



St. Joseph's Grammar school

Scoil Iósaef

Exams Contingency Plan

Policy Author	Mrs D Carlisle
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Proposed by	
Seconded by	
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Examinations Contingency plan



Aims of the Exam Contingency Plan

The Examination Contingency Plan is designed to ensure a consistent and effective response in the event of major disruption to the examination system at St. Joseph's Grammar school affecting candidates across various awarding bodies.

It is a requirement of the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) for England, Wales and Northern Ireland that all centres have their own contingency plans in place to respond to such disruptions. With the school offering qualifications from awarding bodies under the JCQ's jurisdiction the school must have such a plan in place.

All awarding bodies are required to have their own well-established contingency plans in place to respond to such disruptions. This Examination Contingency Plan takes into account these processes and procedures and is designed to complement them, not replace them.

The plan will be implemented in the event of major disruption to the system, such as widespread illness, travel disruption, bad weather or power failures. Any actions taken will be subject to the advice of the official agencies dealing with the specific circumstances being faced, for example, the PSNI.

Implementing the plan will safeguard the interests of candidates while maintaining the integrity of the examination system and safeguarding qualification standards.

The contingencies covered have been implemented on several occasions in response to localised issues in other centres. They would be applied on a larger scale in response to any widespread disruption at a national level.

The priority when implementing contingencies will be to maintain three principles:

- ✓ **delivering assessments to published timetables**
- ✓ **delivering results to published timetables**
- ✓ **complying with regulatory requirements in relation to assessment, marking and standards.**
- ✓ Contingency planning for exams administration is the responsibility of the SMT with the Examinations Officer (Mrs A Garvey) and other staff with a vested interest.

Key Staff involved in the policy:

ROLE	NAMES
Head of Centre	Mrs G Donnelly
Vice Principal	Mrs O McCourt
Exams Officer	Mrs D Carlisle
SENCO	Mr N Kelly
Teaching Staff	All relevant members of staff

Communications

In the event of local disruption, communication to teachers and students will take place through the Examination officer following agreement with the Principal.

In the event of major disruption, details of specific contingencies agreed across Organisations involved in the examinations process will be confirmed on the CCEA website and communicated to relevant stakeholders. This includes communications between the organisations involved in the response and communications to stakeholders such as centres, candidates, parents or carers and the public.

www.ccea.org.uk

The organisations involved in this Joint Contingency Plan are committed to:

- ✓ sharing timely and accurate information as required to meet the aims of the plan
- ✓ communicating with stakeholders so they are aware of disruption to the exams, the contingency measures being implemented and any actions required of them as a result
- ✓ ensuring that any messages to the public are clear and accurate.

CRITICAL INCIDENTS:

a) Specific Bad Weather Contingency Plan

The Head of Centre has recruited a group of volunteers (*from within school staff and external invigilators*) who have guaranteed that they will be able to attend school on bad weather days in order to operate timetabled examinations as per the timetable. Staff will be contacted by text when necessary.

b) Absence of Exam Officer/SENCO (see Appendix A)

The Principal is to ensure that trained, knowledgeable staff are available to keep the exam office basically running without accruing late fees and disadvantaging students, when the need

arises. A succession plan is to be finalised and appropriate people named subsequently.

c) Alternative Accommodation (if we cannot run exams here i.e. if all suitable rooms are out of

action for any reason or if building work is going on)

Mrs A McCall/Mrs G Donnelly is to advise the Exams Officer in a timely manner of the full postal address of any alternative accommodation (eg. Torrent Centre) which affects the full cohort. This will enable Exams Officer to submit the information to all the relevant Awarding Bodies.

d) National Incident (such as volcanic ash 2010 and COVID-19 pandemic)

Centres will take advice from JCQ and the Awarding Bodies concerned and act accordingly, keeping

candidates informed. Candidates should check with the Centre and check the website or Google Classroom for up to date statements.

e) Disruption of Teaching Time where centres are closed for an extended time.

The planning and implementation should be decided at school level. Candidates could be advised to

sit modular papers at a later series if available and possible.

