



# Inspire Education Trust

Together we achieve, individually we grow

## Contingency Plan 2024-2025 Blue Coat CE Secondary School

---

Policy Date: September 2024

Review Date: September 2025

## Document History

Version	Status	Date	Author	Summary Changes
V1		September 2023	Kelly Jobson	Updated to Reflect JCQ changes 2023-2024
V2		June 2024	Kelly Jobson	Updated to reflect the alternative site venue change Page 7
V3		September 2024	Kelly Jobson	Updated to reflect JCQ Changes 2024-2025. Changes highlighted in yellow
V4		October 2024	Paul Cowley	Addition to pages 8 and 9 re: IT failure and cyber response

This plan is reviewed and updated annually to ensure that exam contingency planning at Blue Coat School is managed in accordance with current requirements and regulations.

## Purpose of the Plan

This plan examines potential risks and issues that could cause disruption to the exam process. 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 at Blue Coat School.

Alongside internal processes this plan is informed by the Ofqual 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 2023).

This plan details how Blue Coat School complies with the JCQ's General Regulations for Approved Centres (section 5.3, Centre management) by having in place a written examination contingency plan which covers all aspects of examination administration.

## Contingency arrangements

(GR3.17) All centres 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/ALNCo, 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 their contingency plan centres 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. The following guidance will provide a framework for senior leaders to build and shape a plan/policy in light of their local circumstances: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/exam-system-contingency-plan-englandwales-and-northern-ireland>

Preparing for disruption to examinations - JCQ Joint Council for Qualifications 9 3.18 Each 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. 3.19 Centres must ensure that candidates' work is backed-up and should consider the contingency of candidates' work being backed-up on two separate devices, including one off-site back-up. Centres must implement appropriate security arrangements which protect candidates' work in the event of IT system corruption and cyber-attacks.

## Operating Across More Than One Centre National Centre Number Register and Other Information Requirements

The head of centre will ensure that the centre responds to the National Centre Number Register annual update by the end of October every year 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)

## Possible Causes of Disruption to the Exam Process

### 1. Exams 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:

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above the centre will:

- Advise SLT member responsible for Exams, Exams Assistant to cover Exam Officer Role with assistance from the member of SLT responsible for Exams and the Data Manager. Advertise for a temporary Exams Manager, if required.

## 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 supports not arranged for exam rooms

## Other Criteria:

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above, the centre will:

- Work with the Deputy SENDCo to identify students' 'needs' Check documentation with SEND clerical support.

### 3. Teaching Staff Extended Absence at a Critical Stage of the Exam Cycle

Criteria for implementation of the plan Key tasks not undertaken including:

- Early/estimated entry information not provided to the exams officer on time; resulting in pre-release information not being received
- Final entry information not provided to the exams officer on time; resulting in candidates not being entered for exams/assessments or being entered late/late or other penalty fees being charged by awarding bodies
- Non-examination assessment tasks not set/issued/taken by candidates as scheduled
- Candidates not being informed of centre assessed marks before marks are submitted to the awarding body and therefore not being able to consider appealing internal assessment decisions and requesting a review of the centre's marking
- Internal assessment marks and candidates' work not provided to meet awarding body submission deadlines
- Controlled assessment and coursework.

Other Criteria:

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above the centre will:

- Adjust timetable as far as is practical to ensure subject specialist teachers are teaching examination groups. Hire Subject specialists supply staff, if required.

### 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 listed above the centre will:

- Contact other invigilators on our contact list to bring them into school
- If possible reseat examinations to reduce the number of invigilators required
- Use senior staff as invigilators (observing regulatory restrictions in relation to teacher invigilation)
- Combine small SEND rooms if appropriate

## 5. Exam rooms - lack of appropriate rooms or main venue(s) 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 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 venue details: Use B rooms, S rooms in the HUB, library, Canteen, Upper floor of Welby, Post 16 old and new block as examination rooms.
- Communicate with candidates (and where appropriate, parents/carers) any changes to the exam timetable or venue

#### Instructions to staff

: The Examination Officer or Assistant will

Communicate any changes via Arbor /email as appropriate.

