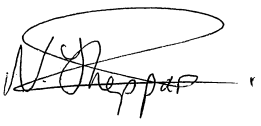
Carisbrooke College

EDUCATION IS OUR CASTLE

Exam Contingency Policy 2026/2027

Centre number: 59010

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Revisions

Policy Area	Revisions
Regulatory Framework and Effective Dates	Updated to comply with the JCQ Preparing for disruption to examinations (effective 1 September 2024) and JCQ Instructions for Conducting Examinations 2025 - 2026, incorporating designated Summer 2025 contingency exam sessions.
Contingency Day	Updated to reflect the Wednesday 23 June 2027 contingency day for June 2027 examinations, and the requirement for candidates to remain available up to and including that date.
Cyber Security and Cyber Attack Response	Includes a dedicated Cyber Attack contingency framework aligned with DfE Cyber Security Standards for schools and colleges and NCSC guidance. Mandates Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) devices for staff accessing exam board systems, phishing/social engineering training, strong password enforcement, and immediate incident reporting to the ICO, DfE, Local Authority, and awarding bodies.
IT System Failures and Data Backups	Mandates candidate work backups across two separate devices, including at least one off-site backup. Requires a secondary fallback internet connection line and standalone Mi-Fi connections for Chromebooks, with cloud-based MIS data (Arbor, Google, Microsoft Azure) accessible off-site.
Examination Paper Distribution	Expanded procedures for the distribution of exam papers in cases of delayed, incorrect, insufficient, or damaged papers being delivered.
Head of Centre Extended Absence	Formally escalates main duties and responsibilities to the HISP MAT Executive Team during critical exam cycle stages.
Alternative Venues and MAT Collaboration	Establishes a tiered multi-site contingency plan across federated HISP MAT centers - relocating students first to Medina College (59022) and secondarily to The Island VI Form (59024), utilising school minibuses or emergency bus hire via Southern Vectis.
Building and National Disruptions (RAAC and Strikes)	Incorporates DfE guidance for settings with Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) or building issues, updated DfE industrial/strike action guidance prioritising exam delivery, and Ofqual/DfE long-term resilience evidence collection rules.
Communication Channels and Portal Notifications	Centralises emergency communications via Arbor MIS and official social media channels, while requiring online alternative site notifications through the JCQ Centre Admin Portal (CAP).

Purpose of the plan

This plan examines potential risks and issues that could cause disruption to the exams process at Carisbrooke College. By outlining actions/procedures to be invoked in case of disruption, it is intended to mitigate the impact these disruptions have on our processes.

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 and the JCQ document Preparing for disruption to examinations (Effective from 1 September 2024).

This plan also confirms Carisbrooke College's compliance with JCQ's General Regulations for Approved Centres (paragraph 5.3(x)) that the centre has in place for inspection that must be reviewed and updated annually:

- a written contingency plan which covers all aspects of examination/assessment administration;
- a written cyber security policy which is available for inspection.

Contingency arrangements

In accordance with the regulations (GR 3.31-36), Carisbrooke College must have an up to date written contingency plan.

The contingency plan must cover all aspects of examination/assessment administration and delivery. Senior leaders must have robust contingency arrangements in place that will minimise the risk to examination/assessment administration and delivery and any adverse impact on candidates.

The plan must cover the following scenarios:

- the head of centre, relevant senior leader(s) with oversight of examination and assessment administration, SENCo (or equivalent role), examinations officer or any other key staff essential to the examination process being absent at a critical stage of the examination cycle;
- the potential impact of other events such as flooding which could lead to all or parts of the centre becoming unavailable;
- potential issues with the centre's IT systems.

As part of the contingency plan the centre must identify an alternative site if examinations cannot be conducted at the registered address. Larger centres may require more than one potential alternative site or different sites for different Year Groups.

Carisbrooke College must have at least one senior member of staff (senior designated contact) who is available to manage emergency requests from awarding bodies that are results related during the summer holidays. However, a number of contacts can be provided to reduce the risk of this falling on one individual throughout the summer holidays.

Carisbrooke College must ensure that candidates' work is backed-up and should consider the contingency of candidates' work being backed-up on two separate devices, including one off-site back-up. Appropriate security arrangements must be implemented which protect candidates' work in the event of IT system corruption and cyber-attacks.

