



Exam Contingency Plan

Policy/Procedure creator: Kelly Ghosal

Policy/Procedure created/reviewed: 09/05/2023

Centre Name	Ralph Thoresby School
Centre Number	37655
Date plan first created	7/1/22
Current plan approved by	Graham Cowgill
Current plan reviewed by	Kelly Ghosal
Date of next review	January 2024

Key staff involved in the plan

Role	Name(s)
Head of centre	Will Carr
Senior leader(s)	Angela Caswell; Steven Hackshaw; Graham Cowgill
Exams officer	Kelly Ghosal
ALS lead/SENCo	Kerri Haynes-McDonnell
Other staff (if applicable)	Not Applicable

This plan is reviewed and updated annually to ensure that exam contingency planning at Ralph Thoresby School is managed in accordance with current requirements and regulations.

Purpose of the plan

This plan examines potential risks and issues that could cause disruption to the exam process.

By outlining actions/procedures to be invoked in case of disruption it is intended to mitigate the impact these disruptions have on our exam process at Ralph Thoresby School.

Alongside internal processes this plan is informed by the Ofqual **Exam system contingency plan: England, Wales and Northern Ireland** which provides guidance in the publication, 'What schools and colleges and other centres should do if exams or other assessments are seriously disrupted' and the **JCQ Joint Contingency Plan** for the Examination System in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

This plan details how Ralph Thoresby School complies with the JCQ's **General Regulations for Approved Centres** (section 5.3, Centre management) by having in place a written examination contingency plan which covers all aspects of examination administration. This will allow members of the senior leadership team to act immediately in the event of an emergency or 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. The potential impact of a cyber-attack should also be considered.

Operating across more than one centre

Not Applicable

Possible causes of disruption to the exam process

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

Criteria for implementation of the plan

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

Planning

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

Entries

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

Pre-exams

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

Exam time

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

Results and post-results

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

Other criteria:

No other criteria identified

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

For a short term absence, Graham Cowgill (SLT exams lead) will be trained and act as the contingency.

If Graham is unavailable, Thierry Brunier (data manager) will be trained and act as the contingency.

For longer periods of absence, a suitably qualified replacement would be employed on a supply, temporary or fixed term basis.

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

Criteria for implementation of the plan

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

Planning

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

Pre-exams

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

Exam time

- access arrangement candidate support not arranged for exam rooms

Other criteria:

No other criteria identified

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

- Where absence prevents completion of the assessment and approval of candidates, the Headteacher will appoint a suitably qualified assessor and formally confirm their competency.
- Where absence interferes with making and checking access arrangements, the designated HLTA will carry out this task.

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

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Key tasks not undertaken including:

- Early/estimated entry information not provided to the exams officer on time; resulting in pre-release information not being received
- Final entry information not provided to the exams officer on time; resulting in candidates not being entered for exams/assessments or being entered late/late or other penalty fees being charged by awarding bodies
- Non-examination assessment tasks not set/issued/taken by candidates as scheduled

- Candidates not being informed of centre assessed marks before marks are submitted to the awarding body and therefore not being able to consider appealing internal assessment decisions and requesting a review of the centre's marking
- Internal assessment marks and candidates' work not provided to meet awarding body submission deadlines

Other criteria:

No other criteria identified

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

- In the event of absence, the Department's Line Manager will identify a suitable deputy (normally second in the department where present) to oversee these duties.
- In the absence of a teacher, the line manager can submit the necessary data.
- In the event of long term absence a supply teacher would be given the duties.

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

Criteria for implementation of the plan

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

Other criteria:

No other criteria identified

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

EO to cover an invigilator shortage by using:

- * Invigilator's employed by other centres
- * Supply/agency invigilators
- * Support staff from Ralph Thoresby

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

Criteria for implementation of the plan

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

Other criteria:

No other criteria identified

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

- (where main exam venue(s) unavailable due to an unexpected incident at exam time) where possible, make use of other available rooms within the centre, prioritising candidates whose progression will be severely delayed if they do not take their exam or timetabled assessment when planned
- identify whether the exam or timetabled assessment can be sat at an alternative venue, in agreement with the relevant awarding body

- (where main exam venue(s) unavailable due to an unexpected incident at exam time) where possible, move to alternative venue, prioritising candidates whose progression will be severely delayed if they do not take their exam or timetabled assessment when planned

Alternative venue details:

• If the Main Hall and/or Gymnasium are unavailable for examinations, or all candidates cannot be accommodated, other rooms in the school will be used, e.g. Sports Hall and Drama Studio

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

Communication details:

* Students will be notified through the Arbor messaging service, via email and through coaching notices.

