

# **Exam Contingency Plan**

St Marks Church of England Academy

## Exam Contingency Plan

Centre name	St Marks Church of England Academy
Centre number	14501
Date plan first created	19/03/2024
Current plan approved by	Jennie Khan
Current plan reviewed by	Christopher Pigott
Date of review	23/10/2025
Date of next review	01/10/2026

## Key staff involved in the plan

Role	Name
Head of centre	Aimee Gallagher
Senior leader(s)	Jennie Khan (Senior Leader in charge of Examinations)
Exams officer	Anne Rogers
SENCo (or equivalent role)	Nicola Van Zyl
Other staff (if applicable)	Christopher Pigott (Data and Exams Manager)

This plan is reviewed and updated annually to ensure that contingency planning at St Marks Church of England Academy is managed in accordance with current requirements and regulations.

## Purpose of the plan

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

By outlining actions/procedures to be invoked in case of disruption it is intended to mitigate the impact these disruptions have on processes at St Marks Church of England Academy.

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', the **JCQ Joint Contingency Plan** for the Examination System in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and the JCQ document **Preparing for disruption to examinations**.

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

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

## Contingency arrangements

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Operating across more than one centre

This does not apply to this centre.

## National Centre Number Register and other information requirements

The head of centre will ensure that the centre completes the National Centre Number Register annual update by the end of October every year (even if there are no changes to centre details) which includes providing senior designated contact details (this might include a personal mobile number and/or email address). These must be the contact details of someone who can be reached in an emergency if the centre is

closed over the summer and who can mobilise resources to respond to the issue. (GR 5.3)

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

Where the head of centre may be absent at a critical stage of the examination cycle, main duties and responsibilities will be passed to Jennie Khan (Senior Leader in charge of Examinations).

## **Possible causes of disruption to the exam process**

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

#### Criteria for implementation of the plan

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

#### Planning

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

#### Entries

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

#### Pre-exams

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

#### Exam time

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

#### Results and post-results

- access to examination results affecting the distribution of results to candidates

- the facilitation of post-results services

Other criteria:

No other criteria defined.

#### Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

In the event of the extended absence of the Exams Officer, the Data and Exams Manager would undertake the role to ensure that key tasks are completed by the required deadlines.

Regular line management meetings between the Exams Officer, the Data and Exams Manager and the Senior Leader in charge of Examinations allows for information sharing, so that an absence can be covered successfully with outstanding tasks quickly identified.

Entry deadlines are highlighted on the school calendar, and timelines shared with Heads of Departments.

Maintain a monitoring plan for Senior Leaders to ensure accurate entry submissions by exam board deadlines.

Build in candidate briefings into assembly cycle, so that these are still delivered in the case of the absence of the Exams Officer.

Have a number of designated secure room keyholders:

Exams Officer

Data and Exams Manager

Senior Leader in charge of Examinations

Head of Centre

Facilities Manager

Data and Exams Assistant

So that in the case of absence, secure materials are still logged into the centre, securely stored in date order, and are available for examinations and assessments.

Ensure all senior leaders understand exam rules and regulations, as defined by the JCQ and awarding bodies. Senior leaders will monitor conditions throughout all examination and assessment period and ensure that rules and regulations are following in full.

## **2. SENCo (or equivalent role) 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:

Information regarding exam access arrangements are not shared effectively with staff delivering the curriculum or assessments.

### Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

Utilise the expertise of one the other trained SENCOs within the senior leadership team, to cover key tasks in the case of the extended absence of the SENCO.

Ensure this senior leader, trained as an access arrangements assessor, oversees contingencies where necessary.

On a termly basis, review the SEN register and Access Arrangements list, to ensure that these are kept up-to-date for use in any exam series. Make sure that these lists are recorded correctly on the Academy's MIS, so that this information is accessible by all staff involved in exam administration.

In the case of extended absence, ensure via the Exams Officer that Access Arrangement applications have been made by the relevant JCQ deadlines prior to an exam series beginning.

