



ALDERCAR HIGH SCHOOL

Exam Contingency Plan

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Approval Level : Local Governing Board			

Exam Contingency Plan

Aldercar High School

Exam Contingency Plan

Centre Name	Aldercar High School
Centre Number	23236
Date plan first created	09/09/2024
Current plan approved by	Adam Blake
Current plan reviewed by	Emily Biggs
Date of next review	Sep 2025

Key staff involved in the policy

Role	Name
Head of Centre	Clare Hatto
Senior leader(s)	Jo Powdrill, Adam Blake, Trudy Williams, Sarah Murray and Katy Hall
Exams officer	Emily Biggs
ALS lead/SENCo	Kate Temple
Other staff (if applicable)	Exams Asst - Kiki Mourelatou

This plan is reviewed and updated annually to ensure that exam contingency planning at Aldercar High 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 Aldercar High 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**.

This plan details how Aldercar High 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. 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, or on results day, owing to an unforeseen emergency. The potential impact of a cyber-attack should also be considered.

Operating across more than one centre National Centre Number Register and other information requirements

The head of centre will also ensure that as a contingency to enable the prompt handling of urgent issues only, responds to the awarding bodies' request for information regarding the contact details of a senior member of staff (which might include a personal mobile number and/or email address). This will ensure that any urgent matters which might adversely affect candidates which arise outside of term time, and which potentially put qualification awards at risk, can be addressed by awarding bodies with the support of that member of staff. Heads of centre should ensure that this member of staff has the necessary authority to mobilise resources to provide this support, which might include resolving issues within the centre itself. (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:

No other criteria identified

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

Exams assistant will follow procedures and practices within the Examinations Officer remit. Exams Officer to ensure essential information is available to Deputy Head (Academic) Exams Officer to ensure Exam Cycle, policies and procedures in place.

2. ALS lead/SENCo extended absence at a critical stage of the exam cycle

Criteria for implementation of the plan

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

Planning

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

Pre-exams

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

Exam time

- access arrangement candidate support not arranged for exam rooms

Other criteria:

No other criteria identified

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above The centre

will:

Deputy Head (Academic) to appoint a suitable Deputy SENCo as rapidly as possible, who will follow procedures and practices within the SENCo remit. Exams Officer to ensure essential information is available to Deputy Head (Academic) Exams Officer to ensure Exam Cycle, policies and procedures in place.

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

Other criteria:

No other criteria identified

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

Deputy Head (Academic) to ensure departmental continuity by requesting an alternative member of the takes responsibility for the actions above.

4. Invigilators - lack of appropriately trained invigilators or invigilator absence

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- Failure to recruit and train sufficient invigilators to conduct exams
- Invigilator shortage on peak exam days
- Invigilator absence on the day of an exam

Other criteria:

No other criteria identified

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

Exams Officer to ensure that ratio of invigilator to student follows JCQ regulations with centre staff invigilator trained in case of invigilator absence. Exams Officer to ensure all invigilators have annual training supply additional training as required. Exams Officer to ensure a specific Exams Day Contingency Plan is in place (Appendix 1) Exams Officer to ensure a specific Emergency Evacuation Plan is in place (Appendix 2)

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

Other criteria:

No other criteria identified

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: To be confirmed

- communicate with candidates (and where appropriate, parents/carers) any changes to the exam or assessment timetable or to the venue

Communication details: Students will receive an individual timetable detailing exam location and time and where necessary the exams officer will meet with student about the arrangement to ensure arrangements suit.

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

Other centre actions:

No other actions identified

6. Cyber-attack

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- Where a cyber-attack may compromise any aspect of delivery

Other criteria:

No other criteria identified

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

Invigilator to record the disturbance to exam via incident log. Exams Officer to contact IT and decide on best plan of action where necessary contact the awarding body for guidance.

7. Failure of IT systems

Criteria for implementation of the plan

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

Other criteria:

No other criteria identified

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

Deputy Head (Academic) and examinations to contact in-house IT department. Exams Officer to make entries from another venue direct to the Awarding Bodies. Exams Officer to contact all Awarding Bodies (see Appendix 1 for telephone numbers) for alternative route for dissemination of results.

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

Criteria for implementation of the plan

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

Other criteria:

No other criteria identified

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

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

Other centre actions:

No other actions identified

9. Disruption of teaching time in the weeks before an exam - centre closed for an extended period Criteria for implementation of the plan

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

Other criteria:

No other criteria identified

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

- recognise it remains the responsibility of the centre to prepare students, as usual, for examinations
- facilitate alternative methods of learning
- communicate with candidates (and where appropriate, parents/carers) information relating to alternative methods of learning

Communication details: To be confirmed

- take advice offered by the awarding body regarding alternative arrangements for conducting examinations that may be available
- take advice offered by the awarding body on the options for candidates who have not been able to take scheduled examinations
- advise candidates, where appropriate, of the opportunities to take their exam or assessment at a later date

Other centre actions:

No other actions identified

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:

No other criteria identified

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: To be confirmed

- 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

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. 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.

