



*Saint Joseph's*  
CATHOLIC SCHOOL

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# CONTINGENCY PLAN

## 2025/26

This plan is reviewed annually to ensure compliance with current regulations.

Approved/reviewed by	
Date of next review	

## Key staff involved in the plan

Role	Name(s)
Head of centre	Mr Higgins
Senior leader(s)	Mr Rooney, Mr Ford
Exams officer	Mrs Oakley
SENCo (or equivalent role)	Mrs Maher & Mrs Jones

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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 St Joseph's 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 centers should do if exams or other assessments are seriously disrupted*, the **JCQ Joint Contingency Plan** for the Examination System in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and the JCQ document **Preparing for disruption to examinations**

This plan also confirms St Joseph's Catholic School compliance with JCQ's **General Regulations for Approved Centres** (GR 5.3) that the centre has in place for inspection that must be reviewed and updated annually by a member of the senior leadership team and communicated within the centre:

- a contingency plan which covers all aspects of examination/assessment administration and delivery

## Contingency arrangements

In accordance with the regulations (GR 3.17-19), St Joseph's Catholic School **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.

St Joseph's Catholic 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.

St Joseph's Catholic 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 St Joseph's Catholic School 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.

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

In the event of the absence of the head of centre or the member of senior leadership with oversight of examination and assessment administration, responsibility for implementing JCQ regulations and requirements relating to during exam time will be escalated to Mr Richard Rooney & Mr Oliver Ford Deputy Head and Assistant Head

The centre also has in place a member of the senior leadership team who will provide support and guidance to the examinations officer and ensure that the integrity and security of examinations and assessments is maintained throughout an examination series.

To support understanding of the regulations and requirements, sections of relevant JCQ documents will be specifically referenced including:

- General Regulations for Approved Centres (section 5)
- Instructions for conducting examinations (16-31)
- Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments (8)
- A guide to the special consideration process (2-7)

## 1. Possible causes of disruption to the exam process

### **Exam officer extended absence (non-exam day)**

#### Action

- Normal school absence policy would be followed with line manager & headteachers PA informed of absence.
- EO will advise of any critical activities and any mitigation action can be taken dependent on any imminent priority or deadline tasks.

#### Mitigation

- The EO role is part of the school Support team the Operations & Strategic Director will take over in any event of unforeseen absence/ unavailability. The O&SD would therefore review the situation and deputise accordingly, however the EO has documented key activities and deadlines within in this document which should be used if absence is sustained.
- All members of the invigilating team also receive regular exam process training so may be able to take on some responsibilities of the EO in an emergency. Further support and guidance can also be gained from EO at Wyvern College St. Edmunds or the Exam Support Network

### **Exam officer absence (examination day)**

#### Action

- Absence should be reported to O&SD as soon as practically possible. The EO has mobile numbers for O&SD and Head of Centre for emergencies.
- If EO does not arrive at school 1 hour before expected start time the EO should be treated as absent. The following will need to take place and O&SD will access exam papers and work with invigilators to get exam underway.
  - Exam papers to be retrieved from storage following JCQ regulations by alternative key holder.
  - Exam box to be taken out of exam cupboard (prepared rooming plan with access arrangements indicated, desk labels etc. will already be in the box)
  - IT Manager to support setting up computers / any ICT arrangement.
  - Extra site staff as necessary to assist setting up the examination room.
  - Exam papers only to be opened when another invigilator is in the examination room (before exam papers are opened ensure 2<sup>nd</sup> person checks date and session)
  - Lead invigilator will start the exam as normal.
  - A member of staff (O&SD, Deputy head (academic) or Head Teachers PA) will be on call (via Walkie Talkie's) should there be any support required in the exam room.
  - Once the exam has been finished the invigilator will return the exam papers to O&SD who will lock in secure storage
  - Exam papers should be dispatched next day via Yellow Label service to Awarding Bodies along with completed attendance register.
  - Exam boxes for next day's exam should be prepared and check should be made that examination papers are in safe.
  - As the school only has one EO it would be recommended that support and advise is requested from neighbouring school (Wyvern St. Edmunds) if unplanned absence on critical Exam Day to ensure no impact on students.