National Centre Number Register and other information requirements

In accordance with the regulations (GR 5.3), the head of centre will ensure that Carisbrooke College responds to the National Centre Number Register annual update by the end of October every year which includes providing senior designated contact details (this might include a personal mobile number and/or email address). These must be the contact details of someone who can be reached in an emergency if the centre is closed over the summer and who can mobilise resources to respond to the issue.

Head of centre absence at a critical stage of the exam cycle

Where the Head of Centre may be absent at a critical stage of the examination cycle, main duties and responsibilities will be escalated to the HISP MAT Executive Team. Possible causes of disruption to the exam process include:

1. Exam officer extended absence at a critical stage of the exam cycle

Criteria for implementation of the plan

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

- Planning
- annual data collection exercise not undertaken to collate information on qualifications and awarding body specifications being delivered;
- annual exams plan not produced identifying essential key tasks, key dates and deadlines;
- sufficient invigilators not recruited.
- Entries
- awarding bodies not being informed of early/estimated entries which prompts release of early information required by teaching staff;
- candidates not being entered with awarding bodies for external exams/assessment;
- awarding body entry deadlines missed or late or other penalty fees being incurred.
- Pre-exams
- invigilators not trained or updated on changes to instructions for conducting exams;
- exam timetabling, rooming allocation; and invigilation schedules not prepared;
- candidates not briefed on exam timetables and awarding body information for candidates;
- confidential exam/assessment materials and candidates' work not stored under required secure conditions;
- internal assessment marks and samples of candidates' work not submitted to awarding bodies/external moderators.
- Exam time
- Exams/assessments not taken under the conditions prescribed by awarding bodies;
- required reports/requests not submitted to awarding bodies during exam/assessment periods, for example very late arrival, suspected malpractice, special consideration;
- candidates' scripts not dispatched as required for marking to awarding bodies.
- Results and post-results
- access to examination results affecting the distribution of results to candidates;
- the facilitation of the post-results services.

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- The Head of Centre will take responsibility for the oversight of the examination process/series and delegate individual tasks to appropriately qualified and trained support staff;
- a delegated member of support staff will be seconded to liaise with the Exams Officer from the other local HISP MAT centres (Medina College - 59022) to ensure that all aspects above are considered and acted upon with full support;
- the centre will also utilise exam board support services, such as OCR Emergency Exams Officer Contingency Service, to ensure that all aspects of the exam cycle are covered.

2. SENDCo (or equivalent role) extended absence at a critical stage in the exam cycle

Criteria for implementation of the plan

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

- Planning
- candidates not tested/assessed to identify potential access arrangement requirements;

- centre fails to recognise its duties towards disabled candidates as defined under the terms of the Equality Act 2010;
- evidence of need and evidence to support normal way of working not collated.
- Pre-exams
- approval for access arrangements not applied for to the awarding body;
- centre-delegated arrangements not put in place;
- modified paper requirements not identified in a timely manner to enable ordering to meet external deadline;
- staff (facilitators) providing support to access arrangement candidates not allocated and trained
- Exam time
- access arrangement candidate support not arranged for exam rooms.

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- An appropriately qualified member of staff from SEND (i.e. Natalie James) will be seconded to liaise with other SEND staff within HISP MAT to ensure that all aspects are considered and acted upon;
- where there is not an appropriately qualified assessor on site, Carisbrooke College will engage the services of an outside assessor.

3. Teaching staff extended absence at a critical stage 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 or incurring late or other penalty fees being charged by awarding bodies;
- non-examination assessment tasks (including controlled assessments and coursework) 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 disruption:

- Exams Officer will liaise with the Head of Centre, Assistant Headteacher responsible for Teaching and Learning, and Curriculum Leaders to ensure that all entries and internal assessment marks are in on time;
- the Head of Centre, Assistant Headteacher responsible for TandL and Curriculum Leaders to ensure that non-examination tasks are completed and marked within the requisite time scales, and that candidates are informed of centre assessed marks prior to submission to the awarding body.

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 to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- Invigilation staff from one of the other local HISP MAT centres (59022 or 59024) will be used where possible;
- where not possible, appropriately trained support staff will be used to fill in gaps in the invigilation timetable;
- when not possible to source appropriately trained staff from within the school or local HISP MAT centres, agency staff may be used providing they have the appropriate training.