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: To be confirmed – Still to be confirmed – SLT decision.

Communication details: Students will receive an individual timetable detailing exam location and time and where necessary the exams officer will meet with student about the arrangement to ensure arrangements suit.

- 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

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. Disruption to transporting 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 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 criteria identified

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

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

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

Criteria for implementation of the plan

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

Other criteria:

No other criteria identified

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

- make arrangements to access its results at an alternative venue/share facilities with another centre if this is possible, in agreement with the relevant awarding body
- make arrangements to coordinate access to post-results services from an alternative venue

Alternative venue details: To be confirmed

- 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

This plan also confirms Aldercar High School compliance with JCQ's **General Regulations for Approved Centres** (section 5.3) that the centre has in place a written examination contingency plan which covers all aspects of examination administration. This will allow members of the senior leadership team to act immediately in the event of an emergency or staff absence.

This plan also confirms Aldercar High School compliance with JCQ's **General Regulations for Approved Centres** (section 5.3) that the centre has in place a written examination contingency plan which covers all aspects of examination 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.

Candidates may not be able to take examinations but centres remain open

Centres' contingency plans should focus on options that enable candidates to take their examinations. As part of these preparations, centres should take into account the guidance provided in the JCQ document Instructions for conducting examinations: <http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/ice---instructions-for-conducting-examinations>

- consider moving the starting time of the examination for all candidates (see section 6.2 of the JCQ document Instructions for conducting examinations)
- being aware of the rules for very late arrivals (see section 21 of the JCQ document Instructions for conducting examinations). Wherever possible, it is always in the best interest for candidates to sit the examination. However, special consideration is an option where a candidate is unable to sit the examination (see Chapter 4 of the JCQ document A guide to the special consideration process: <https://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-specialconsideration/regulations-and-guidance>.) The relevant awarding body should be contacted if additional support or guidance in the event of disruption to examinations is required.

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, 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. 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. There are three main categories of disruption, which are outlined in the scenarios

Further guidance to inform procedures and implement contingency planning

Ofqual – 2024/25

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**

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.

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.

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 [JCO'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 guidance taken directly from **Instructions for Conducting Examinations 2024-25** (www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/ice---instructions-for-conducting-examinations/)

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:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/exam-system-contingency-plan-englandwales-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 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.

Links to other JCQ documentation

JCQ **Joint Contingency Plan** - jqc.org.uk/exams-office/other-documents

JCQ **Preparing for disruption to examinations** - jqc.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations

JCQ Notice to Centres - **Examination contingency plan**/examinations policy - jqc.org.uk/exams-office/generalregulations/notice-to-centres--exam-contingency-plan

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

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

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

Instructions for conducting examinations - [jqc.org.uk/exams-office/ice---instructions-for-conductingexaminations](https://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/ice---instructions-for-conductingexaminations)

A guide to the special consideration process - [jqc.org.uk/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-specialconsideration/regulations-and-guidance](https://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-specialconsideration/regulations-and-guidance)

GOV.UK

Emergency planning and response: Exam and assessment disruption - [gov.uk/guidance//publications/emergency-planning-and-response-for-education-childcare-and-childrensocial-care-settings](https://www.gov.uk/guidance//publications/emergency-planning-and-response-for-education-childcare-and-childrensocial-care-settings)

Dispatch of exam scripts guide: Ensuring the service runs smoothly; Contingency planning [gov.uk/government/publications/dispatch-of-exam-scripts-yellow-label-service](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dispatch-of-exam-scripts-yellow-label-service)

Wales

School closures: examinations - [gov.wales/school-closures-examinations](https://www.gov.wales/school-closures-examinations)

Opening schools in extremely bad weatherand extreme hot weather: guidance for schools - [gov.wales/opening-schools-extremely-bad-weather-guidance-schoolswww.gov.wales/opening-schools-wellchildcare-and-play-settings-extreme-bad-weather-and-extreme-hot-weather](https://www.gov.wales/opening-schools-extremely-bad-weather-guidance-schoolswww.gov.wales/opening-schools-wellchildcare-and-play-settings-extreme-bad-weather-and-extreme-hot-weather)

Northern Ireland

(updated 2021/22) Exceptional closure days - [education-ni.gov.uk/articles/exceptional-closure-days](https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/articles/exceptional-closure-days)

Checklist - exceptional closure of schools - [education-ni.gov.uk/publications/checklist-exceptional-closureschools](https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/checklist-exceptional-closureschools)

National Cyber Security Centre

The NCSC's free **Web Check** ([ncsc.gov.uk/information/web-check](https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/information/web-check)) and **Mail Check** ([ncsc.gov.uk/information/mailcheck](https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/information/mailcheck)) services can help protect schools from cyber-attacks. Two NCSC cyber security services, which are already helping thousands of organisations to protect their websites and email servers from cyber-attacks, are now available to **all UK schools**. Both tools are available free of charge, are quick to set up, and thereafter run automatically. More information is available from the NCSC website ([ncsc.gov.uk/blog-post/cyber-tools-for-uk-schools](https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/blog-post/cyber-tools-for-uk-schools)).

