



Exam Contingency Plan Policy

POLICY REVIEW AND ADOPTED BY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE	DATE
REVIEWED:	November 2025
REVIEW FREQUENCY:	Annually
DATE OF NEXT REVIEW:	September 2026
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER / REVIEWED BY:	Headteacher

1. Aims

This plan aims to:

- Examine potential risks and issues that could cause disruption to the management and administration of exams
- Mitigate the impact of disruptions by providing actions or procedures to follow

2. Legislation and guidance

This plan complies with the [Joint Council for Qualifications \(JCQ\) General Regulations for Approved Centres](#), which requires all exam centres to have a written examination contingency plan/examinations policy.

It's also based on:

- Ofqual's [guidance on contingency planning](#)
- JCQ's [joint contingency plan](#)

3. Responsibilities

3.1 Head of centre

The head of centre is Sally Hudson, Headteacher. They will ensure that

- A written examination contingency plan/examinations policy is in place, and covers all aspects of exam/assessment administration
- Staff are aware of these plans
- There are procedures in place to maintain the security of user accounts (see section 4)

3.2 Senior designated contact(s)

The senior designated contact(s) must be available to manage emergency requests from awarding bodies that are results-related during the summer holidays

3.3 Examinations officer

The examinations officer is a distinct/separate role to the head of centre and is responsible for:

- Appointing and training a member of staff as an examinations assistant who can take over their responsibilities in the event of their absence

3.4 Staff and invigilators

Staff and invigilators involved in the centre's exam/assessment process are responsible for reading, understanding and implementing the contingency plan.

4. Cyber security arrangements

Exam/assessment planning includes appropriate preventive measure against issues relating to cyber security, for example, candidates' work is backed up on 2 separate devices, including 1 off-site back-up

The head of centre is responsible for ensuring there are procedures in place to maintain the security of user accounts by:

- Providing training for authorised staff on the importance of creating strong unique passwords and keeping all account details secret

- Providing training for staff on awareness of all types of social engineering/phishing attempts
- Enabling additional security settings wherever possible
- Updating any passwords that may have been exposed
- Setting up secure account recovery options
- Reviewing and managing connected applications
- Monitoring accounts and regularly reviewing account access, including removing access when no longer required
- Ensuring authorised members of staff securely access awarding bodies' online systems, in line with awarding body regulations regarding cyber security and the JCQ 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)
- Reporting any actual or suspected compromise of an awarding body's online systems immediately to the relevant awarding body

5. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed by Sally Hudson, Headteacher every year before each exam series. At every review, the policy will be shared with the governing board.

6. Links with other policies

This policy is linked to our:

- Malpractice Policy
- NEA Policy
- Appeals Policy

7. Contingency plan

The details below set out examples of scenarios where a contingency plan may be needed to minimise risk to examination administration. These are consistent with Ofqual's current contingency planning guidance.

7.1 Alternative site(s)

If examinations/assessments cannot be conducted at the centre's registered address, the alternative site is: Northwood Primary, Pendleton Rd S, Darlington DL1 2HF

7.2 Scenarios

1. Exam officer extended absence at key points in the exam process (cycle)

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Key tasks required in the management and administration of the exam cycle are not undertaken, these may included:

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 and trained

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
- exam timetabling, rooming allocation; and invigilation schedules not prepared
 - candidates not briefed on exam timetables and awarding body information for candidates
 - 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 e.g. very late arrival, suspected malpractice, special consideration
- candidates' scripts not dispatched as required 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:

- Headteacher to appoint a suitable Deputy Examinations Officer as rapidly as possible, who will follow procedures and practices within the Examinations Officer remit.
- Exams Officer to ensure essential information is available to Headteacher
- Exams Officer to ensure Exam Cycle, policies and procedures are up to date at all times

2. SENCo extended absence at key points in 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
- 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
- modified paper requirements not identified in a timely manner to enable ordering to meet external deadline
- staff providing support to access arrangement candidates not allocated and trained

Exam time

- access arrangement candidate support not arranged for exam rooms

Centre actions:

- Assistant SENCo will follow procedures and practices within the SENCo remit.
- Exams Officer to ensure essential information is available to Headteacher
- Exams Officer to ensure Exam Cycle, policies and procedures are up to date at all times

3. Subject Leads 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
- Internal assessment marks and candidates' work not provided to meet submission deadlines

Centre actions:

- Headteacher to ensure continuity by requesting an alternative member of staff 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

Centre actions:

- Examinations Officer to maintain a short list of suitable candidates.
- Examinations Officer to ensure that capacity is never exceeded on any one day.
- Headteacher/Examinations Officer to review training procedures regularly and put in place additional training as required.
- Examinations Officer to ensure a specific Exams Day Contingency Plan is in place (Appendix 1)
- Examinations Officer to ensure a specific Emergency Evacuation Plan is in place (Appendix 2)
- Examinations Officer to ensure an Exams Incident Log is in place (Appendix 3)

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

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- Exams officer unable to identify sufficient/appropriate rooms during exams timetable planning
- Insufficient rooms available on peak exam days
- Main exam venues unavailable due to an unexpected incident at exam time

Centre actions:

- Pre-planning at all stages is essential.
- Headteacher and Examinations Officer to continually review all stages of the process.
- Headteacher to identify an alternative site to conduct exams (eg Eldon House)
- Use offsite premises and submit alternative exam centre paperwork.
- Emergency Evacuation plan should be in place

6. Issues with Exam Scripts

Criteria for implementation of the plan:

- The parcel or one of the packets has been opened during transit and therefore there may have been a breach of security
- There are differences between the material received and the despatch/ delivery note
- The material has been significantly damaged in transit or upon opening;
- The material appears not to meet the centre's requirements;
- The material has been received in error.

Centre actions:

- Exam Officer and second person to cross check the exam paper packets against the awarding body despatch note and the centre timetable of entries upon delivery
- The awarding body will be informed immediately if there are any problems

7. Failure of IT systems / Cyber Attack

Criteria for implementation of the plan

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

Centre actions:

- Headteacher and examinations officer to contact in-house IT department.
- Examinations Officer to contact all Examination Boards (see Appendix 1 for telephone numbers) to seek further guidance
- IT department to allow the examinations officer to use an alternative site as a contact for all Examination Boards and/or JCQ and to allow access to secure websites via this site.
- Headteacher and examinations officer to monitor situation and take any action required as directed by Awarding Bodies

8. Disruption of teaching time – strike action

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- Centre closed or insufficient members of staff onsite to conduct exams

Centre actions:

- The centre to communicate with parents, carers and students about the potential for disruption and plans to address this.
- Alternative venues to be sourced for students with imminent exams.
- Examinations Officer to advise the Examination Boards as appropriate.
- Use awarding bodies additional resilience dates to avoid exams being affected
- In extreme circumstances, allow candidates to resit exams in the next available series.

9. Centre is unable to open as normal during the examination period – fire, flood or wide spread illness

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- In the event that the centre is unable to open as normal for scheduled examinations, e.g. a fire at the centre, flooding or wide spread illness

Centre action:

- The centre to inform relevant awarding organisations as soon as possible
- Refer to emergency plans and/or health and safety policy, where appropriate
- Head of centre will decide whether the centre is safe to open, based on advice or instructions from relevant local or national agencies
- Use alternative venues in agreement with relevant awarding organisations
- Communicate any changes to your plans with parents and pupils
- Apply to awarding organisations for special consideration for candidates where they have met the minimum requirements
- Offer candidates an opportunity to sit any examinations missed at the next available series, if possible

10. 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:

- The centre to communicate with awarding organisations to organise alternative delivery of papers.
- Arrange with Exam Boards for alternative means of receiving papers either electronically or alternative courier.
- Examinations Officer to ensure papers are kept securely until needed.

11. Disruption to the transportation of completed examination scripts

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- Delay in normal collection arrangements for completed examination scripts

Centre actions:

- The centre to communicate with relevant Exam Boards at the outset to resolve the issue.
- Alternative transport should only be used with the agreement of the relevant Exam Boards.
- Scripts must be stored securely until such time transport is confirmed.

12. 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

Centre actions:

- It is the responsibility of the Head of Centre to communicate this immediately to the relevant awarding organisation(s) and subsequently to students and their parents or carers.
- The Exam Boards may generate candidate marks for the affected assessments based on other evidence, as defined by the Exam Boards and the regulators.
- It may be necessary for the candidates to retake the assessment at the next available opportunity.

13. Centre unable to distribute results as normal

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:

- Centre to contact awarding organisations about alternative options.
- Arrange to access results at an alternative site.
- Inform staff, students and parents as soon as possible of the change in distribution of results.

14. Centre has provider approval withdrawn

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- An awarding body withdraws centre approval status for NEA

Centre Actions:

- Centre to begin the appeal process as soon as possible
- Identify and address all concerns raised by the awarding body in order to have approval reinstated
- Send all portfolios and assessment records to the relevant awarding body for reevaluation
- Return all certificates received
- Support in locating a suitable alternative provider.
- Inform all affected learners from the centre.

