



## Exam Contingency Plan

Policy/Procedure creator: Mr Mathew Downs, Deputy Head

Policy/Procedure created/reviewed: 20/04/2023

|                          |                   |
|--------------------------|-------------------|
| Centre Name              | Highcliffe School |
| Centre Number            | 55215             |
| Date plan first created  | 17/10/2022        |
| Current plan approved by | Governing Body    |
| Current plan reviewed by | Mrs Nicola Lill   |
| Date of next review      | October 2023      |

### Key staff involved in the plan

| Role                        | Name(s)                      |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| Head of centre              | Mr Patrick Earnshaw          |
| Senior leader(s)            | Mr Mathew Downs, Deputy Head |
| Exams officer               | Mrs Nicola Lill              |
| ALS lead/SENCo              | Mrs Katie Guerrini           |
| Other staff (if applicable) | Not Applicable               |

This plan is reviewed and updated annually to ensure that exam contingency planning at Highcliffe 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 Highcliffe 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' and the **JCQ Joint Contingency Plan** for the Examination System in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

This plan details how Highcliffe 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 staff absence. 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

This does not apply to this centre

## Possible causes of disruption to the exam process

### 1. Exams officer absence at key points in the exam process (exam cycle)

#### Criteria for implementation of the plan

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

##### Planning

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

##### Entries

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

##### Pre-exams

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

##### Exam time

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

##### Results and post-results

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

Other criteria:

No other criteria identified

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

The centre will:

- Direct Exams Assistant and exams office team to assume responsibility for the above tasks with the support of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT).
- As part of a MAT if necessary call upon expertise of relevant staff at other members schools in the Trust.

## 2. ALS lead/SENCo extended absence at key points in the exam process (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:

- Direct SEN administrators and qualified SENCO who is part of SLT to take responsibility for the pre-exams processes.
- Train SEN T/A for for access arrangement testing.
- Use an external agency in the case of extended absence.
- As part of a MAT if necessary call upon expertise of relevant staff at other members schools in the Trust.

## 3. Teaching staff extended absence at key points in the exam process (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:

- As the entry process is led by the EO, the exams team will follow up designated staff within the affected area.
- Ensure Subject Leads assume responsibility for providing estimated entry, final entry information, internal assessment marks and work for the EO.
- in the absence of Subject Leads ensure that the appropriate staff can provide entry information etc. as above.

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

#### **Criteria for implementation of the plan**

- Failure to recruit and train sufficient invigilators to conduct exams
- Invigilator shortage on peak exam days
- Invigilator absence on the day of an exam

Other criteria:

No other criteria identified

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

The centre will:

- Use the support staff (admin staff, pastoral leads and T/As) who are trained annually with invigilators.
- Conduct an annual recruitment cycle in the autumn and/or spring terms accordingly.

## **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 or apply for a change of examination times and make alterations to the school day.
  - Consider partial school closure
- (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:

The centre will liaise with the school's insurance provider to identify an alternate venue without delay.

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

Communication details:

The centre will communicate with candidates and parents/carers via email, text message and/or messages on MyHighcliffe.

- 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:

No other criteria identified

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

The centre will:

- Train and regularly update all staff in how to avoid a cyber-attack.
- Refer to the centre's Disaster Recovery plan and Data Breach Policy as required

## **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:

IT system failure during a timetabled exam

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

The centre will:

- In the event of MIS failure at entry deadline, make exam entries online with individual awarding bodies (AB) using paper copies of entry details collected, the centre's internal system, SIS and information from MIS provider back-ups.
- In the event of MIS failure during exams prep internal system, revert to manual plans using SIS in conjunction with information from ABs.
- In the event of MIS failure at results release time, download results information from AB.
- In the event of centre IT system failure at any point during the cycle, seek information from MIS provider back-ups.
- In the event of complete failure of internet in any of the above stages the school will switch to its back-up system or the procedures will be conducted off-site.
- In the event of an IT system failure during a timetabled exam, provide IT support with USB devices to manually retrieve saved documents from before the failure and during the remainder of the exam.

## 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 emergency evacuation policy/procedure in line with JCQ's 'Centre emergency evacuation procedure' (or its 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:

If required the centre will liaise with the school's insurance provider to identify an alternate venue without delay.

## 9. Disruption of teaching time in the weeks before an exam - centre closed for an extended period

### Criteria for implementation of the plan

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

Other criteria:

No other criteria identified

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

The centre will:

- recognise it remains the responsibility of the centre to prepare students, as usual, for examinations
- facilitate alternative methods of learning
- communicate with candidates (and where appropriate, parents/carers) information relating to alternative methods of learning

Communication details:

The centre will communicate with candidates and parents/carers via email, text message and/or messages on MyHighcliffe.

