Contingency Plan 2025/2026

Approved by: Jula Bray   **Date:** October 2025

Signed by: **Position: Head of Education Services**

Last reviewed: October 2025   **Next review due:** October 2026

Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed **annually** by the Head of Centre to ensure compliance with current regulations.

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Key staff involved in the plan

Inclusion School

Role	Name(s)
Head of centre	Matthew Atkinson
Senior leader(s)	Matthew Atkinson, Ele Murphy, Yvonne Haynes, Paula Ball
Exams officer	Paula Ball
SENCo (or equivalent role)	Ele Murphy

Inclusion College

Role	Name(s)
Head of centre	Chris McShane
Senior leader(s)	Chris McShane, Anna Moores, Michael Collins, Nery's Nabbs, Sharon Moore
Exams officer	Sharon Moores
SENCo (or equivalent role)	Anna Moores

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Purpose of the plan

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

Alongside internal processes, this plan is informed by the Ofqual (and Northern Ireland Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment) **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 also confirms Inclusion Education compliance with JCQ's **General Regulations for Approved Centres** (GR 5.3) that the centre has 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

In accordance with the regulations (GR 3.17-19), Inclusion Education **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.

Inclusion Education **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.

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

National Centre Number Register and other information requirements

In accordance with the regulations (GR 5.3), the head of centre will ensure that Inclusion Education completes the National Centre Number Register annual update by the end of October every year (even it there are no changes to centre details) which includes providing senior designated contact details (this might include a personal mobile number and/or email address). These must be the contact details of someone who can be reached in an emergency if the centre is closed over the summer and who can mobilise resources to respond to the issue.

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

The SLT Lead for Exams will continue to oversee the exam process and will take on any additional responsibilities that may fall to the Head of Centre.

Possible causes of disruption to the exam process

1. Exam officer extended absence at a critical stage of the exam cycle

Criteria for implementation of the plan

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

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

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

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

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- The organisation has a second member of staff wo has received the exams officer training to be able to support the exams officer assistant to take on these actions.
- Deputy Head (DofE) is the SLT Lead for Exams and is able to support.
- Training and work shadowing is ongoing to ensure this available support is kept up to date.
- All procedures should be documented. With further support available via;

  - The Key Tasks section of the Exams Office website
  - The Examination Administration section of the DfE website
  - Awarding Organisation's online support and helplines
  - The Examinations office Section of the JCQ website

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

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Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- SLT Lead for Exams to arrange for the services of an approved assessor for the period of assessment of the cohort if required.
- SLT Lead for Exams to ensure all reasonable adjustments and access arrangements paperwork is complete and approved.
- Teaching staff to ensure learners usual way of working is recorded to assist with reasonable adjustment applications.
- Exam Officer/Admin assistant/SLT Lead for Exams to perform administration for, pre-exams and exam time arrangements.

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

Criteria for implementation of the plan

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

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Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- SLT Lead for Exams to ensure the above takes place.

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

Criteria for implementation of the plan

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

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- Exam Officer to oversee the training of all suitable staff to be invigilators/practical assistants to be called upon in the event of a shortfall on an exam day.
- Exam Officer to conduct a review of available invigilators and their availability for the next exam series, recruit and train additional invigilators if felt necessary.
- Use the provisional exam timetable to determine invigilator numbers to assess availability at the earliest opportunity.
- SLT to source cover to be able to provide additional invigilators in the event of a shortfall at short notice.

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

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- Exams officer unable to identify sufficient/appropriate rooms during exams timetable planning
- Insufficient rooms available on peak exam days
- Main exam venues unavailable due to an unexpected incident at exam time

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- Exams Officer and SLT Lead for Exams will identify additional suitable rooms if extra space is required.
- Prepare learners for a change to usual teaching rooms if one or more is to be utilised for the exam period or as a reserve if necessary.
- Liaise with alternative Inclusion Education sites to enable exams to take place there.
- If applicable; implementing alternative arrangements for conducting of examinations and notifying the JCQ Centre Inspection Service of an alternative site arrangement by submitting the JCQ Alternative Site form online, using the Centre Admin Portal (CAP)
- Contact Awarding organisations/JCQ for advice to ensure rules and regulations are followed.

