

Beech Lodge School
CONTINGENCY PLAN
2024/2025

This policy is reviewed annually to ensure compliance with current regulations.

Approved/reviewed by	James Thorpe
Date of next review	September 2025

Key staff involved in the procedure

Role	Names
Proprietor	Daniela Shanly
Head of Centre	James Thorpe
SENCo	Sara Doherty
SLT members	Daniela Shanly, Lucy Barnes, Dan Gillespie, James Thorpe, Jack Rider
Teaching staff	All staff
Access arrangement facilitator/Exams Officer	Sara Doherty/Shelley Hopper

Contents

Purpose of the plan.....	3
Contingency arrangements.....	3
National Centre Number Register and other information requirements	3
Head of centre absence at a critical stage of the exam cycle	4
Possible causes of disruption to the exam process	4
1. Exam officer extended absence at a critical stage of the exam cycle	4
2. SENCo (or equivalent role) extended absence at a critical stage of the exam cycle.....	5
3. Teaching staff extended absence at a critical stage of the exam cycle.....	5
4. Invigilators - lack of appropriately trained invigilators or invigilator absence.....	6
5. Exam rooms - lack of appropriate rooms or main venues unavailable at short notice	6
6. Cyber-attack	6
7. Failure of IT systems	7
8. Emergency evacuation of the exam room (or centre lockdown)	7
9. Disruption caused by teaching staff/support staff industrial strike action	7
10. Disruption of teaching time in the weeks before an exam – centre closed for an extended period	8
11. Candidates may not be able to take examinations - centre remains open	8
12. Centre may not be able to open as normal during the examination period.....	8
13. Disruption to public transport preventing students from reaching examination centre.....	9
14. Disruption due to extreme weather	9
15. Disruption in the distribution of examination papers	9
16. Delay in collection arrangements for completed examination scripts	10
17. Assessment evidence is not available to be marked	10
18. Centre unable to distribute results as normal or facilitate post results services.....	10
Further guidance to inform procedures and implement contingency planning.....	12
DfE	12
Ofqual	12
JCQ.....	15
GOV.UK.....	16
Wales.....	16
Northern Ireland	16
National Cyber Security Centre	16

Purpose of the plan

This plan examines potential risks and issues that could cause disruption to the examination/assessment process at Beech Lodge School. By outlining actions/procedures to be invoked in case of disruption it is intended to mitigate the impact these disruptions have on our processes.

Alongside internal processes, this plan is informed by the Ofqual (and Northern Ireland Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment) **Exam system contingency plan: England, Wales and Northern Ireland** which provides guidance in the publication *What schools and colleges and other centres should do if exams or other assessments are seriously disrupted*, 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 Beech Lodge School'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 examination/assessment administration and delivery

Contingency arrangements

In accordance with the regulations (GR 3.17-19), Beech Lodge School **must** have an up to date written contingency plan.

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

The plan must cover the following scenarios:

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

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

Beech Lodge School **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.

Beech Lodge School **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. Appropriate security arrangements must be implemented which protect candidates' work in the event of IT system corruption and cyber-attacks.

National Centre Number Register and other information requirements

In accordance with the regulations (GR 5.3), the head of centre will ensure that Beech Lodge School 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.

Head of centre absence at a critical stage of the exam cycle

In the event of the absence of the Head of Centre, responsibility for implementing JCQ regulations and requirements relating to during exam time will be escalated to Dan Gillespie (Headteacher).

The centre also has in place a member of the senior leadership team (Lucy Barnes – Principle) who will provide support and guidance to the examinations officer and ensure that the integrity and security of examinations and assessments is maintained throughout an examination series.

In the absence of the Head of Centre, Dan Gillespie and/or Lucy Barnes will act as an emergency point of contact for the awarding bodies. They have the authority to liaise across the centre and ensure that any issues, queries, raised by an awarding body are successfully resolved.

