



Exam Contingency Plan 2025- 2026

Thomas Hall School

Exam Contingency Plan 2024 to 2025

Centre name	Thomas Hall School
Centre number	54214
Date plan first created	20/11/2023
Current plan approved by	Phil Arnold
Current plan reviewed by	Charlotte Webster
Date of next review	01/10/2026

Key staff involved in the plan

Role	Name
Head of Centre	Phil Arnold
Senior leader(s)	Phil Arnold, Charlotte Webster, Katy Lewis
Exams officer	Michelle Spiess
ALS lead/SENCo	Helen Towler-Williams, Joe Medland
Other staff (if applicable)	Invigilator team Exam Admin team

This plan is reviewed and updated annually to ensure that exam contingency planning at Thomas Hall 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 Thomas Hall 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', 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 2023).

This plan details how Thomas Hall School complies with the JCQ's General Regulations for Approved Centers (section 5.3, Centre management) by having in place a written examination contingency plan which covers all aspects of examination administration. This will allow members of the Senior Leadership Team to act immediately in the event of an emergency or where the Head of Centre, Examinations Officer or SENDCo is absent at a critical stage of the examination cycle. The examination contingency plan should reinforce procedures in the event of the Centre being unavailable for examinations, or on results day, owing to an unforeseen emergency. The potential impact of a cyber-attack should also be considered.

Operating across more than one centre: Not applicable

National Centre Number Register and other information requirements

The Head of Centre will also ensure that as a contingency to enable the prompt handling of urgent issues only, responds to the awarding bodies' request for information regarding the contact details of the Deputy Head (personal mobile number and/or email address). This will ensure that any urgent matters which might adversely affect candidates which arise outside of term time, and which potentially put qualification awards at risk, can be addressed by awarding bodies with the support of that member of staff.

Heads of Centre should ensure that the Deputy Head has the necessary authority to mobilise resources to provide this support, which might include resolving issues within the Centre itself. (GR 5.3)

Summary of possible causes of disruption

	Possible disruption	Page number
1.	Head of Centre absence	5
2.	Exams officer extended absence at a critical stage of the exam cycle	5
3.	SENCO/ Access Arrangement Co-Ordinator absent at critical stage of the exam cycle	6
4.	Teaching staff extended absence at critical stage of exam cycle	7
5.	Invigilators: lack of appropriately trained invigilators or invigilator absence	8
6.	Exam rooms lack appropriate rooms or main venue unavailable at short notice	8
7.	Cyber attack	10
8.	Failure of IT systems including internet	10
9.	Emergency Evacuation of the exam room	10
10.	Disruption of teaching time in the weeks before an exam; eg Centre closed for an extended period	11
11.	Candidates may not be able to take exams; Centre remains open	11
12.	Centre may not be able to open as normal during examination period	12
13.	Disruption in the distribution of examination papers	13
14.	Disruption to transporting completed examination scripts	13
15.	Assessment Evidence is not available to be marked	14
16.	centers unable to distribute results as normal (including the Centre being closed in an emergency)	14
17.	Any other cause of disruption to the exam process	15

Possible causes of disruption to the exam process

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

The Deputy Headteacher will act on his behalf.

2. Exams 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:

- 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 Head of Centre will ensure:

- The Exams Officer regularly provides updates in weekly SLT meetings to ensure that they are informed of the current situation with exams.
- The Senior Invigilator receives ongoing training throughout the year, so they are able to step up as necessary.

In the Event of Exams Officer being absent:

The Senior Invigilator and examination team (comprising of admin /SENDCo/SEND team /Deputy head) to step up and lead the process

Data manager at Reach South to support and advise with exams administration.

Request support from the Examinations officers in other Reach Academy Trust Schools

Administrative Assistants to support exam administration.

3. SENCo 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 access arrangements process within the exam cycle not undertaken including:

Planning

- candidates not tested/assessed to identify potential access arrangement requirements
- Centre fails to recognize 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 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 listed

above

The Head of Centre will ensure:

- The SENCO regularly provides updates in weekly SLT meetings to ensure that they are informed of the current situation with exams.
- The Assistant SENCO receives ongoing training throughout the year, so they are able to step up as necessary.

