

Exam Contingency Plan

2024/25

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

Author:	SLE
Date Created:	April 2024
Review by / date Reviewed:	February 2025
Review Date:	March 2026

Date	Reviewed by	Summary of changes:
Aug 2022?	SLE	Updated the dates
March 2024	SLE	Update JCQ regulations where required
February 2025	SLE	Update JCQ regulations and dates where required

Key staff involved in the plan

Role	Name(s)
Head of centre	Subrina Johal
Exams officer line manager (Senior leader)	Claire Harley / Beatrice Finn
Exams officer	Sam Lane
ALS lead/SENCo	Emma Topley
Senior leader(s)	Subrina Johal, Claire Harley/Beatrice Finn

Contents

Key staff involved in the plan	1
Purpose of the plan	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 last minute/on the day absence e.g. traffic, family emergency or illness	4
2. Exam officer extended absence a critical stage of the exam cycle	4
3. SENCo (or equivalent role) extended absence at a critical stage of the exam cycle	5
4. Teaching staff extended absence at key points in the exam cycle	5
5. Invigilators - lack of appropriately trained invigilators or invigilator absence	5
6. Exam rooms - lack of appropriate rooms or main venues unavailable at short notice	6
7. Cyber-attack	6
8. Failure of IT systems	7
9. Emergency evacuation of the exam room (or centre lock down).....	7
10. Disruption of teaching time in the weeks before an exam – centre closed for an extended period	7
11. Candidates may not be able to take examinations - centre remains open	8
12. Centre at risk of being unable to open as normal during the examination period.....	8
13. Disruption in the distribution of examination papers.....	9
14. Delay in collection for completed examination scripts	9
15. Assessment evidence is not available to be marked.....	9
16. Centre unable to distribute results as normal or facilitate post results services.....	10
Further guidance to inform procedures and implement contingency planning.....	11
Ofqual.....	11
JCQ Contingency Planning	13
GOV.UK.....	14
Wales.....	14

Purpose of the plan

This plan examines potential risks and issues that could cause disruption to the examination/assessment process at Orchard Mead Academy. 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. This plan is also informed by: the JCQ document **Preparing for disruption to examinations** (Effective from 1 September 2024).

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.

- This plan also confirms Orchard Mead Academy's compliance with JCQ's **General Regulations for Approved Centres** (GR section 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.

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. 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. 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.
- Orchard mead academy 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.
- Orchard mead academy 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 Orchard Mead Academy responds to the National Centre Number Register annual update by the end of October every year which includes providing senior designated contact details (this 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 our head of centre being absent at a critical stage of the exams calendar, main duties and responsibilities will be escalated as per the centre's written escalation policy

Possible causes of disruption to the exam process

1. Exam officer last minute/on the day absence e.g. traffic, family emergency or illness

In the event of a last-minute emergency that means that the exams officer is unable to get to school in time for the process of starting the exams, they must call the Head of Centre and SLT responsible for exams directly by 6am. If there is an issue such as traffic/road closures this must be communicated as quickly as possible after the event causing lateness has occurred. It is the exams officer and SLTs responsibility to ensure that their route to work is planned in advance using traffic updates etc.

2. Exam officer extended absence 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

- In the short term, support would be available from other staff in similar roles within the trust.
- SLT to nominate an 'Acting' member of staff to cover the role
- Make sure the exam policy folder is up to date with quick reference guides.