Possible causes of disruption to the exam process

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

Criteria for implementation of the plan

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

Planning

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

Entries

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

Pre-exams

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

Exam time

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

Results and post-results

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

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- *Exam Officer to keep Head of Centre updated about all aspects of the exam cycle*
- *Head of Centre to verify and check the entries with the School Administrator*
- *Additional admin support to be put in place if needed, from the front office*
- *Assistant Head and School Administrator to be constantly updated and trained on examination procedures and changes in line with awarding body and JCQ regulations*
- *Head of Centre to oversee training for invigilators in Exam Officers absence*

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*

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- *Assistant Head/Head of Centre to oversee the SENCo role*
- *Examination Officer to have liaison with the Head of Centre on examination arrangements, applications for additional needs and allocation of support staff*

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 (including controlled assessments and coursework) tasks not set/issued/taken by candidates as scheduled

Candidates not being informed of centre assessed marks before marks are submitted to the awarding body and therefore not being able to consider appealing internal assessment decisions and requesting a review of the centre's marking

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

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- *Exams Officer to work with Head of Centre to ensure all estimated information is gathered and submitted ahead of deadlines*
- *Exams Officer to work with Head of Centre to ensure all final entry information is gathered and entries made ahead of deadlines*
- *Escalation process – should the Head of Centre be absent, the Headteacher will take over the role as Head of Centre*
- *Additional specialist teaching support to be sought from partner school and local school network if needed*

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

- *Admin staff and LSAs have been dual trained to step in, in case of an emergency or absence*

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

Criteria for implementation of the plan

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

Insufficient rooms available on peak exam days

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

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- *Head of Centre to close the school to certain year groups if needed, due to unplanned incidents to free up space for the examinations*
- *Head of Centre to prioritise rooming for examinations and have arranged for classes to be moved to other areas*
- *Relocate to alternative venue if necessary – Berkshire College of Agriculture*

6. Cyber-attack

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Where a cyber-attack may compromise any aspect of delivery

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- *(GR 3.21) Ensure there are procedures in place to maintain the security of user accounts by:*
 - a) providing training for authorised staff on the importance of creating strong unique passwords and keeping all account details secret*
 - b) providing training for staff on awareness of all types of social engineering/ phishing attempts*
 - c) enabling additional security settings wherever possible*
 - d) updating any passwords that may have been exposed*
 - e) setting up secure account recovery options*
 - f) reviewing and managing connected applications*
 - g) monitoring accounts and regularly reviewing account access, including removing access when no longer required*
 - h) ensuring authorised members of staff securely access awarding bodies' online systems in line with awarding body regulations regarding cyber security and the JCQ document Guidance for centres on cyber security*
Authorised staff will have access, where necessary, to a device which complies with awarding bodies' multi-factor authentication (MFA) requirements.
- *Report any actual or suspected compromise of an awarding body's online systems immediately to the relevant awarding body*
- *In the case of any actual or suspected cyber-attack the Exams Officer/IT Manager will immediately contact TSI (specialist external ICT provider) for support*

7. Failure of IT systems

Criteria for implementation of the plan

IT system corruption affecting candidates' work

MIS system failure at final entry deadline

MIS system failure during exams preparation

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

MIS system failure at results release time

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- *(GR 3.19) 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. Implement appropriate security arrangements which protect candidates' work in the event of IT system corruption and cyber-attacks.*
- *ICT system is backed up on a regular basis*
- *Seek ICT specialist help from external provider (TSI) to resolve the issue as quickly as possible*
- *Exams Officer will make entries from another site direct to the awarding bodies (using awarding bodies' secure extranet sites).*
- *Exam room scheduling/timetables compiled using alternative methods (alternative software/manual bookings and timetables).*
- *Exams Officer will contact awarding bodies in respect of re-sitting online exams affected by system failure, or to seek an alternative solution.*
- *In the case of a power outage, students using laptops for exams (due to Access Arrangements) will be able to continue their work using the laptops' internal battery.*
- *Laptops always fully charged at the start of exams and students to 'save' their work regularly.*
- *Results accessed directly from the awarding bodies' secure extranet sites (accessed from an alternative site if necessary).*

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

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Whole centre evacuation (or lockdown) during exam time due to serious incident resulting in exam candidates being unable to start, proceed with or complete their exams