Ensure the secure transportation of question papers or assessment materials to the alternative venue Sidney Stringer School.

- (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
- If a venue on site is out of action, we may shut the remaining school to all pupils and use classroom venues.
- In the event the above cannot happen and the whole site is out of use, we will move the examinations to Sidney Stringer School and reduce the year groups on site and use their main hall venues and classrooms with coach facilities if possible.

## 6. Cyber-Attack

### Criteria for Implementation of the Plan

The contingency plan will be implemented if the following criteria are met during a cyber-attack:

- **Disruption to Examination Systems:** In the event of a cyber-attack that affects the ICT systems used for exam administration (e.g., exam registration, scheduling, or communication with awarding bodies), resulting in the inability to access or process examination data.
- **Interruption of Digital Exam Papers:** If the cyber-attack disrupts the availability of electronic exam papers, online exams, or any digital resources necessary for the conduct of the examination.
- **Loss of Candidate Data:** Should there be any breach or compromise of student data, including personal details, exam entries, or results, the plan will be triggered to ensure confidentiality and integrity are maintained.
- **Communication Breakdown:** If the cyber-attack impacts communication channels between the exam centre and the awarding body, preventing the timely submission of exam papers, candidate details, or queries.
- **System Shutdown or Lockout:** In the case of a widespread system lockout or shutdown due to malware or ransomware, which prevents normal administrative and exam-related functions.

### Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above the centre will:

Inspire Education Trust have a Cyber Response plan in place that will be actioned in the event of a Cyber Attack. All relevant information regarding specific actions the Trust will undertake during an attack, including contacting external bodies, are detailed in there.

The below actions are specific to Exam contingency and assume the Trust Cyber Response Plan is being followed.

- **Switch to Backup Systems:** Use manual or offline records to manage exams and candidate data.
- **Contact the Awarding Body:** Inform the exam board about the issue and follow their guidance.
- **Use Alternative Communication:** Use phones or other non-digital methods to stay in touch with the awarding body and staff.
- **Inform Students and Staff:** Quickly update everyone on any changes to exam schedules or procedures.



## 7. Failure of IT systems

### Criteria for Implementation of the Plan

- MIS/IT system failure at final entry submission deadline
- MIS/IT system failure during exams preparation (Exam scheduling/seating plans etc)
- MIS/IT system failure during exam time (Online examinations)
- MIS/IT system failure at results release time (Downloading and producing results slips)

### Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above:

When a disruption occurs during any of the above times that is caused by an MIS/IT failure, Exams Office is to contact Trust ICT Support urgently – Give as much information to technicians as possible.

- Trust ICT support are available all year round and can be contacted on the below channels:
  - Internal phone extension for ICT – 1010
  - Email for ICT – [ICT@IETrust.org](mailto:ICT@IETrust.org)
  - Based in room B5 for face to face.
  - If radio has been issued, contact on agreed channel.

Under the assumption that the ICT team have been notified and there is no immediate resolution to MIS/IT issue, the Exams Officer should then follow the below actions:

Exams Officer to contact awarding bodies and notify of failure and seek guidance for particular scenario.

#### MIS failure – any time

The Trust use a cloud MIS system that is highly available. Upon failure with no immediate resolution, the Exams Officer should:

Contact Trust ICT to liaise with MIS provider

Contact awarding bodies and notify of failure – seek alternate solutions or extension to deadline.

#### IT Failure – Entries, Pre-Exams, Results/post results

Contact awarding bodies and notify of failure.

Where possible, work from another site. (i.e. Internet connectivity failure at exam site, work from a different Trust school that has connectivity)

#### IT Failure – Exam time

Exams Officer to contact awarding bodies and notify of failure and seek guidance for particular scenario. (ie – resitting online exam)

## 8. Emergency Evacuation of the Exam Room (or Centre Lockdown)

Please refer to centres Emergency evacuation policy.