Appendix 1 Exam Day Contingency Plan

Exam Item	Location/ Holders Name	Responsibility
Keys to Secure Storage for exam papers and exam stationery	KL / SH	KL / SH
Centre Timetable	Timetable widely published	KL / TCa
Seating plans	TBA within each exam room	SLT
Exam cards / setting out of exam rooms / notices etc.	Exam cards with exam booklet. Attendance sheets with exam booklet Official ones in exam cupboard	Cards produced by KL Set up by invigilators
Invigilators	SH / TCa organise	
Access Arrangements (incl. Cover sheets)	Notification on attendance sheets.	KL / LB / KR / AD
Script envelopes / Examiner address labels	In exam cupboard	KL
Exam clashes	SH	
Collation of scripts	Invigilators Checked off on official attendance registers Official attendance sheets completed before posting	Invigilators KL KL
Completion of proof of posting form / posting scripts	Dispatch log in exam cupboard	KL
Awarding Bodies tel no: WJEC AQA OCR Pearson CIE	02920 265 000 0800 197 7162 01223 553 998 08444 632 535 01223 553 554	

Appendix 2

Policy for Severe Disruption/Evacuation during External Examinations

Possible Causes

- Unreasonable noise disruption
- Fire/Bomb/Flood Alert during an Examination

Unreasonable noise disruption

In the event of a severe disruption in an externally set examination, invigilators are advised to stop the examination, tell the candidates to close their answer books, make a note of the time and summon help (Exams Officer/Headteacher/Main Office) to sort out the problem. Exam room conditions must be maintained.

When the disruption has been resolved the candidates can resume their examination and the time taken to resolve the issue added on at the end of the examinations. The candidates must be supervised at all times and thus the break in the examination can be regarded as 'a supervised rest break'.

An incident log (Appendix 3) must be completed with the times of the disruptions noted. The Exams Officer to make Examining Bodies aware of the disruption if necessary.

Fire/Bomb/Flood Alert during an Examination

In the event of a fire alarm or bomb alert sounding (or any other emergency situation arising) during an examination, the first priority of the invigilators is to preserve life. The next priority is to ensure the security of the examination.

The invigilator should summon assistance, if there is time and it is appropriate. The Headteacher will make a decision as to whether a full evacuation is necessary.

If the emergency is over quickly, the candidates should resume the examination. A careful note of the time of resumption must be noted and the full time allocated for the examination given to complete the examination, ignoring the interruption.

A full report (Appendix 3) must be completed with the times of the disruptions noted and a special consideration form will be filled in so as not to disadvantage the candidates.

Any breach of question paper security or malpractice will be reported to the awarding body immediately

Appendix 3

Emergency evacuation procedure for examinations

The invigilator **must** take the following action in an emergency such as a fire alarm or a bomb alert.

- Stop the candidates from writing.
- Collect the attendance register (**in order to ensure all candidates are present**).
- Evacuate the examination room in line with the instructions given by the appropriate authority.
- Advise candidates to leave all question papers and scripts in the examination room.
- Candidates should leave the room in silence.
- Make sure that the candidates are supervised as closely as possible while they are out of the examination room to make sure there is no discussion about the examination.
- Make a note of the time of the interruption and how long it lasted.
- Allow the candidates the full working time set for the examination.
- If there are only a few candidates, consider the possibility of taking the candidates (with question papers and scripts) to another place to finish the examination.
- Make a full report of the incident and of the action taken, and send to the relevant awarding body.

Appendix 4

Exam Room Incident Log

Date:
Time:
Examination:
Venue:

Exam	Start	Finish

Invigilator(s):

Name	Time in	Time out

Record of incident:

Time	Incident

Further guidance to inform and implement contingency planning

Ofqual

Joint contingency plan in the event of widespread disruption to the examination system in England, Wales and Northern Ireland

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/exam-system-contingency-plan-england-wales-and-northern-ireland/joint-contingency-plan-in-the-event-of-widespread-disruption-to-the-examination-system-in-england-wales-and-northern-ireland>

JCQ

General regulations

<http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations>

Guidance on alternative site arrangements

<http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/forms>

Instructions for conducting examinations

<http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/ice---instructions-for-conducting-examinations>

A guide to the special consideration process

<http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-special-consideration/regulations-and-guidance>

GOV.UK

Emergencies and severe weather: schools and early years settings

<https://www.gov.uk/emergencies-and-severe-weather-schools-and-early-years-settings>

Teaching time lost due to severe weather conditions

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/teaching-time-lost-due-to-severe-weather-conditions/teaching-time-lost-due-to-severe-weather-conditions>

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

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dispatch-of-exam-scripts-yellow-label-service/dispatch-of-exam-scripts-guide>