In the Event of the SENCO being absent:

- The Exams Officer, Senior Invigilator and examination team (comprising of admin /SEND team /Deputy head) to step up and lead the process
- Inclusion at Reach South to support and advise with exams administration.
- Request support from the SENCO network in other Reach Academy Trust Schools

4. Teaching staff extended absence at a critical stage of 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
- Non-examination assessment tasks not set/issued/taken by candidates as scheduled
- Candidates not being informed of Centre assessed marks before marks are submitted to the awarding body and therefore not being able to consider appealing internal assessment decisions and requesting a review of the Centre's marking
- Internal assessment marks and candidates' work not provided to meet awarding body submission deadlines

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed

above:

The Head of Centre will ensure:

- Heads of Department have a central place where marks are collated and held.
- Head of Department have their own departmental contingency plans

In the Event of the teaching staff having extended absence:

Subject lead of faculty lead to assist

SLT to assist

Data manager to assist

5. 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 listed

above

The Head of Centre will ensure:

- The Exams Officer attempts to recruit as many invigilators as possible
- The Exams Officer ensures that as many current staff members are trained as invigilators as possible including reception etc

In the Event of the shortage of invigilators/ being absent:

- Agency staff to be used
- Any other staff available to be used.

6. 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:

Arrangements would need to be made for the provision of temporary classrooms or use of an alternative site.

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: see below.
- communicate with candidates (and where appropriate, parents/carers) any changes to the exam or assessment timetable or to the venue
- **Communication** details: Deputy head to lead communications by email;/school website/letter .
- Individual students and parents to be contacted following Risk Assessment of priority communication required for vulnerable students
- 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

IN THE EVENT THAT WE NEED TO USE AN ALTERNATIVE VENUE:

Portable Offices 0800 169 4288 www.portableoffices.co.uk

Are able to deliver large open plan portacabins large enough for current cohort within 24 hours of request. The portacabins are fully built, insulated, double glazed with pre-wired electrics. They just require an electrician to connect.

7. Cyber-attack

Criteria for implementation of the plan

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

Other criteria:

No any other criteria identified.

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The Centre will:

Notify: it@reachsouth.org
Notify the Exam Boards.
Notify insurers via
REACH South team
Notify the police.

8. 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:

Notify
IT@reachsouth.org.
Notify the exam boards.

In the event of the internet failing, exam laptops can be used offline and papers be downloaded onto usb sticks (permission must be given by REACH South IT for the use of USBs).

In the event of printing and photocopying being unavailable, a printer is kept in the exam cupboard. It will have to be taken off site to be used as in-school computers do not allow for plug in printers.

9. 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:

No other actions identified.

10. 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 using software /online resources
- communicate with candidates (and where appropriate, parents/carers) information relating to alternative methods of learning
- 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.

11. Candidates may not be able to take examinations - centre remains open

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- Candidates may not be able 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
- 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. Centre may not be able 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 may not be able 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 (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, using the Centre Admin Portal (CAP).)
- 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
- 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.

13. 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.

14. 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 organisations arrange collections, seek advice from the relevant awarding organisations and will not make its own arrangements for transportation unless told to do so by the awarding organisation
- for any examinations where the centre makes its own arrangements for transportation, investigate alternative dispatch options that comply with the requirements detailed in the JCQ

Instructions for conducting examinations

- ensure the secure storage of completed examination scripts until collection

Other centre actions:

No other actions identified.

15. 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.

16. 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: To be confirmed.
- 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: To be confirmed.

Other centre actions:

No other actions identified.

17. Any other cause of disruption to the exam process

Cause of disruption

No further causes identified.

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed

above Not applicable.

Further guidance to inform procedures and implement contingency planning

DfE

Meeting digital and technology standards in schools and colleges

- ~~Cyber Security Standards in schools and colleges~~
- Cyber crime and cyber security: a guide for education providers
- DfE Cyber Security Guidance - March 2023

Ofqual

Ofqual guidance extract taken directly from the Exam system contingency plan: England, Wales and Northern Ireland - What schools and colleges and other centres should do if exams or other assessments are seriously disrupted **(last updated 5 October 2023)** www.gov.uk/government/publications/exam-system-contingency-plan-england-wales-and-northern-ireland/what-schools-and-colleges-should-do-if-exams-or-other-assessments-are-seriously-disrupted

"This document was updated in October 2023 to include Ofqual's final decisions on long-term resilience arrangements, and the Department for Education (DfE)'s guidance for education settings with confirmed reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC).