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 to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- Where main exam venue(s) is 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 the main exam venue(s) is unavailable due to an unexpected incident at exam time, where possible, move to an 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

Initially, if possible, alternative venues in the centre will be used:

Carisbrooke College (59010)

If the Sports Hall is unavailable then the Hall and Drama Studio will be used. If the allocated small rooms are unavailable then other classrooms will be prepared and used, displacing lower year group students if necessary.

If the whole of one of the sites (centres) was unavailable for use then one of the other centres would be used. The centre will contact the awarding bodies to inform them of the situation and obtain advice.

Carisbrooke College, in the first instance, would move students to Medina College. Students due to sit examinations in the CC Sports Hall would sit them in the MC Sports Hall (as half of the Sports Hall is available) if necessary. Small room provision would be on the ML or H corridor classrooms, near the MC student small rooms/in rooms that have previously been used at MC.

The second option would be The Island VI Form (59024) The Head of Centre would arrange for desks and chairs to be moved to the site as necessary. The school's minibuses would be used by facilities staff. If necessary a van would be rented at short notice from Premier Ford, Enterprise or Bartletts.

Candidates will be supervised securely throughout any transfer to an alternative venue and will not have access to unauthorised electronic devices or examination materials. Where appropriate and safe to do so, candidates may be instructed to make their own way to the alternative venue. The centre will follow the instructions of the relevant awarding body and any applicable emergency arrangements.

If necessary, as above, one cohort can sit the exam, and as long as the other cohort of students have been held securely, they will complete the exam in the same venue, once finished.

In the event that all three centres are unavailable Carisbrooke College would contact the local authority to request support, and contact the relevant awarding bodies.

Ensure the secure transportation of question papers or assessment materials to the alternative venue. This would involve at least two members of staff (one of which would be a member of the exams team).

(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

Communication details

- Arbor (MIS) would be used to contact parents/carers, as well as social media;
- notifying the JCQ Centre Inspection Service of an alternative site arrangement by submitting the JCQ Alternative Site Form online, using Centre Admin Portal (CAP).

6. Cyber Attack

Criteria for implementation of the plan

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

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

Carisbrooke College will:

- Ensure there are procedures in place to maintain the security of user accounts by:
  - providing training for authorised staff on the importance of creating strong and unique passwords, and keeping all account details secret;
  - providing training for all 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 document *Guidance for Centres on Cyber Security*.
- Authorised staff will have access, where necessary, to a device which complies with awarding bodies' multi-factor authentication (MFA) requirements;
- report any actual or suspected compromise of an awarding body's online systems immediately to the relevant awarding body;
- the centre has in place a written cyber security policy, available for inspection, in accordance with GR 5.3(x);
- Assess whether the incident constitutes a reportable personal data breach and, where required, notify the ICO. Notify the Department for Education, Local Authority and relevant awarding bodies where appropriate;
- use the awarding bodies' secure sites to retrieve required information.

7. Failure of IT systems

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- IT system corruption affecting candidates' work;
- MIS system failure at final entry deadline;
- MIS system failure during exams preparation;
- MIS system failure at results release time (Embargo Day and Results Day);
- internet failure during exam.

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- Ensure that candidates' work is backed-up and should consider the contingency of candidates' work being backed-up on two separate devices, including one off-site back-up. Implement appropriate security arrangements which protect candidates' work in the event of IT system corruption and cyber-attacks;
- entries/results will be administered through the exam board secure websites. All registers and seating plans will be printed in advance in case of IT failure on the day of the exam. Support may be requested from the other federated centres if necessary;
- exams location and student information is held in the cloud, and accessible from any location, where it can be printed again;
- Mi-Fi standalone internet connections available for Chromebooks to be connected to;
- A second full back-up internet connection is being installed and will provide an additional contingency once operational;
- if full outage of internet connection on one site is known in advance, students using IT provision will be moved to alternative site (please see alternative venue section in section 5);
- if a lack of internet means that reading software is not accessible, trained staff will act as readers.

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 a serious incident, resulting in exam candidates being unable to start, proceed with, or complete their exams.