- 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:

implement use of SIS to provide online learning, (short to medium-term.)

negotiate use of alternative site(s) e.g. year groups at different locations or negotiate leasing arrangements for temporary accommodation on-site as appropriate (long-term).

## 10. Candidates at risk of being unable to take examinations - centre remains open

### Criteria for implementation of the plan

- Candidates at risk of being unable to attend the examination centre to take examinations as normal

Other criteria:

No other criteria 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:

The centre will communicate with candidates and parents/carers via email, text message and/or messages on MyHighcliffe.

- 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 at risk of being unable 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 at risk of being unable to open as normal for scheduled examinations

Other criteria:

No other criteria identified

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

The centre will:

- 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
- 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:

If required the centre will liaise with the school's insurance provider to identify an alternate venue without delay.

Communication details:

The centre will communicate with candidates and parents/carers via email, text message and/or messages on MyHighcliffe.

- 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 criteria identified

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

The centre will:

- liaise with awarding bodies regarding the provision of electronic access to examination papers via a secure external network and will ensure when copies are received/made these are stored under secure conditions
- follow guidance provided by the awarding body on the conduct of examinations in such circumstances
- understand that as a last resort, and in close collaboration with centres and regulators, awarding organisations will consider scheduling of the examination on an alternative date
- communicate with candidates (and where appropriate, parents/carers) any changes to the exam or assessment timetable or to the venue

Other centre actions:

No other actions identified

### **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 criteria identified

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

The centre will:

- where examinations are part of the national 'yellow label' service or where awarding bodies arrange collections, contact the relevant awarding bodies for advice and instructions and will not make its own arrangements for transportation unless told to do so by the awarding body
- for any examinations where the centre makes its own collection arrangements, investigate alternative options that comply with the requirements detailed in the JCQ publication 'Instructions for Conducting Examinations'
- ensure the secure storage of completed examination scripts until collection

Other centre actions:

No other actions identified

### **14. Assessment evidence is not available to be marked**

#### **Criteria for implementation of the plan**

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

Other criteria:

No other criteria identified

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

The centre will:

- liaise with the awarding body to determine if candidate marks for affected assessments may be able to be generated based on other appropriate evidence of candidate achievement as defined by the awarding body

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

Other centre actions:

No other actions identified

## 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:

To be confirmed

- 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:

The centre will communicate with candidates and parents/carers via email, text message and/or messages on MyHighcliffe.

Other centre actions:

No other actions identified

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

### Cause of disruption

- The absence of the head of centre or the member of senior leadership with oversight of examination administration, responsibility for implementing JCQ regulations and requirements relating to activity at all stages of the Exam Process

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

Escalation Process

- In the absence of the member of senior leadership with oversight of examination administration, responsibility for implementing JCQ regulations and requirements relating to activity at all stages of the Exam Process will be escalated to The Head of Centre, Mr Patrick Earnshaw.
- In the absence of the Head of Centre, responsibility for implementing JCQ regulations and requirements relating to activity at all stages of the Exam Process will be escalated to the Chair of Governors to identify a member of the school senior staff who has the required knowledge and experience. If it is deemed that there is no member of senior staff with required experience then the Chair of Governors will work to source this from outside the

organisation.

To support understanding of the regulations and requirements, the following JCQ publications will be referenced:

- General Regulations for Approved Centres
- Instructions for conducting examinations
- Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments
- Instructions for conducting coursework
- Instructions for conducting non-examination assessments
- Suspected Malpractice – Policies and Procedures
- A guide to the special consideration process

Amended; Senco Name

Page 2 (Added) Under Purpose of the plan: new heading 'Operating across more than one centre' and field for completion (New JCQ requirement)

This does not apply to this centre

Page 3: (Amended/Added) Under 1. Exams officer absence at key points in the exam process (exam cycle) Exams Assistant training now complete so:

Amended to: Direct Exams Assistant and exams office team to assume responsibility for the above tasks with the support of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT).

Added: As part of a MAT if necessary call upon expertise of relevant staff at other members schools in the Trust.

Page 3: (Amended/Added) Under 2. ALS lead/SENCo extended absence at key points in the exam process (exam cycle)

Amended to: Direct SEN administrators and qualified SENCO who is part of SLT to take responsibility for the pre-exams processes.

Added: As part of a MAT if necessary call upon expertise of relevant staff at other members schools in the Trust.

Page 5 (Added) (Section Added) Under Possible causes of disruption to the exam process: new cause '6. Cyber-attack' and fields for completion. (New JCQ requirement)

Added: Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the criteria listed above

The centre will:

train and regularly update all staff in how to avoid a cyber-attack.