Alternative site(s) details:

6. Cyber security

Criteria for implementation of the plan

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

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

(This will include the required arrangements for cyber security)

(GR 3.21) Ensure there are procedures in place to maintain the security of user accounts by:

a) ensuring that all members of centre staff who access awarding bodies' online systems undertake annual cyber security training...

... The training must include:

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

Certificates of completed staff cyber training must be downloaded and held on file for inspection. The NCSC training resource provides a certificate of completion of cyber training.

b) developing and maintaining a comprehensive cyber security policy for the centre. The National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) provides resources to assist centres in creating such policies.
c) implementing and enforcing robust security measures, including:
   - mandatory MFA for all accounts and systems containing exam-related information, including those that interface between awarding body and centre systems, to enhance security and protect sensitive data.
   - regularly reviewing and updating security settings to align with current best practices;
d) updating any passwords that may have been exposed
e) setting up secure account recovery options
f) reviewing and managing connected applications
g) monitoring accounts and regularly reviewing account access, including removing access when no longer required
h) ensuring authorised members of staff securely access awarding bodies' online systems in line with awarding body regulations regarding cyber security and the JCQ document *Guidance for centres on cyber security*
   Authorised staff will have access, where necessary, to a device which complies with awarding bodies' MFA requirements.
i) reporting any actual or suspected compromise of an awarding body's online systems immediately to the relevant awarding body

7. Failure of IT systems

Criteria for implementation of the plan

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

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- (This will include the security arrangements put in place which protect candidates' work)

- Awarding organisations to be informed of the disruption and an extension to deadlines should be requested if appropriate.

- Exams Officer ensures all stages of the process of exam preparation is recorded in such a way as no system failure means we have lost the relevant information.

- The centre IT support and MIS contractor's teams be available to respond quickly.

- Refer to awarding organisation guidance regarding power outage for on screen test.

- Special consideration can be applied for the event of a serious disruption.

- Results can be obtained at an alternative site.

- In the event of a Cyber-attack exam and results information is not stored solely within the school network.

- Results information can be accessed and downloaded via the awarding organisations secure sites. This can be accessed via home computers if the school network is affected.

- (GR 3.19) Ensure where candidates' work is produced electronically that it is backed-up and should consider the contingency of candidates' work being backed-up on two separate devices, including one off-site back-up via the Cloud... Implement appropriate security arrangements which protect candidates' work in the event of IT system corruption and cyber-attacks.

8. Emergency evacuation of the exam room (or center 'stay-put' plan is activated)

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Whole centre evacuation (or lockdown) during exam time due to serious incident resulting in exam candidates being unable to start, proceed with or complete their exams

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- The centre to notify the awarding organisation/JCQ as soon as possible if the start of an exam is affected by an emergency evacuation that impacts the exam being held and action accordingly

- Fire alarm will sound to signal the need to evacuate
    - The exam time will be stopped. Invigilators make a note of the time to ensure candidates get the full exam time if the exam is able to continue.
    - Candidates are asked to stop working. All papers and materials are left face down in the exam room.
    - Candidates are to be escorted to the assembly area slightly away from the rest of the school. The invigilators are to supervise to ensure the candidates to not speak with each other.
    - The awarding organisation will be notified following the disruption and special consideration applied for if appropriate.
    - If all clear is given, the exam officer will be first back in the building to ensure security of the papers. The exam can resume once all candidates have returned to the room and are ready.

The agreed Stay Put alarm will sound

- Candidates and invigilators will remain in the exam room and will lock or will barrier the door (i.e with a desk)
- Everyone should sit on the floor under desks if possible, or along the walls out of sight of the doors and windows
- The exam time will be stopped, and papers will remain on the desks, face down.
- Depending on the outcome of the situation and when all clear is given, the exam can continue if appropriate and the candidates are not disadvantaged to do so, otherwise the Awarding organisation will be contacted for advice.
- The awarding organisation will be notified following the disruption and special consideration applied for if appropriate.

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

Criteria for implementation of the plan

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

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- Where there is disruption to teaching time and students miss teaching and learning, it remains the responsibility of centres to prepare students, as usual, for examination. The centre will refer to the school's emergency and business continuity plan.
- The Centre to liaise with JCQ/Awarding organisations and other local centres to find suitable alternative venues as well as alternative Inclusion Education sites.
- The Centre to ensure good communication with learners, parents and carers about any potential disruption to teaching and plans to address this.
- If applicable; implementing alternative arrangements for the conducting of examinations and notifying the JCQ Centre Inspection Service of an alternative site arrangement by submitting the JCQ Alternative Site form online, using the Centre Admin Portal (CAP)
- Contact the awarding organisation/JCQ for advice to ensure all rules and regulations are followed

•	In some cases, the Centre may advise candidates to sit examinations in an alternative series.

