HODGSON ACADEMY

EXAM CONTINGENCY PLAN AND RESILIENCE ARRANGEMENTS POLICY 2025/2026

This policy is reviewed annually to ensure compliance with current regulations

Approved/reviewed by	
Date of next review	October 2026

Key staff involved in this policy

Role	Name
Head of Centre	Mr S. Khan
Examination Officer	Mrs O. Leader
Exams Officer Line Manager (SLT)	Mrs J. Shaw
Senior Leaders	Miss F. Bate, Miss S. Hetherington, Mrs J. Aionesei, Mr A. Day, Mrs L. Foley, Mr C. McCann, Mrs J. Bristow, Mr L. Jenkinson, Miss R. Buckley
Network Manager/ Assistant Network Manager	Mr F. James/ Mr R. Holt
SENCO/Assistant SENCO	Mrs L. Foley/ Mrs Linda Beaumont
Other staff	Mrs E. Maxwell

Purpose of the plan

This plan examines potential risks and issues that could cause disruption to the management and administration of the exam process at Hodgson Academy. By outlining actions/procedures to be followed in case of disruption, it is intended to mitigate the impact these disruptions have on our exam process.

At all times, the Examinations Officer and Senior Leadership Team will liaise with the relevant Awarding Body to ensure any contingency plans meet with its requirements and that JCQ regulations are adhered to where possible.

Alongside internal processes, this plan is informed by the Ofqual (and Northern Ireland Council of 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**, 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 2024).

This plan also confirms Hodgson Academy's compliance with JCQ's **General Regulations for Approved Centres** (GR 5.3) that the centre has in place for inspection that must be reviewed and updated annually:

- A written contingency plan which covers all aspects of the examination/assessment administration.

Contingency arrangements

In accordance with the regulations, Hodgson Academy must have an up to date written contingency plan.

The contingency plan must cover all aspects of the 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 the examination and assessment administration, SENDCo, Assistant SENDCo, exams 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 part of the centre becoming unavailable
- Potential issues with the centre's IT system (cyber-attack)

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

Hodgson Academy must have at least one senior member of staff 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.

Hodgson Academy must ensure that candidates work is backed-up and should consider the contingency of candidates' work being backed up p two separate devices, including one off site back-up. Appropriate security arrangements must be implemented which protect candidates' work in the event of IT systems corruption or cyber-attacks.

National Centre Register and other information requirements

In accordance with the regulations, the head of centre will ensure that Hodgson Academy responds to the National Centre Number Register annual update by the end of October every year which includes providing senior designated contact details (this must include a personal mobile number and/or email address). These must be the contact details of someone who can be reached in an emergency if the centre is closed over the summer and who can mobilise resources to respond to the issue.

Head of centre 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, main duties and responsibilities will be escalated in accordance with the centre's written escalation process.

Causes of potential 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 and trained
- *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*
  - exam timetabling, rooming allocation; and invigilation schedules not prepared
  - candidates not briefed on exam timetables and awarding body information for candidates
  - 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 e.g. very late arrival, suspected malpractice, special consideration
  - candidates' scripts not dispatched as required 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 disruption:

- Examinations assistant to assume responsibility for the above tasks with the support of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT)
- To ensure all examinations officers are trained fully in the above procedures.
- Records of training to be kept.

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
  - evidence of need and evidence to support normal way of working not collated

- centre fails to recognise its duties towards disabled candidates as defined under the terms of the Equality Act 2010

- *Pre-exams*
  - approval for access arrangements not applied for to the awarding body
  - modified paper requirements not identified in a timely manner to enable ordering to meet external deadline
  - staff providing support to access arrangement candidates not allocated and trained
- *Exam time*
  - access arrangement candidate support not arranged for exam rooms

Centre actions:

- The Teaching Assistants, Examinations Officer to work with the nominated named SENCo along with SLT to identify students where applications for access arrangements may be required. The employment of outside agencies/professionals may be required.
- Identify another nominated person to submit access arrangements.
- A certificate of qualification should be kept on file for any nominated trained assessor(s)

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
- Internal assessment marks and candidates' work not provided to meet submission deadlines

Centre actions:

- The Examinations Officer to liaise with Lead Teacher and/or SLT and assistant lead teacher, if necessary, to ensure all necessary deadlines are adhered to. Where this is not possible, the EO will liaise with the relevant Awarding Body and act upon advice received.
- Regular department meetings to identify deadline dates and delegate if necessary.