## Mitigation

- The EO role is part of the school Support team the Operations & Strategic Director will take over in any event of unforeseen absence/ unavailability. The O&SD would therefore review the situation and deputise accordingly, however the EO has documented key activities and deadlines within in this document which should be used if absence is sustained.
- All members of the invigilating team also receive regular exam process training so may be able to take on some responsibilities of the EO in an emergency. Further support and guidance can also be gained from EO at Wyvern St. Edmunds or the Exam Support Network
- Exam Boxes are prepared the night before an exam.

## **Exam officer absence (Results and post-results day)**

### Action

- Normal school absence policy would be followed with line manager & headteachers PA informed of absence.
- EO will advise of any critical activities and any mitigation action can be taken dependent on any imminent priority or deadline tasks.
- A member of SLT with access to A2C, will download the results into SIMS.
- The same staff member will upload into SIMS Exams
- The results will then be printed off, in house order.
- Students can then collect and sign for results, after 9.30 and until the advertised time.
- Post Results forms will be ready to complete and should be issued, as advised by Heads of Dept and SLT to students after results have been checked. Ensuring that all signatures are received.
- Ensure that candidates are all aware of deadlines and costs.

### Mitigation

- The school has 2 trained EO's and an SLT member, who can step in to this role should the need arise.
- Envelopes and forms are printed and ready prior to results day.
- Tests on systems are completed by EO and ICT manager, prior to results day.

## 2. SENCo (or equivalent role) extended absence at a critical stage of the exam cycle

### Action

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.

### Mitigation

- Ensuring deadlines are set and communicated to staff in advance, always building in some time contingency to allow for issues. Good and clear communications both with SLT and EO.
- Early booking with assessor for testing so that paperwork is in place ahead of exams and students are allocated correct access arrangement.
- Exam rooms access arrangements are checked and logged by SENCo, EO and invigilator.
- SENCO to complete EAA training early each year.

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

### Action

- Normal school absence policy would be followed with line manager & Head Teachers PA informed of absence.
- Head Teachers PA would then inform EO/ Line manager to discuss any key activities/ deadlines which are required. Cover for tasks would be allocated if tasks deemed critical.

### Mitigation

- Ensuring deadlines are set and communicated to staff in advance, always building in some time contingency to allow for issues. Good and clear communications both with teaching staff and HODs is key. NEA/Coursework tasks have been set issued and taken by candidates as scheduled. EO will submit marks and upload where necessary. All keys' dates on school calendar in advance.
- When issues do occur EO to speak to relevant Awarding Body and explain the situation, for example it may be better to enter student by entry date but withdraw at later date with no charge than to incur late entry penalties. The action taken should be communicated to O&SD & line manager of absent staff member.

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

##### Action

- EO to check if trained support staff can invigilate, call other invigilators and in an emergency EO can invigilate in the room. Exam cannot start until correct ratios of staff to students in the exam room.

##### Mitigation

- Invigilator absence is covered in Exam training with all Invigilators provided with EO mobile telephone number.
- Have available list of invigilators who are happy to be called in at short notice.
- Ensure the Invigilation team has mixed skills, e.g. not all invigilators want to lead an exam in the hall
- Regular training of invigilators to ensure knowledge and competency levels maintained.

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

##### Action

- Exams officer to have a spare room in place, in case of need.
- Meet with SLT with regards to Insufficient rooms available on peak exam days
- Main exam venues unavailable due to an unexpected incident at exam time, use our contingency plan at alternative site.