In the case of extended absence, ensure that the Senior Leader in charge of Examinations liaises with the Academy's IT department, to confirm that the centre's Word Processor Policy is followed during all examinations.

In the case of the extended absence, the Director of Inclusion will timetable Access Arrangement facilitators and invigilators for an exam room where candidates with Access Arrangements are seated.

Ensure that Access Arrangements are shared with Heads of Department and teaching staff through the Academy's MIS, so that students receive the correct arrangements during non-exam assessments where appropriate.

### **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 tasks (including controlled assessment and coursework) not set/issued/taken by candidates as scheduled
- Candidates not being informed of centre assessed marks before marks are submitted to the awarding body and therefore not being able to consider appealing internal assessment decisions and requesting a review of the centre's marking
- Internal assessment marks and candidates' work not provided to meet awarding body submission deadlines

Other criteria:

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

Have in place effective line-management structures and processes that ensure key information is shared and known by a number of staff in each subject department. This would include storing non-exam assessment material marks and work on a shared area of the Academy's network, so that these are accessible by other staff in a department in the case of extended absence.

Key tasks completed by subject Heads of Department, for example the completion of exam entry information, will be closely monitored by the Exams Officer to ensure that these tasks are completed by the relevant internal and external deadlines.

Create long-term absence plans for any teaching staff with exam classes and/or exam responsibilities to ensure that candidates are not disadvantaged in the case of extended absence.

Entry deadlines are highlighted on the school calendar, and timelines shared with Heads of Departments. Senior Leaders will identify in the case of absence where this information may need to be shared more widely within a department.

#### **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:

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

Maintain a bank of invigilators, on casual contracts, who can provide excess capacity as required.

Ensure sufficiently trained staff members who are able to stand-in to invigilate as capacity requires.

Provide annual training / retraining for invigilators and those with exam-related responsibilities.

In the case where correct invigilator ratios are not possible to meet in an exam room, explore the possibility of running exams across two or more sessions, with candidates not sitting exams kept under secure centre supervision until they have completed the exam session.

## 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:

### Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

- (where main exam venue(s) unavailable due to an unexpected incident at exam time) where possible, make use of other available rooms within the centre, prioritising candidates whose progression will be severely delayed if they do not take their exam or timetabled assessment when planned
- identify whether the exam or timetabled assessment can be sat at an alternative venue, in agreement with the relevant awarding body
- (where main exam venue(s) unavailable due to an unexpected incident at exam time) where possible, move to alternative venue, prioritising candidates whose progression will be severely delayed if they do not take their exam or timetabled assessment when planned
- **Alternative site(s)** details: Agreement is in place with Lonesome Primary School to provide capacity and rooms as required in event of emergency.
- communicate with candidates (and where appropriate, parents/carers) any changes to the exam or assessment timetable or to the venue
- **Communication** details:
  - Text messages will be sent directly to candidates and parents/carers.
  - A message will be posted on the school website as a homepage pop-up.
  - A direct email will be sent to students and parents/carers.
  - Assemblies and coaching time will provide updates to students directly.
  - The exams noticeboard in a central school location will be updated with information accordingly.
- 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:

## 6. Cyber security

### Criteria for implementation of the plan

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

Other criteria:

### Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

All IT systems are backed up and accessible by central trust IT specialists.

Hard copy backups are retained and accessible in the event of any inability to access critical information

digitally.

The Academy will monitor through firewall protection any irregularities, and flag and respond urgently where these could impact exam arrangements.

A critical incident plan is in place, and known by relevant parties. This critical incident plan would be implemented in the case of a cyber attack.

The Exams Officer will contact the relevant exam boards in the case of disruption to an exam or assessment, or to the processing of a key exam task by the specified deadline, and ensure that their guidance is followed.

## **7. Failure of IT systems**

### Criteria for implementation of the plan

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

Other criteria:

### Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

All IT systems are backed up and accessible by central trust IT specialists.

Hard copy backups are retained and accessible in the event of any inability to access critical information digitally.

Ensure an adequate supply of backup devices are available.

Liaise with the Academy Trust to utilise resources centrally or from a different location to gain access to systems (where the IT/system failure is identified as a local failure).

