

Preparing for disruption to examinations

This notice is based on guidance provided within the JCQ Joint Contingency Plan, which is available from the JCQ website: www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/other-documents/jcq-joint-contingency-plan

In the event of widespread disruption to the examination system, all centres must have contingency plans in place. There are three main categories of disruption, which are outlined below.

Candidates at risk of being unable to take examinations – centres remain open

Your contingency plans should focus on options that enable candidates to take their examinations. As part of these preparations, you should take into account the guidance provided in the JCQ publication, *Instructions for conducting examinations*, www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/ice---instructions-for-conducting-examinations/instructions-for-conducting-examinations-2019-2020. This includes:

- Considering moving the start times of the examination (according to the regulations) for all candidates (see Section 6.2 of the JCQ *Instructions*)
- Being aware of the rules for very late arrivals (see Section 21 of the JCQ *Instructions*).

Wherever possible, it is always in the best interest for candidates to sit the exam. However, if candidates who are unable to sit the exam meet the criteria, special consideration through absence for acceptable reasons is an option (see Chapter 4 of the JCQ publication, *A guide to the special consideration process*, www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-special-consideration/regulations-and-guidance/a-guide-to-the-special-consideration-process-2019-2020).

Do not hesitate to call the relevant awarding body if you require additional support or guidance in the event of disruption to your examinations.

Centres at risk of being unable to open as normal during the exam period

As above, your contingency plans must focus on enabling candidates to take their examinations if your centre is at risk of being unable to open as normal.

The responsibility for deciding 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.

Information on what schools and colleges and other centres should do if exams or other assessments are seriously disrupted can be found in the Ofqual exam system contingency plan: 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

Special consideration through absence for acceptable reasons is also available as an option if all other avenues have been exhausted and candidates meet the relevant criteria.

Do not hesitate to call the relevant awarding body if you require additional support or guidance in the event of disruption to your examinations.

Disruption to transporting completed examination papers

If there is a delay in normal collection arrangements for completed examination scripts:

- Where examinations are part of the national 'yellow label' service or where awarding bodies arrange collections, centres should **contact the relevant awarding bodies** for advice and instructions.
- For examinations where centres make their own collection arrangements, you should **investigate alternative options** that comply with the JCQ *Instructions for conducting examinations*.
- **Completed scripts must be stored securely** until they are collected.

Summary of centre and awarding body responsibilities

Examination centres are responsible for:

- Preparing plans for any disruption to exams as part of centres' general emergency planning
- Deciding whether the centre can open for examinations as scheduled and informing relevant awarding bodies if the centre is unable to open
- Exploring the opportunities for alternative arrangements if the centre cannot open for examinations and agreeing such arrangements with the awarding bodies
- Judging whether candidates meet the requirements for special consideration as a result of any disruption and submitting these requests to the relevant awarding bodies
- Assessing their circumstances and liaising with awarding bodies in the event of disruption to the transportation of papers.

Awarding bodies are responsible for:

- Ensuring centres receive examination materials for scheduled examinations
- Advising centres on possible alternative examination arrangements and declining/approving proposals for alternative examination arrangements
- Evaluating and declining/approving requests for special consideration.

Contacting the awarding bodies

In all cases, if you have any concerns, please contact the relevant awarding body for advice:

- AQA 0800 197 7162
eos@qa.org.uk
- CCEA 028 9026 1212, 028 9026 1293
centresupport@ccea.org.uk
- OCR 01223 553998
general.qualifications@ocr.org.uk
- Pearson 0344 463 2535
- WJEC 02920 265 077
exams@wjec.co.uk