Exam Contingency Policy

Paignton Academy

Exam Contingency Policy

Centre name	Paignton Academy
Centre number	54333
Date plan first created	05/12/2023
Current plan approved by	Tim Willcocks
Current plan reviewed by	Stephanie Julyan
Date of review	14/09/2026
Date of next review	30/09/2027

Key staff involved in the plan

Role	**Name**
Head of centre	Derwyn Williams
Senior leader(s)	Tim Willcocks - Exams SLT
Exams Officer	Stephanie Julyan
SENCo (or equivalent role)	Denise Mills - SENCO (Exams Access Arrangements Officer)
Other staff (if applicable)	Gracie Skirrow - Deputy Exams Officer (DEO) Simon Dossett- SENDCo Fenella Cooke - Assistant SENDCo Louise Kenney - Assistant SENDCo

This plan is reviewed and updated annually to ensure that contingency planning at Paignton Academy is managed in accordance with current requirements and regulations and reflects centre practice.

Purpose of the plan

This plan examines potential risks and issues that could cause disruption to the examination and assessment process.

By outlining actions/procedures to be invoked in case of disruption it is intended to mitigate the impact these disruptions have on processes at Paignton Academy.

Alongside internal processes, this plan is informed by the Ofqual (and Northern Ireland Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment) **Exam system contingency plan: England, Wales and Northern Ireland** which provides guidance in the document *What schools and colleges and other centres should do if exams or other assessments are seriously disrupted* and the JCQ guidance **Preparing for disruption to examinations**.

This plan also confirms how Paignton Academy complies with JCQ's **General Regulations for Approved Centres** (5.3 *Centre management*) by:

- having 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
- its contingency planning including succession arrangements for members of staff involved in examination and assessment administration

Contingency arrangements

The centre **must** have in place, and at all times comply with, an up to date written contingency plan.

The contingency plan **must** cover all aspects of examination/assessment administration and delivery. Senior leaders **must** have robust contingency arrangements in place that will minimise the risk to examination/assessment administration and delivery and any adverse impact on candidates.

The plan **must** cover the following scenarios:

- the head of centre, relevant senior leader(s) with oversight of examination and assessment administration, SENCo (or equivalent role), examinations officer or any other key staff essential to the examination process being absent at a critical stage of the examination cycle
- the potential impact of other events such as flooding which could lead to all or parts of the centre becoming unavailable
- potential issues with the centre's IT systems

As part of the contingency plan the centre **must** identify an alternative site or 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.

The centre **must** have at least one senior member of staff (senior designated contact) who is available to manage emergency requests from awarding bodies that are results related during the summer holidays. However, a number of contacts can be provided to reduce the risk of this falling on one individual throughout the summer holidays.

The centre **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. (GR 3.31-36)

Operating across more than one centre

As the Exams Office Staff work across two school sites the Head of Centre and SLT will ensure that there is suitable support in place so that obligations can be met in relation to movement of secure materials, setting up exam rooms and starting exams on time, whilst remaining compliant with JCQ and awarding body regulations

National Centre Number Register and other information requirements

The head of centre will ensure that the centre 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. (GR 5.3)

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

Where the Head of Centre may be absent at a critical stage of the examination cycle, the main duties and responsibilities will be escalated in accordance with the written escalation process

Possible causes of disruption to the exam process

1. Exams manager/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 post-results services

Other criteria:

No other criteria identified

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

- Planning

Annual qualification data collection and Exams Plan begun in July of previous academic year and the DEO is able to take over with support from SLT if the EO is absent at key data collection point, the qualification data is stored in a shared area with all members of the Exams Office Team and the exams SLT having access

A calendar of deadlines is produced with all members of the Exams Office Team adding dates as they are recieved and/or agreed for their area of responsibility. SLT have access to public deadlines and can ensure these are met in the EO absence

A rota is produced for the invigilators during term 1 or 2 allowing for early identification of gaps and recruitment

- Entries

The DEO is able to submit estimated entries and enter candidates for external exams / assessments via EDI with support from SLT / CTLs and IT

All internal and external deadlines are published to Subject Teachers, CTLS and the DEO, who also has full access to exam board secure websites and the exams email account in order to receive update and support from exam boards

Entries are done as soon as the basedata is released meaning there is time for the DEO or SLT to do entries in the EOs absence.