##### Mitigation

- Exam Officer arrives early onsite on day of exams and checks Exam Room

Alternatives site details: **Elizabeth Hall, Exeter Street, Salisbury, St Osmund's Catholic Primary School, Exeter Street, Salisbury, SP1 2SG**

## 6. Cyber security

### Actions

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

- ensuring that all members of centre staff who access awarding bodies' online systems undertake annual cyber security training...
- ... The training must include:
  - the importance of creating strong, unique passwords for all accounts.
  - keeping all account details strictly confidential.
  - the critical role of Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) in protecting against unauthorised access.
  - how to properly set up and use MFA for both centre and awarding bodies' systems.
  - an awareness of all types of social engineering/phishing attempts; ...
  - the importance of staff quickly reporting any suspicious activity, events, incidents and encouraging a safe and supportive reporting culture.
- Certificates of completed staff cyber training must be downloaded and held on file for inspection. The NCSC training resource provides a certificate of completion of cyber training.
- 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.
- implementing and enforcing robust security measures, including:
  - mandatory MFA for all accounts and systems containing exam-related information, including those that interface between awarding body and centre systems, to enhance security and protect sensitive data.
  - regularly reviewing and updating security settings to align with current best practices.
  - updating any passwords that may have been exposed.
  - setting up secure account recovery options
  - reviewing and managing connected applications
  - monitoring accounts and regularly reviewing account access, including removing access when no longer required
- ensuring authorised members of staff securely access awarding bodies' online systems in line with awarding body regulations regarding cyber security and the JCQ document *Guidance for centres on cyber security*.
- Authorised staff will have access, where necessary, to a device which complies with awarding bodies' MFA requirements.
- reporting any actual or suspected compromise of an awarding body's online systems immediately to the relevant awarding body

### Mitigation

- All school accounts are password protected.
- There is a filter system in place.
- A firewall and anti-virus systems are in place.
- A back up of the server is held off site.
- Account restrictions are made so only specific accounts have full access to the server.
- Microsoft 365 has a 30 day back up which can be retrieved.
- All staff to undergo required training.

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## 7. Failure of IT systems

### Action

- Any ICT issue to be raised to the network manager immediately.
- Where the issue is impacting an exam action would be taken immediately to resolve the issue, so the student impacted was minimised. The action taken will be in line with JCQ rules and if necessary, a Special Consideration application would be made to the Awarding Body

### Mitigation

- The school endeavours to minimise any ICT disruption via resilient design and preventative maintenance. The network manager also ensures we are up to date with SIMS maintenance patches and is on call when exam results are being downloaded.
- Students who use laptops and computers during exams are reminded at the beginning of an exam to save work. This will help mitigate any issues should an issue occur.
- Students who use laptops are always positioned close to a plug socket to reduce the risk of battery failure of the laptop.  
(This will include the security arrangements put in place which protect candidates' work)

(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)

### Action

- stop the candidates from writing.
- collect the attendance register (in order to ensure all candidates are present) and evacuate the examination room in line with the instructions given by the appropriate authority.
- advise candidates to leave all question papers and scripts in the examination room.

Candidates must be advised to close their answer booklet.

- ensure the candidates leave the room in silence.
- ensure candidates are supervised as closely as possible while they are out of the examination room so that there is no discussion about the examination.
- make a note of the time of the interruption and how long it lasted.
- allow the candidates the remainder of the working time set for the examination once.

It resumes.

- if there are only a few candidates, consider the possibility of taking the candidates. (With question papers and scripts) to another place to finish the examination.

(JCQ Instructions for conducting examinations)

25.4 A full report of the incident must be produced and retained on file, if required by an awarding body.

25.5 Any breach of question paper security or malpractice must be reported to the awarding body **immediately**.

25.6 As each incident will be different, advice can be sought from the relevant awarding body as soon as it is safe to do so.

25.7 An online application for special consideration must be submitted to the relevant awarding body where candidates have been disadvantaged.

Mitigation

- These instructions will be read to students at the exam briefings and will be included the exam pack.
- Staff will be with students in lines should students need to evacuate to ensure the integrity of the exam.
- Special consideration guidelines are printed off and filed ready for any possible necessity.