3. 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

- SLT to appoint an acting SENCo to cover role
- SLT/Exams Manager to liaise with acting SENCo to ensure they are aware of the exams calendar.
- SLT/Exams Manager to have knowledge of the assessor contact information, so that the assessor can be contacted in the absence of key members of the SEN team
- Supporting evidence from teaching staff to be available to the Exams Manager for inspection purposes

4. Teaching staff extended absence at key points in the exam cycle

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Key tasks not undertaken including:

Early/estimated entry information not provided to the exams officer on time; resulting in pre-release information not being received

Final entry information not provided to the exams officer on time; resulting in candidates not being entered for exams/assessments or being entered late/late or other penalty fees being charged by awarding bodies

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

- HoF's to oversee that the above actions take place in the absence of a member of teaching staff
- SLT to ensure that appropriately trained staff in place to cover role, including taking responsibility for the actions listed above if the absent member of staff is HoF
- Exams manager to liaise with cover staff to support in completion of the actions listed above

5. 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

- Internal staff (admin staff, SEN officer, cover supervisors) to be trained to cover exam invigilation at short notice
- Bank of trained invigilators to exceed number usually required for a peak exam day
- Where a planned exam session is likely to exceed the number of trained invigilators available, additional recruitment, from agencies if absolutely necessary, to take place well in advance of examination date

6. 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

- Pre-planning of examination rooming essential
- If normal examination rooming unavailable alternative rooming within the centre to be sought wherever possible. This will usually be the Sports Hall for large examinations. External examinations to take priority over other events for these spaces. Exams manager to liaise with premises staff to arrange appropriate transportation of exam furniture to new venue if required.
- If, for any extreme reason, the whole site was out of use, we would utilise the premises of other schools within our MAT. A hall in one or two of the primary schools could be best as the other secondary school would also have exams going on.

Alternative site details:

- Request support from another school within our trust including the primary schools
- Consider using local community centre etc.,

7. 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

- There is a system in place to protect against file corruption, cyber attacks including antivirus.
- There is an acceptable use policy, with on and off site back ups.
- All systems are reviewed by the IT team regularly and updated if required.
 - (This will include the required arrangements for cyber security)
(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.

- i. reporting any actual or suspected compromise of an awarding body's online systems immediately to the relevant awarding body

8. 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

- (This will include the security arrangements put in place which protect candidates' work) (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.
- Wherever possible entries/exams preparation to occur well ahead of deadlines
- SLT to contact internal IT support
- Exams Office to contact all Examination Boards to ascertain alternative site arrangements for examinations or the receiving of results - if applicable.

9. Emergency evacuation of the exam room (or centre lock down)

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Whole centre evacuation (or lock down) 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

- Emergency evacuation/invacuation policy to be followed
- Maintain the safety of staff and students at all times
- Inform the relevant awarding body at the earliest opportunity for guidance
- Apply for special consideration if appropriate – have a discussion with the senior member of staff for exams

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

- (Where there is disruption to teaching time and students miss teaching and learning, it remains the responsibility of centres to prepare students, as usual, for examinations. ☐ In the case of modular courses,

centres may advise candidates to sit examinations in an alternative series. (Centres should have plans in place to facilitate alternative methods of learning.)

- SLT to communicate with parents, carers and students over the potential disruptions to teaching time and how this will be addressed
- If part of the centre can be opened, students with impending examinations should be prioritised for attendance
- Exams manager to contact all students that may be affected.

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

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Candidates at risk of being unable to attend the examination centre to take examinations as normal because of a crisis

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- Consider moving the starting time of the examination for all candidates (see section 6.2 of the JCQ document *Instructions for conducting examinations*)
- Be 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*)
- Exams manager to communicate with relevant awarding bodies to make them aware of the issue
- SLT to communicate with parents, carers and candidates to advise of possible solutions to the issue
- If student is able to sit the exam but not attend the centre, the Exams manager is to liaise with candidates to identify whether the examination can be sat at an alternative venue in agreement with the relevant awarding organisations
- Exams manager to apply to awarding organisations for special consideration for candidates where they have met the minimum requirements. Candidates are only eligible for special consideration if they have been fully prepared and have covered the whole course but are affected by adverse circumstances beyond their control. If a candidate chooses not to sit an examination for other reasons, they should be aware that special consideration rules will not apply

12. Centre at risk of being unable 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 at risk of being unable to open as normal during the examination period (To) Centre may not be able to open as normal during the examination period