Comply with internal incident management procedures to ensure a timely resolution of any such incident.

The Exams Officer will contact the relevant exam boards in the case of disruption to an exam or assessment, or to the processing of a key exam task by the specified deadline, and ensure that their guidance is followed.

## **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:

### 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:

## 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:

### 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:  
Text messages will be sent directly to candidates and parents/carers.  
A message will be posted on the school website as a homepage pop-up.  
A direct email will be sent to students and parents/carers.
- 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:

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

### Criteria for implementation of the plan

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

Other criteria:

### Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

- focus on options that enable candidates to take their examinations (referencing the JCQ document *Preparing for disruption to examinations*)
- take advice offered by the awarding body on the options for candidates who have not been able to take scheduled examinations
- discuss alternative arrangements with the awarding body if a candidate misses an exam or loses their

assessment due to an emergency, or other event, outside of the candidate's control

- identify whether the exam or timetabled assessment can be sat at an alternative venue, in agreement with the relevant awarding body, ensuring the secure transportation of questions papers or assessment materials to the alternative venue
- communicate with candidates (and where appropriate, parents/carers) any changes to the exam or assessment timetable or to the venue
- **Communication** details:  
Direct telephone communication with students and parents/carers to make individual arrangements.

For identified candidates, alternate exam centre arrangements will be made and agreed in advance.

- 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:

Explore whether transferring the student's exam entries to another centre would be a suitable arrangement.

## **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

Other criteria:

### Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

- focus on enabling candidates to take their examinations
- take advice, or follow instructions, from relevant local or national agencies in deciding whether the centre is able to open
- contact the relevant awarding body as soon as possible and follow its instructions (This could include implementing alternative arrangements for the conducting of examinations and notifying the JCQ Centre Inspection Service of an alternative site arrangement by submitting the JCQ Alternative Site form online, using the Centre Admin Portal)
- contact the relevant awarding body as soon as possible and follow its instructions
- discuss alternative arrangements with the awarding body if the exam or assessment cannot take place
- follow guidance provided by the awarding body on the conduct of examinations in such circumstances
- where accommodation is limited, prioritise candidates whose progression will be severely delayed if they do not take their exam or timetabled assessment when planned
- communicate with candidates (and where appropriate, parents/carers) any changes to the exam or assessment timetable or to the venue
- **Alternative site(s)** details: Agreement is in place with Lonesome Primary School to provide capacity and rooms as required in event of emergency.

- **Communication** details:  
Text messages will be sent directly to candidates and parents/carers.  
A message will be posted on the school website as a homepage pop-up.  
A direct email will be sent to students and parents/carers.
- 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:

## **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:

### 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:

## **13. Delay in collection arrangements for completed examination scripts**

### Criteria for implementation of the plan

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

Other criteria:

### Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

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

Other centre actions:

#### 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:

##### 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:

#### 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:

##### Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

- make arrangements to access its results at an alternative venue/share facilities with another centre if this is possible, in agreement with the relevant awarding body
- make arrangements to coordinate access to post-results services from an alternative venue
- **Alternative site(s)** details: Agreement is in place with Lonesome Primary School to provide capacity and rooms as required in event of emergency.
- 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:
  - Text messages will be sent directly to candidates and parents/carers.
  - A message will be posted on the school website as a homepage pop-up.
  - A direct email will be sent to students and parents/carers.
  - Assemblies and coaching time will provide updates to students directly.
  - The exams noticeboard in a central school location will be updated with information accordingly.

Other centre actions:

**16. Any other cause of disruption to the exam process**

Cause of disruption

N/A

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

N/A

## Changes 2025/2026

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Centre-specific changes

Upon review in October 2025, the following changes were made:

Specified the role of the Exams and Data Manager in the case of the extended absence of the Exams Officer.

Specified the nominated keyholders for the Secure Storage Room, who can store and access secure exam materials in the case of extended absence of the Exams Officer.

Added that Access Arrangements and the SEN register will be confirmed as correct on a termly basis, to support contingency in the case of the extended absence of the SENCO.

