

Our Lady's Catholic High School

Examinations Contingency Plan Policy

Love, Learn, Grow

At Our Lady's, we place Christ at the heart of everything we do. Through our school 'Being One of Ours' virtues, we nurture each individual to love, learn and grow in their unique, God-given potential, ready to be of service to the world.

Reviewed: Spring Term 2026
Next Review: Spring Term 2027

EXAMINATIONS CONTINGENCY PLAN POLICY

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Key staff involved in the plan

Role	Name(s)
Head of centre	Richard Charnock
Exams officer line manager (Senior leader)	Matt Power
Exams officer	Louise Gavell
ALS lead/SENCo	Stephen Broderick
IT Manager	Geoff Diggles

Purpose of the plan:

This plan examines potential risks and issues that could cause disruption to the management and administration of the exam process at Our Lady's Catholic High School. 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.

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

This plan also confirms Our Lady's Catholic High School's compliance with JCQ's **General Regulations for Approved Centres** (section 5.3) that the centre has 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.

Possible causes of disruption to the exam process:

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 include:

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
- invigilators not trained or updated on changes to instructions for conducting exams

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:

- Assistant Head (Curriculum) 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 the Assistant Head (Curriculum)
- Exams Officer to ensure exam cycle, policies and procedures are up to date at all times

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
- centre fails to recognise its duties towards disabled candidates as defined under the terms of the Equality Act 2010
- **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:

- Assistant Head (Curriculum) to appoint a suitable Deputy SENCO as rapidly as possible, who will follow procedures and practices within the SENCO remit.
- Exams Officer to ensure essential information is available to Assistant Head (Curriculum)
- Exams Officer to ensure exam cycle, policies and procedures are up to date at all times

Principal Teacher 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
- Non-examination assessment tasks not set/issued/taken by candidates as scheduled
- Candidates not being informed of centre assessed marks before marks are submitted to the awarding body and therefore not being able to consider appealing internal assessment decisions and requesting a review of the centre's marking
- Internal assessment marks and candidates' work not provided to meet awarding body submission deadlines

Centre actions:

- Assistant Head (Curriculum) to ensure departmental continuity by requesting an alternative member of the department takes responsibility for the actions above.

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 shortlist of suitable candidates.
- Examinations Officer to ensure that capacity is never exceeded on any one day.
- 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 Incident Log is in place (Appendix 3)

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.
- Assistant Head (Curriculum) and Examinations Officer to continually review all stages of the process. Gym to be the first option as an alternative venue for emergency accommodation. Arts Theatre to be the second option.
- Emergency Evacuation plan should be in place (Appendix 2)

Cyber-attack

Criteria for implementation of the plan

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

Centre Actions:

A cyber-attack would affect the delivery of:

- On-screen examinations
- Downloading exam papers
- Uploading exam entries
- Downloading/printing results

Secure coding files are available for the Exams Officer to download from 8am on the day of the examination via Edexcel Online. If this is not possible due to a cyber-attack, the Exams Officer will contact the exam board for further advice. Access to paper exam papers could take place from an alternative centre such as Corpus Christi Catholic High School, with whom we have a close relationship. Printing of alternative papers could take place there and our candidates would be able to sit a delayed but still secure examination.

Failure of IT systems

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:

- Assistant Head (Curriculum) and Examinations Officer to contact in-house IT department.
- Examinations Officer to contact all Examination Boards (see Appendix 1 for telephone numbers) for alternative route for dissemination of results.

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

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- Whole centre evacuation (or lock down) during exam time due to serious incident resulting in examination candidates being unable to start, proceed with or complete their examinations.

Centre actions:

- The centre to communicate with relevant awarding organisations at the outset to make them aware of the issue.
- Centre to liaise with other centres/venues to sit exams at a different venue in extremis - **Corpus Christi Catholic High School.**

Disruption of teaching time — 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:

- The centre to communicate with parents, carers and students about the potential for disruption to teaching time and plans to address this.
- Look into the provision of alternative venues to be prioritised for students with imminent exams.

- Examinations Officer to advise the Examination Boards as appropriate.
- In extreme circumstances advise candidates they may need to sit exams in the next available series.