School would relocate to another site in the locality in collaboration with other local schools or organisations in order that teaching and learning can resume and priority would be given to the Year 11 – 14 exam classes (Year 10 Irish classes for the May/June exam series).

Special Consideration to be applied for, if appropriate, via Mr McGrath.

f) Disruption in the Distribution of Examination Papers:

If a crisis disrupts the distribution of examination papers then Awarding Bodies would provide

access to a secure website where papers could be downloaded. The Exams Officer would make

copies and keep in secure conditions.

Alternatively, copies could be e-mailed to centres if electronic transfer is not possible. The Awarding Bodies could source alternative couriers to deliver exam papers.

If security has been compromised, then the centre will inform the relevant exam board immediately.

If the papers have not been received in time, the exams officer will contact the exam board in question.

If the papers need to be sent to a different venue as the centre is closed, the exam boards will be notified to redirect the papers to the new address.

g) Candidates Unable to take Examinations because of crisis, where centre can remain open

The Centre will apply for special consideration (Mr J McGrath) where candidates have met the minimum requirements.

Candidates are only eligible for special consideration if they have been fully prepared and have covered the whole course but are affected by adverse circumstances beyond their control.

JCQ guidance on special consideration can be accessed through the JCQ website:

www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-specialconsideration/regulations-and-guidance

Candidates could be advised to sit modular papers at a later series if available and possible.

h) If the Centre has to close for the Exam Period

If the school is unable to open as normal for scheduled examinations, it must inform each Awarding Organisation with which examinations are due to be taken as soon as is possible. The responsibility for deciding whether it is safe for the school to open lies with the Principal (Head of centre). The Principal is responsible for taking advice, or following instructions from relevant local or national agencies in deciding whether they are able to open.

- Discuss the possibility of staying open with the relevant agencies (Exam Boards, EA etc).
- Apply for special consideration where candidates have met the requirements.
- Candidates could be advised to sit modular papers at a later series if available and possible.
- The Awarding Bodies would be flexible and supportive if another venue has to be used.

Advice from other agencies would need to be taken (i.e. Health Protection, Environment Agencies)

- Investigate sharing the facilities of another Centre (schools in Dungannon or use of Torrent Centre)

i) Disruption to Collection of Completed Examination Scripts

Centres to:

- Seek advice from normal collection agency ie Parcel Force. The school must not to make arrangements for transportation without approval from awarding organisations.
- Ensure secure storage of completed scripts whilst awaiting collection.
- Investigate other methods of collection and obtain proof of postage.

j) Difficulty in Meeting Results Schedule

Inability of awarding organisations (including the case of a single awarding organisation) to either meet planned schedule for issue of results, or to issue results as planned due to a systems failure. If the awarding organisation(s) face delay in meeting the planned schedule for issuing results:

- The awarding body should establish priorities for processing results, implement existing contingency plans for disruption to the schedule for issuing results.
- If awarding organisation(s) face difficulty in issuing results as planned due to a systems failure: in consultation with regulators, assess the level of disruption and consider alternative options for issuing results dependent upon the nature of the particular systems failure, the awarding organisations and regulators to liaise with relevant organisations (i.e. UCAS, CAO) regarding process of candidate progression to further and higher education.

The Awarding Bodies to consider changing results schedule. The Centre will use an appropriate

method to advise candidates of any changes.

k) Centre Closed on Results Day

*** Students are normally issued their results via the postal system and can get access to their CCEA results online using their PIN numbers. However, some pupils may want their results from the school directly. (changed in August 2019 to collection from the school directly)**

Centre to contact C2K to resolve any ICT related issues.

- The Centre to make alternative arrangements and inform candidates by an appropriate method.

The Centre will make arrangements to access its results at an alternative site (Torrent Centre).

The Centre will make arrangements to co-ordinate access to post- results services from an alternative site.

- The Centre to share facilities with another centre if possible.

