

Policy Name: CONTINGENCY PLAN (EXAMS)

Policy Type: Statutory

Issue Date: 16th January 2025

To be reviewed: Annually – 16th January 2026

Approved by: Board of Trustees

Policy Owner: Steph Brown

Glossary of abbreviations

JCQ	Joint Council of Qualifications
JCQ GR	Joint Council of Qualifications: General Regulations

1. Aims

- a. The contingency plan must cover all aspects of examination/assessment administration and delivery.
- b. By outlining actions/procedures to be invoked in case of disruption it is intended to mitigate the impact these disruptions have on exam processes.
- c. Alongside internal processes this plan is informed by
 - 1) The Ofqual Exam system contingency plan: England, Wales and Northern Ireland which provides guidance in the publication, 'What schools and colleges and other centres should do if exams or other assessments are seriously disrupted',
 - 2) The JCQ Joint Contingency Plan for the Examination System in England, Wales and Northern Ireland
 - 3) The JCQ document Preparing for disruption to examinations (Effective from 1 September 2024).
- d. This plan details how the Trust 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, a written contingency plan which covers all aspects of examination/assessment administration and delivery.

2. Legislation and Guidance

- a. The centre must have an up to date written contingency plan and the contingency plan must cover all aspects of examination/assessment administration and delivery.
- b. The plan must cover the following scenarios:
 - 1) 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
 - 2) The potential impact of other events such as flooding which could lead to all or parts of the centre becoming unavailable
 - 3) Potential issues with the centre's IT systems

- c. 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.
- d. 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
- e. However, a number of contacts can be provided to reduce the risk of this falling on one individual throughout the summer holidays.
- f. As part of the contingency plan the centre must identify an alternative site if examinations cannot be conducted at the registered address.
- g. The centre must ensure that candidates' work is backed-up and should consider the contingency of candidates' work being backed-up on two separate devices, including one off-site back-up. Appropriate security arrangements must be implemented which protect candidates' work in the event of IT system corruption and cyber-attacks. (JCQ GR 3.17-19)
- h. 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.

3. Possible causes of disruption to the exam process

- a. Exams officer extended absence at a critical stage of the exam cycle: Key tasks required in the management and administration of the exam cycle not undertaken including:
 - 1) 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
 - 2) 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
 - 3) Pre-exams
 - awarding bodies not being informed of early/estimated entries which prompts release of early information required by teaching staff
 - 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

-
- 4) 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
 - 5) Results and post-results
 - access to examination results affecting the distribution of results to candidates
 - the facilitation of post-results services
 - 6) Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above the centre will utilise current Administration staff in order to support the Data Manager to carry out the Exams Officer role.
- b. SENCo (or equivalent role) extended absence at a critical stage of the exam cycle; key tasks required in the management and administration of the access arrangements process within the exam cycle not undertaken including:
- 1) 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
 - 2) 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
 - 3) Exam time
 - access arrangement candidate support not arranged for exam rooms
 - 4) Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above the centre will utilise the remaining members of the SENCo Team to ensure responsibilities are carried out.
- c. Teaching staff extended absence at a critical stage of the exam cycle criteria for implementation of the plan. Key tasks not undertaken including:
- 1) Early/estimated entry information not provided to the exams officer on time; resulting in pre-release information not being received
 - 2) 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
 - 3) Non-examination assessment tasks (including controlled assessment and coursework) not set/issued/taken by candidates as scheduled

- 4) 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
 - 5) Internal assessment marks and candidates' work not provided to meet awarding body submission deadlines
 - 6) Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above the centre will utilise other teaching staff to ensure teaching responsibilities are met.
- d. Invigilators - lack of appropriately trained invigilators or invigilator absence; early/estimated entry information not provided to the exams officer on time; resulting in pre-release information not being received
- 1) Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above the centre will utilise Administration staff to carry out Invigilator responsibilities.
- e. Exam rooms - lack of appropriate rooms or main venue(s) unavailable at short notice; exams officer unable to identify sufficient/appropriate rooms during exams timetable planning
- 1) 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: To be confirmed
 - communicate with candidates (and where appropriate, parents/carers) any changes to the exam or assessment timetable or to the venue
 - Parents / Guardians will receive communication through the school communications software, via the school website or through the school social media platforms
 - 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
- f. Cyber-attack - Where a cyber-attack may compromise any aspect of delivery, centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption by:
- 1) Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above, will be undertaken through Face to Face delivery of messages, with minimal cyber usage, where appropriate.

- g. Failure of IT systems including: IT system corruption affecting candidates' work; or MIS/IT system failure at final entry deadline; MIS/IT system failure during exams preparation; MIS/IT system failure at results release time
 - 1) Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above, the centre will routinely check and test for IT systems failures and compliance.
- h. Emergency evacuation of the exam room (or centre lockdown); 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
 - 1) 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
- i. Disruption of teaching time in the weeks before an exam - centre closed for an extended period: the criteria for implementation of the plan will be:
 - 1) 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
 - Parents / Guardians will receive communication through the school communications software, via the school website or through the school social media platforms
 - 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
- j. Candidates may not be able to take examinations - centre remains open
 - 1) 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
- Parents / Guardians will receive communication through the school communications software, via the school website or through the school social media platforms.
- 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

k. Centre may not be able to open as normal during the examination period (including in the event of the centre being unavailable for examinations owing to an unforeseen emergency)

1) 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
- Parents / Guardians will receive communication through the school communications software, via the school website or through the school social media platforms
- 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

l. Disruption in the distribution of examination papers

1) 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 centre's 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

- m. Delay in collection arrangements for completed examination scripts
- 1) 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
- n. Assessment evidence is not available to be marked - 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
- 1) 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
- o. Centre unable to distribute results as normal (including in the event of the centre being unavailable on results day owing to an unforeseen emergency) or facilitate post-results services
- 1) 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: To be confirmed
 - make arrangements to make post-results requests at an alternative location
 - contact the relevant awarding body if electronic post-results requests are not possible
 - inform candidates of any alternative arrangements in place for the distribution of results and the facilitation of post-results services
 - Parents / Guardians will receive communication through the school communications software, via the school website or through the school social media platforms.
- p. Any other cause of disruption to the exam process: No further causes identified