The Kimberley School
Exam Contingency Plan
2026/27

This plan is reviewed annually to ensure compliance with current regulations

Approved/reviewed by	
Andrew Park	
Date of next review	September 2027

Key staff involved in contingency planning

Role	Name(s)
Head of centre	Andrew Park
Exams officer line manager (Senior Leader)	Kirsty Andrews
Exams Manager / officer	Helen Bullock
SENCo	Ann Lawrence (SENCo)
SLT member(s)	Andrew Park, Danny Knapczyk, Jo Clemmet, Ann Lawrence, Jonathan Saunders, Kaylee Eatherington
Assessor(s)	Sarah Meakin
Access arrangement facilitator(s)	Sarah Meakin / Ann Lawrence

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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 The Kimberley School. 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* and the JCQ document **Preparing for disruption to examinations**.

This plan also confirms The Kimberley School's 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
- The centre's contingency planning **must** include succession arrangements for members of staff involved in examination and assessment administration

Contingency arrangements

In accordance with the regulations (GR 3.31-36), The Kimberley School **must** have in place, and at all times comply with, 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 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 Kimberley School **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 Kimberley School **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 **The Kimberley School** responds to 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.

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

Where the head of centre / senior leader may 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. Exam Manager / officer extended absence at 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 school planning calendar clearly identifies key dates for submitting entries and events. This is displayed on the Data Team's whiteboard and within the communal calendar on Outlook. Therefore, important dates will be highlighted for all staff in the event of the Exam Officer's absence and actioned. See Appendix for calendar of events and key tasks.
The MIS Team Leader has experience of covering for this role and is able to deal with routine examination administration activities.
The Deputy Head – Curriculum is trained to administer and apply examination protocols in line with JCQ guidelines. The Kimberley School would also seek assistance through experienced Exams Officers in partner schools within the Trust. Other members of the school data team would be directed to assist in exams administration.

- The MIS Team Leader has covered this role previously and would be able to cover the role in the absence of the Exams Officer. In addition, an Exam resilience pack is currently being compiled to ensure that key duties are able to be picked up by other support staff and ensure resilience of this key role.

2. SENCo or equivalent extended absence at 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*

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- The Learning Support team work closely together and are able to access all pupil profiles and EHCP's. The Exam Officer liaises with this team on a regular basis to ensure that access arrangements are noted on the MIS for all teaching staff to be aware of and for examinations/coursework. Therefore, it is not anticipated to be an issue if the Assistant SENCO was absent for a long period of time as the information would be readily available and is securely stored in the Academic Support Unit.
- As we carry out Mock Exams for all year groups access arrangements and additional support is identified at an early stage.
- Specialist assessor, Exams Officer and Lead LSA to work with SLT to identify students where applications for access arrangements may be required. The employment of outside professionals may be required.
- Assistant SENCo/Learning Mentors will follow procedures and practices within the SENCo remit. Exams Officer to ensure essential information is available to Assistant SENCo
- Exams Officer to ensure Exam Cycle, policies and procedures are up to date at all times
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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 manager / officer on time; resulting in pre-release information not being received

Final entry information not provided to the exams manager / 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

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- The Exam Officer will be able to judge the number of students per subject to enter for estimated entries and would check this with the Deputy Head – Curriculum. Therefore, this would not be an issue if the subject teacher was absent.
- Due to timetabling and planning it is unlikely that candidates would not be submitted for entry on time during a teacher absence as there is a large window of opportunity to collate this information. If the subject leader continued to be absent then the Year Performance Leader would be able to support the Exam Officer in identifying which candidates to submit. Hardcopy sign offs confirm those agreed for entry and these are triple checked against subject assessment sheets which are stored on the 'O' drive and can be accessed by all those in the ASU.
- Line managers will liaise with subject leaders during absence to ensure that all assessment deadlines are adhered to. Please refer to the Controlled Assessment/NEA Policy for more details.
- Senior Leadership Team to ensure departmental continuity by requesting an alternative member of the takes responsibility for the actions above if the absence is long term.
- Assistant Head - Progress leads on Academic progress to monitor and set internal deadlines for internal assessment marks.

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

- Currently we have 25 invigilators who are trained and employed through the school. However, if numbers were short we would contact a supply agency or seek assistance from other schools in the Trust.
- The Kimberley School would seek assistance of experienced invigilators from partner schools within EMET.
- If an invigilator was absent on the day the Exams officer would review the rooming schedule and see if there was additional capacity elsewhere, seek cover from invigilators who had not been scheduled that day or seek assistance from other schools in the Trust/supply agency.
- All invigilators have mobile/desk numbers of Exams Officer and can call from their mobile or the phone in the venue in the case of emergency. A bell system exists in the main exam halls to summon assistance in these circumstances.

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

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Exams manager / 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

- The Examinations Officer organises rooming for examinations before the Easter holidays ensuring sufficient time is available to identify appropriate rooms and plan appropriately
- Alternative venues in school to be made available for exams
- In the event of a room not being available at very short notice, sufficient staff will be made available to ensure the security of the examination is not compromised whilst alternative rooming is sourced.