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

Action

- Normal school absence policy would be followed with line manager & Head Teachers PA informed of absence.
- Head Teachers PA would then inform EO/ Line manager to discuss any key activities/ deadlines which are required. Cover for tasks would be allocated if tasks deemed critical.
- *HODs to ensure that work is available for students via electronic sources, web. Email, Teams, Class Charts, directing to BBC bitesize.*
- *Communications will also be sent out to students and parents when the incident is identified and at regular intervals*

*Teaching time lost due to severe weather conditions*

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/teaching-time-lost-due-to-severe-weather-conditions>

Mitigation

Mitigation

- Ensuring deadlines are set and communicated to staff in advance, always building in some time contingency to allow for issues. Good and clear communications both with teaching staff and HODs is key. NEA/Coursework tasks have been set issued and taken by candidates as scheduled. EO will submit marks and upload where necessary. All keys' dates on school calendar in advance.
- When issues do occur EO to speak to relevant Awarding Body and explain the situation, for example it may be better to enter student by entry date but withdraw at later date with no charge than to incur late entry penalties. The action taken should be communicated to O&SD & line manager of absent staff member.
- *Teachers to plan ahead and communicate to students in advance if disruption is planned and foreseen e.g. strike action or weather related.*

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

### Action

- Response is dependent on the type of issue; the action is on the student (or appropriate attendance is known).
- JCQ document Instructions for conducting examinations)
- Consider moving the starting time of the examination for all candidates (see section 6.2 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.

### Mitigation

- If a candidate can sit the exam but cannot attend the Centre due to a crisis, appropriate communication with the relevant Awarding Bodies would be undertaken by the EO and alternative options would be explored (home, hospital, alternative Centre etc.)
- Appropriate use of Special Consideration policies would be applied should the candidate/candidates be unable to attend due to unforeseen circumstances and where alternative arrangements could not be made or are not agreed by the Awarding Body

## 11. Centre may not be able to open for examinations.

### Actions

- 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.
- 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.
- EO/SLT/RECEPTION to be made aware of issue at site and need to relocate to alternative site and submit alternative site form online via CAP.
- EO to contact Invigilators.
- The Awarding Body should be notified immediately if the school cannot open or if it is not safe for students and staff to travel.
- Follow Awarding Body instructions on how to proceed and for additional support and guidance.
- Consider the security of the exam if an alternative site is used.
- Staff involved in exams (including invigilators) would be contacted by email, telephone, and text.

### Mitigation

- Officer contacts SLT as early as possible to discuss contingency plan impact on exams i.e., will Exams the school open for exam purposes only
- If possible, the Exams Officer arrives to co-ordinate alternative arrangements.
- Alternatives site details:

**St Osmund's Catholic Primary School, Exeter Street, Salisbury, SP1 2SG.**

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

<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>

## 12. Disruption in the distribution of examination papers

### Action

- 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. (Only in the case of nationwide disruption)
- EO to communicate with the Awarding Body in advance of exams period if papers not received.
- EO can download Exam Papers from secure website (a short time before exam due to start) and print exam papers if dispatches not received. This may delay the start of the exam, but it should be noted on exam report and Awarding Body informed if exam starts late.
- Students should be seated in Exam room whilst Exam Papers are being copied & printed if a delay to the start of the exam.
- Papers should be checked before being given to student to ensure that there are no printing / photocopying issues which could impact student performance.
- A log will be kept for any missed/refused collections.

### Mitigation

- EO check the exam papers as they are received so an issue with paper arrivals should be known in advance and the Awarding Body can then best advice on action.