* Parents/carers will be notified through the Arbor messaging service.

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

Other centre actions:

No other actions identified.

6. Cyber-attack

Criteria for implementation of the plan

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

Other criteria:

No other criteria identified

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

In the event of a cyber attack, the results can be accessed via the awarding bodies secure sites. All data is stored remotely (OneDrive) so can be accessed from home computers.

Students results could be compiled using mail merge, having downloaded the results from the AB sites, thereby circumnavigating the MIS.

7. Failure of IT systems

Criteria for implementation of the plan

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

Other criteria:

No other criteria identified.

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

- In the event of MIS or other system failure, EO will liaise with ICT Technician, Business Manager and IT support provider to determine appropriate action.
- EO to liaise with Awarding bodies to determine another way of making entries.
- Possibility of using a consortium school to help with making the entries if we know the deadline will not otherwise be met.

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

Criteria for implementation of the plan

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

Other criteria:

No other criteria identified.

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

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

Other centre actions:

- The responsibility for deciding whether it is safe for the school to open lies with the Headteacher (Head of centre).
- The Headteacher is responsible for taking advice, or following instructions from relevant local or national agencies in deciding whether they are able to open.
- The school will open for examinations and examination candidates only if it is possible to conduct examinations safely and in accordance with relevant guidance from awarding bodies.
- The school will consider the use of alternative venues in agreement with relevant awarding organisations (e.g. share facilities with other centres or use other public building, if possible)

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

Criteria for implementation of the plan

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

Other criteria:

No other criteria identified

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

- recognise it remains the responsibility of the centre to prepare students, as usual, for examinations

- facilitate alternative methods of learning
- communicate with candidates (and where appropriate, parents/carers) information relating to alternative methods of learning

Communication details:

- Students will be communicated through their school email, online learning will be provided through OneDrive and hard copy packs will be available for those without access to IT.
- Parents/carers will be communicated with through the Arbor 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

Other centre actions:

No other actions identified

10. Candidates at risk of being unable 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

Other criteria:

No other criteria identified

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

- take advice offered by the awarding body on the options for candidates who have not been able to take scheduled examinations
- discuss alternative arrangements with the awarding body if a candidate misses an exam or loses their assessment due to an emergency, or other event, outside of the candidate's control
- identify whether the exam or timetabled assessment can be sat at an alternative venue, in agreement with the relevant awarding body, ensuring the secure transportation of questions papers or assessment materials to the alternative venue
- communicate with candidates (and where appropriate, parents/carers) any changes to the exam or assessment timetable or to the venue

Communication details:

- Students will be communicated with through their school email.
- Parents/carers will be communicated with through the Arbor 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

Other centre actions:

No other actions identified

11. 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 for scheduled examinations

Other criteria:

No other criteria identified

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

- take advice, or follow instructions, from relevant local or national agencies in deciding whether the centre is able to open
- contact the relevant awarding body as soon as possible and follow its instructions
- discuss alternative arrangements with the awarding body if the exam or assessment cannot take place
- follow guidance provided by the awarding body on the conduct of examinations in such circumstances
- where accommodation is limited, prioritise candidates whose progression will be severely delayed if they do not take their exam or timetabled assessment when planned
- communicate with candidates (and where appropriate, parents/carers) any changes to the exam or assessment timetable or to the venue

Alternative venue details:

Contact local hotel to use their conference centre and/or local universities.

Communication details:

- Students will be communicated with through their school email.
- Parents/carers will be communicated with through the Arbor 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

Other centre actions:

No other actions identified

12. Disruption in the distribution of examination papers

Criteria for implementation of the plan

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

Other criteria:

No other criteria identified

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

- liaise with awarding bodies regarding the provision of electronic access to examination papers via a secure external network and will ensure when copies are received/made these are stored under secure conditions
- follow guidance provided by the awarding body on the conduct of examinations in such circumstances
- understand that as a last resort, and in close collaboration with centres and regulators, awarding organisations will consider scheduling of the examination on an alternative date

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

Other centre actions:

No other actions identified

13. Disruption to transporting completed examination scripts

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- Delay in normal collection arrangements for completed examination scripts/assessment evidence