## 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 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
  
- Communications details:
  - 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

## 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 Other

Criteria:

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above the centre will:

- 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: parents/carers) will be informed/communicated with via Email/Arbor and the school website will be updated.
- 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

- 

## 11. Centre May Not Be Able to Open as Normal During the Examination Period

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

### Criteria for Implementation of the Plan

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

### Other Criteria:

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above the centre will:

- 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 (CAP).)
- Contact the relevant awarding body as soon as possible and follow its instructions
- 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 venue details: Sidney Stringer School Coventry
- Communication details:
- If required, an alternative location to be arranged where possible and advertised via website and social media. The Examination Boards are contacted immediately by the Exams Officer and advice is sought and acted upon
- 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
- 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

## 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:

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

## 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:
- No other criteria identified
- 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 arrangements for transportation, investigate alternative dispatch options that comply with the requirements detailed in the **JCQ Instructions for conducting examinations**
- ensure the secure storage of completed examination scripts until collection

## 14. Assessment Evidence is Not Available to Be Marked

### Criteria for Implementation of the Plan

- Large scale damage to or destruction of completed examination scripts/assessment evidence before it can be marked
- Completed examination scripts/assessment evidence does not reach awarding organisations
- Other criteria:
- No other actions 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

## 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

### 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 facility 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 venue
- Alternative venue details: Sidney Stringer School Coventry
- 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: Communicate any changes via Arbor/email as appropriate

## 16. Any Other Cause of Disruption to the Exam Process

### Cause of Disruption

- No further cases identified

### 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](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)

"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 JCQ's guidance on special consideration

### **Wider communications**

The regulators, Ofqual in England, Qualifications in Wales and 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 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 (UCAS) and the Central (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
- 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

JCQ guidance taken directly from Instructions section 15, **Contingency planning**

"15.1 The qualification regulators, awarding bodies and government departments responsible for education have prepared and agreed information for schools and colleges in the event of examinations being seriously disrupted. This jointly agreed information will ensure consistency of response in the event of major disruption to the examinations system affecting significant numbers of candidates.

Further information may be found at: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/exam-system-contingency-plan-england-wales-and-northern-ireland](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/exam-system-contingency-plan-england-wales-and-northern-ireland)

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

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

•  
examination cycle. The examination contingency plan should reinforce procedures in the event of the centre being unavailable for examinations owing to an unforeseen emergency.

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

15.4 In the event that the head of centre decides the centre cannot be opened for scheduled examinations, the 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* - [www.gov.uk/government/publications/exam-system-contingency-plan-england-wales-and-northern-ireland](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/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 that there is 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 was agreed to reschedule the examinations and the affected candidates will be expected to make themselves available in such circumstances. The decision regarding the re-scheduling of examinations will always rest with the awarding body. The centre must conduct the examination on the scheduled date unless instructed to do otherwise by the awarding body.

15.8 Where candidates choose not to be available for the rescheduled examination(s) for reasons other than those traditionally covered by special consideration, they will not be eligible for enhanced grading arrangements. Centres **must** therefore ensure candidates and parents are aware of the contingency arrangements so that they may take them into account when making their plans for the summer. However, the awarding bodies will not insist upon candidates being available throughout the entire timetable period as a matter of course."

### Links to other JCQ documentation

JCQ Joint Contingency Plan

JCQ Preparing for disruption to examinations

General Regulations for Approved Centres

Guidance notes on alternative site arrangements

Guidance notes for transferred candidates

Instructions for conducting examinations

- 

A guide to the special consideration process

Guidance for centres on cyber security

Information for centres affected by RAAC – the delivery of non-examination assessments and the special consideration process

Further clarification for centres affected by RAAC, Caledonian Modular or similar building issues – March 2024

## **GOV.UK**

Emergency planning and response: Exam and assessment disruption

Dispatch of exam scripts guide: Ensuring the service runs smoothly; Contingency planning

## **Wales**

School closures: examinations

Opening schools in extremely bad weather and extreme hot weather

## **Northern Ireland**

Exceptional closure days - Northern Ireland

Checklist - exceptional closure of schools


## **National Cyber Security Centre**

Cyber Security for Schools

Cyber security training for school staff

•  
**Reviewed:** Kelly Jobson September 2024  
Paul Cowley November 2024  
  
**Next Review Date:** September 2025  
  
**Approved by Directors:** 23 September 2024

Signed:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Lois Whitehouse  
CEO

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Nicky Aston  
Chair of Standards