- Sports Halls to be first options as alternative venues for emergency accommodation.

6. Cyber security

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Where a cyber-attack may compromise any aspect of delivery

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

(This will include the required arrangements for cyber security)
(GR 3.38) 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.

A record of completed cyber security training must be held on file for inspection. This record could take the form of a certificate, a paper checklist, a spreadsheet-based checklist or a Learning Management System (LMS) report.

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:

- where available, MFA must be used 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. Where MFA is not available on the centre's systems, an equivalent multi-layered security approach must be in place. For example, strong log-in controls, access and monitoring controls and secure storage so that exam-related data is protected in line with cyber security best practice.
- 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' multi-factor authentication (MFA) requirements.
i) reporting any actual or suspected compromise of an awarding body's online systems immediately to the relevant awarding body

Cyber attack

Should the centre suffer a serious cyber-attack that rendered the school ICT network inoperable; removed access to the internet; prevented the normal use of all school networked ICT equipment the school would seek to take the following action regarding examinations:

a. Contact with all awarding bodies – this would be undertaken by personal phone whilst school equipment is locked down
b. The school would still be able to access our MIS (Arbor) as this is a cloud-based product – again on private devices whilst school equipment is locked down. This would provide us with all the exam related information that we would need to continue.
c. Paper based exams would be largely unaffected and could continue to take place
d. Students who use laptops in exams (A relatively small number) – we would seek to wipe the exam laptop machines and rebuild with new Windows 11 so these could be used as normal for exams. If this was not possible in the time frame, we would seek assistance from other schools in our Trust. Alternatively, we would use reader scribes as necessary for a paper based exam completion; special consideration would also be requested if such a scenario arose.
e. Printing exam responses from laptops would be changed to a cable connection to a stand alone printer as the network would not be available.
f. Stand alone printers would still allow us to print accessible exam papers or indeed print on different coloured paper / enlarge etc
g. All efforts to be running as normal would be made, but Police / RPA investigation and the need to be certain that the ICT network and all hardware was free of malware etc might take some time and typically we would need to wait for approval before being allowed to reboot the network.

Online computer based exams

The centre would not be able to complete an online exam if a serious cyber attack rendered all school hardware inoperable including internet connectivity at very short notice prior to the commencement of the exam. It is unlikely, at short notice, that the centre would be able to wipe and reconfigure a large number of computers required for an online exam. Even if that were possible without the servers being back in action the internet could not function in school. In these circumstances the centre would take the following actions:

a. Immediately inform the awarding body and discuss options including whether the exam could be completed as paper based and whether or not student supervision could create some more time to put in place a solution
b. Seek assistance from a fellow Trust school to facilitate the exam being able to take place at an alternative centre – obviously with the permission of the awarding body.
c. Fellow Trust schools all work with existing awarding bodies and are therefore approved centres for exams.
d. Contact the Trust school and make all preparations: ICT technical; invigilation; candidate identification; transport; continued communication with the awarding body.
e. Inform candidates and parents / carers of the alternative arrangements
f. Submit Special consideration requests given the upheaval on candidates

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

Technical failure or power outage immediately prior to or during an on-screen examination

MIS system failure at results release time

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- In November 2025 the centre moved to Arbor – a cloud based MIS. This should continue to work even if the school's own network has been cyber-attacked.
- Marksheets are saved to the Exams Folder on the 'O' Drive, this will confirm which candidates are to be entered for an exam in the event of a MIS Failure and in the event of the 'O' Drive cannot be accessed, hardcopy sign offs from teaching staff will confirm entry of the candidates for the exam.

- Due to timetabling and planning it is unlikely that MIS failure during exam preparation would impact the department as there is a large window of exam preparation to ensure resilience. We now have a cloud based MIS so we would still be able to access it even if school hardware and network were rendered inoperable.
- If MIS should fail on results day and IT were unable to quickly resolve the issue, the Exams Officer could download candidate results slips direct from the relevant Exam board.
- Line manager of IT staff will be instructed to ensure that IT staff are in school pre, post and results day to ensure that any technical difficulties can be resolved quickly or items replaced.

(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 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

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- See Lockdown Policy and follow procedure stipulated within this
- SLT to manage all such incidents and priority to be given to exam cohorts
- The centre to communicate with parents, carers and students about the potential for disruption to teaching time and plans to address this.

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 the centre to prepare students, as usual, for examinations.
- In the case of unitised courses, the centre may advise candidates to sit examinations in an alternative series.
- The centre should have plans in place to facilitate alternative methods of learning.)

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

- LT to consult the Critical Incident Plan and implement appropriate actions
- The Examinations Officer will contact the relevant Awarding Bodies to discuss alternative arrangements and liaise with the SLT to take appropriate action
- Use alternative venues in agreement with relevant awarding organisations (share facilities with other centres or use other public buildings if possible)
- Apply to awarding organisations for special consideration for candidates

- Offer candidates an opportunity to sit any examinations missed at the next available series, if possible
- Parents and candidates to be kept informed of school actions to resolve the issue.

