



ST EDMUND'S COLLEGE

Examinations Contingency Plan

2025/2026

To realise – in mind, body and spirit – the full potential of every member of the St Edmund's Family, through Catholic values, learning, service and leadership.

Avita Pro Fide

St Edmund's is committed to ensuring the welfare and protection of children in its care and this commitment is a fundamental part of the role of every person employed by St Edmund's.

Date policy last reviewed:	Michaelmas 2025
Current policy approved by:	St Edmund's College Governing Body
Current policy reviewed by:	Exams Officer
Date of next review :	Michaelmas 2026

Key staff involved in exam contingency planning

Role	Name(s)
Head of centre	Matthew Mostyn
Senior leader(s)	Sarah Sanders
Examinations officer	Wojciech Rerutko
SENCo	Lisa Aylett

This plan is reviewed and updated annually to ensure that exam contingency planning at St Edmund's College 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 St Edmund's College.

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 examinations 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** (Updated 7 May 2024)

This plan details how St Edmund's College 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.

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. Examinations officer absence at key points in the exam process (exam cycle)

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 examinations 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 examinations/assessment.
- awarding body entry deadlines missed or late or other penalty fees being incurred.

Pre-examinations

- Invigilators not trained or updated on changes to instructions for conducting examinations.
- Exam timetabling, rooming allocation; and invigilation schedules not prepared.
- Candidates not briefed on exam timetables and awarding body information for candidate's
- 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

Examination time

- Examinations/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

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

- Examinations Officer (EO) draws up calendar of key tasks and deadlines, both internal and external, at beginning of the year, which can be accessed by the Head of Centre (HoC) and the Senior Leadership Team.
- EO to keep relevant iSAMs and exam process manuals that can be accessed by the HoC at any time.
- HoC to have access to iSAMS exam module to make entries, and access to exam boards to submit coursework marks and samples.
- EO to inform the HoC of any absence in good time so that the smooth running of examinations can be ensured. A folder will be made up during each exam period detailing which examinations are taking place, with seating plans, access arrangement information, rooms, candidate lists, attendance registers and invigilator lists and can be found in the examinations office clearly labelled.
- EO, HoC and Deputy Head Academic to have access to the secure room and exam storage safes. Exam papers to be stored in date order to ensure they are easily found.
- HoC access and upload results using the manuals stored in the Examinations Office.
- EO to be able to work remotely if appropriate.

Succession arrangements (Exams Officer)

In the event that the Exams Officer leaves their post, the school will follow a structured transition procedure to ensure continuity and integrity of examination processes.

- The Headteacher will immediately appoint an interim Exams Officer or designate a suitably trained member of staff to take over examination duties.
- ☐ All examination materials, passwords, secure keys, and communication records with examination boards will be transferred securely under supervision.
- The departing Exams Officer must complete a formal handover document outlining ongoing tasks, upcoming deadlines, and any unresolved issues.
- The interim or newly appointed Exams Officer will receive appropriate training and support to ensure a smooth and effective transition.
- The school will notify all relevant examination boards of the change in personnel without delay
- All actions taken during the transition must comply with awarding body regulations and the school's data protection and security policies.

2. SENCo extended absence at key points in the exam process (exam cycle)

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-examinations

- 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

Examination time

- Access arrangement candidate support not arranged for examination rooms

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

- Ensure an additional SEN member of staff trained in administration of access arrangements.
- The SEN team to keep a list of external assessors to facilitate testing/assessing.
- EO trained to apply for access arrangements.
- EO to oversee AA candidate arrangements.
- Invigilators trained to support SEN team.

3. Teaching staff extended absence at key points in the exam process (exam cycle)

Key tasks not undertaken including:

- Early/estimated entry information not provided to the examinations officer on time; resulting in pre-release information not being received.
- Final entry information not provided to the examinations officer on time; resulting in candidates not being entered for examinations/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.

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

- Heads of Department (HoD) to oversee all departmental examination related tasks including estimated entries, non-examination assessments and coursework marks, and ensure processes are in place to complete these in good time. HoD will ensure candidates are made aware of all deadlines.
- EO to provide HoD with coursework deadlines, examination windows etc at the start of the examination cycle.
- Awarding bodies to be made aware of any potential issues, and advice obtained from them as soon as possible.
- HoC to recruit temporary teachers to provide support if required.

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

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

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

- EO to manage the bank of invigilators available to the college, recruiting and training new members as and when required but well in advance of the examination periods.
- EO to advise invigilators of examination dates in good time to avoid unavailability.
- EO to ensure a reserve invigilator booked on every examination day.
- Administration staff to be trained to invigilate in case of emergencies.

5. Exam rooms - lack of appropriate rooms or main venue(s) unavailable at short notice

- EO unable to identify sufficient/appropriate rooms during examinations timetable planning.
- Insufficient rooms available on peak exam days.
- Main examination venues unavailable due to an unexpected incident at examination time.