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

Criteria for implementation of the plan

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

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- The centre to communicate with parents/carers and learners, keeping them informed regarding solutions to the disruption.

- Liaise with alternative Inclusion Education sites, for the candidates to take their exams there.

- If applicable; implementing alternative arrangements for the conducting of examinations and notifying the JCQ Centre Inspection Service of an alternative site arrangement by submitting the JCQ Alternative Site form online, using the Centre Admin Portal (CAP)

- The Centre to apply to awarding organisations for special consideration for those candidates that would be eligible (this will not apply if a candidate chooses not to sit the exam)

- Contact the awarding organisation/JCQ for advice to ensure all rules and regulations are followed.

- In some cases, the Centre may advise candidates to sit examination in an alternative series.

11. Centre may not be able to open for examinations
(Including in the event of the centre being unavailable for examinations owing to an unforeseen emergency)

Criteria for implementation of the plan

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

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- It remains the responsibility of the centre to prepare the learners, as usual, for exams.

- The decision on whether it is safe for a centre to open lies with the Head off Centre who is responsible for taking advice or following instructions from relevant local or national agencies.

- Special consideration is an option if all other agencies have been exhausted and candidates meet published criteria.

- The relevant awarding body should be contacted if additional support or guidance in the event of disruption to examinations is required.

- In the event the Head of Centre decides the centre cannot be opened for scheduled exams, the relevant awarding organisation will be informed as soon as possible, and any advice given will be acted on.

- The Centre to open for exams and exam candidates only, if possible.

- Liaise with Inclusion Education sites regarding holding examinations there.

- If applicable, implementing alternative arrangements for the conducting of examinations and notifying the JCQ Centre Inspection Service of an alternative site arrangement by submitting the JCQ Alternative Site form online, using the Centre Admin Portal (CAP).

- Special consideration may be used where candidates are unable to achieve a result due to one of the above factors and within the criteria.

12. Disruption in the distribution of examination papers

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Disruption to the distribution of examination papers to the centre in advance of examinations

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- In the first instance the Centre to seek advice from awarding organisation
- Awarding organisations to provide the Centre with electronic access to examinations papers via a secure external network.
- The Exams Officer would need to ensure that copies are received, made and stored under secure conditions and should have plans in place to facilitate such an action.
- Source alternative courier for the delivery of hardcopies.
- As a last resort, and in close collaboration with the centre and regulators, awarding organisations consider scheduling the examination on an alternative date.

13. Delay in collection arrangements for completed examination scripts

Criteria for implementation of the plan

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

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- Where examinations are part of the national 'yellow label' service or where awarding bodies arrange collection, centres should contact the relevant awarding bodies for advice and instructions and should not make their own arrangements for transportation unless told to do so by the awarding body.
- For any examinations where the Centre make their arrangements for transportation, the Centre should investigate alternative dispatch options that comply with requirements detailed in the JCQ Instructions for Conducting Examinations.
- The Centre to ensure secure storage of completed examinations papers until collection.
- The Centre to communicate with relevant awarding organisation at the outset to resolve the issue.

14. Assessment evidence is not available to be marked

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Large scale damage to or destruction of completed examination scripts/assessment evidence before it can be marked

Completed examination scripts/assessment evidence does not reach awarding organisations

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- The Centre to contact the awarding organisations who may generate candidate marks for affected assessments based on other appropriate evidence of candidate achievement as defined by the awarding organisations.
- Where marks cannot be generated by awarding organisations, candidates may need to retake affected assessment in a subsequent assessment series.
- The Centre ensures all internal assessments are recorded in the event they are required as evidence.

