



Exam Contingency Policy

Purpose of the process

This policy 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 Ludlow CE School.

Alongside internal processes, this plan is informed by Ofqual's 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 notice, "Preparing for disruption to examinations (effective from 11 October 2021)."

This policy details how Ludlow CE School complies with the JCQ's General Regulations for Approved Centres (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 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.

Possible causes of disruption to the exam process

1. Exams Officer absence at key points in the exam process (exam cycle)

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 post-results services.

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

- Head of Centre, with support from the SLT, to act as temporary Examination Officer (EO) to take over responsibilities should the absence of the EO have the potential to affect the meeting of deadlines.
- EO to write exam cycle key dates on calendar displayed in Exams Office.
- EO to produce key jobs for each month and for this to be displayed on EO notice board in Exams Office.
- Ensure Policies and Procedure are up to date at all times.

2. SENCo and Additional Learning Support Lead extended absence at key points in the exam process (exam cycle)

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 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

- Support for candidates with access arrangements not arranged in exam rooms

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

- SENCO and Mrs S Smith, Additional Learning Support Lead and Level 7 Assessor, to work closely together in the monitoring and application of Access Arrangements so that both are informed and up to date.
- EO to have regular meetings with Assessor and/or SENCO to keep up to date with Access Arrangement applications.
- Central register of Access Arrangements and actions to be taken kept on shared drive so the most up to date list is readily accessible and available to the Head of Centre and teaching staff.

3. Teaching staff extended absence at key points in the exam process (exam cycle)

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

- Implementation of a robust system of absence cover for teaching staff, including those within each department who can step in to replace absent colleagues.
- Internal deadlines set in place by EO prior to external deadlines to all EO, relevant departments and the SLT to pre-empt any missed deadlines and to seek the appropriate information from other staff members.

4. Invigilators - lack of appropriately trained invigilators or invigilator absence

- 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

- EO and Head of Centre to be responsible for ensuring there are sufficient TAs employed to cover invigilation.
- All TAs available to complete up-to-date exam invigilator training, as well as facilitator training, to ensure back up is available in the case of absence.
- Active and proactive recruitment of a bank of invigilators well ahead of time.
- Yearly training of invigilators, both in-house and online, so an up to date list of invigilators is kept and up to date training certificates are kept on record.
- Exam dates sent out as soon as they are available to have plenty of time to cover days where invigilators may not be available.

5. Exam rooms - lack of appropriate rooms or main venue(s) unavailable at short notice

- 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 listed above

The Centre will:

- Where main exam venue(s) are 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.

- Communicate with candidates (and where appropriate, parents/carers), via SIMS registered school email and parent/carer address email, any changes to the exam or assessment timetable or venue.
- 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.

Alternative venue details: School Sports Hall or adjoining Leisure Centre

6. Failure of IT systems

- MIS/IT system failure at final entry deadline.
- MIS/IT system failure during exams preparation.
- MIS/IT system failure at results release time.

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

- Exam entries to be made at least 2 working days ahead of schedule.
- In the event of MIS failure, immediately liaise with the awarding body with which the examination entries are with and seek guidance as to how an alternative entry can be made.
- In the event of MIS failure during exam preparation, e.g. preparing seating plans, an alternative equivalent should be prepared and used and awarding bodies made aware of the alternative methods used.
- In the event of MIS failure at the results stage, candidates to be made aware of delay to the release of results and expectations managed.
- Awarding bodies to be informed of failure and alternative methods, such as postal/courier to be considered to ensure results are received at the centre.
- Centre to also consider alternative sites to access information.

7. Cyber-attack

- IT systems and all access to computers fail during an examination series or at key points in the exam cycle

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

- Having a robust firewall with Shropshire ICT.
- Liaising directly with Shropshire ICT security team for advice should a cyber-attack occur as well as contacting and receiving advice from the NCSC, law enforcement, Action Fraud and the Department for Education on: sector.securityenquiries@education.gov.uk.
- Training all staff on cyber security annually.
- Promptly reporting any incidents of cyber-attack to the relevant awarding body/bodies which might compromise any aspect of assessment delivery and follow advice given.
- Where candidates produce work electronically, ensuring their work is backed-up regularly and stored securely on the centre's IT system and Shropshire ICT's back ups.
- Ensuring protection of the candidates' work from corruption by using the X drive rather than pen drives.
- Considering the risks and implications of any cyber-attack by following and regularly reviewing National Cyber Security Centre advice for support in cyber security preparedness and mitigation work / Using the NCSC's free Web Check and Mail Check services to help protect from cyber-attacks.
- Where students with access arrangements which include electronic support, provide alternative provision and apply for special consideration, where applicable.

8. Emergency evacuation of the exam room (or Centre lockdown)

- 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.

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'.
- 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.

9. Disruption of teaching time in the weeks before an exam - Centre closed for an extended period

- 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 listed above

The Centre will:

- Recognise it remains the responsibility of the Centre to prepare students, as usual, for examinations.
- Communicate with candidates (and where appropriate, parents/carers), via SIMS registered school email and parent address email, 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.
- Contact the relevant awarding bodies to discuss alternative arrangements and liaise with the Head of Centre to take appropriate action.