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- Exams manager to contact relevant awarding bodies.
- Exams manager/SLT investigate possible use of alternative venues in agreement with relevant awarding organisations (e.g. share facilities with other centres or use other public building, if possible)
- SLT to communicate any change of venue to parents, carers and candidates
- Exams manager to make arrangements for change of venue/contact invigilators
- Exams manager to apply to awarding organisations for special consideration for candidates where they have met the minimum requirements (This must focus on options that enable candidates to take their examinations)
- The decision on whether it is safe for a centre to open lies with the head of centre who is responsible for taking advice or following instructions from relevant local or national agencies v Special consideration is an option if all other avenues have been exhausted and candidates meet the published criteria

Alternative site(s) details:

- Request support from another school within our trust including the primary schools
- Consider using local community centre etc.,

- 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).

13. 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

- (Awarding organisations to provide centres with electronic access to examination papers via a secure external network. Centres would need to ensure that copies are received electronically, printed, and stored under secure conditions and should have plans in place to facilitate such an action. Awarding organisations would provide guidance on the conduct of examinations in such circumstances. as a last resort, and in close collaboration with centres and regulators, awarding organisations to consider scheduling of the examination on an alternative date)
- Admin Assistant (second pair of eyes) and Exams manager to check in all papers and alert SLT line lead if papers appear not to have arrived in good time.
- Exams manager to contact appropriate awarding body to alert to any possible discrepancies and determine a solution
- For Discrepancies identified on the day of examination, exams manager to contact boards immediately to arrange an alternative method of delivery of papers etc., electronic transfer and ensure that required security conditions are met.

14. Delay in collection 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

- (Where examinations are part of the national 'yellow label' service or where awarding bodies arrange collections, centres should contact the relevant awarding bodies for advice and instructions and should not make their own collection arrangements for transportation unless told to do so by the awarding body , for any examinations where centres make their own collection arrangements, centres should investigate alternative options that comply with the requirements detailed in the JCQ publication *Instructions for conducting examinations*. Centres to ensure secure storage of completed examination scripts until collection.)
- Exams manager/Admin Assistant to seek advice from awarding bodies. Alternative arrangements for transportation should not be made without approval from awarding bodies.
- Examinations scripts to remain in secure storage until a satisfactory arrangement has been agreed upon.
-

15. 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

- (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.)

- Exams manager to notify awarding body immediately for advice and further instruction.
- All marks should be recorded in our central MIS system
- SLT to communicate with parents, carers and candidates over the issue
- Awarding bodies may be able to generate marks for affected assessments based on other evidence, or it may be necessary for students to re-take the assessment at the next available opportunity

16. 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: centre to make arrangements to access its results at an alternative site, in agreement with the relevant awarding organisation ☐ centres to make arrangements to coordinate access to post results services from an alternative site ☐ centres to share facilities with other centres if this is possible, in agreement with the relevant awarding organisation.)
- (Facilitation of post results services: ☐ centre to make arrangements to make post results requests at an alternative location
- Centres to contact the relevant awarding organisation if electronic post results requests are not possible)
- Exams manager to contact awarding bodies to notify them of the issue and establish alternatives.
- SLT/Exams manager to investigate the possibility of accessing results at an alternative site, or by alternative means eg. e-mail
- SLT to inform parents, carers and candidates of arrangements in place
- SLT/Exams manager to investigate whether post-results services can be accessed via another centre

Alternative site(s) details:

- Request support from another school within our trust including the primary schools
- Consider using local community centre etc.,

Further guidance to inform procedures and implement contingency planning

Ofqual

What schools and colleges and other centres should do if exams or other assessments are seriously disrupted

Contingency planning

You should prepare for possible disruption to exams and other assessments and make sure staff are aware of these plans.