15. Centre unable to distribute results as normal or facilitate post results services
(Including in the event of the centre being unavailable on results day owing to an unforeseen emergency)

Criteria for implementation of the plan

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

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- The Centre to make arrangements to access it's results at an alternative site, in agreement with relevant awarding organisation.
- The Centre to make arrangements to coordinate access to post results services from an alternative site.
- The Centre to share facilities with other centres if this possible, in agreement with relevant awarding organisation.
- As a Centre with a small number of candidates, the Head of Centre will notify each learner with their results and will send postal confirmation of result, if appropriate to do so.

Facilitation of post results services:

- The Centre to make arrangements to make post results requests at an alternative location
- The Centre to contact the relevant awarding organisation if electronic post results requests are not possible.

Further guidance to inform procedures and implement contingency planning

DfE

Meeting digital and technology standards in schools and colleges

    Cyber security standards for schools and colleges

Ofqual

What schools and colleges and other centres should do if exams or other assessments are seriously disrupted

This document was updated in October 2023 to include Ofqual's final decisions on long-term resilience arrangements, and the Department for Education (DfE)'s guidance for education settings with confirmed reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC),

In addition to this guidance, you will need to be aware of your specific responsibilities for local and national school preparations and contingencies. You should also follow advice from relevant public health bodies.

Contingency planning

Awarding organisations are required to establish, maintain and comply with an up-to-date detailed written contingency plan, to mitigate any incident they have identified may occur. This includes having communication plans for external parties (Ofqual General Condition of Recognition A6). Schools and colleges should also be prepared for possible disruption to exams and assessments and make sure staff are aware of these plans.

Disruption to assessments or exams

In the absence of any instruction from the relevant awarding organisation, you should make sure that any exam or timetabled assessment takes place if it is possible to hold it. This may mean relocating to alternative premises. You should discuss alternative arrangements with your awarding organisation if:
- the exam or assessment cannot take place
- a student misses an exam or loses their assessment due to an emergency, or other event, outside of the student's control

You may also wish to see the JCQ's notice to centres on exam contingency plans and JCQ's notice on preparing for disruption to examinations in England, Wales and Northern Ireland for qualifications within its scope.

Steps you should take

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

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

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

After the exam
1. Consider whether any students' ability to take the assessment or demonstrate their level of attainment has been materially affected and, if so, apply to the relevant awarding organisation 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 are able to 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, 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 Department of Education in Northern Ireland, and the Welsh Government will inform the relevant government ministers as soon as it becomes apparent that there will be significant local or national disruption, and ensure that they are kept updated until the matter is resolved.
Awarding organisations will alert the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) and the Central Applications Office (CAO) about any impact of the disruption on their deadlines and liaise regarding student progression to further and higher education.
Awarding organisations will alert relevant professional bodies or employer groups if the impact of disruption particularly affects them.

Widespread national disruption to the taking of examinations or assessments

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

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

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

The DfE has updated its guidance 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

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

JCQ

15. CONTINGENCY PLANNING

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

15.2 In addition, awarding bodies have their own well-established contingency plans in place to respond to disruptions. It is important that exams officers who are facing disruption liaise directly with the relevant awarding body 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*.
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> 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.
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> 15.7 In the event of national disruption to a day of examinations in summer 2026, the awarding bodies will liaise with the qualification regulators and government departments to agree the most appropriate option for managing the impact. As a last resort, the affected examinations will be rescheduled. Although every effort would be taken to keep the impact to a minimum, it is possible that there could be more than one timetable date affected following the disruption, up to and including the last contingency day. Centres will be alerted if it is agreed to reschedule the examinations and the affected candidates will be expected to make themselves available in such circumstances. The decision regarding the rescheduling of examinations will always rest with the awarding body. The centre must conduct the examination on the scheduled date unless instructed to do otherwise by the awarding body.
>
> 15.8 Where candidates choose not to be available for the rescheduled examination(s) for reasons other than those traditionally covered by special consideration, they will not be eligible for enhanced grading Centres **must**, therefore, ensure candidates and parents are aware of the contingency arrangements so that they may take them into account when making their plans for the summer.

(JCQ guidance above taken directly from **Instructions for conducting examination**s 2025-2026 http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/ice---instructions-for-conducting-examinations, section 15, Contingency planning)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

GOV.UK

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

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

Wales

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

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

Northern Ireland

Exceptional closure days – Northern Ireland www.education-ni.gov.uk/articles/exceptional-closure-days
Checklist - exceptional closure of schools www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/checklist-exceptional-closure-schools

National Cyber Security Centre

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

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