March) which will require updating and Invigilators called in. Should additional Invigilators be required, liaise with Business Manager to have an advert placed. Suitable interview questions are in the Invigilator area. Entries are made on SIMS by using marksheets. Marksheets are produced by class list per subject. (Speak to SIMS Manager if classes do not appear) Marksheets are distributed to HOD's for completion. Once all entries are made, using the skeleton timetable, Exams can be timetabled and an invigilator timetable can be created using excel spreadsheet (templates are in T:Exams – Invigilator Folder) SLT to Exams will hold an assembly in advance of all Exams to brief all students on regulations and procedures. All exam materials are received at Reception and logged. A call is made to the Exams Office and packages are then stored in the secure

2. ALS lead/SENCo extended absence at a critical stage of the exam cycle

Criteria for implementation of the plan

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

Planning

- candidates not tested/assessed to identify potential access arrangement requirements

- centre fails to recognise its duties towards disabled candidates as defined under the terms of the Equality Act 2010
- evidence of need and evidence to support normal way of working not collated

Pre-exams

- approval for access arrangements not applied for to the awarding body
- centre-delegated arrangements not put in place
- modified paper requirements not identified in a timely manner to enable ordering to meet external deadline
- 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:

To ensure students are tested in the summer term of Year 9, Liaise with SENCO in other WeST MAT schools, with a view to using them to assess candidates. Potential to buy in the services of an approved Educational Psychologist through Plymouth City Council

3. Teaching staff extended absence at a critical stage of the exam cycle

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Key tasks not undertaken including:

- Early/estimated entry information not provided to the exams officer on time; resulting in pre-release information not being received
- Final entry information not provided to the exams officer on time; resulting in candidates not being entered for exams/assessments or being entered late/late or other penalty fees being charged by awarding bodies
- Non-examination assessment tasks not set/issued/taken by candidates as scheduled
- Candidates not being informed of centre assessed marks before marks are submitted to the awarding body and therefore not being able to consider appealing internal assessment decisions and requesting a review of the centre's marking
- Internal assessment marks and candidates' work not provided to meet awarding body submission deadlines

Other criteria:

No other criteria identified

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

Where there is disruption to teaching time, or pupils do not receive the provision of normal teaching and learning, it is Hele's School responsibility to ensure that pupils are prepared for the examinations as usual. During the extended absence of teaching staff at key points in the exam cycle, the HOD will provide the Exams Officer with details of estimated and final entries for exams. During the extended absence of HOD at key points in the exam cycle, the DIP will provide the Exams Officer with details of estimated and final entries for exams. Hele's school will communicate with parents, carers and pupils about the potential for disruption to teaching time and Hele's School plans to address this problem. The teaching provision for pupils who will be facing examinations shortly will be priority. Where appropriate, the school will advise pupils whether it is appropriate to sit examinations in the next available series. During major disruption, Hele's School will strive to continue teaching all pupils, either through an alternative method of learning or at a different venue in conjunction with West (MAT)

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:

Invigilators unable to invigilate at last minutes, due to self isolating. During a global pandemic there may be situations whereby an Invigilator may be experiencing symptoms of for example COVID-19 or is self isolating.

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

Hele's School will ensure that all invigilators who are being used are appropriately trained and suitable for the job. A training session is held in Sept/Oct and March/April. It is the Exams Officer and SLT link to Exams responsibility to maintain a panel of suitable invigilators which can be called upon in the event of a shortfall. Provisional timetables and estimated entry information will be used to determine the number of invigilators required. An Invigilator timetable will be disseminated in advance of all exams. The Exams Officer will endeavour to confirm attendance of invigilators prior to the examination date. Where there is a shortage of invigilators, the Exams Officer and SLT team will arrange to cover any absences. We will use support staff as follows: Priority 1 - up to 4 PSM's (Pastoral Support Managers) Priority 2 - 1 x Finance Officer (KP) Priority 3 - 1 x Resources (CG) Priority 4 - 1 x Data Team (TH) Priority 5 - Deputy Senco (NG) It is the responsibility of the Exams Officer to ensure that recruitment and training of invigilators is completed well in advance of examination dates. A review of available invigilators will be conducted prior to the examination period, in which invigilators' availability for the next exam series will be confirmed, allowing time for any amendments or training. The Deputy Exams Officer may be called upon to Invigilate at short notice.