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- *Beech Lodge has a separate policy for emergency evacuation of the exam room (or lockdown) which details the responsibilities of staff and the actions to be taken in the event of an emergency*
- *See evacuation sheet in each exam room*

9. Disruption caused by teaching staff/support staff industrial strike action

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Exams disrupted due to teaching staff/support staff participating in national industrial action

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- *Beech Lodge School is a private specialist school, and is not bound by the same pay negotiations affecting mainstream schools.*

- *If Beech Lodge were to be affected by industrial strike action, the Head of Centre would work with SLT to ensure that priority is given to ensuring that exam preparation, and exams, can go ahead as planned.*
- *In the case that exams are affected nationally, the Exams Officer will monitor communications from JQC and awarding bodies, and will act upon their instructions accordingly.*

10. 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

- *The school would relocate to another identified area in collaboration with other local schools/organisations, within 5 to 10 days, in order that teaching and learning could be resumed, with priority being to students preparing for examinations.*
- *Head of Centre and centre staff to support students to access online lessons (via Teams).*
- *Apply for special consideration, if appropriate.*

11. 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

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- *Request alternative centre for examinations, if required, due to not being able to get in to the school buildings.*
- *Medical needs student – if a student is unable to come into school, they are to have home invigilation, after requested and permission given from the appropriate examination boards.*
- *Special consideration to be requested, if appropriate.*

12. Centre may not be able to open as normal during the examination period

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

Criteria for implementation of the plan

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

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- *The school would relocate the Berkshire College of Agriculture, in order to take examinations, following a request to the relevant examination board to relocate the centre and having gained approval*
- *Notify the JCQ Centre Inspection Service of an alternative site arrangement by submitting the JCQ Alternative Site form online, using the Centre Admin Portal (CAP).)*
- *Special consideration to be sought, if appropriate*

13. Disruption to public transport preventing students from reaching examination centre

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Candidates unable to take examinations due to planned lack of public transport
Candidates unable to take examinations due to sudden disruption to public transport
Candidates arrive late due to public transport problems

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- *No students at Beech Lodge School currently travel by public transport (students are transported by parents/carers or taxis).*
- *Exams Officer or Head of Centre will liaise with students/parents/carers/taxi companies to ensure that they are all aware of any potential disruption to public transport that may have a knock-on effect to road travel (e.g. heavier than normal traffic).*
- *Students/parents/carers/taxis advised to allow for extra travelling time if necessary.*
- *Latecomers to be permitted to take their examinations providing they are within the JCQ regulations.*
- *Centres to apply to awarding organisations for special consideration for candidates where they have met the minimum requirements.*

14. Disruption due to extreme weather

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Extreme weather causing disruption to exams

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- *In cases of high temperatures, Beech Lodge would take steps to ensure that students can comfortably sit their exams by:*
 - *Ensure doors and windows are open to allow ventilation;*
 - *Utilise exam rooms that are away from the glare of the sun;*
 - *Provide portable fans for exam room;*
 - *Provide chilled water for students.*
- *In cases of predicted inclement weather, the Head of Centre or Exams Officer would liaise with students, parents/carers and taxi companies to advise that they should allow for extra travelling time when heading to the centre.*
- *In the case that exams are affected nationally, the Exams Officer will monitor communications from JQC and awarding bodies, and will act upon their instructions accordingly.*

15. Disruption in the distribution of examination papers

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Disruption to the distribution of examination papers to the centre in advance of examinations

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- *If security measures are compromised, the centre would inform the relevant examination board immediately to notify them of the issue.*
- *If the papers were not received within the timeframe, the Examination Officer would contact the relevant exam board.*
- *If the papers needed to be sent to a different venue as the centre is closed, a redirection notification would be sent to the board and to the couriers.*

- *Awarding organisations to provide centre with electronic access to examination papers via a secure external network. The Exams Officer would ensure that copies are received, made and stored under secure conditions. Awarding body guidance would be followed to uphold the conduct of examinations in such circumstances.*