Candidates at risk of being unable to take examinations - centre remains open

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- Centre at risk of being unable to open as normal for scheduled examinations

Centre actions:

- The centre to communicate with relevant awarding organisations at the outset to make them aware of the issue.
- The centre to communicate with parents/carers and candidates regarding solutions to the issue.
- Centre to liaise with Exam Boards to sit exams at a different venue in extremis.
- Should a significant number of candidates need to be isolated due to sickness, use the Gym or back of the Sports Hall if not all of the cohort sitting the examination and designated invigilators/pastoral support staff should be on hand.
- If a small number (<5) are affected, isolate students in an appropriate classroom or the training centre with separate invigilation.
- Apply for Special Consideration for those affected to the appropriate Exam Boards.

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.
- Awarding organisations to provide centres with electronic access to examination papers via a secure external network. Ensure that copies are received, made and stored under secure conditions and have plans in place to facilitate such an action.

Awarding organisations would provide guidance on the conduct of examinations in such circumstances.

- As a last resort, and in close collaboration with centres and regulators, awarding organisations to consider scheduling of the examination on an alternative date

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.

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:

- It is the responsibility of the Head of Centre to communicate this immediately to the relevant awarding organisation(s) and subsequently to pupils and parents/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.
- Centre always obtains proof of postage when sending out assessments to the awarding bodies and can provide this as evidence if needed

Centre unable to distribute results as normal 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

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.

Distribution of results:

- Centre to make arrangements to access its results at an alternative site, in agreement with the relevant awarding organisation
- Centre to make arrangements to coordinate access to post results services from an alternative site
- Centre to share facilities with other centres if this is possible, in agreement with the relevant awarding organisation.)

Facilitation of post results services:

- Centre to make arrangements to make post results requests at an alternative location
- Centre to contact the relevant awarding organisation if electronic post results requests are not possible)

Appendix 1

Exams Day Contingency plan

Exam Item	Location/ Holders Name	Responsibility
Keys to Secure Storage for exam papers and exam stationery	LRE holds spare keys	LGA / MPO / LRE
Centre Timetable	Timetable widely published	LGA / MPO
Seating plans	Kept by LGA	LGA
Invigilators	EO to organise	LGA
Access Arrangements (incl. Cover sheets)	Notification on attendance sheets.	BBE / SBK
Script envelopes / Examiner address labels	Kept by LGA	LGA
Exam clashes	Resolution arranged, candidates informed	LGA
Collection of scripts	Invigilators	Invigilators / LGA
Collation of scripts	Exams Officer - Checked off on official attendance registers Official attendance sheets	LGA
Completion of proof of posting form / posting scripts	Kept by LGA	LGA

Awarding Bodies tel no:	WJEC 029 2026 5000 AQA 0800 197 7162 OCR 01223 553 998 Pearson 0344 4632535	
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Appendix 2

Plan 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/Assistant Head (Curriculum)/ 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, via the Exams officer who will confirm if immediate evacuation is necessary and the School Office who will notify the Assistant Head (Curriculum). A decision will be made 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 made and the full time allocated for the examination given to complete the examination, ignoring the interruption.

An incident log (Appendix 3) must be completed with the times of the disruptions noted. A special consideration form will be filled in so as not to disadvantage the candidates.

Procedure for Emergency Evacuation from an Examination

If it is necessary to evacuate the building, the lead invigilator should then stop the examination taking a note of the time and evacuate the building by row and in silence. The candidates must leave all examination papers, scripts and writing equipment behind, and in accordance with the school emergency evacuation procedures. The candidates should remain supervised and in silence throughout the emergency. Several other members of staff will be needed to help police this.

In the event of an emergency, requiring candidates to evacuate buildings during an examination the following areas should be used but the candidates must be kept at a distance and in silence from the main body of pupils who will be mustering at other emergency evacuation points:

Sports Hall: In the field at the front

At all times invigilators must act in accordance with section 25 of the JCQ '*Instructions for Conducting Examinations*' 2024-25 booklet. They should also summon assistance immediately an emergency arises. Silence should be maintained during the time the candidates are outside the examination room.

Section 25 of the JCQ '*Instructions for Conducting Examinations*' (ICE) booklet 2024-25 states:

In an emergency such as a fire alarm or a bomb alert, the invigilator must take the following action:

- *Stop the candidates from writing;*
- *Collect the attendance register (in order to ensure all candidates are present) and 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;*
- *Ensure candidates leave the room in silence;*
- *Ensure 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 once it resumes;*
- *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 the action taken (Appendix 3), and send to the relevant awarding body.*

Exam Room Incident Log

This incident log is for the exams officer or invigilator(s) to use to record any irregularities that may happen in the exam room at the point of occurrence.

All irregularities must be recorded.

An exam room incident log should be used to record any irregularities.

An example of the Exam Room Incident log is printed at the end of this document.