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 venue details: A venue within the West MAT would be called upon in an emergency situation.

- communicate with candidates (and where appropriate, parents/carers) any changes to the exam or assessment timetable or to the venue

Communication details: Via intouch (SIMS) via email to candidates and parent/carers School website By telephone

- 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 actions identified

6. Cyber-attack

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- Where a cyber-attack may compromise any aspect of delivery

Other criteria:

Also refer to WeSt Cyber Security Procedure in the Examinations Policy folder <https://www.westst.org.uk/our-policies>

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

IT managers ensure regular checks are carried out to test software which prevents cyber attacks happening and affecting the schools servers. All students work is backed up on secure servers also.

7. Failure of IT systems

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- 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:

In the event that IT systems fail during peak examination periods, the relevant Awarding Bodies will be informed immediately. If systems fail at the final entry deadline, the relevant Awarding Bodies will be informed and an extension to the deadline will be requested. Internal deadlines will be set in advance of the Awarding Bodies deadline to allow for such anomalies and IT failure. Entries can be made using the Awarding bodies secure internet sites. Hele's School will ensure that during the exam cycle there will be an ICT team on standby in order to repair systems in the event of failure or damage. Where a failure of IT systems results in serious disruption of the examination, special consideration can be applied for. In the event of IT systems failing during the distribution of Candidate results, Hele's School will advise of alternative sites where results can be obtained. Venues will be sought within the WeST MAT. Results are emailed to school email addresses on results day as a matter of course

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:

The Principal will inform all staff by use of the school bell system if the school goes into lockdown. Full details are in the Lockdown Procedures Policy.

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:

National Pandemic

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: Via in-touch SIMS via email to parents/cares/candidates School website Microsoft teams

- 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 actions 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

Other criteria:

No other actions identified

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

- 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: Via in-touch SIMS via email to parents/cares/candidates School website Telephone

- 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 actions identified

11. Centre may not be able to open as normal during the examination period

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

Criteria for implementation of the plan

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

Other criteria:

Not Applicable

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

- 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 (CAP).)
- 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 venue details: Another centre within the MAT to be decided by Head of centre

Communication details: Via in-touch SIMS via email to parents/cares/candidates School website Telephone

- 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 actions 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 actions 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:

The Exams Officer/Deputy Exams Officer would alert the Awarding Bodies in advance of the exams if papers had not been received. Entry totals are available several months in advance and the EO/DEO would be aware if the papers had not arrived ahead of the exam season.

13. Disruption to transporting completed examination scripts

Criteria for implementation of the plan

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

Other criteria:

No other action 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 **Instructions for conducting examinations**
- ensure the secure storage of completed examination scripts until collection

Other centre actions:

Liaise with the Parcel Force depot to identify cause of disruption and arrange for an alternative pick up.

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:

Ensure mock exams are taken under strict JCQ regulations Liaise with IT department regarding backups

15. Centre unable to distribute results as normal (including in the event of the centre being unavailable on results day owing to an unforeseen 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 venue details: Use a venue within the West MAT - TBC

- 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: Via in-touch SIMS via email to parents/cares/candidates School website Telephone

Other centre actions:

Results are already emailed to students school email address on results day

16. Any other cause of disruption to the exam process

Cause of disruption

Internal governance Absence of HoC, SLT to Exams

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

Internal governance arrangements In the absence of the Head of Centre (HoC), their duties will fall to one of the Deputy Principal (DP) Mrs Clare Pomfret. If the HoC is self-isolating they will work remotely from home , liaising with the DP. In the event that the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) link to exams is absent, another Assistant Principal (AP) Mr Kairn Stone will ensure that the integrity and security of the examinations and

assessments is maintained throughout the examinations series and provide support and guidance to the Exams Officer. If the SLT to exams is self-isolating they will work remotely from home liaising with the AP and Exams Officer.