Refer to the centre's Disaster Recovery plan and Data Breach Policy as required

Page 6 (Added) Under cause 7. Failure of IT systems Under Possible causes of disruption to the exam process:.

Added: New criteria 'IT system failure during a timetabled exam'

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the criteria listed above

The centre will:

provide IT support with USB devices to manually retrieve saved documents from before the failure and during the remainder of the exam.

Amended: In the event of complete failure of internet in any of the above stages the school will switch to its back-up system or the procedures will be conducted off-site.

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

DfE Cyber Security Guidance - March 2023 (As exam season approaches the Department for Education is reminding schools and colleges to renew their cyber security and backup policies)

### 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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-organisation-maintained-schools))
- **exceptional closure days** ([www.education-ni.gov.uk/articles/exceptional-closure-days](http://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](http://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](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/school-terms-and-school-closures))
- **opening schools in extremely bad weather** (<https://gov.wales/opening-schools-extremely-bad-weather-guidance-schools>) - 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](http://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/](http://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/](http://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

1. Contact the relevant awarding organisation and follow its instructions.

2. Take advice, or follow instructions, from relevant local or national agencies in deciding whether your centre is able to open.
3. Identify whether the exam or timetabled assessment can be sat at an alternative venue, in agreement with the relevant awarding organisation, ensuring the secure transportation of questions papers or assessment materials to the alternative venue.
4. Where accommodation is limited, prioritise students whose progression will be severely delayed if they do not take their exam or timetabled assessment when planned.
5. In the event of an evacuation during an examination please refer to JCQ's 'Centre emergency evacuation procedure' ([www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/ice---instructions-for-conducting-examinations/](http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/ice---instructions-for-conducting-examinations/)).
6. Communicate with parents, carers and students any changes to the exam or assessment timetable or to the venue.
7. Communicate with any external assessors or relevant third parties regarding any changes to the exam or assessment timetable.

#### **After the exam**

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

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

##### **Exam planning**

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

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

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

##### **After the exam**

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

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

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

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

See also JCQ's guidance on special considerations ([www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-special-consideration/](http://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](https://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](https://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](https://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 2022-2023** ([www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/ice—instructions-for-conducting-examinations/](http://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](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/bodies.

15.3 Centres should prepare plans for any disruption to examinations as part of their general emergency planning. It is important to ensure that relevant centre staff are familiar with the 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 days' for examinations, summer 2023. This is consistent with the qualification regulators' document *Examssystem 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)

The designation of 'contingency days' 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 2023, 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](http://jqc.org.uk/exams-office/other-documents)

JCQ **Preparing for disruption to examinations** (Effective from 1 September 2022) - [jqc.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations](http://jqc.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](http://jqc.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations/notice-to-centres—exam-contingency-plan)

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

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

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

Instructions for conducting examinations - [jqc.org.uk/exams-office/ice—instructions-for-conducting-examinations](http://jqc.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](http://jqc.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](http://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: guidance for schools - [gov.wales/opening-schools-extremely-bad-weather-guidance-schools](https://www.gov.wales/opening-schools-extremely-bad-weather-guidance-schools)

## 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)

## ProtectUK

ProtectUK.[police.uk](https://www.police.uk)

## 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:

1. More ransomware attacks on UK education - NCSC.GOV.UK ([ncsc.gov.uk/news/alert-targeted-ransomware-attacks-on-uk-education-sector](https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/news/alert-targeted-ransomware-attacks-on-uk-education-sector))
2. Ransomware advice and guidance for your IT teams to implement ([ncsc.gov.uk/guidance/mitigating-malware-and-ransomware-attacks](https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/guidance/mitigating-malware-and-ransomware-attacks))
3. Offline backups in an online world ([ncsc.gov.uk/blog-post/offline-backups-in-an-online-world](https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/blog-post/offline-backups-in-an-online-world))
4. Backing up your data ([ncsc.gov.uk/collection/small-business-guide/backing-your-data](https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/collection/small-business-guide/backing-your-data))
5. Practical resources to help improve your cyber security ([gov.uk/section/education-skills/cyber-security-schools](https://www.gov.uk/section/education-skills/cyber-security-schools))
6. Building Resilience: Ransomware and the risks to schools and ways to prevent it ([com/watch?v=FppzWedY0ic&t=237s](https://www.com/watch?v=FppzWedY0ic&t=237s))
7. School staff offered training to help shore up cyber defences - NCSC.GOV.UK ([gov.uk/news/school-staff-offered-training-to-help-cyber-defences](https://www.gov.uk/news/school-staff-offered-training-to-help-cyber-defences))