



# **Examinations Contingency Plan 2023-24**

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## **Purpose of the Plan**

This plan examines potential risks and issues that could cause disruption to the exams process at Northleigh House 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 Centres 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 document **Preparing for disruption to examinations** (Effective from 1 September 2023).

This plan also confirms Northleigh House School is compliant with the JCQ **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 where the Head of Centre, Examinations Officer or SEN Officer 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-attach should also be considered.

## **National Centre Number Reister and Other Information Requirements**

The Head of Centre will also ensure that Northleigh House School has a contingency to enable the prompt handling of urgent issues only, responds to the awarding organisations request for information regarding the contact details of a senior member of staff (which might include a 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. Head of Centre should ensure that this member of staff has the necessary authority to mobilise resources to provide this support, which might include resolving issues within the Centre itself.

## **Head of Centre (HOC) absence at a critical stage of the examination cycle**

Where the HOC may be absent at a critical stage of the examination cycle, main duties and responsibilities will be escalated in accordance with the Centre's Escalation Process.

## **Causes of Potential Disruption to the Examination Process**

### **1. Examinations Officer extended absence at a critical stage of the examination cycle**

The following are the key tasks involved in the management and administration of the examination cycle which would be at risk in the event of the Examinations Officer being absent:

### **Planning**

- Annual data collection exercise not undertaken to collate information on qualifications and awarding organisations specifications being delivered
- Annual examinations plan not produced identifying essential key tasks, key dates and deadlines
- Sufficient invigilators not available and trained

### **Entries**

- Awarding organisations not being informed of early/estimate entries which prompts release of early information required by teaching staff
- Candidates not being entered with awarding organisations for external examinations/assessments
- Awarding organisations entry deadlines missed or late or other penalty fees being incurred

### **Pre-Examinations**

- Invigilators not trained or updated on changes to the Instructions for Conducting Examinations
- Examination timetabling, rooming allocations and invigilation schedules not prepared
- Candidates not briefed on examination timetables and awarding organisations information for candidates.
- Examination/assessment materials and students' work not stored under required secure conditions
- Internal assessment marks and sample of candidates' work not submitted to awarding organisations/external moderators

### **Examination Time**

- Examinations/assessment not taken under the conditions prescribed by the awarding organisations
- Required reports/requests not submitted to awarding organisations during examination/assessment periods for example, late arrival, suspected malpractice, special consideration
- Candidates' scripts not dispatched as required to the awarding organisations

### **Result and Post-Results**

- Access to examination results, affecting the distribution of results to students
- The facilitation of the post-results services

### **Recommended Actions**

- The previous Examinations Officer, who is currently the School Director can be called upon to take over
- The Senior Leadership Team may nominate a "deputy" to cover the role during Examinations Officer's absence
- Appropriate training to be organised
- All procedures should be documented

- Current Examinations Officer has produced and updates an Examinations Manual to assist in navigating the various processes

## **2. SEN Officer extended absence at a critical stage of the examination cycle**

Key tasks required in the management and administration of the access arrangement process within the examination 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-Examinations**

- Approval for access arrangements not applied for to the awarding organisations
- Modified paper requirements not identified in a timely manner to enable ordering to meet the external deadline
- Staff providing support to access arrangement students not allocated and trained

### **Examination Time**

- Access arrangement student support not arranged for examination rooms

### **Recommended Actions**

- Consider employing temporary SEN Officer or ask for the assistance of previous SENCo who now works in the Centre as an English teacher
- The Senior Leadership Team may nominate a “deputy” to cover the role during SEN Officer’s absence
- Appropriate training to be organised

## **3. Teaching staff extended absence at a critical stage of the examination cycle**

- Early/estimate entry information not provided to the Examinations Officer on time; resulting in pre-release information not being received
- Final entry information not provided to the Examinations Officer on time; resulting in:
  - Candidates not being entered for examinations/assessments or being entered late
  - Late or other penalty fees being charged by the awarding organisations
- Internal assessment marks and candidates’ work not provided to meet submission deadlines

### **Recommended Actions**

- Other Subject Teachers or Senior Leadership Team to provide Examinations Officer with details of estimated/final entries
- Other Subject Teachers or Senior Leadership Team to provide Examinations Officer with estimated grades/coursework marks and the coursework samples to be transmitted to moderators
- The Senior Leadership Team may consider employing a temporary teacher(s) to cover for the absence(s)
- Appropriate training to be organised