Changes 2023/2024

(Updated) Under **Purpose of the plan** by adding: this plan is also informed by: the JCQ document **Preparing for disruption to examinations** (Effective from 1 September 2023).

(Changed) This plan also confirms [centre name's] compliance with JCQ's **General Regulations for Approved Centres** (section 5.3) that the centre has in place a written examination contingency plan which covers all aspects of examination administration. This will allow members of the senior leadership team to act immediately in the event of an emergency or staff absence. (To) This plan also confirms [centre name's] compliance with JCQ's **General Regulations for Approved Centres** (section 5.3) that the centre has in place a written examination contingency plan which covers all aspects of examination administration. This will allow members of the senior leadership team to act immediately in the event of an emergency or where the head of centre, examinations officer or SENCo is absent at a critical stage of the examination cycle.

(Changed) Under **Operating across more than one centre**: As the head of centre and/or exams officer operates across more than one centre, the head of centre will ensure there is suitable support in place, so they can meet their obligations in relation to the recruitment, selection and training of staff across the centres for which they are responsible (To) As the head of centre and/or examinations officer operates across more than one centre, the head of centre will ensure there is suitable senior leadership team support in place, so they can meet their obligations across all centres for which they are responsible in relation to recruitment, selection, training and support of staff.

(Added new section) **National Centre Number Register and other information requirements**

(Changed) Titles of **possible causes of disruption 1-3** from: absence at key points in the exam process (cycle) (To) absence a critical stage of the exam cycle

(Changed) Title of **cause 10** from: Candidates at risk of being unable to take examinations - centre remains open (To) Candidates may not be able to take examinations - centre remains open

(Changed) Title of **cause 11** from: Centre at risk of being unable to open as normal during the examination period (To) Centre may not be able to open as normal during the examination period

(Added) To centre actions in **cause 11**: 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 (CAP).

(Reworded) Centre actions in **cause 13**

(Updated where relevant) **Further guidance to inform procedures and implement contingency planning**

Centre-specific changes

Upon review in September 2023, no centre-specific changes

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 (www.gov.uk/guidance/meeting-digital-and-technology-standards-in-schools-and-colleges/cyber-security-standards-for-schools-and-colleges)

Cyber crime and cyber security: a guide for education providers

(www.gov.uk/government/publications/indicators-of-potential-fraud-learning-institutions/guide-on-cyber-crime-and-cyber-security-for-education-providers)

DfE Cyber Security Guidance - March 2023 (www.theexamsoffice.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/DfE-Cyber-Security-Guidance-March-2023.pdf)

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**

(updated 18 January 2023)

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 www.gov.uk/guidance/ofqual-handbook/section-a-governance). Schools and colleges should also be prepared for possible disruption to exams and assessments and make sure staff are aware of these plans.

General contingency guidance

- **emergency planning and response** (www.gov.uk/guidance/emergencies-and-severe-weather-schools-and-early-years-settings) from the Department for Education in England
- **handling strike action in schools** (www.gov.uk/government/publications/handling-strike-action-in-schools) from the Department for Education in England
- **school organisation: local-authority-maintained schools** from the Department for Education in England (www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-organisation-maintained-schools)
- **exceptional closure days** (www.education-ni.gov.uk/articles/exceptional-closure-days) from the Department of Education in Northern Ireland
- **checklist - exceptional closure of schools** (www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/checklist-exceptional-closure-schools) from the Department of Education in Northern Ireland
- **school terms and school closures** from NI Direct (www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/school-terms-and-school-closures)
- **opening schools in extremely bad weather** (www.gov.wales/opening-schools-well-childcare-and-play-settings-extreme-bad-weather-and-extreme-hot-weather) - guidance for schools from the Welsh Government
- **police guidance** from National Counter Terrorism Security Office and partners on preparing for threats

(www.protectuk.police.uk)

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 (www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations/notice-to-centres--exam-contingency-plan/) and JCQ's notice on preparing for disruption to examinations (www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/other-documents/preparing-for-disruption-to-examinations/) in England, Wales and Northern Ireland for qualifications within its scope.