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

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;
- remain open for exams where possible. In an emergency/crisis exams will be moved to an alternate federated centre (see alternative venue details in section 5);
- will notify students/carers by school communication systems/social media/website/local press;
- contact the awarding bodies as soon as possible and they will offer advice;
- ensure students will be held securely.

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.

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

The centre will:

- facilitate alternative methods of learning, such as live lessons via Google Classroom, work set via Google Classroom. These provisions can be accessed at home;
- communicate with candidates (and, where appropriate, parents/carers) information relating to alternative methods of learning;

- use facilities at one of the federated sites (Medina College or the Island VI Form), where/when appropriate.

Communication details:

- take advice offered by the awarding body regarding alternative arrangements for conducting examinations;
- 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;
- communication via Arbor (MIS) and social media.

10. Candidates may not be able to take examinations because of a crisis - centre remains open

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- Candidates may not be able to attend the examination centre to take examinations as normal because of a crisis.

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

The centre will:

- consider moving the starting time of the examination for all candidates (see section 6.2 of the JCQ document Instructions for Conducting Examinations (ICE));
- be aware of the rules for very late arrivals (see section 21 of the JCQ document Instructions for Conducting Examinations (ICE));
- wherever possible, ensure that it is in the best interest for the candidates to sit the examination;
- notify the awarding body of any special considerations (see Chapter 4 of the JCQ document A Guide to the Special Consideration Process);
- contact the relevant awarding body if additional support or guidance, in the event of disruption to examinations, is required;
- 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 question papers or assessment materials to the alternative venue;
- Where appropriate, discuss with the relevant awarding organisation whether the candidate can sit the examination at an alternative approved venue;
- communicate with candidates (and where appropriate, parents/carers) any changes to the exam or assessment timetable or venue;
- communicate with the relevant awarding organisations to make them aware the situation, and complete the relevant paperwork;
- communicate with candidates/parents/carers regarding possible solutions;
- apply for special consideration where appropriate (see Chapter 4 of the JCQ document A Guide to the Special Consideration Process).

Communication details:

- Consider whether any candidates' ability to take the assessment or to demonstrate their level of attainment has been affected and, if so, apply for special consideration.

11. Centre may not be able to open during the examination period - including in the event of the centre being unavailable for examinations owing to an unforeseen emergency

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- Centre may not be able to open as normal for scheduled examinations.

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- The decision on whether it is safe for a centre to open lies with the head of centre who is responsible for taking advice or following instructions from relevant local or national agencies;
- special consideration is an option if all other avenues have been exhausted and candidates meet the published criteria;
- the relevant awarding body should be contacted if additional support or guidance in the event of disruption to examinations is required
- contact the relevant awarding body as soon as possible and follow its instructions. This could include implementing alternative arrangements for the conducting of examinations and notifying the JCQ Centre Inspection Service of an alternative site arrangement by submitting the JCQ Alternative Site Form online, via the Centre Admin Portal (CAP);
- discuss alternative arrangements with the awarding body is the exam or assessment cannot take place;
- follow guidance provided by the awarding body;
- 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:

- See Section 5.

Communication details:

- Communication to parents/carers at the earliest opportunity via Arbor (MIS) and social media;
- Consider whether any candidates' ability to take the assessment or to demonstrate their level of attainment has been affected and, if so, apply for special consideration.

12. Disruption in the distribution of examination papers

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- Disruption to the distribution of examination papers to the centre in advance of examinations' official commencement;
- examination papers have not been received within the expected timescale;
- incorrect, insufficient, or damaged examination papers have been received.

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

The centre will:

- contact the relevant awarding body immediately to report the issue and seek further instructions;
- liaise with the awarding body regarding alternative delivery arrangements, including emergency delivery or secure electronic access to the examination papers where this is authorised;
- where electronic papers are provided, ensure they are accessed, printed and stored securely in accordance with the awarding body's instructions;
- ensure appropriate reprographic facilities and authorised staff are available to print examination papers at short notice, where required;
- follow all instructions provided by the relevant awarding body regarding the conduct of the examination;
- keep candidates under appropriate supervision and ensure examination security is maintained while awaiting the papers or while papers are being securely prepared;

- ensure candidates do not have access to unauthorised electronic devices, examination materials or information about the examination;
- communicate with candidates and, where appropriate, parents/carers, regarding any significant delay or change to the examination arrangements;
- maintain a record of the disruption, communications with the awarding body and actions taken by the centre;
- understand that, as a last resort and in consultation with the relevant awarding body and regulators, the examination may need to be scheduled for an alternative date;
- complete any incident reporting or other documentation required by the awarding body.

