

# EXAM CONTINGENCY PLAN

## 2023/24

This plan is reviewed annually to ensure compliance with current regulations

Approved/reviewed by	
Kirsty Saull	
Date of next review	November 2024

## Key staff involved in the plan

Role	Name(s)
Head of centre	<b>Jonathan Smart (Headteacher)</b>
Exams officer line manager (Senior leader)	<b>Kirsty Saul (Assistant Headteacher)</b>
Exams officer	<b>Sally Edwards</b>
Exams assistant	<b>Becky Homersham</b>
ALS lead/SENCo	<b>Fiona Kane (KS4 SENCo)/Tilly Shale(KS3 SENCo)</b>
Senior leader(s)	<b>Heads of Faculty: Matthew Taylor (Maths); Lucy Gotham (English); Duncan King (Science); Hannah Newton (CARTS); Hannah Williams (MFL); Tom Kane (Humanities); Michelle Woodward (PE); Harkit Sandhu (Business and Computing)</b>

## Contents

Key staff involved in the plan.....	2
Purpose of the plan .....	4
National Centre Number Register and other information requirements .....	4
Possible causes of disruption to the exam process .....	4
1. Exam officer extended absence at a critical stage of the exam cycle.....	4
2. ALS lead/SENCo extended absence at a critical stage of the exam cycle.....	5
3. Teaching staff extended absence at a critical stage of the exam cycle.....	6
4. Invigilators - lack of appropriately trained invigilators or invigilator absence.....	6
5. Exam rooms - lack of appropriate rooms or main venues unavailable at short notice.....	7
6. Cyber-attack .....	7
7. Failure of IT systems.....	7
8. Emergency evacuation of the exam room (or centre lockdown) .....	8
9. Disruption of teaching time in the weeks before an exam – centre closed for an extended period .....	8
10. Candidates may not be able to take examinations - centre remains open.....	8
11. Centre may not be able to open as normal during the examination period .....	8
12. Disruption in the distribution of examination papers .....	9
13. Disruption to transporting completed examination scripts.....	9
14. Assessment evidence is not available to be marked .....	9
15. Centre unable to distribute results as normal or facilitate post results services.....	10
Further guidance to inform procedures and implement contingency planning .....	11
DfE .....	11
Ofqual .....	11
JCQ.....	13
GOV.UK .....	14
Wales .....	14
Northern Ireland .....	14
National Cyber Security Centre .....	14

## Purpose of the plan

This plan examines potential risks and issues that could cause disruption to the exams process at King Alfred's. By outlining actions/procedures to be invoked in case of disruption it is intended to mitigate the impact these disruptions have on our exam process.

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 publication *What schools and colleges and other centres should do if exams or other assessments are seriously disrupted* and the **JCQ Joint Contingency Plan** for the Examination System in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and the JCQ document **Preparing for disruption to examinations** (Effective from 1 September 2023).

This plan also confirms King Alfred's compliance with JCQ's **General Regulations for Approved Centres** (section 5.3) that the centre has in place:

- 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, or on results day, owing to an unforeseen emergency. The potential impact of a cyber-attack should also be considered.

The arrangements covered in this contingency plan relate to the following centres:

- King Alfred's Academy

National Centre Number Register and other information requirements

The head of centre will also ensure that King Alfred's has a contingency to enable the prompt handling of urgent issues only, responds to the awarding bodies' request for information regarding the contact details of a senior member of staff (which might include a personal mobile number and/or email address). This will ensure that any urgent matters which might adversely affect candidates which arise outside of term time, and which potentially put qualification awards at risk, can be addressed by awarding bodies with the support of that member of staff. Heads of centre should ensure that this member of staff has the necessary authority to mobilise resources to provide this support, which might include resolving issues within the centre itself.