Steps you should take

Exam planning

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

In the event of disruption

- 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' (www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/ice---instructions-for-conducting-examinations/).
- Communicate with parents, carers and students 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 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 complete the assessment under those conditions (other than where any reasonable adjustments or special considerations require alternative conditions).
- Promptly notify the relevant regulators about any event which could have an adverse effect on students, standards or public confidence.
- Coordinate its communications with the relevant regulators where the disruption has an impact on multiple centres or a wide range of learners.

After the exam

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

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

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

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

See also JCQ's guidance on special considerations (www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-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 Department for Education in England, the Department of Education in Northern Ireland and the Welsh Government will inform the relevant government ministers as soon as it becomes apparent that there will be significant local or national disruption; and ensure that they are kept updated until the matter is resolved.

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

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

Widespread national disruption to the taking of examinations or assessments

The governments' view across England, Wales and Northern Ireland is education in 2022 to 2023 has returned to normal. Schools are open and examinations will go ahead in summer 2023.

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 November 2022, Ofqual and the Department for Education issued decisions following a consultation on the resilience of the qualifications sector (www.gov.uk/government/consultations/ensuring-the-resilience-of-the-qualifications-system-in-2023-gcse-as-a-level-project-and-aea/outcome/consultation-decisions) for specific examinations awarded in England in summer 2023. Ofqual has published Guidance for schools, colleges and other exam centres on gathering evidence of student performance (www.gov.uk/government/publications/supporting-resilience-in-the-exam-system-in-2023) for students entering GCSEs, AS and A levels, the Advanced Extension Award and Project qualifications to support resilience in the exam system in England in 2023.

The Department for Education has updated its guidance on handling strike action in schools (www.gov.uk/government/publications/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 should speak to the relevant awarding organisations if they are expecting any disruption that might affect the sitting of exams and assessments.

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

JCQ guidance taken directly from **Instructions for Conducting Examinations 2023-2024** (www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/ice---instructions-for-conducting-examinations/) section 15, **Contingency planning**

15.1 The qualification regulators, awarding bodies and government departments responsible for education have prepared and agreed information for schools and colleges in the event of examinations being seriously disrupted. This jointly agreed information will ensure consistency of response in the event of major disruption to the examinations system affecting significant numbers of candidates.

Further information may be found at: 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/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 In the event that the head of centre decides the centre cannot be opened for scheduled examinations, the relevant awarding body must be informed as soon as possible. Awarding bodies will be able to offer advice regarding the alternative arrangements for conducting examinations that may be available and the options for candidates who have not been able to take scheduled examinations.

15.5 The awarding bodies will designate 'contingency sessions' for examinations, summer 2024. This is consistent with the qualification regulators' document *Exam system contingency plan: England, Wales and Northern Ireland* - www.gov.uk/government/publications/exam-system-contingency-plan-england-wales-and-northern-ireland

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

In the event that there is national disruption to a day of examinations in summer 2024, the awarding bodies will liaise with the qualification regulators and government departments to agree the most appropriate option for managing the impact. As a last resort the affected examinations will be rescheduled. Although every effort would be taken to keep the impact to a minimum, it is possible that there could be more than one timetable date affected following the disruption, up to and including the 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.

Where candidates choose not to be available for the rescheduled examination(s) for reasons other than those traditionally covered by special consideration, they will not be eligible for enhanced grading arrangements. Centres must therefore ensure candidates and parents are aware of the contingency arrangements so that they may take them into account when making their plans for the summer. However, the awarding bodies will not insist upon candidates being available throughout the entire timetable period as a matter of course.