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

- Candidates at risk of being unable to attend the examination centre to take examinations as normal.

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), via phone call or email via SIMS registered school email and parent/carer address email, 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.

11. Centre at risk of being unable to open as normal during the examination period (including in the event of the Centre being unavailable for examinations owing to an unforeseen emergency)

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

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.
- 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), via SIMS registered school email and parent address email, 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.
- Seek the use of an alternative venue for the sitting of examinations e.g. Leisure Centre.
- Explore alternative methods of teaching students during the period of closure.

12. Disruption in the distribution of examination papers

- Disruption to the distribution of examination papers to the centre in advance of examinations.

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), via SIMS registered school email and parent/carer address email, any changes to the exam or assessment timetable or to the venue.

13. Disruption to transporting completed examination scripts

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

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

- Where examinations are part of the national 'yellow label' service, or where awarding bodies arrange collections, contact the relevant awarding bodies for advice and instructions and do not make own arrangements for transportation unless told to do so by the awarding body.
- For any examinations where the Centre makes its own collection arrangements, investigate alternative options that comply with the requirements detailed in the JCQ publication 'Instructions for Conducting Examinations'.
- EO to ensure the secure storage of completed examination scripts until collection.

14. Assessment evidence is not available to be marked

- Large-scale damage to, or destruction of, completed examination scripts/assessment evidence before it can be marked.
- Completed examination scripts/assessment evidence not reaching awarding organisations.

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.

14. 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

- 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 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: e.g. Leisure centre or DHMAT Offices.
- 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, via email to students' school email address, of any alternative arrangements in place for the distribution of results, and the facilitation of post-results services.

This process is reviewed annually to ensure compliance with current regulations

Approved/reviewed by	
Mrs N Sampson Mrs P Hearle	
Date of next review	15/10/2023

APPENDIX 1

Further guidance to inform procedures and implement contingency planning

Ofqual

What schools and colleges and other centres 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.

Covid specific guidance

When drafting contingency plans, you should consider the following guidance:

- [actions for schools during the coronavirus outbreak](#) from the Department for Education in England
- [actions for FE colleges and providers during the coronavirus outbreak](#) from the Department for Education in England
- [responsibility for exams](#) from the Department for Education in England
- [vocational, technical and other general qualifications in 2022](#) from Ofqual (regulator)
- [GCSE, AS and A level qualifications in 2022](#) from Ofqual (regulator)
- [coronavirus \(COVID-19\) \(information from CCEA\)](#) – information on vocational, technical and general qualifications from CCEA Regulation

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
- [bomb threats](#) procedures for handling bomb threats from the National Counter Terrorism Security Office

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 the [JCQ Joint Contingency Plan for the Examination System in England, Wales and Northern Ireland](#).

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 JCQ's [Centre emergency evacuation procedure](#).
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 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

1. Take all reasonable steps to mitigate any adverse effect, in relation to their qualifications, arising from any disruption.
2. Provide effective guidance to any of their centres delivering qualifications.
3. 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).
4. Promptly notify the relevant regulators about any event which could have an adverse effect on students, standards or public confidence.
5. 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](#)

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 should continue in 2021 to 2022 with schools remaining open and that examinations and assessments will go ahead in both autumn 2021 and summer 2022.

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 exam timetables.

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

(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** (updated 30 September 2021) <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/what-schools-and-colleges-should-do-if-exams-or-other-assessments-are-seriously-disrupted>

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 a 'contingency day' for examinations, summer 2022. 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 a 'contingency day' 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 2022, 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 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 this contingency arrangement so that they may take it 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** 2021-2022 <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

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

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

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

Wherever possible, it is always in the best interest for candidates to sit the examination. However, if candidates who are unable to sit the examination 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*: <https://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-special-consideration/regulations-and-guidance>)

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

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

As above, centres' contingency plans must focus on enabling candidates to take their examinations if the 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 centres should do if examinations or other 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

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.

Please 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 scripts

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, they should **investigate alternative options** that comply with the JCQ publication 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 examinations 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 because 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 there are any concerns, please contact the relevant awarding body for advice:

AQA

0800 197 7162

eos@aqa.org.uk

CCEA

028 9026 1212, 028 9026 1293, 028 9026 1425

centresupport@ccea.org.uk

OCR

01223 553998

support@ocr.org.uk

Pearson

0344 463 2535

WJEC

02920 265 077

exams@wjec.co.uk

(JCQ guidance above taken directly from the notice - **Preparing for disruption to examinations** effective from 11 October 2021

www.jcq.org.uk/preparing-for-disruption-to-examinations/)

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: Severe weather; Exam disruption; Coronavirus (COVID-19)

www.gov.uk/guidance/emergencies-and-severe-weather-schools-and-early-years-settings

School organisation: local-authority-maintained schools

National Counter Terrorism Security Office

Guidance - Bomb Threats www.gov.uk/government/publications/crowded-places-guidance/bomb-threats

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