16. 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

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- *The Examination Officer to securely place examination papers back into the secure storage area until the designated courier is contacted and picks up the papers.*
- *Examination Officer to contact relevant awarding organisations for advice as needed.*

17. Assessment evidence is not available to be marked

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Large scale damage to or destruction of completed examination scripts/assessment evidence before it can be marked

Completed examination scripts/assessment evidence does not reach awarding organisations

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- *Exams Officer to immediately communicate with relevant exam boards.*
- *Head of Centre to communicate with students and their parents/carers.*
- *Centre to apply for special consideration, if appropriate.*
- *All teacher assessed work to be backed up and copied before it is sent to the examination centre/examiner.*
- *All work to be backed up on the ICT system, if appropriate, which could be retrieved and then sent. This data will also be backed up regularly.*
- *Awarding organisations to generate candidate marks for affected assessments based on other appropriate evidence of candidate achievement as defined by the awarding organisations.*
- *Where marks cannot be generated by awarding organisations candidates may need to retake affected assessment in a subsequent assessment series.*

18. Centre unable to distribute results as normal or facilitate post results services

(Including in the event of the centre being unavailable on results day owing to an unforeseen emergency)

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Centre is unable to access or manage the distribution of results to candidates, or to facilitate post-results services

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

Distribution of results:

- *Head of Centre/Exams Officer would make arrangements to access its results at an alternative site, the Berkshire College of Agriculture, in agreement with the relevant awarding organisation.*
- *Head of Centre/Exams Officer would make arrangements to coordinate access to post results services from an alternative site, Berkshire College of Agriculture.*
- *Request from the examination boards paper copies of results to distribute.*

Facilitation of post results services:

- *Contact our ICT external provider (TSI) to resolve ICT issues*
- *Head of Centre/Exams Officer would make arrangements to make post results requests at an alternative location, Berkshire College of Agriculture*
- *School to contact the relevant awarding organisation if electronic post results requests are not possible*

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

What schools and colleges and other centres 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

1. Contact the relevant awarding organisation and follow its instructions.
2. Take advice, or follow instructions, from relevant local or national agencies in deciding whether your centre is able to open.
3. Identify whether the exam or timetabled assessment can be sat at an alternative venue, in agreement with the relevant awarding organisation, ensuring the secure transportation of questions papers or assessment materials to the alternative venue.
4. Where accommodation is limited, prioritise students whose progression will be severely delayed if they do not take their exam or timetabled assessment when planned.
5. In the event of an evacuation during an examination please refer to JCQ's Centre emergency evacuation procedure.
6. Communicate with 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

(Ofqual guidance extract above taken directly from the Exam system contingency plan: England, Wales and Northern Ireland - **What schools and colleges and other centres should do if exams or other assessments are seriously disrupted** (last updated 7 May 2024)

<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>)

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: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/exam-system-contingency-plan-england-wales-and-northern-ireland>

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

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

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

15.4 In the event that the head of centre decides the centre cannot be opened for scheduled examinations, the 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 Where candidates choose not to be available for the rescheduled examination(s) for reasons other than those traditionally covered by special consideration, they will not be eligible for enhanced grading arrangements. Centres **must** therefore ensure candidates and parents are aware of the contingency arrangements so that they may take them into account when making their plans for the summer.

(JCQ guidance above taken directly from **Instructions for conducting examinations 2024-2025** <http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/ice---instructions-for-conducting-examinations>, section 15, Contingency planning)

JCQ Joint Contingency Plan www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/other-documents

JCQ 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

Instructions for conducting examinations www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/ice---instructions-for-conducting-examinations

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

Guidance for centres on cyber security (Effective from November 2023) www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations/

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

Information for centres affected by RAAC – the delivery of non-examination assessments and the special consideration process www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/non-examination-assessments/

Further clarification for centres affected by RAAC, Caledonian Modular or similar building issues – March 2024 www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/non-examination-assessments/

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: Ensuring the service runs smoothly; Contingency planning

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

Wales

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

Opening schools as well as childcare and play settings in extreme bad weather and 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 <https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/section/education-skills/cyber-security-schools>

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