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:

- The Examinations Officer and Recruitment Manager will review the invigilation staffing at the start of each academic year to ensure sufficient staff are recruited and trained in a timely fashion.

- The Daily Operations Manager will be aware of the school staff available for invigilation duties at short notice and for peak exam days and liaise with the Examinations Officer. Agencies can be contacted for supply invigilators if necessary.
- Invigilators supplied from an agency must be competent and fully trained in the understanding of what is and what is not permissible. HR to check this at the time of arranging.

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

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- Examinations 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 such as flooding

Centre actions:

- The Examinations Officer will organise rooming for examinations before the Easter holidays, ensuring sufficient time is available to identify appropriate rooms and plan appropriately.
- In the event of a room not being available at very short notice, sufficient staff will be made available to ensure the security of the examination is not compromised whilst alternative rooming/site is sourced. The Daily Operations Manager and SLT will always work with the Data/Exams officer(s) during such emergencies.

Alternative site details: Blackpool Sixth Form College, Blackpool, FY3 7LR

6. Failure of IT systems

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- MIS system failure at final entry deadline
- MIS system failure during exams preparation
- MIS system failure at results release time

Centre actions:

- IT Manager to work to resolve the issues as quickly as possible keeping the exams officer and head of centre informed.
- The Examinations Officer, in consultation with the SLT, will make entries from another venue direct to the Awarding Bodies. Results may also be accessed directly from the AB. At all times during the system failure the Data/Exams officer(s) will liaise with the AB to minimise disruption and costs incurred.
- Ensure that the candidates' work is backed up and should consider candidates' work being backed-up on two separate devices, including one off-site back up. Implement appropriate security arrangements which protect candidates' work in the event of IT system corruption or cyber-attacks.

7. Cyber-attack

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Where it is identified that a cyber-attack may compromise any aspect of the delivery of examinations.

Examinations Officer to work with SLT and the Network Manager, to make immediate contact with awarding bodies to seek further guidance and support. SLT will work with Examinations Officer to take action ad determined by the relevant awarding bodies.

Centre actions:

- Back ups ate taken daily to the MIS and the data is stored offline
- The system for restoring the data are reliable and robust
- The school will make contact with the police and Action Fraud
- The school will make contact with the National Cyber Security Centre
- The school will Inform the Department of Education
- If the school system is significantly compromised for an exam that requires ICT for completion, the school may need to transport students to an alternative site. Following guidelines from JCQ Alternative site booklet.
  Alternative site: Blackpool Sixth Form College
- Students will remain supervised and in exam conditions until the issue has been resolved.
- The school has dongles and 3G hotspots, so in the event of an attack on the school's internet system, we will still have access to the exam boards websites through another system.
- Ensuring there are procedures in place that maintain the security of user accounts by:
  - Providing training for authorised staff on the importance of creating strong unique passwords and keeping all account details secret
  - Providing training for staff on awareness of all types of social engineering/ phishing attempts
  - Enabling additional security settings wherever possible
  - Updating any passwords that may have been exposed
  - Setting up secure account recovery options
  - Monitoring accounts and regularly reviewing account access, including removing access when no longer required
  - Ensuring authorised members of staff securely access awarding bodies' online systems in line with awarding body regulations regarding cyber security and the JCQ document *Guidance for centres on cyber security.*
  - Authorised staff will have access, when necessary, to a device which complies with awarding bodies' multi-factor authentication (MFA) requirements.

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 the serious incident resulting in exam candidates being unable to start, proceed with or complete their exams

Centre actions:

- Examinations Officer will liaise with Awarding Bodies to discuss alternative arrangements and work with SLT to take appropriate action.

9. 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.

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.

Centre actions:

- Examinations Officer and SLT will consider moving the start time of the examination for all candidates, provided they are kept in supervision from the correct time.
- If additional support is required, Examinations Officer will contact the relevant AB to discuss alternative arrangements and liaise with the SLT to take appropriate action. Daily Operations Manager to be consulted.
- If the head of centre decides the centre cannot be opened for scheduled exams the relevant awarding body must be informed as soon as possible. Awarding bodies will offer advice. Liaise with SLT to approve a reasonable outcome for the examinations to take place.
- Head of operations to manage the communication with students and parents as to the outcome.
- Awarding bodies and JCQ departments responsible for education have prepared and agreed 'contingency dates' in the event of any major disruptions to exams which are **Wednesday 11th June and Wednesday 25th June.** Students are informed to be available on these dates.