Useful information

AQA <http://www.aqa.org.uk/>

JCQ www.jcq.org.uk

CCEA www.rewardinglearning.org.uk

Ofqual www.ofqual.gov.uk

Edexcel www.edexcel.com

DENI www.deni.gov.uk

OCR www.ocr.org.uk

UCAS www.ucas.ac.uk

JCQ A guide to the special consideration process

[http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-specialconsideration/ regulations-and-guidance/a-guide-to-the-special-considerationprocess](http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-specialconsideration/regulations-and-guidance/a-guide-to-the-special-considerationprocess)

JCQ Instructions for conducting examinations www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/ice---instructions-for-conducting-examinations

DENI guidance on dealing with disruption to teaching and learning

http://www.deni.gov.uk/exceptional_closures_checklist.pdf

www.deni.gov.uk/index/85-schools/5-school-management/exceptional-closure-ofschools-to-adverse-weather.htm

<http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/school-closures>

(Updated October 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.

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

You may also wish to see the [JCQ's notice to centres on exam contingency plans](#) and [JCQ's notice on preparing for disruption to examinations](#) in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, for qualifications within its scope.

Steps you should take

Exam planning

Review your 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.

Schools, colleges and other exam centres must speak to the relevant awarding organisations as soon as possible if they are expecting any disruption that might affect the sitting of exams and assessments.

In the event of disruption

1. Contact the relevant awarding organisation promptly 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 question 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 students, parents and carers any changes to the exam or assessment timetable or to the venue.
7. Communicate with any external assessors, invigilators 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 to the relevant awarding organisation 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 are able to 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, 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 [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

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.

Summary of responsibilities in the event of disruption to examinations

Awarding organisations are responsible for:	Examination centres are responsible for:
Offering advice regarding communication with candidates, parents and carers	Communicating with candidates, parents and carers
	Preparing plans for any disruption to exams as part of general emergency planning
Ensuring centres receive examination materials for scheduled examinations	Preparing candidates for examinations
	Ensuring examinations and assessments are taken under the conditions prescribed by awarding organisations
	Ensuring, where relevant, that assessment materials and candidate work are stored under secure conditions
	Deciding whether the centre can open for examinations as scheduled and informing relevant awarding organisations if the centre is unable to open
Advising centres on possible alternative examination arrangements and declining or approving proposals for alternative examination arrangements	Exploring the opportunities for alternative arrangements if the centre cannot open for examinations and agreeing such arrangements with the awarding organisations
Evaluating and declining or approving requests for special consideration	Judging whether candidates meet the requirements for special consideration as a result of any disruption and submitting these requests to the relevant awarding organisations
	Assessing and liaising with awarding organisations in the event of disruption to the transportation of papers
Marking, moderating and grading candidate work	
Issuing results to centres on scheduled dates	The distribution of examination results to candidates
Advising UCAS and CAO about any delays that may impact on their deadlines	
Making a post results service available	Offering a post results service

APPENDIX A

Exam officer extended absence at key points in the exam process (cycle)

Criteria for implementation of the plan

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 and trained

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

exam timetabling, rooming allocation; and invigilation schedules not prepared

candidates not briefed on exam timetables and awarding body information for candidates

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 e.g. very late arrival, suspected malpractice, special consideration

candidates' scripts not dispatched as required to awarding bodies

Results and post-results

access to examination results affecting the distribution of results to candidates the facilitation of the post-results services

Centre actions:

Mr J McGrath/ Mrs O McCourt to liaise with C2k over entries and verify them.

Mrs O McCourt, Head of Year, Senior Invigilator to liaise over pre-exam administration.

Senior Invigilator to liaise with Mrs O McCourt regarding exam time issues and results. Senior Invigilator to undertake training of invigilators in Exam Officers absence.

Additional administration support to be put in place in the main office eg Mrs Clarke.

2. SENCo extended absence at key points in 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

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

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:

SENCO assistant, L Jones, to liaise with Exams Officer over SENCO absence to ensure access arrangements (AA's) are correct and up to date.

Scribes, readers and other roles in relation to students with AA's are to be scheduled by L Jones and Mrs Carlisle in advance of the exam series.

3. Teaching staff extended absence at key points in 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
- Internal assessment marks and candidates' work not provided to meet submission deadlines

Centre actions:

HOD/HOC and Exams Officer to liaise with remaining teaching staff in the department to complete the necessary paperwork.

Additional specialist help is to be sought from other local schools in the Area Learning group if required.