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

- Where main examination venue(s) are unavailable due to an unexpected incident at examination time, make use of other available rooms within the centre where possible, prioritising candidates whose progression will be severely delayed if they do not take their examination or timetabled assessment when planned. If the Douay Hall, or Galilee Chapel cannot be used, examinations will be relocated to the Butler Hall which is a separate building.
- Identify whether the examination or timetabled assessment can be sat at an alternative venue, in agreement with the relevant awarding body.
Alternative venue details: To be confirmed
- Communicate with candidates (and where appropriate, parents/guardians) any changes to the examination or assessment timetable or venue.
- Communicate with candidates (and where appropriate, parents/carers) any changes to the examination or assessment timetable or to the venue.
Communication details: Candidates, Parents and Carers will be informed via email, the VLE, Parentmail, and Parent Portal.
- EO to ensure the secure transportation of question papers or assessment materials to the alternative venue.
- After the examination 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.

6. Cyber security

The head of centre must ensure there are procedures in place to maintain the security of user accounts by:

- ensuring that all members of centre staff who access awarding bodies' online systems undertake annual cyber security training.
- developing and maintaining a comprehensive cyber security policy for the centre.
- implementing and enforcing robust security measures e.g. regularly reviewing and updating security settings to align with current best practices

Cyber-attack

- In the event of a cyber-attack the College will execute the Incident Response Plan as detailed in the College's Information Security Policy, overseen by the Bursar who has been appointed as the Data Protection Controller.
- EO to inform the Awarding bodies immediately to ensure the protection of awarding body secure sites
- IT to carry out routine backups of all data held on the computer network. These will be tested regularly to ensure data can be recovered in case of loss of live systems, as detailed in the College's Information Security Policy.

7. Failure of IT systems

- iSAMS or IT system failure at final entry deadline.
- iSAMS or IT system failure during examinations preparation.
- iSAMS or IT system failure at results release time.

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

- In the event of an iSAMS system failure at crucial times during the examination cycle the ICT Manager will be informed as soon as possible and every step will be taken to reinstate iSAMS to working condition.
- Examination boards will be notified in good time and steps will be taken to continue proceedings using manual systems.
- IT support to be in college during examination pre-release results days, and results days.

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

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 examinations.

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

- The Centre will refer to and invoke its emergency evacuation policy/procedure in line with JCQ's 'Centre emergency evacuation procedure'.
- EO 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.

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

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

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

- The Centre will recognise it remains the responsibility of the centre to prepare students, as usual, for examinations
- The Centre will facilitate alternative methods of learning.

- Communicate with candidates (and where appropriate, parents/carers) information relating to those alternative methods of learning
Communication details: Candidates, Parents and Carers will be informed via email, the VLE, Parentmail, and Parent Portal.
- 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.

10. Candidates unable to take examinations because of a crisis - centre remains open

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: Candidates, Parents and Guardians will be informed via, email, the VLE, Parentmail, and Parent Portal.
- 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

11. Centre 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)

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
- Discuss alternative arrangements with the awarding body if the exam or assessment cannot take place and 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/guardians) any changes to the exam or assessment timetable or to the venue
Communication details: Candidates, Parents and Guardians will be informed via, email, the VLE, Parentmail, and Parent Portal.
- 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
- 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).

Alternative venue details:

If the Douay Hall, or Galilee Chapel cannot be used, examinations will be relocated to the Butler Hall which is a separate building.

Centres must ensure they are familiar with the relevant regulator's guidance and/or awarding body guidance on ensuring resilience in the qualifications system. Centres should consider putting in place a process for gathering and securely retaining evidence of candidate performance in line with the published guidance.

In the unlikely event that the government determines that examinations cannot go ahead, centres will need evidence of candidate assessment performance, such as mock examinations, to enable alternative methods of awarding grades.

12. Disruption in the storage and distribution of examination papers

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 and 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/guardians) any changes to the exam or assessment timetable or to the venue
- In an emergency situation where the secure room and the secure storage facility cannot be accessed and the centre will need to invoke a contingency arrangement, the ICQ Centre Inspection Service must be contacted immediately.

13. Disruption to the transportation of completed examination scripts

If there is a delay in normal collection arrangements for completed examination scripts/assessment evidence the EO will

- Where examinations are part of the national 'yellow label' service or where awarding bodies arrange collections, seek advice from awarding bodies and will not make its own arrangements for transportation unless told to do so by the awarding body
- 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's Instructions for Conducting Examinations
- Ensure the secure storage of completed examination scripts until collection

14. Assessment evidence is not available to be marked

In the event of large-scale damage to or destruction of completed examination scripts/assessment evidence before it can be marked or completed examination scripts/assessment evidence not reaching awarding organisations. 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

- The Centre will make arrangements to access its results at an alternative venue in agreement with the relevant awarding body
- Make arrangements to coordinate access to post results services from an alternative venue
Alternative venue details: If the King Room is unable to be used to distribute results, then the results and post results services will be relocated to the Douay Hall or Butler Hall which are separate buildings.
- Contact the relevant awarding body if electronic post results requests are not possible
- Inform candidates of any alternative arrangements in place for the distribution of results and the facilitation of post-results services
Communication details: Candidates, Parents and Guardians will be informed via, email, the VLE, Parentmail, and Parent Portal.

