Exam Contingency Plan

Shenley Brook End School

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Centre name	Shenley Brook End School
Centre number	52304
Date plan first created	17/11/2023
Current plan approved by	Jemma Malins
Current plan reviewed by	Gareth McCluskey
Date of review	08/10/2025
Date of next review	08/10/2026

Key staff involved in the plan

Role	**Name**
Head of centre	Gareth McCluskey
Senior leader(s)	Zara Peskett, Jackie Hearty, Sam Southwell, Andrew Nash, Claire Wright, Sam Arkinson, Amanda Green, Steve Livesey
Exams officer	Jemma Malins
SENCo (or equivalent role)	Sue Butler/Nicola Partridge
Other staff (if applicable)	Libby Booden

This plan is reviewed and updated annually to ensure that contingency planning at Shenley Brook End 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 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 Shenley Brook End School.

Alongside internal processes this plan is informed by the Ofqual **Exam system contingency plan: England, Wales and Northern Ireland** which provides guidance in thedocument '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 Shenley Brook End School 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 adminstration 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 escalated in accordance with the centre's written escalation process.

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 identified

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

Exams officer (EO) will produce "How to" documents / Exam assistant undertaking training to be able to do some of the EO taks in her absence.
EO prepares actions/tasks for 1/2 months ahead (on-going) shared with Director of Data and Data Services Manager and Exams and Data Assistant
Director of Data and/or Data Services Manager and Exams and Data Assitant trained (and on going) to carry out EO tasks
Head of Centre is exams trained
Liaise with EO in other school(s) within the Trust to share exams expertise and know-how
Also work with partner schools (through Milton Keynes Secondary Headteachers (MKSH) forum to request support, as is currently used between EOs from many schools

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:

No other criteria identified

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

Access external Ed Psych support for testing
Instruct the SENCo to delegate exam access requests and support to SEN teacher

Book supply if there is inadequate internal staff support for exams (Teaching Assistants, Curriculum Team Support Assistants, admin staff.

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:

No other criteria identified

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

SLT to nominate a 'deputy' to cover a role/task

Work shadowing; job rotation; staff development sessions; briefing sessions

Buddying up; networking with staff from a local centre; sharing expertise with a local centre

EO have input in training

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:

EO has a pool of invigilators who are trained before placed in the pool, there for sufficent to cover most evenualilities
If exceptional circumstances mean a shortage at particular time, CTSAs, Support Staff or Leadership Group members will invigilator, or contact schools, employ supply/agency staff alongside and supervised by trained

invigilators.

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:

In our wider contingency plan we outline the measures to take in the worse case scenarios and and how the centre would manage arrangements for exams to take place.

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:
  Theatre

  Gym

  Canteen

  SDL / Library

  Classrooms

  Meeting rooms

  The Hazeley Academy
- communicate with candidates (and where appropriate, parents/carers) any changes to the exam or assessment timetable or to the venue
- **Communication** details:
  Letters/emails home.
- 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:

No other criteria identified

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

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:

Contact IT support or electrician and if necessary NAA field support officer for assistance.

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

Contact IT support or electrician and if necessary NAA field support officer for assistance.

Contact EXAM BOARD to inform entries will be late.

Centre to ensure that EO has a laptop with full access to required sites/systems

EO to work from partner school

8. Emergency evacuation of the exam room (or centre lockdown)

Criteria for implementation of the plan

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

Other criteria:

No other criteria identified

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

- refer to and invoke its (exams) emergency evacuation policy/procedure in line with JCQ's 'Centre emergency evacuation procedure' (or its (exams) lockdown policy)
- contact the relevant awarding body as soon as possible and follow its instructions
- where accommodation is limited, prioritise candidates whose progression will be severely delayed if they do not take their exam or timetabled assessment when planned
- (after the exam) consider whether any candidate's ability to take the assessment or demonstrate their

level of attainment has been materially affected and, if so, apply for special consideration

Other centre actions:

Taking advice/instructions from relevant local or national agencies

Communicating with parents/carers and students and keeping them informed regarding solutions to the disruption

Applying for special consideration for candidates

Keeping question papers and exam materials secure

Keeping scripts secure

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:
  Candidates (and where appropriate, parents/carers) will be informed by Arbor letter/email or phonecall
- 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:

Seeking/following awarding body guidance/instructions

Invoking actions as detailed in DofE statutory guidance

Taking advice/instructions from relevant local or national agencies

Communicating with parents/carers and students and keeping them informed regarding solutions to the disruption

Posting information on the centre's website; updates on local radio etc.

Sourcing alternative venues/facilities

Applying for special consideration for candidates

Applying for alternative site arrangements

Applying for transferred candidate arrangements

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:

No other criteria identified

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:
  Candidates (and where appropriate, parents/carers) will be informed by Arbor/email
- 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:

Entering candidates for the next available exam series (where available).

11. Centre may not be able to open for examinations

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

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- Centre may not be able 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:

- 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: The Hazeley Academy
- **Communication** details: Candidates (and where appropriate, parents/carers) will be informed by Arbor/email
- 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:

Entering candidates for the next available exam series (where available).

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 criteria identified.

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:

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 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:

No other criteria 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:

Communicating with parents/carers and students and keeping them informed regarding solutions to the disruption.

15. Centre unable to distribute results as normal (including in the event of the centre being unavailable on results day owing to an unforseen 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 site**(s) details: The Hazeley Academy
- 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: Candidates (and where appropriate, parents/carers) will be informed by Arbor/email

Other centre actions:

Buddying up; networking with staff from a local centre; sharing expertise with a local centre

16. Any other cause of disruption to the exam process

Cause of disruption

No further causes identified

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

Not applicable.

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

N/A

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

"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

- 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 2025-2026section 15, **Contingency planning**

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

Further information may be found at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/exam-system-contingency-plan-england-wales-and-northern-ireland

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

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 weatherand 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