



DURLSTON
PREP & SENIOR SCHOOL

Examination Contingency Policy

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES PROFORMA

Author:	Exams Officer
Persons/Committees etc consulted whilst document in draft:	Senior Leadership Team
Date agreed:	October 2023
Date of next review/update and by whom:	October 2026
By whom agreed:	Board of Governors
Date document first issued:	October 2023
Responsibility for dissemination to new staff:	Line Manager
Principal Target Audience:	All staff

Amendments Summary:

Amend. No.	Issued	Page	Subject

Key staff involved in contingency planning

Role	Name(s)
Head of centre	Richard May
Exams officer line manager (Senior Leader)	Richard May (Headmaster)
Senior Leaders	Bob Lack (Director of Teaching & Learning), Julia Gill (Deputy Head), Darren Collard (Head of Senior School), Gilly Smith (Head of Pre-Prep), Barry Bates (Bursar)
Exams officer	Janet White
SENCo	Natasha Lack

Organisation Structure for Examinations

Janet White, examination officer is responsible for all key processes in the examination cycle including, Planning, Entries, Pre-exam communications to students & training of invigilators, all examination sessions and results / all post result services.

In the event of the Examination officer's extended absence at key points in the exam process cycle, as detailed in our contingency plan; Mr Richard May, head teacher/head of centre will assume responsibility for all processes. The examination officer is part of a team of 4 people led by an experienced member of the SLT. SLT members Mr Bob Lack (Director of teaching & learning) & Mrs Julia Gill (Deputy Head) will cover all above key duties as necessary, if directed by Mr May or in his absence.

- Richard May, Head of Center & Headmaster
 - Janet White, Examination Officer
 - Invigilators
 - Bob Lack, Director of Teaching & Learning
 - Julia Gill, Deputy Head

- Other members of the Senior Leader Team
 - Darren Collard, Head of Seniors
 - Gilly Smith, Head of Pre-Prep
 - Barry Bates, Bursar

Contents

Key staff involved in the plan.....	1
Purpose of the plan.....	3
Possible causes of disruption to the exam process	4
1. Exam officer extended absence at key points in the exam process (cycle).....	4
2. SENCo extended absence at key points in the exam cycle.....	5
3. Teaching staff extended absence at key points in the exam cycle.....	5
4. Invigilators - lack of appropriately trained invigilators or invigilator absence.....	5
5. Exam rooms - lack of appropriate rooms or main venues unavailable at short notice.....	6
6. Cyber Attack	6
7. Failure of IT systems.....	8
8. Emergency evacuation of the exam room (or centre lock down).....	8
9. Disruption of teaching time – centre closed for an extended period.....	8
10. Candidates unable to take examinations because of a crisis – centre remains open.....	8
11. Centre unable to open as normal during the exams period.....	9
12. Disruption in the distribution of examination papers.....	9
13. Disruption to the collection of completed examination scripts.....	9
14. Assessment evidence is not available to be marked.....	10
15. Centre unable to distribute results as normal or facilitate post results services.....	10
Further guidance to inform procedures and implement contingency planning.....	11
Ofqual.....	11
JCQ.....	13
GOV.UK.....	14
National Cyber Security Centre	14

Purpose of the plan

This plan examines potential risks and issues that could cause disruption to the exams **and assessment** process at Durlston School. 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 Exam system contingency plan: England, Wales and Northern Ireland** which provides guidance in the **document What schools and colleges and other centre's should do if exams or other assessments are seriously disrupted**, the **JCQ Joint Contingency Plan in the event of widespread disruption to the Examination System in England, Wales and Northern Ireland** and the **JCQ document Preparing for disruption to examinations**.

This plan also confirms Durlston School is compliant 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/assessment administration and delivery. This plan is available for inspection, is updated annually and communicated within the school. It ensures members of the senior leadership team act immediately in the event of an emergency or staff absence. The examination contingency plan reinforces the procedures in the event of the school disruption affecting examinations or on results day, due to the absence of the examination officer or an unforeseen emergency such as the potential impact of a cyber attack.

Contingency arrangements

In accordance with the regulations (GR 3.17-19), Durlston **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.

Durlston **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.

Durlston **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 Durlston 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. 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.