General contingency guidance

- [emergency planning and response](#) from the Department for Education in England
- [school organisation: local-authority-maintained schools](#) from the Department for Education in England
- [exceptional closure days](#) 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 in extremely bad weather](#) - guidance for schools from the Welsh Government
- [bomb threats](#) procedures for handling bomb threats from the National Counter Terrorism Security Office

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

See also the [JCQ Joint Contingency Plan for the Examination System in England, Wales and Northern Ireland](#).

Steps you should take

Exam planning

Review 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.

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 parents, carers and students 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 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 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.

See also [JCQ's guidance on special considerations](#)

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 [Department for Education](#) 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 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 ·
- 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 30 September 2021) <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 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 centres contingency plan must be invoked, utilising the centres 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 days' for examinations, summer 2025. This is consistent with the qualification regulators' document *Exam system contingency plan: England, Wales and Northern Ireland*: <https://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 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/

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 in extremely bad weather: guidance for schools gov.wales/opening-schools-extremely-bad-weather-guidance-schools

A typical exam day during an exam season

What to do if the exams manager is not in school!!

Do not panic!!

Before the exam

- Arrive in school early, about 7 – 7.30am is ideal.
- Make arrangements the day/night before (if possible) with the exams line lead, Beatrice Finn or the lead invigilator to access the exam material.
- Make arrangements the day/night before (if possible) to access the exams secure bunker
- The Exams line lead, Beatrice Finn) is THE ONLY MEMBER OF STAFF ALLOWED ACCESS TO THE secure store, the head teacher also has access to a set of keys in an emergency.
- The key to the exam safe is inside the key safe on the left-hand wall as you walk in the bunker, and those with access have the key code.
- You will only need to access the exam safe to retrieve the days exam papers – make sure it is locked after!!
- LOCK the exam bunker as you leave the area.

8am

- Invigilators start to arrive; the current ratio is 1 invigilator for every 30 students
- Student identification cards are always put out immediately after the previous exam, so will already be on the table as per the seating plan.
- take an invigilator with you to get the papers from the exam safe.
- All papers are in date order and identified with a slip of paper.
- Find the correct papers, check the date and exam number with the invigilator.
- The invigilator will sign to confirm the papers that have been removed from the safe.
- LOCK the safe.
- Exit the room and LOCK it.
- Both of you take the papers into the exam room.
- Check to see if there are other venues being used, there will be a seating plan if there are any other rooms being used.
- Use the seating plan to decide which papers to open first – refer to the seating plan.
- If there are tiers and/or additional exams, **only** open one set at a time and ask an invigilator to put them on the correct tables – refer to seating plan. Do this until all the papers are out.
- Ask a couple of invigilators to check that the correct papers are on the tables and that every table that has a student ID card on it has a paper.
- Check to see what additional stationary items are required for the exam, for example, calculators, highlighting pens or mathematical equipment, get these ready for when students start arriving, or in the case of English, all tables must have a highlighter pen on the desk ready.
- Ask that the mobiles are opened up for students' bags and coats etc.,
- The A3 seating register should be up on the board outside each room, and in the sports hall kitchen window for students to check where they are sat.

Students start arriving

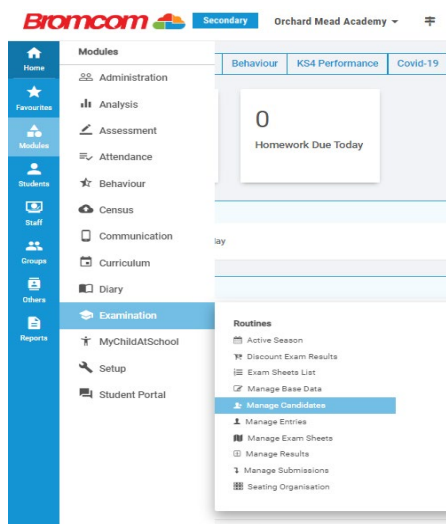
- Inform the invigilators that students are arriving and to be ready make sure their own phone is switched off/silent.
- Allow students to enter as quickly and calmly as possible, invigilators will be in the hall telling students about phones and checking they do not have anything on their person that they should not have.
- There should be no talking/communicating from students once they enter the exam room.
- Make sure you have your laminated crib sheet ready as well as a copy of all the papers being sat in this exam session.
- If teachers are supporting with seating students, they MUST NOT look at the paper or discuss it with any student.