- Pre-exams

Invigilators are able to undertake online invigilation training from The Exams Office which is fully compliant with JCQ regulations. HR ensure invigilators are up to date with relevant safeguarding etc.

Briefing of candidates is routinely done by SLT in assemblies and SLT, along with support from the admin hub, are able to supervise all communication to candidate and parents.

Subject Teachers are able to access information for candidates to ensure their teaching/tutor groups are briefed correctly.

The DEO routinely submits some internal marks and work and is able to asumme submission of the mark submission and work routinely done by the EO. With support from SLT, the EAAO is also able to timetable rooms and seat candidates and assume all communication with SEN students and parents.

- Exam Time

All Academy Staff are aware of the rules and regulations regarding assessments and Invigilators are fully compliant with JCQ regulations for examinations.

The DEO has access to CAP to submit reports for, eg, very late candidates. The DEO, the EAAO and multiple Invigilators are fully trained in dispatching scripts.

- Results and Post Results

Both the EO and the DEO are able to access results via EDI and Exam Board Secure Sites. IT support is available on results day and results are accessible externally in the event of site wide disruption.

In the absence of the EO the DEO, with support from SLT, is able to access results files and results on secure websites.

All key administrative processes are detailed in the 'How To' folder in the secure exams area and a calendar of internal and external exams is displayed, along with season checklists in the exams folder detailing which tasks have been completed at any time.

2. SENCo (or equivalent role) **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

Other criteria:

No other criteria identified

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

- Planning

Deputy SENCos, the EO and the DEO are able to organise testing using an outside specialist assessor in the absence of the EAAO

Deputy SENCos are able to collate evidence of normal way of working with assistance of SEN House Liaison Team and Exams Office Staff

All Academy Staff are aware of the rights of, and duties towards, disabled candidates and can advocate on their behalf with the SEND Team

- Pre –exams / Exams

Emergency and late JCQ approvals can be processed by all members of the Exams Office Team

Facilitators are trained alongside Invigilators and can be trained and allocated by SEND staff, the EO, the DEO or the EAAO as required

- Exam Time

Arbor (MIS) is updated after each PPE session with the most up to date access arrangement information and formal year 11 approved access arrangements are inputted to Arbor once approved. This information is provided as standard to invigilators so staff in the exam room can ensure that approved access arrangements are in place for all exams

Candidates are reminded during the 'Script' to alert staff in the room if their approved access arrangements have not been supplied

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

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Key tasks not undertaken including:

- Early/estimated entry information not provided to the exams manager/officer on time; resulting in pre-release information not being received
- Final entry information not provided to the exams manager/officer on time; resulting in candidates not being entered for exams/assessments or being entered late/late or other penalty fees being charged by awarding bodies
- Non-examination assessment tasks (including controlled assessment and coursework) 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

Other criteria:

No other criteria identified

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

- CTL and Subject Teachers within the department are able to give entry information to the EO. Qualification data is collected before the start of the academic year to allow maximum time for estimated entry information to be given to exam boards.
- CTL and Subject Teachers are aware of pre-release dates and deadlines for their qualifications and, where permissible, have access to secure sites in order to access information independently.
- Exams Office Team to remind staff of the need to give students time to appeal internal assessment marks and a suggested deadline is on the internal calendar of exam dates.
- In the event that work is not provided to meet submission deadlines the EO will liaise with exams boards to request an extension or alert boards to work being posted/submitted late as applicable.
- CTLs have access to a shared teams folder with all relevant paperwork and, after a meeting with the Exams Office Team, agree internal deadlines which preceed external submission deadlines.
- The EO is able to do intial entries based on MIS data (Arbor) and candidates are given their statement of entry in tutor groups in time for any discrepancies or missing entries to be alerted to the Exams Office Team.