## **4. Invigilators - Lack of appropriately trained invigilators or invigilator absence**

- Failure to recruit and train sufficient invigilators to conduct examinations
- Invigilator shortage on peak examination days
- Invigilator absence on day of an examination

### **Recommended Actions**

- Examinations Officer to ensure that extra staff are available to act as invigilators and are sufficiently trained
- Conduct a review of available invigilators, prior to the start of the examination series
- Use provisional timetable and estimated entry information to determine the invigilator numbers required
- Identify where invigilators may be short
- Senior Leadership Team responsible for cover to provide additional invigilator resource in the event of a shortfall at short notice but they must be sufficiently trained

## **5. Examination Rooms - Lack of appropriate rooms or main venue unavailable at short notice**

- Examinations Officer unable to identify sufficient/appropriate rooms during examinations timetable planning
- Insufficient rooms available on peak examination days
- Main examination venue unavailable due to an unexpected incident at examination time

### **Recommended Actions**

- Identify, working with a responsible Senior Leadership Team member, a shortlist of suitable rooms including reserves
- Move candidates from normal classrooms for the duration of the examinations
- Plan alternative accommodation for the duration of the incident

## **6. Cyber-attack**

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

### **Recommended Actions**

- As examination question papers are delivered to the Centre prior to the examination date, examinations should be able to be sat by candidates
- Candidates who require Word Processors should be able to use these, as no access will be required through the Internet and they can stand alone from the Centre Network
- Awarding Bodies will need to be notified
- Alternative ways of delivering information to awarding organisations will need to be provided as the Centre will be unable to access awarding organisations systems

## **7. Failure of IT Systems**

- Management Information System failure at final entry deadline
- Management Information System failure during examination preparation
- Management Information System failure at result release time

### **Recommended Actions**

- Awarding organisations to be informed of the situation and an extension to the deadline should be requested
- IT Manager on standby to repair damage quickly, where possible
- Special consideration can be applied for in the event of a serious disruption
- Results can be obtained at an alternative site

## **8. Emergency evacuation of the examination room (or Centre lockdown)**

- Centre has to evacuate from the examination room due to an incident

### **Recommended Actions**

- Stop the candidates from writing
- Advise candidates to leave all question papers and scripts in the examination room
- Ensure candidates leave the room in silence
- Ensure the 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
- Invigilator to make a note of the time of the interruption and how long it lasted, advice may need to be taking from the awarding organisations
- Allow the candidates the remainder of the working time set for the examination once the examination resumes
- If there are only a few candidates, consider the possibility of taking them with question papers and scripts to another place to finish the examination
- Invigilators make a full report of the incident and of the action taken and send to the relevant awarding organisations

## **9. Disruption to teaching time in the weeks before an examination - 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, therefore, interrupting the provision of normal teaching and learning

### **Recommended Actions**

- Centre to communicate with parents, carers and candidates about disruption to teaching time and provide appropriate work via the Centre intranet
- Priority will be given to the examination cohort
- Senior Management Team to be responsible for finding alternative ways of learning/venue
- Where there is disruption to teaching time and candidates have missed teaching and learning, it remains the responsibility of Centres to prepare students, as usual, for examinations
  - in the case of modular courses, the Centre may advise candidates to sit examinations in an alternative series
  - the Centre should have plans in place to facilitate alternative methods of learning, for example, online

## **10. Candidates may not be able to take examinations – Centre remains open**

- Candidates may not be able to attend the Examination Centre to take examinations as normal

### **Recommended Actions**

- Centre to liaise with parents, carers and candidates to identify whether the examination can be sat at an alternative venue in agreement with the relevant awarding organisations
- Centre to offer students an opportunity to sit any examinations missed at the next available series
- Centre to apply to awarding organisations for special consideration for candidates where they have met the minimum requirements. Candidates are only eligible for special consideration if they have a medical certificate or have been advised by the Centre not to attend an examination
- Latecomers to be permitted to take their examinations providing that they are within the JCQ regulations

## **11. Centre may not be able to open as normal during the examinations period**

- Centre may not be open as normal for scheduled examinations
- The provision of normal teaching and learning is interrupted
- Centre closed due to inaccessibility or risk of injury