Further guidance to inform procedures and implement contingency planning

DfE

Meeting digital and technology standards in schools and colleges

- [Cyber Security Standards in schools and colleges](#)
- [Cyber crime and cyber security: a guide for education providers](#)
- [DfE Cyber Security Guidance - March 2023](#)

Ofqual

Ofqual guidance extract taken directly from the **Exam system contingency plan: England, Wales and Northern Ireland - What schools and colleges and other centres should do if exams or other assessments are seriously disrupted** (last Updated 7 May 2024)www.gov.uk/government/publications/exam-system-contingency-plan-england-wales-and-northern-ireland/what-schools-and-colleges-should-do-if-exams-or-other-assessments-are-seriously-disrupted

"This document was updated 7 May 2024 to include Ofqual's final decisions on long-term resilience arrangements, and the Department for Education (DfE)'s guidance for education settings with confirmed reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC). In addition to this guidance, you will need to be aware of your specific responsibilities for local and national school preparations and contingencies. You should also follow advice from relevant public health bodies.

Contingency planning

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

Disruption to assessments or exams

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

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

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

Steps to be taken

Exam planning

The contingency plans will be checked well in advance of each exam or assessment series to ensure that if the contingency plan is invoked, you will comply with the awarding organisation's requirements.

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

In the event of disruption

- Contact the relevant awarding organisation and follow its instructions.
- Take advice, or follow instructions, from relevant local or national agencies in deciding whether your centre is able to open.
- Identify whether the exam or timetabled assessment can be sat at an alternative venue, in agreement with the relevant awarding organisation, ensuring the secure transportation of questions papers or assessment materials to the alternative venue.
- Where accommodation is limited, prioritise students whose progression will be severely delayed if they do not take their exam or timetabled assessment when planned.
- In the event of an evacuation during an examination please refer to [Jcq's Centre emergency evacuation procedure](#).
- Communicate with students, parents and carers any changes to the exam or assessment timetable or to the venue.
- Communicate with any external assessors or relevant third parties regarding any changes to the exam or assessment timetable.

After the exam

- Consider whether any students' ability to take the assessment or demonstrate their level of attainment has been materially affected and, if so, apply to the relevant awarding organisation for special consideration.
- Advise students, where appropriate, of the opportunities to take their exam or assessment at a later date.
- Ensure that scripts are stored under secure conditions.
- Return scripts to awarding organisations in line with their instructions. Never make alternative arrangements for the transportation of completed exam scripts, unless told to do so by the awarding organisation.

Steps the awarding organisation should take

Exam planning

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

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

In the event of disruption

- Take all reasonable steps to mitigate any adverse effect, in relation to their qualifications, arising from any disruption.
- Provide effective guidance to any of their centres delivering qualifications.
- Ensure that where an assessment must be completed under specified conditions, students are able to complete the assessment under those conditions (other than where any reasonable adjustments or special considerations require alternative conditions).
- Promptly notify the relevant regulators about any event which could have an adverse effect on students, standards or public confidence.
- Coordinate its communications with the relevant regulators where the disruption has an impact on multiple centres or a wide range of learners.

After the exam

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

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

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

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

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

Wider communications

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

The [DfE in England](#), the [DfE in Northern Ireland](#), and the [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 (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.

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](#) 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 as well as 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
- [police guidance](#) from National Counter Terrorism Security Office and partners on preparing for threats
- [cyber security guidance for schools and colleges](#) from the National Cyber Security Centre"

JCQ

JCQ guidance taken directly from **Instructions for conducting examinations 2025/2026 section 15, Contingency planning**

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

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

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 relevant awarding body must be informed as soon as possible. Awarding bodies will be able to offer advice regarding the alternative arrangements for conducting examinations that may be available and the options for candidates who have not been able to take scheduled examinations.

15.5 The awarding bodies will designate 'contingency sessions' for examinations, summer 2025. This is consistent with the qualification regulators' document *Exam system contingency plan: England, Wales and Northern Ireland* - www.gov.uk/government/publications/exam-system-contingency-plan-england-wales-and-northern-ireland

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.

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

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

Links to other JCQ documentation

[JCQ Joint Contingency Plan](#)

[JCQ Preparing for disruption to examinations](#)

[JCQ Notice to Centres - exam contingency plan](#)

[General Regulations for Approved Centres](#)

[Guidance notes on alternative site arrangements](#)

[Guidance notes for transferred candidates](#)

[Instructions for conducting examinations](#)

[A guide to the special consideration process](#)

GOV.UK

[Emergency planning and response: Exam and assessment disruption](#)

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

National Cyber Security Centre

The NCSC's free Web Check and Mail Check 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.

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](#)
- [Ransomware advice and guidance for your IT teams to implement](#)
- [Offline backups in an online world](#)
- [Backing up your data](#)
- [Practical resources to help schools improve their cyber security](#)
- [Building Resilience: Ransomware, the risk to schools and ways to prevent it](#)
- [School staff offered training to help shore up cyber defences](#)

Frequency of review: Annually

Policy last reviewed: Michaelmas 2025

Next review date: Michaelmas 2026