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

Other criteria:

no other criteria identified

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

- New invigilators are recruited at the begining of the academic year and again before the start of GCSEs if required and all invigilators are trained on appointment with annual updated training for current invigilators.
- Invigilator availability is collated early in the academic year and rotas are circulated before the end of term 2 to allow maximum time for planning any extra cover needed. A minimum of 1 extra invigilator per site is allocated to allow for emergency absences. Other Academy Staff are also able to stand in as invigilators for emergencies.
- Staff instructed by the Head of Centre are able to start exams, assist with settling candidates, chasing absences and queries to ease pressure at the beginning of the exam and reduce the need for invigilating staff above the required ratio.

5. Exam rooms - lack of appropriate rooms or main venue(s) unavailable at short notice

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- Exams manager/officer unable to identify sufficient/appropriate rooms during exams timetable planning
- Insufficient rooms available on peak exam days
- Main exam venues unavailable due to an unexpected incident at exam time

Other criteria:

no other criteria indentified

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

- (where main exam venue(s) unavailable due to an unexpected incident at exam time) where possible, make use of other available rooms within the centre, prioritising candidates whose progression will be severely delayed if they do not take their exam or timetabled assessment when planned
- identify whether the exam or timetabled assessment can be sat at an alternative venue, in agreement with the relevant awarding body
- (where main exam venue(s) unavailable due to an unexpected incident at exam time) where possible, move to alternative venue, prioritising candidates whose progression will be severely delayed if they do not take their exam or timetabled assessment when planned
- **Alternative site**(s) details:
  - Exams are run over both schools sites according to the candidate's normal place of study; there is capacity for each site to house the whole cohort if required.
  - Borough Road alternative site - Waterleat Road
  - Waterleat Road alternative site- Borough Road
- communicate with candidates (and where appropriate, parents/carers) any changes to the exam or assessment timetable or to the venue
- **Communication** details:
  - Exam information, including timetables, is always available on the Academy website and any changes are sent home to students and parents via email and Arbor messaging service. Indivduals are given a note on their tutor peg in addition.
- ensure the secure transportation of question papers or assessment materials to the alternative venue

- (after the exam) consider whether any candidate's ability to take the assessment or demonstrate their level of attainment has been materially affected and, if so, apply for special consideration

Other centre actions:

no other actions identified

6. Cyber security

Criteria for implementation of the plan

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

Other criteria:

no other criteria identified

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

- All Academy Staff have access to Microsoft Teams, reducing the reliance on an intranet and allowing work to be accessed outside the centre's network
- Year 10 & 11 work from Chromebooks allowing them to access work independently of the school's network

7. Failure of IT systems

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- IT system corruption affecting candidates' work
- MIS/IT system failure at final entry deadline
- MIS/IT system failure during exams preparation
- Technical failure or power outage immediately prior to or during an on-screen examination
- MIS/IT system failure at results release time

Other criteria:

No other criteria identified

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

- Ensure candidate work is saved on Microsoft Teams classrooms and downloaded, where appropriate, to ensure work can continue in the event of system corruption
- Use the other site or off site facilities to ensure entries and results are sent and received as all Academy Staff have laptops which can be used to access the Information Management System and exam board secure sites from anywhere with WiFi
- In the event of a technical failure or power/internet outage during or before an on screen exam the Exams Office Team will immediately contact the exam board for advice whilst keeping candidates in exam conditions. Papers can be downloaded on a staff laptop via hot spot in the event of no internet and can be printed via a plug and print printer, or at the other site in the case of a power outage

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

Other criteria:

no other criteria identified

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

- refer to and invoke its (exams) emergency evacuation policy/procedure in line with JCQ's 'Centre emergency evacuation procedure' (or its (exams) lockdown policy)
- contact the relevant awarding body as soon as possible and follow its instructions
- where accommodation is limited, prioritise candidates whose progression will be severely delayed if they do not take their exam or timetabled assessment when planned
- (after the exam) consider whether any candidate's ability to take the assessment or demonstrate their level of attainment has been materially affected and, if so, apply for special consideration

Other centre actions:

- In the event of a whole school evacuation the possibility of moving exam candidates to the other school site will be considered if practical