## Possible causes of disruption to the exam process

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

#### Criteria for implementation of the plan

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

#### *Planning*

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

#### *Entries*

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

#### *Pre-exams*

- *invigilators not trained or updated on changes to instructions for conducting exams*
- *exam timetabling, rooming allocation; and invigilation schedules not prepared*
- *candidates not briefed on exam timetables and awarding body information for candidates*

- *confidential exam/assessment materials and candidates' work not stored under required secure conditions*
- *internal assessment marks and samples of candidates' work not submitted to awarding bodies/external moderators*

#### *Exam time*

- *exams/assessments not taken under the conditions prescribed by awarding bodies*
- *required reports/requests not submitted to awarding bodies during exam/assessment periods, for example very late arrival, suspected malpractice, special consideration*
- *candidates' scripts not dispatched as required for marking to awarding bodies*

#### *Results and post-results*

- *access to examination results affecting the distribution of results to candidates*
- *the facilitation of the post-results services*

#### Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- Information and access will be made readily available to the Examinations Assistant and the Leadership team member linked to examinations in light of the absence of the Examinations Officer so that these tasks may be undertaken by them.
- Additionally, another Examinations Officer within the Vale Academy Trust will be consulted and asked to provide assistance.
- The Examinations Assistant and the Leadership Team member linked to examinations are to be kept abreast of key information, key policies, plans and decisions as they are made by the Examinations Officer so that they are able to step in and continue on if and when necessary (these will also be documented).
- Contact will be made with all exam boards to ensure that deadlines etc. are clear and they are aware the centre may need additional advice, guidance and support in meeting these due to the absence of the Examinations Officer if and when necessary.
- If an insufficient number of invigilators have been recruited, Leadership Team members will be trained to step in as invigilators (and further recruitment of invigilators will be made a top priority)

*We will also refer to the following for further guidance as and when necessary:*

- ▶ The Key Tasks section of The Exams Office website.
- ▶ The Examinations Oracle and Centre Support Service of the Examination Officers Association.
- ▶ The Examinations Administration section of the DFE website.
- ▶ Examination Board helplines.
- ▶ The Exams Office section of the Joint Council for Qualifications website.

## **2. ALS lead/SENCo extended absence at a critical stage of the exam cycle**

#### Criteria for implementation of the plan

*Key tasks required in the management and administration of the access arrangements process within the exam cycle not undertaken including:*

#### *Planning*

- *candidates not tested/assessed to identify potential access arrangement requirements*
- *centre fails to recognise its duties towards disabled candidates as defined under the terms of the Equality Act 2010*
- *evidence of need and evidence to support normal way of working not collated*

#### *Pre-exams*

- *approval for access arrangements not applied for to the awarding body*
- *centre-delegated arrangements not put in place*
- *modified paper requirements not identified in a timely manner to enable ordering to meet external deadline*
- *staff (facilitators) providing support to access arrangement candidates not allocated and trained*

#### *Exam time*

- *access arrangement candidate support not arranged for exam rooms*

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- As the centre has 2 SENCoS, the second SENCo (in charge of KS3) will step in, supported by our Inclusion Manager, SEND team and linked leadership team member to ensure the above key tasks are completed.
- If necessary, VAT SENCo will also be called upon to provide additional assistance

**3. Teaching staff extended absence at a critical stage of the exam cycle**

Criteria for implementation of the plan

*Key tasks not undertaken including:*

*Early/estimated entry information not provided to the exams officer on time; resulting in pre-release information not being received*

*Final entry information not provided to the exams officer on time; resulting in candidates not being entered for exams/assessments or being entered late/late or other penalty fees being charged by awarding bodies*

*Non-examination assessment tasks 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

- Heads of Faculty and TLR holders in each faculty are to oversee entry information to ensure it is provided in time so that all students are entered appropriately and pre-release information is received
- Heads of Faculty, in conjunction with their Leadership team link and TLR holders, to ensure that all non-examination assessment tasks are set, issued and taken by candidates as scheduled.
- Heads of Faculty and their TLR holders will ensure all candidates are informed of centre-assessed marks before they are submitted to exam boards to ensure they are given the opportunity to consider an appeal and review. They will also ensure said marks and candidate work is provided by the awarding body submission deadlines.