## 13. Delay in collection arrangements for completed examination scripts.

### Action

- 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 examinations where centres make their own collection arrangements, they should investigate alternative options that comply with 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.
- All scripts are returned using the designated dispatch methods prescribed by the Awarding Body concerned. Where this becomes unavailable or inappropriate, the Awarding Body will be contacted to discuss suitable alternatives.
- EO to contact designated dispatch service when one collection is missed.
- EO will complete automated report which comes from Awarding Body requesting update on status completed exam scripts when there is a delay in dispatch.
- Dispatch of exam scripts guide: Ensuring the service runs smoothly; Contingency planning <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dispatch-of-exam-scripts-yellow-label-service>

#### Mitigation

- EO to escalate missed collections to DfE yellow label service, so log is kept of missed collections and receive update on when next collection planned.

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

#### Action

- In the event of large-scale damage or destruction of completed examination scripts/assessment evidence before it can be marked, the Exam Officer would notify the Awarding Body immediately for advice and further instructions.
- Student marks would be submitted based on appropriate evidence and candidates would be given the opportunity to retake if possible.
- Where any work is not available the teacher or HOD would advise the EO. The EO would contact the Awarding Body to discuss appropriate action. The student would be informed where appropriate.
- awarding organisations to generate candidate marks for affected assessments based on other appropriate evidence of candidate achievement as defined by the awarding organisations.
- where marks cannot be generated by awarding organisations candidates may need to retake affected assessment in a subsequent assessment series

#### Mitigation

- Staff and students are informed of the need to ensure all work is stored securely (this includes electronic) ensuring where appropriate backup copies are taken.

## 15. Centre unable to distribute results as normal or facilitate post results services

### Action

- If due to a timing delay (including technical impact) (i.e., results are not available).
- Communication sent via email to student explaining delay in results and when will be available for collection.
- EO/ SLT member on door at original collection time for results to give information.
- Poster put on school doors to explain issue and new arrangement for collection.
- Information on school website.

### If due to a school staffing

- Follow "absence of staff member with Exam Responsibilities" disruption outlined in this document.

### If due to an issue with school premise

- Follow "lack of appropriate rooms or main venues unavailable at short notice" disruption outline in this document. Also consider whether communication can be sent electronically or outside the venue.
- As results days also have local media presence this should be considered when deciding on appropriate action

### Mitigation

- SLT and site staff are aware in advance of the dates students will be collecting results – contact to be made with EO if there were a known issue with school which would affect access.
- EO and other staff come into school for pre-results so can also check the access for students.
- EO has access to download the results remotely.
- Alternative site(s) details:  
**Elizabeth Hall, Exeter Street, Salisbury / St Osmund's Catholic Primary School, Exeter Street, Salisbury, SP1 2SG**

## Further guidance to inform procedures and implement contingency planning.

### DfE

#### Meeting digital and technology standards in schools and colleges

[Cyber security standards for schools and colleges](#)

### Ofqual

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

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

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

#### Contingency planning

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

#### Disruption to assessments or exams

In the absence of any instruction from the relevant awarding organisation, you should make sure that any exam or timetabled assessment takes place if it is possible to hold it. This may mean relocating to alternative premises. You should discuss alternative arrangements with your awarding organisation if:

- the exam or assessment cannot take place
- a student misses an exam or loses their assessment due to an emergency, or other event, outside of the student's control

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

#### Steps you should take

##### Exam planning

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

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

##### In the event of disruption

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

### **After the exam**

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

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

#### **Exam planning**

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

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

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

### **After the exam**

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

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

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

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

See also [JCQ's guidance on special consideration](#)

#### **Wider communications**

The regulators, [Ofqual](#) in England, [Qualifications Wales](#) in Wales and [CCEA Regulation](#) in Northern Ireland, will share timely and accurate information, as required, with awarding organisations, government departments and other stakeholders.

The [DfE in England](#), the [Department of Education in Northern Ireland](#), and the [Welsh Government](#) will inform the relevant government ministers as soon as it becomes apparent that there will be significant local or national disruption, and ensure that they are kept updated until the matter is resolved.

Awarding organisations will alert the [Universities and Colleges Admissions Service \(UCAS\)](#) and the [Central Applications Office \(CAO\)](#) about any impact of the disruption on their deadlines and liaise regarding student progression to further and higher education.