The Department for Education has been asking centres to review **National Cyber Security Centre advice** following increasing number of cyber-attacks involving ransomware infections. The NCSC information supports centres in cyber security preparedness and mitigation work.

Ransomware attacks continue and the Department is reminding centres to review the NCSC advice and to take precautions. This includes ensuring that you have backups in place for your key services and data.

For ease of reference, the Department has highlighted key links relating to the NCSC cyber security guidance below:

- Further ransomware attacks on UK education by cyber criminals - NCSC.GOV.UK ([ncsc.gov.uk/news/alerttargeted-ransomware-attacks-on-uk-education-sector](https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/news/alerttargeted-ransomware-attacks-on-uk-education-sector))
- Ransomware advice and guidance for your IT teams to implement ([ncsc.gov.uk/guidance/mitigatingmalware-and-ransomware-attacks](https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/guidance/mitigatingmalware-and-ransomware-attacks))
- Offline backups in an online world ([ncsc.gov.uk/blog-post/offline-backups-in-an-online-world](https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/blog-post/offline-backups-in-an-online-world))
- Backing up your data ([ncsc.gov.uk/collection/small-business-guide/backing-your-data](https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/collection/small-business-guide/backing-your-data))
- Practical resources to help schools improve their cyber security ([gov.uk/section/education-skills/cybersecurity-schools](https://www.gov.uk/section/education-skills/cybersecurity-schools))
- Building Resilience: Ransomware, the risk to schools and ways to prevent it ([com/watch?v=FppzWedY0ic&t=237s](https://www.com/watch?v=FppzWedY0ic&t=237s))
- School staff offered training to help shore up cyber defences - NCSC.GOV.UK ([gov.uk/news/school-staffoffered-training-to-help-cyber-defences](https://www.gov.uk/news/school-staffoffered-training-to-help-cyber-defences))

Summary of centre and awarding body responsibilities

Summary of responsibilities in the event of disruption to examinations.

JCQ is responsible for coordinating across awarding organisations, including convening the crisis management team.

Regulators (Ofqual in England, Qualifications Wales in Wales and CCEA Accreditation in Northern Ireland) are responsible for sharing timely and accurate information, as required with awarding organisations, government departments and other stakeholders.

Awarding organisations are responsible for:	Examination centres are responsible for:
	Preparing plans for any disruption to exams as part of centres' general emergency planning
Ensuring centres receive examination materials for scheduled examinations	Preparing candidates for examinations
	Ensuring examinations and assessments are taken under the conditions prescribed by awarding organisations
	Ensuring, where relevant, that assessment materials and candidate work are stored under secure conditions
	Deciding whether the centre can open for examinations as scheduled and informing relevant awarding organisations if the centre is unable to open
Advising centres on possible alternative examination arrangements and declining/approving proposals for alternative examination arrangements	Exploring the opportunities for alternative arrangements if the centre cannot open for examinations and agreeing such arrangements with the awarding organisations
Evaluating and declining/approving requests for special consideration	Judging whether candidates meet the requirements for special consideration as a result of any disruption and submitting these requests to the relevant awarding organisations
	Assessing and liaising with awarding organisations in the event of disruption to the transportation of papers
Marking, moderating and grading candidate work	
Issuing results to centres on scheduled dates	The distribution of examination results to candidates

Useful information

Owners of this plan	
AQA	www.aqa.org.uk/
CCEA	www.ccea.org.uk
City & Guilds	www.cityandguilds.com
NCFE	www.ncfe.org.uk
OCR	www.ocr.org.uk/
Pearson	www.qualifications.pearson.com
WJEC	www.wjec.co.uk/
UCAS	www.ucas.ac.uk/
JCQ	www.jcq.org.uk
Regulators	
CCEA	www.ccea.org.uk/regulation
Ofqual	www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofqual
Qualifications Wales	www.qualificationswales.org
Government	
DfE	www.education.gov.uk/
DENI	www.deni.gov.uk/
Welsh Government	https://gov.wales/
Useful documents	
Ofqual three-country guidance on what schools and colleges and other centres 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
JCQ access arrangements, reasonable adjustments and special consideration	www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-special-consideration/regulations-and-guidance
JCQ instructions for conducting examinations	www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/ice---instructions-for-conducting-examinations
DfE guidance on dealing with disruption to teaching and learning	http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/adminandfinance/emergency-planning/a0069425/advice-on-severe-weather
DENI guidance on dealing with disruption to teaching and learning	www.deni.gov.uk/exceptional_closures_checklist.pdf