**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

- Examinations Officer is to identify how many invigilators are required on our busiest days (use provisional timetables and estimated entry information to determine this)
- Recruiting more invigilators than is required
- Conduct a review of available invigilators and their availability for each exam series to ensure we have enough for every day examinations are taking place
- Examinations Officer and Examinations assistant to ensure all invigilators receive up-to-date training and have up-to-date DBS.
- Ensuring we always have a spare invigilator in each day (above the number required) to account for last minute absence
- Ensure that all of the Leadership team, the cover team and the examinations assistant have undergone up-to-date invigilator training in order to enable them to step in if an emergency arises
- Cover Manager to arrange additional invigilator resource in the case of a shortfall at short notice.

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

### Criteria for implementation of the plan

*Exams officer unable to identify sufficient/appropriate rooms during exams timetable planning*

*Insufficient rooms available on peak exam days*

*Main exam venues unavailable due to an unexpected incident at exam time*

### Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- The Centre hall, sixth form auditorium and a range of offices on site will be used.
- Where possible, classrooms will be identified and used with usual classes being re-roomed.
- The Local Baptist Church rooms and the Beacon auditorium will be used where there are insufficient rooms on site – the need for these will be identified and booked in advance
- The sports hall and dining hall on west site will be used in an emergency due to an unexpected incident during exam time
- The Leisure centre hall will also be looked at and considered in case of emergency.

Alternative venue details:

Please see above

## 6. Cyber-attack

### 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

- Ensure that our Firewalls are up-to-date to combat Ransomware and Malware etc. to help prevent a cyber attack (and that our MIS provider has done the same)
- Ensure that all staff are aware of cyber threats such as phishing emails etc. and know what to do (e.g. check if it has come from a recognised source/genuine email account etc. and flag to the IT department if they are in any doubt) to help prevent a cyber attack
- Ensure that our IT department is compliant with the Department of Education's set of cyber security standards.
- Our IT department will be on hand to assist on the day of examinations with any IT issues affecting exams directly
- Paper copies of key documents required to run the examinations will be kept to ensure they are able to go ahead.

## 7. Failure of IT systems

### Criteria for implementation of the plan

*MIS system failure at final entry deadline*

*MIS system failure during exams preparation*

*Power outage immediately prior to or during an on-screen test*

*MIS system failure at results release time*

### Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- Our IT department will be on hand to assist with any failures of IT systems.
- MIS contractors will be contacted immediately to repair damage quickly.
- Exam boards will be informed if we are unable to meet final entry deadline and an extension to the deadline will be requested.
- Exam boards will be informed if there is a power outage prior to or during an on-screen test and special consideration will be requested in the event of serious disruption (if it is prior to the test, an alternative venue on our centre's other site may be possible and will be considered if there is time).

- Results will be obtained at an alternative site within the VAT.

## **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

- All staff to refer to the centre's existing policy for dealing with emergency evacuation of exam rooms.
- Candidates to be kept in examination conditions in the first instance if emergency evacuation takes place during exam.
- Inform exam boards of the disruption and ask for special consideration in case of serious disruption.
- Seek out alternative venues if there is enough time prior to the exam starting (see above regarding exam venue contingency plan at short notice)

## **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

- It remains the responsibility of the centre to prepare students, as usual for examinations.
- Students will be offered online learning with lessons/revision and practice materials provided on Teams and via Epriase to support students' preparation in the lead up to examinations.
- In the case of modular courses, the centre may advise candidates to sit examinations in an alternative series if appropriate.

## **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*

### Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- If a candidate is not able to take an examination, they are only eligible for special consideration if they have a medical certificate/letter or have been advised by their centre not to attend an examination.
- If a candidate chooses not to sit an examination they be aware that special consideration rules will not apply
- JCQ guidance on special consideration can be accessed through the JCQ website.
- With enough notice and medical evidence, certain reasonable adjustment regarding the condition in which an examination is sat may be made in order to facilitate the taking of examinations, if and where possible.