Possible causes of disruption to the exam process

1. Exam officer extended absence at key points in the exam process (cycle)

Criteria for implementation of the plan

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

Planning

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

Entries

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

Pre-exams

- *invigilators not trained or updated on changes to instructions for conducting exams*
- *exam timetabling, rooming allocation; and invigilation schedules not prepared*
- *candidates not briefed on exam timetables and awarding body information for candidates*
- *confidential exam/assessment materials and candidates' work not stored under required secure conditions*
- *internal assessment marks and samples of candidates' work not submitted to awarding bodies/external moderators*

Exam time

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

Results and post-results

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

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- The exams officer is part of a team of 3 people led by an experienced member of SLT. SLT members and other staff will cover all above key duties as necessary

2. SENCo extended absence at key points in the exam cycle

Criteria for implementation of the plan

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

Planning

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

Pre-exams

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

Exam time

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

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- The absence of the SENCO would be covered by a Senior Leader in conjunction with the other co-Director of SEN. Support would also be sought from a local secondary school.

3. Teaching staff extended absence at key points in 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

- The extended absence of any teacher would be monitored by the Head of Department or line manager.

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

- Durlston will aim to have a list of 5 pre-approved and trained invigilators. This would be used if invigilator absent. If no external invigilators available, SLT & other staff would cover.

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

- Exams would be moved to classrooms as necessary. In the event of sudden unexpected unavailability, resulting in classrooms having to be used, this might result in school closure to other year groups.

6. Cyber security

Criteria for implementation of the plan

*Where **any incidents might compromise any aspect of assessment delivery, such as a cyber attack***

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- Internet access comes into the school via a dedicated lease line
- Exam accounts setup are fully documented (and backed up), and their configuration is shared between IT Services, therefore if a key member of IT support is off during exams or not available due to a Cyber attack, this won't disrupt any exams to proceed if systems are online
- If systems are offline, local accounts can be used on the IT equipment for students to undertake their exams, saving to USB sticks as a temporary measure if central systems are disrupted. USB sticks are kept in supply during exam season.
- The school will ensure we have access to SIM cards which all have data allowance on them to use as mobile hotspots to share internet access to laptops in school. No central IT services or internet would be required for this to take place.
- A class sized number of laptops are available for students to use independently of Durlston systems and WiFi, allowing any full groups of online exams to proceed
- If printing is required to print out student answers/assessments, and printing services are disrupted due to a Cyber Attack, work can be saved to USB sticks and printed using local printers not connected to the network.
- **As per (General regulations section 3.21) Durlston will ensure there are procedures in place to maintain the security of user accounts by:**
 - **a) ensuring that all members of centre staff who access awarding bodies' online systems undertake annual cyber security training...**
 - **The training must include:**
 - **the importance of creating strong, unique passwords for all accounts;**
 - **keeping all account details strictly confidential;**
 - **the critical role of Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) in protecting against unauthorised access;**
 - **how to properly set up and use MFA for both centre and awarding bodies' systems;**

- · an awareness of all types of social engineering/phishing attempts;...
- · the importance of staff quickly reporting any suspicious activity, events, incidents and encouraging a safe and supportive reporting culture.
- 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.
- b) developing and maintaining a comprehensive cyber security policy for the centre. The National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) provides resources to assist centres in creating such policies;
- c) implementing and enforcing robust security measures, including:
 - · 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;
- d) updating any passwords that may have been exposed
- e) setting up secure account recovery options
- f) reviewing and managing connected applications
- g) monitoring accounts and regularly reviewing account access, including removing access when no longer required
- h) ensuring authorised members of staff securely access awarding bodies' online systems in line with awarding body regulations regarding cyber security and the JCQ document *Guidance for centres on cyber security*
- Authorised staff will have access, where necessary, to a device which complies with awarding bodies' MFA requirements.
- i) reporting any actual or suspected compromise of an awarding body's online systems immediately to the relevant awarding body

7. Failure of IT systems

Criteria for implementation of the plan

IT system corruption affecting candidates' work
MIS system failure at final entry deadline
MIS system failure during exams preparation
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

- Liaise with network support in school.
- 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.
- Contact exam boards for advice.
- Prepare paper copies

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

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Whole centre evacuation (or lock down) 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

- Liaise with JCQ.
- Contact exam boards for advice as soon as possible.
- Consider best use of alternative site
- In the event we are unable to access the main buildings due to an unforeseen emergency we will use the Pre-Prep assembly hall for candidates examinations

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

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Centre closed or candidates are unable to attend for an extended period during normal teaching or study supported time, interrupting the provision of normal teaching and learning

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- Where there is disruption to teaching time and students miss teaching and learning, it remains the responsibility of centres to prepare students, as usual, for examinations. In the case of modular courses, centres may advise candidates to sit examinations in an alternative series. Centres should have plans in place to facilitate alternative methods of learning.
- School would communicate with parents and students about potential disruption to teaching time and plans below:
- Temporary teachers/classrooms hired as necessary.
- Online teaching considered as necessary.