Added that in the case of an unexpected absence of invigilators, that running multiple exams with smaller numbers of candidates would be explored as a potential solution.

Specified that in the case of a Cyber-Attack or IT systems failure that have an impact on exams or assessments, that the Exams Officer would contact the relevant exam boards and ensure that their guidance is followed in full.

## Further guidance to inform procedures and implement contingency planning

DfE

Meeting digital and technology standards in schools and colleges - [Cyber security standards for schools and colleges](#)

Ofqual

Ofqual guidance extract taken directly from the **Exam system contingency plan: England, Wales and Northern Ireland - What schools and colleges and other centres should do if exams or other assessments are seriously disrupted** [www.gov.uk/government/publications/exam-system-contingency-plan-england-wales-and-northern-ireland/what-schools-and-colleges-should-do-if-exams-or-other-assessments-are-seriously-disrupted](http://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 [JCO's notice to centres on exam contingency plans](#) and [JCO's notice on preparing for disruption to examinations](#) in England, Wales and Northern Ireland for qualifications within its scope.

### Steps you should take

#### Exam planning

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

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

#### In the event of disruption

- Contact the relevant awarding organisation and follow its instructions.
- Take advice, or follow instructions, from relevant local or national agencies in deciding whether your centre is able to open.
- Identify whether the exam or timetabled assessment can be sat at an alternative venue, in agreement with the relevant awarding organisation, ensuring the secure transportation of questions papers or assessment materials to the alternative venue.
- Where accommodation is limited, prioritise students whose progression will be severely delayed if they do not take

their exam or timetabled assessment when planned.

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

### **After the exam**

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

### **Steps the awarding organisation should take**

#### **Exam planning**

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

#### **In the event of disruption**

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

#### **After the exam**

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

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

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

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

See also [JCQ's guidance on special consideration](#)

## Wider communications

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

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

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

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

## Widespread national disruption to the taking of examinations or assessments

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

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

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

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

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

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

## General contingency guidance

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

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

## JCQ

### JCQ guidance taken directly from [Instructions for conducting examinations 2025-2026](#) 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](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/exam-system-contingency-plan-england-wales-and-northern-ireland)

15.2 In addition, awarding bodies have their own well-established contingency plans in place to respond to disruptions. It is important that exams officers who are facing disruption liaise directly with the relevant awarding body or bodies.

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

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

15.4 If the head of centre decides the centre cannot be opened for scheduled examinations, the centre's contingency plan must be invoked, utilising the centre's 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* - [www.gov.uk/government/publications/exam-system-contingency-plan-england-wales-and-northern-ireland](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/exam-system-contingency-plan-england-wales-and-northern-ireland)

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

15.7 In the event that there is national disruption to a day of examinations in summer 2026, the awarding bodies will liaise with the qualification regulators and government departments to agree the most appropriate option for managing the impact. As a last resort, the affected examinations will be rescheduled. Although every effort would be taken to keep the impact to a minimum, it is possible that there could be more than one timetable date affected following the disruption, up to and including the last contingency day. Centres will be alerted if it was agreed to reschedule the examinations and the affected candidates will be expected to make themselves available in such

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

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

### **Links to other JCQ documentation**

[JCQ Joint Contingency Plan](#)

[Preparing for disruption to examinations](#)

[General Regulations for Approved Centres](#)

[Guidance notes on alternative site arrangements](#)

[Guidance notes for transferred candidates](#)

[Instructions for conducting examinations](#)

[A guide to the special consideration process](#)

[Guidance for centres on cyber security](#)

### **GOV.UK**

[Emergency planning and response: Exam and assessment disruption](#)

[Dispatch of exam scripts guide: Contingency planning](#)

### **Wales**

[School closures: examinations](#)

[Opening schools in extremely bad weather and extreme hot weather](#)

### **Northern Ireland**

[Exceptional closure days - Northern Ireland](#)

[Checklist - exceptional closure of schools](#)

### **National Cyber Security Centre**

[Cyber Security for Schools](#)

[Cyber security training for school staff](#)