Other criteria:

No other criteria identified

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

- where examinations are part of the national 'yellow label' service or where awarding bodies arrange collections, contact the relevant awarding bodies for advice and instructions 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 collection arrangements, investigate alternative options that comply with the requirements detailed in the JCQ publication 'Instructions for Conducting Examinations'
- ensure the secure storage of completed examination scripts until collection

Other centre actions:

No other actions identified

14. Assessment evidence is not available to be marked

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- Large scale damage to or destruction of completed examination scripts/assessment evidence before it can be marked
- Completed examination scripts/assessment evidence does not reach awarding organisations

Other criteria:

No other criteria identified

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

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

Other centre actions:

No other actions identified

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

Criteria for implementation of the plan

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

Other criteria:

No other criteria identified

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

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

Alternative venue details:

- RTS has a 6th form partnership with a local school so they would be approached to support with an alternative venue.
 - make arrangements to make post results requests at an alternative location
 - contact the relevant awarding body if electronic post results requests are not possible
 - inform candidates of any alternative arrangements in place for the distribution of results and the facilitation of post-results services

Communication details:

- Students will be communicated with through their school email.
- Parents/carers will be communicated with through the Arbor parent portal.

Other centre actions:

No other actions identified

16. Any other cause of disruption to the exam process

Cause of disruption

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

Not Applicable

CHANGES 2022/2023

(Added) Under **Purpose of the plan**: new heading 'Operating across more than one centre' and field for completion

(Added) Under **Possible causes of disruption to the exam process**: new cause '6. Cyber-attack' and fields for completion. This means that causes 6-15, have now changed to causes 7-16

(Added) Under cause **11. 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)**: new field for completion 'Alternative venue details'

(Amended/added) Under **Further guidance to inform procedures and implement contingency planning**: guidance and links to current information

UPDATED December 2022 (in the section of the template – **Further guidance to inform and implement contingency planning**) to reflect Ofqual's update to the Exam system contingency plan: England, Wales and Northern Ireland where information related to pandemic disruption for 2021 to 2022 has been removed, links to newly published guidance added and existing links updated.

UPDATED January 2023 (in the section of the template – **Further guidance to inform and implement contingency planning**) to reflect Ofqual's update to the Exam system contingency plan: England, Wales and Northern Ireland (Updated 'General contingency guidance' to include 'Handling strike action in schools from the Department for Education in England'. Updated 'Widespread national disruption to the taking of examinations or assessments' section to notify that the Department for Education has updated its guidance on handling strike action in schools.)

(Added **March 2023**) Under cause **7. Failure of IT systems**: example added to 'Other criteria' prompt as follows: Add any criteria not listed above for implementation of the plan (an example could be: Power outage immediately prior to or during an on-screen test) or add - No other criteria identified

UPDATED April 2023 (in the section of the template – **Further guidance to inform and implement contingency planning**) added links to DfE cyber security standards and guidance)

CENTRE-SPECIFIC CHANGES

Upon review in September 2022, no centre-specific updates or changes were applicable to this document.

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 (www.gov.uk/guidance/meeting-digital-and-technology-standards-in-schools-and-colleges/cyber-security-standards-for-schools-and-colleges)

DfE Cyber Security Guidance - March 2023 (As exam season approaches the Department for Education is reminding schools and colleges to renew their cyber security and backup policies)

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**

(updated 18 January 2023)

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** www.gov.uk/guidance/ofqual-handbook/section-a-governance). Schools and colleges should also be prepared for possible disruption to exams and assessments and make sure staff are aware of these plans.

General contingency guidance

- **emergency planning and response** (www.gov.uk/guidance/emergencies-and-severe-weather-schools-and-early-years-settings) from the Department for Education in England
- **handling strike action in schools** (www.gov.uk/government/publications/handling-strike-action-in-schools) from the Department for Education in England
- **school organisation: local-authority-maintained schools** from the Department for Education in England (www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-organisation-maintained-schools)
- **exceptional closure days** (www.education-ni.gov.uk/articles/exceptional-closure-days) from the Department of Education in Northern Ireland
- **checklist - exceptional closure of schools** (www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/checklist-exceptional-closure-schools) from the Department of Education in Northern Ireland
- **school terms and school closures** from NI Direct (www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/school-terms-and-school-closures)
- **opening schools in extremely bad weather** (<https://gov.wales/opening-schools-extremely-bad-weather-guidance-schools>) - guidance for schools from the Welsh Government
- **police guidance** from National Counter Terrorism Security Office and partners on preparing for threats (www.protectuk.police.uk)

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 (www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations/notice-to-centres-exam-contingency-plan/) and JCQ's notice on preparing for disruption to examinations (www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/other-documents/preparing-for-disruption-to-examinations/) in England, Wales and Northern Ireland for qualifications within its scope.