### **Recommended Actions**

- In the event that the Head of Centre decides the Centre cannot be opened for scheduled examinations, the relevant organisations must be informed as soon as possible
- The awarding organisations 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
- The Centre to open for examinations and examination candidates only, where possible
- An alternative centre may be considered in the event that candidates are unable to come to the Centre. This would be Shrewley Village Hall, Shrewley, Warwick. Where alternative arrangements for the conducting of examinations takes place, the JCQ Centre Inspection Service will need to be notified of an alternative site arrangements by submitting the JCQ Alternative Site form online using the Centre Admin Portal (CAP)
- Our candidates struggle with severe anxiety so the Centre will consider candidates sitting their examination(s) at their home, subject to awarding organisations approval
- The Centre may advise candidates to sit examinations in an alternative series
- Special consideration can be used where candidates are unable to achieve a result due to one of the above factors
- An examination result may be able to be generated by the awarding organisations, based on factors such as the candidate's performance on other assessments in the same subject

## **12. Disruption to the distribution of examination papers**

- Disruption to the distribution of examination papers to the Centre in advance of examinations
- Centre unable to access secure storage

### **Recommended Actions**

- Awarding organisations to provide the Centre with electronic access to the examination papers via a secure external network
- Awarding organisations would provide guidance on the conduct of examinations in such circumstances
- The Examinations Officer would need to ensure that copies are received, made and stored under secure conditions
- As a last resort and in close collaboration with centres and regulators, awarding organisations to consider scheduling of the examination on an alternative date



### **13. Disruption to transporting completed examination scripts**

- Delay in normal collection arrangements for complete examination scripts

#### **Recommended Actions**

- Centre to seek advice from awarding organisations and should not make their own arrangements for transportation unless told to do so by the awarding organisations
- For examinations where the Centre make their arrangements for transportation, the Centre should investigate alternative dispatch options that comply with the requirements detailed in the JCQ Instructions for Conducting Examinations
- Centre to ensure secure storage of completed examination papers until collection

### **14. Assessment evidence is not available to be marked**

- Large scale damage to or destruction of completed examination script/assessment evidence before it can be marked
- Completed examination scripts/assessment evidence does not reach awarding organisations

#### **Recommended Actions**

- Awarding organisations to generate candidate marks for affected assessment based on other appropriate evidence of the candidates achievement as defined by the awarding organisations
- Copies of assessment evidence kept in secure storage at Centre/Cloud
- Where candidates use word processors to generate their responses to examination questions, copies of these are retained by the Centre and kept in the Centre's secure storage
- Where marks cannot be generate by the awarding organisations, candidates may need to retake affected assessment in a subsequent assessment window

### **15. Centre unable to distribute results as normal or facilitate post results services**

- Centre is unable to access or manage the distribution of results to candidates or to facilitate post-results services

#### **Recommended Actions**

- Centre to make arrangements to access its results at an alternative site, for example, village/church hall or organise for distribution electronically

### **16. JCQ**

16.1 The qualification regulators, awarding bodies and government departments responsible for education have prepared and agreed information for Centres 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>

16.2 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 organisations/bodies.

16.3 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 HOC, EO or SEN Officer 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/carers and staff should disruption to examinations occur.

16.4 In the event that the head of Centre decides the Centre cannot be opened for scheduled examinations, the relevant awarding organisations 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.

16.5 The awarding bodies will designate 'contingency sessions' for examinations, Summer 2024. This is consistent with the qualification regulators' document Exam system contingency plan: England, Wales and Northern Ireland – <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/examsystem-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 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 2024, 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 organisations. The Centre must conduct the examination on the scheduled date unless instructed to do otherwise by the awarding organisations.

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 it into account when making their plans for the summer.

JCQ guidance above directly from JCQ *Instructions for Conducting Examinations 2023-2024*

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

JCQ Joint Contingency Plan <http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/other-documents>

JCQ Notice – Preparing for disruption to examinations

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

JCQ Notice to Centres – Examination contingency plan/examinations policy

<http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations/notice-to-Centres-exam-contingency-plan/>

General Regulations for Approved Centres

<http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations>

Guidance on Alternative Site arrangements <http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/online-forms>

Guidance for Transferred Candidates <http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/online-forms>

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

A guide to the special consideration process

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

## **GOV.UK**

Emergency planning and response: Exam and assessment disruption

<http://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 <https://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 Centres 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 Centres**. 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. Further ransomware attacks on UK education by cyber criminals - NCSC.GOV.UK
2. Mitigating malware and ransomware attacks
3. Offline backups in an online world
4. Backing up your data
5. Practical resources to help Centres improve their cyber security
6. Building Resilience: Ransomware, the risks to Centres and ways to prevent it
7. Centre staff offered training to help short up cyber defences – NCSC.GOV.UK

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