10. Disruption to 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:

- SLT to manage such incidents. Candidates will be taught remotely.

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

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Centre may not be able to open as normal for scheduled examinations due to an unforeseen emergency such as flooding

Centre actions:

The focus is on enabling candidates to take their examinations. The decision on whether it is safe for a centre to open lies with the head of centre who is responsible for taking advice or following instructions from relevant local or national agencies. Special consideration is an option if all other avenues have been exhausted, and the candidates meet the published criteria.

- Examinations Officer will contact the relevant AB to discuss alternative arrangements and liaise with SLT to take appropriate action. If appropriate, the Examinations Officer will notify the JCQ Inspection Service of an alternative site arrangement by submitting the JCQ Alternative Site Form online, using the Centre Admin Portal (CAP)

Alternative site venue details: Blackpool Sixth Form College

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 action:

- Examinations Officer to liaise with awarding organisations to get electronic access to examination papers via a secure external network
- Examinations Officer to ensure that copies received, made and stored under secure conditions
- 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 bodies to consider scheduling of the examination on alternative date.

13. Disruption to the transportation of completed examination scripts

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Delay in normal collection arrangements for completed examination scripts/assessments evidence

Centre actions:

- Where examinations are part of the national 'yellow label' service or where awarding bodies arrange collections, the examinations officer will contact the relevant awarding bodies for advice and instructions and will not make their own arrangements for transportation unless told to do so by the awarding body.
- For any examinations where the centre makes its own collection arrangements, the examinations officer will investigate alternative options that comply with the requirements detailed in the JCQ document Instructions for conducting examinations.
- Examinations Officer will ensure storage of completed examinations scripts until as close to the collection time as possible
- Examinations officer will inform the relevant awarding bodies if an examination is timetabled for the afternoon of the last day of term before the May holidays.

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:

- Examinations Officer will contact the awarding body to notify them of such incidents and act upon advice given
- Marks may be able to be generated by awarding body for the affected assessments base on other appropriate evidence of candidate evidence, as defined by the awarding organisations
- Where marks are unable to 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 due 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:

- Examinations officer will liaise with SLT to make arrangements to access the results/post-results services at an alternative site, in agreement with the relevant awarding organisation, or to send results electronically to students school email address if appropriate.

Alternative site: Blackpool Sixth form or for post-results services, the Examinations Officer will work from home.

Resilience arrangements for use in the unlikely event that the government determines that GCSE examinations and assessments will not go ahead as planned.

In the extremely unlikely event that the government determines that GCSE examinations and assessments will not go ahead as planned, these resilience arrangements set out how evidence of performance will be gathered. Throughout this process, the expert opinions of Heads of Department and teachers, together with academic oversight by the Head of Curriculum will form the basis for well-informed grades. The evidence provided by these resilience arrangements will ensure that there is sufficient evidence of candidate performance to enable alternative methods of awarding grades, such as Teacher Assessed Grades (TAGs), to be determined.

Scope of assessments

Hodgson Academy will plan assessment opportunities to gather evidence of candidate performance in line with their usual assessment approaches. Evidence gathered will be sufficient, so the school feels confident that, taken together, the evidence is an appropriate assessment of the knowledge, understanding and skills of the candidate.

Heads of Department and teachers will plan so that the evidence gathered for candidates assesses them on a wide range of content, similar to that which they will expect in their summer exams, and across the assessment objectives for the qualification.

Candidates will normally only be assessed on content they have been taught so far, at the point in the year when their teachers would usually assess them. Heads of Department and teachers will plan both the assessment opportunities, and when they take place, in ways they judge will best support their candidates in preparing for their exams. For the most part, credible grades will be collected from exam-condition mock examinations that take place in November and January of the final year of study for GCSEs.

The total assessment time will not exceed the total time candidates would spend taking exams for the relevant qualification, plus any time spent on non-exam assessment. Heads of Department and teachers will guard against over-assessment and will not spend longer on these assessments than they would on their existing assessment arrangements. As such, by following the existing internal mock assessment arrangements, the school will have sufficient evidence.