Awarding organisations will alert relevant professional bodies or employer groups if the impact of disruption particularly affects them.

#### **Widespread national disruption to the taking of examinations or assessments**

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

In September 2023, Ofqual and the DfE published [joint consultation decisions on long-term resilience arrangements](#). As in 2023, Ofqual has provided [guidance on collecting evidence of student performance to ensure resilience in the qualifications system](#) for students entering GCSEs, AS and A levels, the Advanced Extension Award and Project qualifications. For VTQs and other qualifications used alongside or instead of GCSEs, AS and A levels,

awarding organisations will provide guidance where needed and will contact schools and colleges with more information.

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

The DfE has updated its guidance on [handling strike action in schools](#) in England in light of the industrial action in 2023. The guidance recommends schools should prioritise the running of examinations and assessments on any strike days and should review their contingency plans to make this happen. Schools, colleges and other exam centres must speak to the relevant awarding organisations if they are expecting any disruption that might affect the sitting of exams and assessments.

The DfE has also issued [guidance for education settings with confirmed reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete \(RAAC\)](#) in their buildings. It includes the need for contingencies for possible disruption to examinations and links to the existing emergency planning guidance.

We will update this page as necessary, with any further relevant links, should national disruption occur.

### General contingency guidance

- [emergency planning and response for education, childcare and children's social care settings](#) from the DfE in England
- [handling strike action in schools](#) from the DfE in England
- [school organisation: local-authority-maintained schools](#) from the DfE in England
- [reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete: guidance for education settings with confirmed RAAC](#) from the DfE in England
- [exceptional closure days: Northern Ireland](#) from the Department of Education in Northern Ireland
- [checklist - exceptional closure of schools](#) from the Department of Education in Northern Ireland
- [school terms and school closures](#) from NI Direct
- [opening schools, childcare and play settings in extreme bad weather and extreme hot weather](#) - guidance for schools from the Welsh Government
- [emergency planning and response guidance for education and childcare settings](#)- guidance for schools and education settings from the Welsh Government
- [protective security and preparedness for education settings](#) from the DfE
- [police guidance](#) from National Counter Terrorism Security Office and partners on preparing for threats
- [cyber security guidance for schools and colleges](#) from the National Cyber Security Centre

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

## JCQ

### 15. CONTINGENCY PLANNING

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

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

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

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

15.4 **If** the head of centre decides the centre cannot be opened for scheduled examinations, the centre's contingency plan must be invoked, utilising the centre's alternative site(s) and the relevant awarding bodies must be informed as soon as possible. Awarding bodies will be able to offer advice regarding the alternative

arrangements for conducting examinations that may be available and the options for candidates who have not been able to take scheduled examinations.

15.5 The awarding bodies will designate 'contingency sessions' for examinations, summer 2026. This is consistent with the qualification regulators' document *Exam system contingency plan: England, Wales and Northern Ireland*.

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 examinations** 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](http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/other-documents)

JCQ Preparing for disruption to examinations [www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations/](http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations/)

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

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

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

Instructions for conducting examinations [www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/ice---instructions-for-conducting-examinations](http://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](http://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/](http://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/](http://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](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/emergency-planning-and-response-for-education-childcare-and-childrens-social-care-settings)

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

## Wales

School closures: examinations [gov.wales/school-closures-examinations](http://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](http://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](http://www.education-ni.gov.uk/articles/exceptional-closure-days)  
Checklist - exceptional closure of schools [www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/checklist-exceptional-closure-schools](http://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/checklist-exceptional-closure-schools)

## **National Cyber Security Centre**

Cyber Security for Schools [www.ncsc.gov.uk/section/education-skills/cyber-security-schools](http://www.ncsc.gov.uk/section/education-skills/cyber-security-schools)

Cyber security training for school staff [www.ncsc.gov.uk/information/cyber-security-training-schools](http://www.ncsc.gov.uk/information/cyber-security-training-schools)