In order to avoid potential breaches of security, care must be taken to ensure the correct question paper packets are opened. An additional member of centre staff must check the day, time, date, subject, unit/component and tier of entry, if appropriate, immediately before a question paper packet is opened. [JCQ ICE 18.1]

After the exam(s) in this room has concluded, incidents recorded here will inform required follow-up actions or reports to awarding bodies. The incident log will be affixed to the seating plan, copy of the attendance register(s), and exam room checklist for this exam room session.

Irregularities are unplanned incidents that could impact on the security of the examination, breach the rules and regulations or affect the conditions that enable candidates to achieve their potential. Examples include: candidate late/very late arrival; suspected malpractice (candidate, centre staff); emergency evacuation; candidate illness/distress; disturbance inside/outside the exam room; unauthorised persons entering the exam room etc.

Appendix 3

Exam Room Incident Log

Date:

Time:

Examination:

Venue:

Exam	Start	Finish

Invigilators:

Name	Time In	Time Out

Record of Incident:

Time	Incident

Further guidance to inform and implement contingency planning:

Ofqual

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

Contingency planning

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

General contingency guidance

- emergency planning and response from the Department for Education in England
- school organisation: local-authority-maintained schools from the Department for Education in England
- exceptional closure days from the Department of Education in Northern Ireland
- checklist - exceptional closure of schools from the Department of Education in Northern Ireland
- school terms and school closures from NI Direct
- opening schools in extremely bad weather - guidance for schools from the Welsh Government
- police guidance from National Counter Terrorism Security Office and partners on preparing for threats

Disruption to assessments or exams

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

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

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

Steps 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

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

After the exam

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

Steps the awarding organisation should take

Exam planning

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

In the event of disruption

- Take all reasonable steps to mitigate any adverse effect, in relation to their qualifications, arising from any disruption.

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

After the exam

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

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

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

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

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

Wider communications

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

The [Department for Education](#) in England, the [Department of Education](#) in Northern Ireland and the [Welsh Government](#) will inform the relevant government ministers as soon as it becomes apparent that there will be significant local or national disruption; and ensure that they are kept updated until the matter is resolved.

Awarding organisations will alert the [Universities and Colleges Admissions Service](#) (UCAS) and the [Central Applications Office](#) (CAO) about any impact of the disruption on their deadlines and liaise regarding student progression to further and higher education.

Awarding organisations will alert relevant professional bodies or employer groups if the impact of disruption particularly affects them.

Widespread national disruption to the taking of examinations or assessments

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 onwards.

As education is devolved, in the event of any widespread sustained national disruption to examinations or assessments, national government departments will communicate with

regulators, awarding organisations and centres prior to a public announcement. Regulators will provide advice to government departments on implications for examinations and assessments, including exam timetables.

In September 2023, Ofqual and the DfE published [joint consultation decisions on long-term resilience arrangements](#). As in 2023, Ofqual has provided [guidance on collecting evidence of student performance to ensure resilience in the qualifications system](#) for students entering GCSEs, AS and A levels, the Advanced Extension Award and Project qualifications. For VTQs and other qualifications used alongside or instead of GCSEs, AS and A levels, awarding organisations will provide guidance where needed and will contact schools and colleges with more information.

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

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

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

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

JCQ

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

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

15.2 In addition, awarding bodies have their own well-established contingency plans in place to respond to disruptions. It is important that exams officers who are facing disruption liaise directly with the relevant awarding body/bodies.

15.3 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 2025. This is consistent with the qualification regulators' document *Exam system contingency plan: England, Wales and Northern Ireland*:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/exam-system-contingency-plan-england-wales-and-northern-ireland>

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

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.

(JCQ guidance above taken directly from **Instructions for conducting examinations 2024-2025** <http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/ice---instructions-for-conducting-examinations>, section 15, Contingency planning)

JCQ Joint Contingency Plan www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/other-documents

JCQ notice - Preparing for disruption to examinations (effective from 11 October 2021) www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/other-documents

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

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

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

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

Instructions for conducting examinations www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/ice---instructions-for-conducting-examinations

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

GOV.UK

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

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

National Cyber Security Centre

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

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

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

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

1. [More ransomware attacks on UK education - NCSC.GOV.UK](#)
2. [Ransomware advice and guidance for your IT teams to implement](#)

3. Offline backups in an online world
4. Backing up your data
5. Practical resources to help improve your cyber security
6. Building Resilience: Ransomware and the risks to schools and ways to prevent it
7. School staff offered training to help shore up cyber defences - NCSC.GOV.UK