Hodgson Academy will not look to introduce additional assessments for the purpose of gathering evidence of student performance, as this will be counter to supporting candidates as they prepare for their exams. Ideally candidates will benefit from the opportunities they are given to prepare for their exams and will not be adversely affected by taking too many assessments. Providing mock exams are completed in this way, one set should be sufficient for the purposes of gathering evidence.

Heads of Department and teachers may also choose to carry out other internal assessments across the year that are not for the purpose of evidence collection.

The conditions candidates are assessed

Hodgson Academy will assess candidates to provide them with opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding in ways that cover the assessment objectives for the qualification. Candidates taking GCSEs will be assessed under exam conditions. For example, candidates will:

- Not know the questions in the assessment beforehand
- Work independently and without assistance (unless candidate has reasonable adjustments/ Access Arrangements)
- Not have any access to books or revision notes
- Be assessed under timed conditions
- Adequate spacing between exam desks in the Sports Hall
- Invigilators present
- All unauthorised items handed in to boxes and removed from the Sports Hall

These measures will help to ensure that the work is authentic and, given that this reflects the conditions under which formal examinations would have been taken, will prepare candidates for the summer exams.

Assessment materials

The mock GCSE assessments will be similar to the full or parts of the exam papers that candidates are preparing to take and will be based on exam board materials.

Student Awareness

Candidates will be made aware that any assessment evidence collected and retained under these arrangements will be used to determine grades only in the unlikely situation that exams and formal assessments cannot go ahead. Students will also be told, where possible, before taking any assessment, whether their performance in the assessment would be used as part of the evidence to determine a grade for them if exams cannot go ahead as planned.

In exceptional circumstances, it might be necessary for assessments that were not taken in line with this guidance to be used as evidence to inform a grade should exams not go ahead as planned. This could be, for example, where a student misses the mock examinations because of serious illness. In such cases, the student might not have been told in advance of taking the assessment that their performance might be used as evidence. Hodgson Academy will expect to receive guidance on how to take this into account when determining TAGs once notified by the government that the exams cannot proceed as expected.

Marking

Teachers will mark the assessments in line with published exam board mark schemes and guidance where appropriate. As these arrangements are intended to support the existing internal assessment process, candidates will be given feedback, which could include marks or comments. Students will not, however, repeat assessments with the same questions following such feedback for the purpose of evidence collection.

Teachers will make it clear to their candidates that any grade used to indicate the level at which the student has performed is not an indication of what their final grade would be if it became necessary to award a qualification using the evidence. It will not be possible for a teacher to determine a final qualification grade unless Ofqual sets specific guidance on this, which Ofqual will do only if exams do not go ahead.

Retention of work/assessments

Students' mock papers/ assessments, either the original or copy, will always be retained either physically or digitally by Hodgson Academy. Students may be given copes of their assessments where this sould support their study.

Non-examined assessment

Where a GCSE/BTEC includes a non-assessment (NEA), subject teachers will support their candidates, wherever possible, to complete that assessment in line with the timescales set by the exam boards. Should exams be cancelled, teachers will take a student's NEA into account when determining a TAG.

Reasonable adjustments for disabled candidates

The same reasonable adjustments that will be made for disabled candidates taking exams in the summer will, where possible, be applied to the assessments. Records should be made of the adjustments and the reasons for them. Hodgson Academy will record the reason why any reasonable adjustment was not made.

If a student's need for a reasonable adjustment is only identified after an assessment has taken place, their teacher will record the reason for this late identification and where possible allow the student to take a different, but equivalent, assessment with the reasonable adjustment in place.

Special considerations for candidates whose performance is affected by an event outside of their control

If a teacher is satisfied that a student's performance in one or more of the assessments was affected by an event that was outside of the student's control at the time of, or immediately before, the assessment, such as illness or family bereavement, the teacher will mark the assessment as normal but record the issues so that these could be taken into account when determining a grade, should that be necessary.

Hodgson Academy will ensure candidates know they need to tell their teachers before, or immediately after, the assessment of any events outside of their control that might have affected their performance in an assessment.

Further guidance to inform procedures and implement contingency planning

Ofqual

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

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

Contingency planning

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

Disruption to assessments or exams

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

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

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

Steps you should take

Exam planning

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

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

In the event of disruption

1. Contact the relevant awarding organisation promptly 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 question papers or assessment materials to the alternative venue.