Links to other JCQ documentation

JCQ **Joint Contingency Plan** - [jqc.org.uk/exams-office/other-documents](https://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/other-documents)

JCQ **Preparing for disruption to examinations** - [jqc.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations](https://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations)

JCQ Notice to Centres - **Examination contingency plan**/examinations policy - [jqc.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations/notice-to-centres--exam-contingency-plan](https://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations/notice-to-centres--exam-contingency-plan)

General Regulations for Approved Centres - [jqc.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations](https://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations)

Guidance notes on alternative site arrangements - [jqc.org.uk/exams-office/online-forms](https://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/online-forms)

Guidance notes for transferred candidates - [jqc.org.uk/exams-office/online-forms](https://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/online-forms)

Instructions for conducting examinations - [jqc.org.uk/exams-office/ice---instructions-for-conducting-examinations](https://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/ice---instructions-for-conducting-examinations)

A guide to the special consideration process - [jqc.org.uk/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-special-consideration/regulations-and-guidance](https://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-special-consideration/regulations-and-guidance)

GOV.UK

Emergency planning and response: Exam and assessment disruption - [gov.uk/guidance//publications/emergency-planning-and-response-for-education-childcare-and-childrens-social-care-settings](https://www.gov.uk/guidance//publications/emergency-planning-and-response-for-education-childcare-and-childrens-social-care-settings)

Dispatch of exam scripts guide: Ensuring the service runs smoothly; Contingency planning - [gov.uk/government/publications/dispatch-of-exam-scripts-yellow-label-service](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dispatch-of-exam-scripts-yellow-label-service)

Wales

School closures: examinations - [gov.wales/school-closures-examinations](https://www.gov.wales/school-closures-examinations)

Opening schools in extremely bad weather and extreme hot weather: guidance for schools - [gov.wales/opening-schools-extremely-bad-weather-guidance-schools](https://www.gov.wales/opening-schools-extremely-bad-weather-guidance-schools)
www.gov.wales/opening-schools-well-childcare-and-play-settings-extreme-bad-weather-and-extreme-hot-weather

Northern Ireland

(updated 2021/22) Exceptional closure days - [education-ni.gov.uk/articles/exceptional-closure-days](https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/articles/exceptional-closure-days)

Checklist - exceptional closure of schools - [education-ni.gov.uk/publications/checklist-exceptional-closure-schools](https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/checklist-exceptional-closure-schools)

National Cyber Security Centre

The NCSC's free **Web Check** ([ncsc.gov.uk/information/web-check](https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/information/web-check)) and **Mail Check** ([ncsc.gov.uk/information/mailcheck](https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/information/mailcheck)) services can help protect schools from cyber-attacks. Two NCSC cyber security services, which are already helping thousands of organisations to protect their websites and email servers from cyber-attacks, are now available to **all UK schools**. Both tools are available free of charge, are quick to set up, and thereafter run automatically. More information is available from the NCSC website ([ncsc.gov.uk/blog-post/cyber-tools-for-uk-schools](https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/blog-post/cyber-tools-for-uk-schools)).

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

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

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

- Further ransomware attacks on UK education by cyber criminals - NCSC.GOV.UK ([ncsc.gov.uk/news/alert-](https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/news/alert-)

targeted-ransomware-attacks-on-uk-education-sector)

- Ransomware advice and guidance for your IT teams to implement (ncsc.gov.uk/guidance/mitigating-malware-and-ransomware-attacks)
- Offline backups in an online world (ncsc.gov.uk/blog-post/offline-backups-in-an-online-world)
- Backing up your data (ncsc.gov.uk/collection/small-business-guide/backing-your-data)
- Practical resources to help schools improve their cyber security (gov.uk/section/education-skills/cyber-security-schools)
- Building Resilience: Ransomware, the risk to schools and ways to prevent it (com/watch?v=FppzWedY0ic&t=237s)
- School staff offered training to help shore up cyber defences - NCSC.GOV.UK (gov.uk/news/school-staff-offered-training-to-help-cyber-defences)