## **11. 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)*

### Criteria for implementation of the plan

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

### Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption



- It remains the responsibility of centres to prepare students, as usual, for examinations.
- In the event that the head of centre decides the centre cannot be opened for scheduled examinations, the relevant awarding body 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.
- The centre to open for examinations and examination candidates only, if possible
- Alternative centres should be considered in the event that candidates cannot come to school.
- Centre may advise candidates to sit examinations in an alternative series where possible.
- The JCQ Centre Inspection Service should be notified of any alternative site arrangement (submitting the JCQ Alternative Site form online, using the Centre Admin Portal (CAP)).
- Special Consideration can be used where candidates are unable to achieve a result due to one of the above factors.
- An exam result can be generated by the awarding body, based on factors such as a child's performance on other assessments in the same subject.
- We will ensure that we have plans a contingency day - identified as GCSE/ A level day in the event of sustained national or local disruption during the summer series.

Alternative venue details:

Please see point 5. Other VAT schools may also be appropriate and would be approached 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

- 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. Disruption to transporting 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 organisations arrange collections, centres should seek advice from awarding organisations and should not make their own arrangements for transportation unless told to do so by the awarding body
- For any examinations where centres make their arrangements for transportation, centres should investigate alternative dispatch options that comply with the requirements detailed in the JCQ *Instructions for conducting examinations*.
- Centres to ensure secure storage of completed examination scripts until collection.

## **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

- 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.

**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 (West site or other VAT site), in agreement with the relevant awarding organisation
- Centre to make arrangements to coordinate access to post results services from an alternative site
- Centre 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 (West site or other VAT site)
- Centre to contact the relevant awarding organisation if electronic post results requests are not possible to make alternative arrangements

## 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](#)  
[Cyber crime and cyber security: a guide for education providers](#)  
[DfE Cyber Security Guidance – March 2023](#)

Ofqual

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

#### 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.

#### General contingency guidance

- [emergency planning and response](#) from the Department for Education in England
- [handling strike action in schools](#) from the Department for Education in England
- [school organisation: local-authority-maintained schools](#) from the Department for Education in England
- [exceptional closure days](#) 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 in extremely bad weather](#) - guidance for schools from the Welsh Government
- [police guidance](#) from National Counter Terrorism Security Office and partners on preparing for threats

#### 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.

##### 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 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.

(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 18 January 2023) <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

15.1 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 relevant awarding body 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 2024. This is consistent with the qualification regulators' document *Exam system contingency plan: England, Wales and Northern Ireland*: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/exam-system-contingency-plan-england-wales-and-northern-ireland>

The designation of 'contingency sessions' within the common examination timetable is in the event of national or significant local disruption to examinations. It is part of the awarding bodies' standard contingency planning for examinations.

In the event of national disruption to a day of examinations in summer 2024, 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.

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 arrangements. 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** 2023-2024 <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/)

JCQ Notice to Centres - Examination contingency plan/examinations policy [www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations/notice-to-centres--exam-contingency-plan/](http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations/notice-to-centres--exam-contingency-plan/)

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)

## 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: Ensuring the service runs smoothly; 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 in extremely 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 [www.education-ni.gov.uk/articles/exceptional-closure-days](http://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](http://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/checklist-exceptional-closure-schools)

## National Cyber Security Centre

The NCSC's free [Web Check](#) and [Mail Check](#) services can help protect schools from cyber-attacks. Two NCSC cyber security services, which are already helping thousands of organisations to protect their websites and email servers from cyber-attacks, are now available to **all UK schools**. Both tools are available free of charge, are quick to set up, and thereafter run automatically. More information is available from the [NCSC website](#).

The Department for Education has been asking centres to review **National Cyber Security Centre advice** following increasing number of cyber-attacks involving ransomware infections. The NCSC information supports centres in cyber security preparedness and mitigation work.

Ransomware attacks continue and the Department is reminding centres to review the NCSC advice and to take precautions. This includes ensuring that you have backups in place for your key services and data.

For ease of reference, the Department has highlighted key links relating to the NCSC cyber security guidance below:

1. [Further ransomware attacks on UK education by cyber criminals - NCSC.GOV.UK](#)
2. [Mitigating malware and ransomware attacks](#)
3. [Offline backups in an online world](#)
4. [Backing up your data](#)
5. [Practical resources to help schools improve their cyber security](#)
6. [Building Resilience: Ransomware, the risk to schools and ways to prevent it](#)
7. [School staff offered training to help shore up cyber defences - NCSC.GOV.UK](#)