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' (www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/ice---instructions-for-conducting-examinations/).
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 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 (www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-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 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

The governments' view across England, Wales and Northern Ireland is education in 2022 to 2023 has returned to normal. Schools are open and examinations will go ahead in summer 2023.

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 November 2022, Ofqual and the Department for Education issued decisions following a consultation on the resilience of the qualifications sector (www.gov.uk/government/consultations/ensuring-the-resilience-of-the-qualifications-system-in-2023-gcse-as-a-level-project-and-aea/outcome/consultation-decisions) for specific examinations awarded in England in summer 2023. Ofqual has published Guidance for schools, colleges and other exam centres on gathering evidence of student performance (www.gov.uk/government/publications/supporting-resilience-in-the-exam-system-in-2023) for students entering GCSEs, AS and A levels, the Advanced Extension Award and Project qualifications to support resilience in the exam system in England in 2023.

The Department for Education has updated its guidance on handling strike action in schools (www.gov.uk/government/publications/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 should speak to the relevant awarding organisations if they are expecting any disruption that might affect the sitting of exams and assessments.

We will update this page as necessary, with any further relevant links, should national disruption occur.

JCQ guidance taken directly from **Instructions for Conducting Examinations 2022-2023** (www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/ice—instructions-for-conducting-examinations/) section 15, **Contingency planning**

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

Further information may be found at: 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 Centres should prepare plans for any disruption to examinations as part of their general emergency planning. It is important to ensure that relevant centre staff are familiar with the 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 days' for examinations, summer 2023. This is consistent with the qualification regulators' document *Examssystem 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 days' 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 2023, 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** - jqc.org.uk/exams-office/other-documents

JCQ **Preparing for disruption to examinations** (Effective from 1 September 2022) - jqc.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations

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

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

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

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

Instructions for conducting examinations - jqc.org.uk/exams-office/ice—instructions-for-conducting-examinations

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

GOV.UK

Emergency planning and response: Exam and assessment disruption - gov.uk/guidance//publications/emergency-planning-and-response-for-education-childcare-and-childrens-social-care-settings

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

Wales

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

Opening schools in extremely bad weather: guidance for schools - [gov.wales/opening-schools-extremely-bad-weather-guidance-schools](https://www.gov.wales/opening-schools-extremely-bad-weather-guidance-schools)

Northern Ireland

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

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

ProtectUK

ProtectUK.[police.uk](https://www.police.uk)

National Cyber Security Centre

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

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

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

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

1. More ransomware attacks on UK education - NCSC.GOV.UK ([ncsc.gov.uk/news/alert-targeted-ransomware-attacks-on-uk-education-sector](https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/news/alert-targeted-ransomware-attacks-on-uk-education-sector))
2. Ransomware advice and guidance for your IT teams to implement ([ncsc.gov.uk/guidance/mitigating-malware-and-ransomware-attacks](https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/guidance/mitigating-malware-and-ransomware-attacks))
3. Offline backups in an online world ([ncsc.gov.uk/blog-post/offline-backups-in-an-online-world](https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/blog-post/offline-backups-in-an-online-world))
4. Backing up your data ([ncsc.gov.uk/collection/small-business-guide/backing-your-data](https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/collection/small-business-guide/backing-your-data))
5. Practical resources to help improve your cyber security ([gov.uk/section/education-skills/cyber-security-schools](https://www.gov.uk/section/education-skills/cyber-security-schools))
6. Building Resilience: Ransomware and the risks to schools and ways to prevent it ([com/watch?v=FppzWedY0ic&t=237s](https://www.com/watch?v=FppzWedY0ic&t=237s))
7. School staff offered training to help shore up cyber defences - NCSC.GOV.UK ([gov.uk/news/school-staff-offered-training-to-help-cyber-defences](https://www.gov.uk/news/school-staff-offered-training-to-help-cyber-defences))