



Joint Council for  
Qualifications<sup>CIC</sup>

# Preparing for disruption to examinations

Effective from 1 September 2024

Produced on behalf of:



©JCQ<sup>CIC</sup> 2024

This document is based on guidance provided within the JCQ Joint Contingency Plan, which is available on the JCQ website:

<https://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/other-documents/>

All centres 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/ALNCo, 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 their contingency plan centres **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.

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.

There are three main categories of disruption, which are outlined in the scenarios below.

## Candidates may not be able to take examinations but centres remain open

Centres' contingency plans should focus on options that enable candidates to take their examinations. As part of these preparations, centres should take into account the guidance provided in the JCQ document *Instructions for conducting examinations*:

<http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/ice---instructions-for-conducting-examinations>

- consider moving the starting time of the examination for all candidates (see **section 6.2** of the JCQ document *Instructions for conducting examinations*)
- being aware of the rules for very late arrivals (see **section 21** of the JCQ document *Instructions for conducting examinations*).

Wherever possible, it is always in the best interest for candidates to sit the examination. However, special consideration is an option where a candidate is unable to sit the examination (see **Chapter 4** of the JCQ document *A guide to the special consideration process*):

<https://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-special-consideration/regulations-and-guidance.>)

The relevant awarding body should be contacted if additional support or guidance in the event of disruption to examinations is required.

## Centres may not be able to open for examinations

As above, centres' contingency plans **must** focus on enabling candidates to take their examinations if the centre is at risk of not being able to open as normal.

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.

Information on what centres should do if examinations/assessments are seriously disrupted can be found in the three country regulators' 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](http://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 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.

## Delay in 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, they should investigate alternative options that comply with the JCQ document *Instructions for conducting examinations*.

Scripts **must** always be kept in the secure room until as close to the collection time as possible. Script packages **must not** be left unattended at the collection area.

## Summary of centre and awarding body responsibilities

Centres are responsible for:

- preparing plans for any potential disruption to examinations as part of their written examination contingency plan
- deciding whether they can open for examinations as scheduled, and in the event that this is not possible informing relevant awarding bodies
- implementing alternative arrangements for the conducting of examinations, as part of their written examination contingency plan, if the centre cannot open for examinations
- 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). The Centre Admin Portal (CAP) can be accessed via any of the awarding bodies' secure extranet sites
- notifying the JCQ Centre Inspection Service of an alternative site arrangement by submitting online the JCQ *Alternative Site form*, using the Centre Admin Portal (CAP). The Centre Admin Portal (CAP) can be accessed via any of the awarding bodies' secure extranet sites
- judging whether candidates meet the requirements for special consideration because of any disruption and submitting requests to the relevant awarding bodies
- assessing their circumstances and liaising with awarding bodies in the event of disruption to collection arrangements for completed examination scripts.

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
- declining/ approving requests for special consideration.

## **Awarding body contact details**

For further advice please contact the relevant awarding body:

### **AQA**

0800 197 7162

[eos@aqa.org.uk](mailto:eos@aqa.org.uk)

### **OCR**

01223 553998

[support@ocr.org.uk](mailto:support@ocr.org.uk)

### **CCEA**

028 9026 1212

028 9026 1293

028 9026 1425

[centresupport@ccea.org.uk](mailto:centresupport@ccea.org.uk)

### **Pearson**

0344 463 2535

### **WJEC**

02920 265 077

[exams@wjec.co.uk](mailto:exams@wjec.co.uk)