13. Delay in collection arrangements for completed examination scripts

Criteria for implementation of the plan

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

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- Where examinations are part of the national 'yellow label' service or where awarding bodies arrange collections, centres contact the relevant awarding bodies for advice and instructions;
- for examinations where centres make their own collection arrangements, they should investigate alternative options that comply with the JCQ document Instructions for conducting examinations;
- centres to ensure secure storage of completed examination scripts until as close to the collection time as possible.

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.
- Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption
- The centre will notify and liaise with the relevant awarding organisation to determine the appropriate course of action;
- the centre will liaise with the awarding organisation to determine whether candidate marks for affected assessments may be generated based on other appropriate evidence of candidate achievement, as defined by the awarding organisation;
- where requested, the centre will provide the awarding organisation with any appropriate alternative evidence of candidate achievement;
- where marks cannot be generated by the awarding organisation, affected candidates will be informed that they may need to retake the affected assessment in a subsequent assessment series;
- the head of centre will communicate, as appropriate, with the awarding organisation(s), affected candidates, parents and carers;
- the centre will maintain a record of the incident and any actions taken, and will complete any documentation required by the awarding organisation.

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

Criteria for implementation of the plan

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

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- 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;
- distribution of results: centre to make arrangements to access its results at one of the other federated sites, in agreement with the relevant awarding organisation;
- centre to make arrangements to coordinate access to post results services at one of the other federated sites;
- centre to share facilities with one of the other federated sites, in agreement with the relevant awarding organisation;
- Facilitation of post results services:
    - Centre to make arrangements to make post results requests at at one of the other federated sites;
    - Centres to contact the relevant awarding organisation if electronic post results requests are not possible.

Alternative venue details

- Carisbrooke College could use Medina College or The Island VI Form;
- the MIS and other electronic information are held in the cloud by Arbor and Google and backed up by Microsoft Azure, so are accessible off site.

Communication details:

- Candidates to be informed of the alternative arrangements via Arbor (MIS) and social media.

Further guidance to inform procedures and implement contingency planning

DfE

- Meeting digital and technology standards in schools and colleges
- https://www.gov.uk/guidance/meeting-digital-and-technology-standards-in-schools-and-colleges/cyber-security-core-standard

Ofqual

- What schools should do if exams or other assessments are seriously disrupted:
- Contingency planning:
- You should prepare for possible disruption to exams and other assessments, and make sure staff are aware of these plans. When drafting contingency plans, you should consider the following guidance:

General contingency guidance:

- Emergency planning and response from the Department for Education in England (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/emergency-planning-and-response-for-education-childcare-and-childrens-social-care-settings)
- Opening and closing local-authority-maintained schools from the Department for Education in England (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-organisation-local-authority-maintained-schools)
- https://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.

See also: https://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations/preparing-for-disruption-to-exams/

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 section 25 of *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, invigilators or relevant third parties regarding any changes to the exam or assessment timetable.

- After the exam

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

Steps the awarding organisation should take:

- Exam planning

  1. Establish and maintain, and at all times comply with, an up-to-date, written contingency plan;
  2. ensure that the arrangements in place with centres and other third parties enable them to deliver and award qualifications in accordance with their conditions of recognition.

- In the event of disruption

  - 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 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.

See also: JCQ's guidance on special considerations (https://www.jcq.org.uk/knowledge-hub/a-guide-to-the-special-consideration-process-2/)

Wider communications

The regulators, Ofqual in England, Qualifications Wales in Wales and CCEA 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 / assessments

As education is developed, in the event of any widespread sustained national disruption to examinations or assessments, national government departments will communicate with regulators, awarding organisations and centres prior to a public announcement. Regulators will provide advice to government departments on implications for examinations and assessments, including exam timetables.
In September 2023, Ofqual and the DfE published joint consultation decisions on long-term resilience arrangements. As in 2023, Ofqual has provided guidance on collecting evidence of student performance to ensure resilience in the qualifications system for students entering GCSEs, AS and A levels, the Advanced Extension Award and Project qualifications. For VTQs and other qualifications used alongside or instead of GCSEs, AS and A levels, awarding organisations will provide guidance where needed and will contact schools and colleges with more information.