4. Where accommodation is limited, prioritise students whose progression will be severely delayed if they do not take their exam or timetabled assessment when planned.

5. In the event of an evacuation during an examination please refer to JCQ's Centre emergency evacuation procedure.

6. Communicate with students, parents and carers any changes to the exam or assessment timetable or to the venue.

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

After the exam

1. Consider whether any students' ability to take the assessment or demonstrate their level of attainment has been materially affected and, if so, apply to the relevant awarding organisation for special consideration.

2. Advise students, where appropriate, of the opportunities to take their exam or assessment at a later date.

3. Ensure that scripts are stored under secure conditions.

4. Return scripts to awarding organisations in line with their instructions. Never make alternative arrangements for the transportation of completed exam scripts, unless told to do so by the awarding organisation.

Steps the awarding organisation should take

Exam planning

1. Establish and maintain, and at all times comply with, an up-to-date, written contingency plan.

2. Ensure that the arrangements in place with centres and other third parties enable them to deliver and award qualifications in accordance with their conditions of recognition.

In the event of disruption

1. Take all reasonable steps to mitigate any adverse effect, in relation to their qualifications, arising from any disruption.

2. Provide effective guidance to any of their centres delivering qualifications.

3. Ensure that where an assessment must be completed under specified conditions, students are able to complete the assessment under those conditions (other than where any reasonable adjustments or special considerations require alternative conditions).

4. Promptly notify the relevant regulators about any event which could have an adverse effect on students, standards or public confidence.

5. Coordinate its communications with the relevant regulators where the disruption has an impact on multiple centres or a wide range of learners.

After the exam

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

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

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

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

See also JCQ's guidance on special consideration.

Wider communications

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

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

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

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

Widespread national disruption to the taking of examinations or assessments

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

In September 2023, Ofqual and the DfE published joint consultation decisions on long-term resilience arrangements. As in 2023, Ofqual has provided guidance on collecting evidence of student performance to ensure resilience in the qualifications system for students entering GCSEs, AS and A levels, the Advanced Extension Award and Project qualifications. For VTQs and other qualifications used alongside or instead of GCSEs, AS and A levels, awarding organisations will provide guidance where needed and will contact schools and colleges with more information.

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

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

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

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

General contingency guidance

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

JCQ

CONTINGENCY PLANNING

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

15.2 In addition, awarding bodies have their own well-established contingency plans in place to respond to disruptions. It is important that exam 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 If the head of centre decides the centre cannot be opened for scheduled examinations, the centre's contingency plan must be invoked, utilising the centre's alternative site(s) and the relevant awarding bodies must be informed as soon as possible. Awarding bodies will be able to offer advice regarding the alternative arrangements for conducting examinations that may be available and the options for candidates who have not been able to take scheduled examinations.

15.5 The awarding bodies will designate 'contingency sessions' for examinations, summer 2025. This is consistent with the qualification regulators' document Exam system contingency plan: England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

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

15.7 In the event of national disruption to a day of examinations in summer 2025, the awarding bodies will liaise with the qualification regulators and government departments to agree the most appropriate option for managing the impact. As a last resort the affected examinations will be rescheduled. Although every effort would be taken to keep the impact to a minimum, it is possible that there could be more than one timetable date affected following the disruption, up to and including the last contingency day. Centres will be alerted if it is agreed to reschedule the examinations and the affected candidates will be expected to make themselves available in such circumstances. The decision regarding the rescheduling of examinations will always rest with the

awarding body. The centre must conduct the examination on the scheduled date unless instructed to do otherwise by the awarding body.15.8

15.8 Where candidates choose not to be available for the rescheduled examination(s) for reasons other than those 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 take them into account when making their plans for the summer.

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Emergency planning and response: Exam and assessment disruption

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/emergency-planning-and-response-for-education-childcare-and-childrens-social-care-settings

Cyber security standards for schools and colleges

https://www.gov.uk/guidance/meeting-digital-and-technology-standards-in-schools-and-colleges/cyber-security-standards-for-schools-and-colleges

Dispatch of exam scripts: yellow label service

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

Teaching time lost due to severe weather conditions

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

Statutory guidance on school closures

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-organisation-maintained-schools