In addition to this guidance, you will need to be aware of your specific responsibilities for local and national school preparations and contingencies. You should also follow advice from relevant public health bodies.

Contingency planning

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

Disruption to assessments or exams

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

- **the exam or assessment cannot take place**

- a student misses an exam or loses their assessment due to an emergency, or other event, outside of the student's control

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

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

See also JCQ's guidance on special consideration

Wider communications

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

The DfE in England, the DfE in Northern Ireland, and the 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

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.

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

General contingency guidance

- **emergency planning and response for education, childcare and children’s social care settings from the DfE in England**
- **handling strike action in schools from the DfE in England**
- **school organisation: local-authority-maintained schools from the DfE in England**
- **reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete: guidance for education settings with confirmed RAAC from the DfE in England**
- **exceptional closure days from the Department of Education in Northern Ireland**
- **checklist - exceptional closure of schools from the Department of Education in Northern Ireland**
- **school terms and school closures from NI Direct**
- **opening schools as well as childcare and play settings in extreme bad weather and extreme hot weather - guidance for schools from the Welsh Government**
- **emergency planning and response guidance for education and childcare settings- guidance for schools and education settings from the Welsh Government**
- **police guidance from National Counter Terrorism Security Office and partners on preparing for threats**
- **cyber security guidance for schools and colleges from the National Cyber Security Centre**

JCQ

JCQ guidance taken directly from Instructions for conducting examinations 2025-2026 section 15,

Contingency planning

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

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

- 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.**
- 3. All centres must have a written examination contingency plan which covers all aspects of examination administration. This will allow members of the senior leadership team to act immediately in the event of an emergency or where the head of centre, examinations officer or**

SENCo is absent at a critical stage of the examination cycle. The examination contingency plan should reinforce procedures in the event of the centre being unavailable for examinations owing to an unforeseen emergency.

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

- 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.**
- 5. The awarding bodies will designate 'contingency sessions' for examinations, summer 2026. This is consistent with the qualification regulators' document *Exam system contingency plan: England, Wales and Northern Ireland* - www.gov.uk/government/publications/exam-system-contingency-plan-england-wales-and-northern-ireland**

The designation of 'contingency sessions' within the common examination timetable is in the event of national or significant local disruption to examinations. It is part of the awarding bodies' standard contingency planning for examinations.

In the event that there is national disruption to a day of examinations in summer 2026, the awarding bodies will liaise with the qualification regulators and government departments to agree the most appropriate option for managing the impact. As a last resort the affected examinations will be rescheduled. Although every effort would be taken to keep the impact to a minimum, it is possible that there could be more than one timetable date affected following the disruption, up to and including the last contingency day. Centres will be alerted if it was agreed to reschedule the examinations and the affected candidates will be expected to make themselves available in such circumstances. The decision regarding the re-scheduling of examinations will always rest with the awarding body. The centre must conduct the examination on the scheduled date unless instructed to do otherwise by the awarding body.

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

Links to other JCQ documentation

[JCQ Joint Contingency Plan](#)

[JCQ Preparing for disruption to examinations](#) [JCQ Notice to Centres -](#)

[exam contingency plan](#) [General](#)

[Regulations for Approved Centres](#)

[Guidance notes on alternative site](#)

[arrangements](#) [Guidance notes for](#)

[transferred candidates](#) [Instructions for](#)

[conducting examinations](#)

A guide to the special consideration process

Guidance for centres on cyber security (Effective from November 2023)

Information for centres affected by RAAC – the delivery of non-examination assessments and the special consideration process

GOV.UK

Emergency planning and response: Exam and assessment disruption

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

Wales

School closures: examinations

Opening schools in extremely bad weather and extreme hot weather

Northern Ireland

Exceptional closure days

Checklist - exceptional closure of schools

National Cyber Security Centre

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

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

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

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

- **Further ransomware attacks on UK education by cyber criminals**
- **Ransomware advice and guidance for your IT teams to implement**
- **Offline backups in an online world**
- **Backing up your data**
- **Practical resources to help schools improve their cyber security**
- **Building Resilience: Ransomware, the risk to schools and ways to prevent it**
- **School staff offered training to help shore up cyber defences**