In December 2022, Qualifications Wales published guidance for contingency assessment arrangements for GCSEs, AS and A levels and Skills Challenge Certificates in the event that a national decision is made to cancel exams. This guidance is still relevant for the current academic year.

The DfE has updated its guidance on handling strike action in schools in England in light of the industrial action in 2023. The guidance recommends schools should prioritise the running of examinations and assessments on any strike days, and should review their contingency plans to make this happen. Schools, colleges and other exam centres must speak to the relevant awarding organisations if they are expecting any disruption that might affect the sitting of exams and assessments.

The DfE has also issued guidance for education settings with confirmed reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) in their buildings. It includes the need for contingencies for possible disruption to examinations and links to the existing emergency planning guidance.

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

General contingency guidance:

- https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/emergency-planning-and-response-for-education-childcare-and-childrens-social-care-settings#full-publication-update-history
- https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/handling-strike-action-in-schools
- https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-organisation-local-authority-maintained-schools
- https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reinforced-autoclaved-aerated-concrete-guidance-for-responsible-bodies-and-education-settings-with-confirmed-raac
- https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/protective-security-and-preparedness-for-education-settings
- https://www.protectuk.police.uk/
- https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/section/education-skills/cyber-security-schools

15. Contingency planning

JCQ guidance taken directly from the Instructions for conducting examinations 2026/27, 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 is intended to ensure consistency of response in the event of major disruption to the examinations system affecting significant numbers of candidates. Further information may be found in the *Exam system contingency plan: England, Wales and Northern Ireland,* available through GOV.UK.

15.2 In addition, awarding bodies have their own well-established contingency plans in place to respond to disruptions. It is important that examinations officers who are facing disruption liaise directly with the relevant awarding body or awarding 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 to how these arrangements will be communicated to candidates, parents/carers and staff should disruption to examinations occur.

15.4 In the event that the Head of Centre decides that the centre cannot be opened for scheduled examinations, the centre's contingency plan must be invoked, utilising the centre's alternative site(s), and the relevant awarding bodies must be informed as soon as possible. Awarding bodies will be able to offer advice regarding the alternative arrangements for conducting examinations that may be available and the options for candidates who have not been able to take scheduled examinations.

15.5 The awarding bodies have designated **Wednesday 23 June 2027** as the contingency day for examinations in the June 2027 examination series. This is consistent with the qualification regulators' document *Exam system contingency plan: England, Wales and Northern Ireland.*

15.6 The designation of a contingency day within the common examination timetable is for use in the event of national or significant local disruption to examinations in the United Kingdom. It forms part of the awarding bodies' standard contingency planning for examinations. Centres must therefore remind candidates that they must remain available up to and including **Wednesday 23 June 2027** should an awarding body need to invoke its contingency arrangements.

15.7 In the event of national disruption to a day of examinations in the summer 2027 examination series, the awarding bodies will liaise with the qualification regulators and relevant government departments to agree the most appropriate option for managing the impact. As a last resort, affected examinations may be rescheduled.

Although every effort will be made to minimise the impact of any disruption, it is possible that more than one timetable date could be affected following a significant disruption, up to and including the contingency day. Centres will be alerted if it is agreed that examinations are to be rescheduled, and affected candidates will be expected to make themselves available in such circumstances.

The decision regarding the rescheduling of examinations will rest with the relevant awarding body. The centre must conduct examinations on the scheduled date unless instructed otherwise by the relevant awarding body.

15.8 Where candidates choose not to be available for a rescheduled examination for reasons other than those covered by the special consideration arrangements, they may not be eligible for enhanced grading arrangements. Centres must therefore ensure that candidates and parents/carers are aware of the contingency arrangements and the requirement to remain available up to and including **Wednesday 23 June 2027**, so that this can be taken into account when making plans for the summer.

For the June 2027 examination series, the contingency day is Wednesday 23 June 2027.

All relevant centre staff must be familiar with the examination contingency plan. Consideration should be given to how these arrangements will be communicated to candidates, parents/carers and staff should disruption to examinations occur.