Centres' contingency plans should focus on options that enable candidates to take their examinations

- Consider the starting time of the examination for all candidates (see section 6 of the JCQ document Instructions for conducting examinations)
  Be aware of the rules for very late arrivals (see section 21 of the JCQ document Instructions for conducting examinations)
  Wherever possible, it is always in the best interest for candidates to sit the examination. However, special consideration is an option where a candidate is unable to sit the examination (see Chapter 4 of the JCQ document A guide to the special consideration process)
  The relevant awarding body should be contacted if additional support or guidance in the event of disruption to examinations is required

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

- The centres' contingency plans must focus on enabling candidates to take their examinations if the centre is at risk of not being able to open as normal

  (This could include implementing alternative arrangements for the conducting of examinations and notifying the JCQ Centre Inspection Service of an alternative site arrangement by submitting the JCQ Alternative Site form online, using the Centre Admin Portal (CAP).)
- The decision on whether it is safe for a centre to open lies with the head of centre who is responsible for taking advice or following instructions from relevant local or national agencies. (For further guidance see: What schools, colleges and other centres should do if exams or other assessments are seriously disrupted)
  Special consideration is an option if all other avenues have been exhausted and candidates meet the published criteria
  The relevant awarding body should be contacted if additional support or guidance in the event of disruption to examinations is required

- Exams Officer to liaise with Head of Centre and to inform the relevant awarding organisation of any such difficulties and put in place suitable alternative arrangements.
- The centre to communicate with awarding organisations to organise alternative delivery of papers if not already received.
- The centre to arrange with Exam Boards for alternative means of receiving papers either electronically or alternative courier.
- Examinations Officer to ensure papers are kept securely until needed.
- Alternative local venues to be sourced and agreed with the examination organisations.

Application for special consideration to awarding organisations if necessary

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

- The Exams Officer will contact the Awarding Bodies to notify them of any such incidents and act upon advice given
- Awarding organisations to provide centres with electronic access to examination papers via a secure external network. Centres 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. Awarding organisations would provide guidance on the conduct of examinations in such circumstances.
- As a last resort, and in close collaboration with centres and regulators, awarding organisations to consider scheduling of 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 collections, centres should contact the relevant awarding bodies for advice and instructions.
  For any examinations where centres make their own collection arrangements for transportation, centres should investigate alternative options that comply with the requirements detailed in the JCQ document Instructions for Conducting Examinations.
  Centres to ensure secure storage of completed examination scripts until as close to the collection time as possible – ensuring script packages are not left unattended at the collection area.
  The Examinations Officer will contact the Awarding Bodies to notify them of any such incidents and act upon advice given
- Scripts must be stored securely until such time transport is confirmed.
- Exams Officer to seek advice regarding alternative delivery and timings.

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 Examinations Officer will contact the Awarding Bodies to notify them of any such incidents and act upon advice given.
- The Head of Centre to communicate this immediately to the relevant awarding organisation(s) and subsequently to students and their parents or carers.
- The Exam Boards may generate candidate marks for the affected assessments based on other evidence, as defined by the Exam Boards and the regulators.
- It may be necessary for the candidates to retake the assessment at the next available opportunity.

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

- Distribution of results: Centre to make arrangements to access its results at an alternative site, in agreement with the relevant awarding organisation. Centres to make arrangements to coordinate access to post-results services from an alternative site. Centres to share facilities with other centres if this is possible, in agreement with the relevant awarding organisation.
- Facilitation of post-results services: Centre to make arrangements to make post-results requests at an alternative location. Centres to contact the relevant awarding organisation if electronic post-results requests are not possible
- Exams Officer in liaison with the Head of Centre to inform relevant awarding organisations immediately and seek advice regarding alternative options.
- Centres to contact awarding organisations about alternative options.
- Arrange to access results at an alternative site.

Inform staff, students and parents as soon as possible of the change in distribution of results.

Further guidance to inform procedures and implement contingency planning

DfE

Meeting digital and technology standards in schools and colleges
Cyber security: core standard

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 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 parents, carers and students 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 for special consideration.
- Advise students, where appropriate, of the opportunities to take their exam or assessment at a later date.
- Ensure that scripts are stored under secure conditions.
- Return scripts to awarding organisations in line with their instructions. Never make alternative arrangements for the transportation of completed exam scripts, unless told to do so by the awarding organisation.

Steps the awarding organisation should take

Exam planning

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

In the event of disruption

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

After the exam

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

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

If some of the students have been adversely affected by the disruption, you should ask the awarding organisation about applying for special consideration.
Decisions about special consideration, when it is or is not appropriate, is for each awarding organisation to make. Their decisions might be different for different qualifications and for different subjects.
See also JCQ's guidance on special considerations

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 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 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 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.

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 7th 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/bodies.

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

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

15.4 In the event that the head of centre decides the centre cannot be opened for scheduled examinations, the 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*:

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 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: Ensuring the service runs smoothly; Contingency planning www.gov.uk/government/publications/dispatch-of-exam-scripts-yellow-label-service

Wales

School closures: examinations www.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 for Principals when considering Opening or Closure of School - exceptional closure of schools www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/checklist-exceptional-closure-schools

National Cyber Security Centre

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

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