10. Candidates unable to take examinations because of a crisis – centre remains open

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Candidates are unable to attend the examination centre to take examinations as normal because of a crisis

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- Focus on options that enable candidates to take their examinations
- Durlston will consider moving the starting time of the examination for all candidates (section 6.2 of the JCQ *Instructions for conducting examinations*) and are aware of the rules for very late arrivals.
- Durlston will communicate with exam boards, parents and candidates at outset where applicable.
- Apply to exam boards for special consideration for candidates
- Arrange for alternative transport arrangements

11. Centre unable to open as normal during the exams period

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

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Centre unable to open as normal for scheduled examinations

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- 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
- Use alternative venue, notifying JCQ Centre Inspection Service of alternative site arrangement via Centre Admin Portal. In the event we are unable to access the main building due to an unforeseen emergency we will use the Pre-Prep assembly hall if accessible for examinations
- Apply to exam boards for special consideration if all other avenues exhausted and candidation meet criteria
- Offer candidates opportunity to sit exams missed at next available series, if possible.

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

- School contacts exam boards to arrange for alternative delivery of papers (email, courier, etc).
- Awarding organisations to provide centres with electronic access to examination papers via a secure external network. Durlston would ensure copies are received, made and stored under secure conditions and 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 Durlston and regulators, awarding organisations may consider scheduling of the examination on an alternative date

13 Disruption in collection arrangements for completed examination scripts

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Delay in normal collection arrangements for completed examination scripts

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- Examinations that are part of the national 'yellow label' service or where awarding organisations arrange collections, Durlston would seek advice from awarding organisations and will not make their own arrangements for transportation unless told to do so by the awarding organisation. Durlston will ensure secure storage of completed examination papers 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 bodies

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- School communicates immediately with exam boards and keeps students and parents informed
- Awarding organisations may 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

- Durlston will make arrangements to access its results at an alternative site, in agreement with the relevant awarding organisation. Durlston will make arrangements to coordinate access to post results services from an alternative site (Examination centres may share facilities with other examination centres if this is possible, in agreement with the relevant awarding organisation.)
- Durlston will contact relevant awarding organisation if electronic post results requests are not possible and seek their support.
- In the event we are unable to access the main building due to an unforeseen emergency we will use the Pre-Prep assembly hall to issue results

Further guidance to inform procedures and implement contingency planning

Ofqual

What schools and colleges 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

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

3.1 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.

3.2 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 parents, carers and students any changes to the exam or assessment timetable or to the venue.
7. Communicate with any external assessors or relevant third parties regarding any changes to the exam or assessment timetable.

3.3 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 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.

4. Steps the awarding organisation should take

4.1 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.

4.2 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 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.

4.3 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.

5. 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](#)

6. Wider communications

The regulators, [Ofqual](#) in England, [Qualifications Wales](#) in Wales and [CCEA](#) 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

In the event of widespread sustained national disruption, the 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 exam timetables.

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.

[Ofqual guidance extract taken directly from the *Exam system contingency plan: England, Wales and Northern Ireland - What schools and colleges and other centres should do if exams or other assessments are seriously disrupted*, (updated 18 January 2022) <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

CONTINGENCY PLANNING

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>

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.

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.

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.

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](#)

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.

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.

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 taken directly from JCQ *Instructions for Conducting Examinations 2022-2023*

<http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/ice---instructions-for-conducting-examinations>, section 15, **Contingency planning**]

JCQ *Joint Contingency Plan* <http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/other-documents>

JCQ Preparing for disruption to examinations (Effective from 1 September 2022) 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/

General Regulations for Approved Centres <http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations>

Guidance notes on *alternative site* arrangements <http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/online-forms>

Guidance notes concerning transferred candidates <http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/online-forms>

Instructions for Conducting Examinations <http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/ice---instructions-for-conducting-examinations>

A guide to the special consideration process <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/

5 tips to get exam ready and stay cyber safe! www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/blogs/

GOV.UK

*Emergency planning and response: Exam and **assessment** disruption*
www.gov.uk/government/publications/emergency-planning-and-response-for-education-childcare-and-childrens-social-care-settings

Dispatch of exam scripts guide: Contingency planning
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dispatch-of-exam-scripts-yellow-label-service>

National Cyber Security Centre

Cyber Security for Schools 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