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

Other criteria:

no other criteria identified

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

- recognise it remains the responsibility of the centre to prepare students, as usual, for examinations
- facilitate alternative methods of learning
- communicate with candidates (and where appropriate, parents/carers) information relating to alternative methods of learning
- **Communication** details:
  • Students and parents are kept up to date via email, text, the Academy website and individual tutor peg notes where appropriate
- take advice offered by the awarding body regarding alternative arrangements for conducting examinations that may be available
- take advice offered by the awarding body on the options for candidates who have not been able to take scheduled examinations
- advise candidates, where appropriate, of the opportunities to take their exam or assessment at a later date

Other centre actions:

- In the event of one school site closing the possibility of moving exam candidates only to the other site will be considered where practical

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

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- Candidates may not be able to attend the examination centre to take examinations as normal because of a crisis

Other criteria:

no other criteria identified

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

- focus on options that enable candidates to take their examinations (referencing the JCQ document *Preparing for disruption to examinations*)
- take advice offered by the awarding body on the options for candidates who have not been able to take scheduled examinations
- discuss alternative arrangements with the awarding body if a candidate misses an exam or loses their assessment due to an emergency, or other event, outside of the candidate's control
- identify whether the exam or timetabled assessment can be sat at an alternative venue, in agreement with the relevant awarding body, ensuring the secure transportation of questions papers or assessment materials to the alternative venue
- communicate with candidates (and where appropriate, parents/carers) any changes to the exam or assessment timetable or to the venue
- **Communication** details:
  • Students and parents are kept up to date via email, text, the Academy website and individual notes on tutor pegs where appropriate

- consider whether any candidates' ability to take the assessment or demonstrate their level of attainment has been materially affected and, if so, apply for special consideration

Other centre actions:

no other actions identified

11. Centre may not be able to open for examinations

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

Criteria for implementation of the plan

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

Other criteria:

no other criteria identified

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

- focus on enabling candidates to take their examinations

- (although the decision on whether it is safe to open lies with the head of centre) take advice, or follow instructions, from relevant local or national agencies in deciding whether the centre is able to open
- contact the relevant awarding body as soon as possible and follow its instructions (This could include implementing alternative arrangements for the conducting of examinations and notifying the JCQ Centre Inspection Service of an alternative site arrangement by submitting the JCQ Alternative Site form online, using the Centre Admin Portal)
- discuss alternative arrangements with the awarding body if the exam or assessment cannot take place
- follow guidance provided by the awarding body on the conduct of examinations in such circumstances
- where accommodation is limited, prioritise candidates whose progression will be severely delayed if they do not take their exam or timetabled assessment when planned
- communicate with candidates (and where appropriate, parents/carers) any changes to the exam or assessment timetable or to the venue
- **Alternative site**(s) details:
  Waterleat Road / Borough Road (as appropriate)
- **Communication** details: • Students and parents are kept up to date via email, text and the Academy website
- consider whether any candidates' ability to take the assessment or demonstrate their level of attainment has been materially affected and, if so, apply for special consideration

Other centre actions:

no other actions identified

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

Other criteria:

- Disruption to the transportation of examinations papers to Waterleat Road on the day of the examination

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

- liaise with awarding bodies regarding the provision of electronic access to examination papers via a secure external network and will ensure when copies are received/made these are stored under secure conditions
- follow guidance provided by the awarding body on the conduct of examinations in such circumstances
- understand that as a last resort, and in close collaboration with centres and regulators, awarding organisations will consider scheduling of the examination on an alternative date
- communicate with candidates (and where appropriate, parents/carers) any changes to the exam or assessment timetable or to the venue

Other centre actions:

- Papers can be securely printed at the Waterleat Road site if the transportation is disrupted
- If the disruption is due to roadworks/traffic accident, papers can also be walked across securely

13. Delay in collection arrangements for completed examination scripts

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- Delay in normal collection arrangements for completed examination scripts/assessment evidence

Other criteria:

- Disruption to the return of completed examination scripts to Borough Road

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

- where examinations are part of the national 'yellow label' service or where awarding organisations arrange collections, seek advice from the relevant awarding organisations and will not make its own arrangements for transportation unless told to do so by the awarding organisation
- for any examinations where the centre makes its own collection arrangements, investigate alternative options that comply with the requirements detailed in the JCQ document *Instructions for conducting examinations*
- keep completed examination scripts in the secure room until as close to the collection time as possible - ensuring script packages are not left unattended in the collection area

Other centre actions:

- Liaise with exam boards and 'yellow label' service to consider sending papers directly from Waterleat Road

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

Other criteria:

no other criteria identified

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

- liaise with the awarding body to determine if candidate marks for affected assessments may be able to be generated based on other appropriate evidence of candidate achievement as defined by the awarding body
- where marks cannot be generated by awarding body, inform candidates they may need to retake the affected assessment in a subsequent assessment series

Other centre actions:

- Assessment evidence is sent via a 'track and trace' service to minimise the risk of loss
- Work is done on Chromebooks and Subject Teachers are able to save work to reprint/upload where necessary

15. Centre unable to distribute results as normal (including in the event of the centre being unavailable on results day owing to an unforeseen emergency) or facilitate post-results services

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

Other criteria:

no other criteria identified

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

- make arrangements to access its results at an alternative venue/share facilities with another centre if this is possible, in agreement with the relevant awarding body
- make arrangements to coordinate access to post-results services from an alternative site
- **Alternative site**(s) details:
    - Results may be issued at either BRC or WRC
    - Results may be emailed or sent to students via Arbor (MIS)
- make arrangements to make post-results requests at an alternative location
- contact the relevant awarding body if electronic post-results requests are not possible
- inform candidates of any alternative arrangements in place for the distribution of results and the facilitation of post-results services
- **Communication** details:
    - Students and parents are kept up to date via email, text and the Academy website

Other centre actions:

no other actions identified

16. Any other cause of disruption to the exam process

Cause of disruption

Approval to run vocational courses (BTEC, NCFE, Cambridge Nationals) removed from centre

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

- work with the awarding body to regain approval if applicable
- considering working with other local centres as a consortium arrangement to allow candidates to complete the course
- consider dual registering candidates with another local centre to allow candidates to complete the course

Changes effective from 1 September 2026

(Updated)

- Under heading **Purpose of the plan** updated wording to reflect changes in GR 3.31-36 and 5.3
- Under section **Cyber security** updated reference to GR 3.38
- Under section **Failure of IT systems** added reference to *Technical failure or power outage immediately prior to or during an on-screen examination*
- Under heading **Further guidance to inform procedures and implement contingency planning** updated various hyperlinks

Centre-specific changes

Upon review in September 2026 the events in the case of 'Failure of IT systems' was expanded, the roles of other staff were specified in the event of the EO being absent. Some minor changes were made to reflect that some direct communication is made with candidates via notes on tutor pegs.

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

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** 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

"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

- 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 students, parents and carers any changes to the exam or assessment timetable or to the venue.

- Communicate with any external assessors, invigilators or relevant third parties regarding any changes to the exam or assessment timetable.

After the exam

- Consider whether any students' ability to take the assessment or demonstrate their level of attainment has been materially affected and, if so, apply to the relevant awarding organisation 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 are able to 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, 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 DfE 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"

JCQ

Instructions for conducting examinations www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/instructions-for-conducting-examinations-ice/ (with particular reference to section 15, **Contingency planning**)

Preparing for disruption to examinations www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations/

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

Guidance notes on alternative site arrangements www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/online-forms/

Guidance notes for transferred candidates www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/online-forms/

A guide to the special consideration process www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-reasonable-adjustments/

Guidance for centres on cyber security www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations/

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 www.gov.uk/government/publications/dispatch-of-exam-scripts-yellow-label-service

Wales

School closures: examinations www.gov.wales/school-closures-examinations

Opening schools in extremely bad weatherand extreme hot weather www.gov.wales/opening-schools-well-childcare-and-play-settings-extreme-bad-weather-and-extreme-hot-weather

Northern Ireland

Exceptional closure days - Northern Ireland www.education-ni.gov.uk/articles/exceptional-closure-days

Checklist - exceptional closure of schools 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

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