Starting the exam

- Make sure the exam room is ready to start
- If there is any special equipment needed, ask students to put their hand up if they need a protractor, ruler, or calculator for example
- While invigilators are distributing this, start to read the exams crib sheet.
- When you get to the phone or any device that can store digital media, pause, inform students that we will be doing spot checks for these devices and repeat that if they hand a device over now they will not get in trouble for it, then wait and look at them.
- With the crib sheet, run through the front of the paper with students.
- Read clearly and subject specific information, this may need to be read twice.
- When this has been done, say 'the time is now **** you may start.'
- Make sure the invigilators write the start time on the board and calculate the correct finish time and write on the board the extra time allowed.
- Ask a reliable member of staff to make a note of the absent students – I usually give them the seating plan and a highlighter pen, tell them to put a cross over any table where the student is absent and bring it back to you.
- Email the absent students to attendance, HOY and AHOY so that they can start calling these students.
- As late students start to arrive write it on the seating where they should be sitting.
- Prior to the end of the exam decide which invigilators are going to collect which columns, for example; I give an invigilator 4 rows at a time – this way they are collected in candidate number order.
- Give students notice that their exam is due to finish in 10 minutes, for example of the exam is due to end at 10:15, at 10:05 say 'you have ten minutes left'.
- At the finish, time advise all students to close their papers and make sure your name and candidate number are on the front of the paper.
- Ask invigilators to collect the papers and take them to a designated table away from students.
- Make sure that a member of the invigilation team – or a member of staff opens the mobile where the bags and coats are located.
- Once all papers are collected in you can start to dismiss students one row at a time, they must remain silent as there may still be other students working (exam concession students).
- All staff left in the hall must stay as quiet as possible while students are still working.

After the exam

- Collate all the papers by subject and in ascending candidate number order
- You will need the attendance register and labels from the relevant awarding body, these should be in the file for that day's exams.
- Check any missing papers against the attendance register, they might have changed tier, check the other register to see if the student appears on there, if this is still not resolved go on to Bromcom; go to Modules, examinations and manage candidates.



- Find your student, click edit at the top of the page. If an entry has been amended it will look like this; C = entry, W = withdrawn

French Tier F	FC	GCSE	French Writing Test Tier F	8658/WF	C
Mathematics Tier H	FC	GCSE	Mathematics Paper 1 Tier H	8300/1H	W
Mathematics Tier H	FC	GCSE	Mathematics Paper 2 Tier H	8300/2H	W
Mathematics Tier H	FC	GCSE	Mathematics Paper 3 Tier H	8300/3H	W
Mathematics Option H	FC	GCSE	Non Calculator (h)	1MA1 1H	C
Mathematics Option H	FC	GCSE	Calculator (h)	1MA1 2H	C
Mathematics Option H	FC	GCSE	Calculator (h)	1MA1 3H	C

- Once you have established that either the student was absent or changed tier you can then complete the boards attendance register, count the papers for that attendance register to make doubly sure that you have the correct number of papers for that register, sign the attendance register, keep the carbon copy, put the papers and exam board register in the appropriate exam plastic return wallet and seal the pack, check that the label matches the contents of the wallet. If you are unsure about this, then Amy Pepper in D&T is fantastic and well established with this process.
- When all papers are packaged send them to main reception for parcel force to collect.
- If there is another exam this day get the seating plan out and out invigilators to put the cards out as per the seating plan, the cards should have already been sorted for this. Put the next set of registers up in the corridor for students to check as they arrive. Repeat the exam process again.
- Once the exams have finished for the day get the next day's file out, check what is being sat and ask the invigilators to put the cards out for the next exam.
- Repeat the whole process for each and every exam session.