

Notre Dame High School

Exam Contingency Plan

2025/26

This plan is reviewed annually to ensure compliance with current regulations

Approved/reviewed by	
M Birch	
Date of next review	December 2026

Key staff involved in the plan

Role	Name(s)
Head of Centre	Deidre Cleary
Exams Manager Line Manager (Senior Leader)	Martyn Birch
Exams Manager	Heather Slater
SENCo	Michael Owczarek
Senior Leader(s)	Andrew Marsden
	Suzanne Woodward

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Purpose of the plan

This plan examines potential risks and issues that could cause disruption to the examination and assessment process at **Notre Dame High 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 processes.

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 document *What schools and colleges and other centres should do if exams or other assessments are seriously disrupted*, the **JCQ Joint Contingency Plan** for the Examination System in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and the JCQ document **Preparing for disruption to examinations**

This plan also confirms **Notre Dame High School's** compliance with JCQ's **General Regulations for Approved Centres** (GR 5.3) that the centre has in place for inspection that must be reviewed and updated annually:

- a written contingency plan which covers all aspects of examination/assessment administration and delivery.

Contingency arrangements

In accordance with the regulations (GR 3.17-19), **Notre Dame High School 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 (or equivalent role), 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 the contingency plan the centre **must** identify an alternative site or alternative sites which can be used 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.

Notre Dame High School must have at least one senior member of staff (senior designated contact) who is available to manage emergency requests from awarding bodies that are results related during the summer holidays. However, a number of contacts can be provided to reduce the risk of this falling on one individual throughout the summer holidays.

Notre Dame High School must ensure where candidates' work is produced electronically it is backed-up and should consider the contingency of candidates' work being backed-up on two separate devices, including one off-site back-up via the Cloud. Appropriate security arrangements must be implemented which protect candidates' work in the event of IT system corruption and cyber-attacks.

National Centre Number Register and other information requirements

In accordance with the regulations (GR 5.3), the head of centre will ensure that **Notre Dame High School** responds to the National Centre Number Register annual update by the end of October every year which includes providing senior designated contact details (this might include a personal mobile number and/or email address). These must be the contact details of someone who can be reached in an emergency if the centre is closed over the summer and who can mobilise resources to respond to the issue.

Head of Centre/senior leader(s) with oversight of examination and assessment administration absence at critical stage of the exam cycle

If the head of centre (Mrs D Cleary) were absent at a critical stage of the examination cycle, the SLT exams lead (Mr M Birch) would deputise. If the SLT exams lead was absent, Mrs S Woodward (senior deputy head teacher) would deputise.

Possible causes of disruption to the exam process

1. Exam Manager extended absence at a critical stage of the exam 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*

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 the post-results services*

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- Regular communication and joint working between Examinations Officer (EM-Heather Slater) and SLT exams lead (Martyn Birch) to ensure that more than one person is aware of processes throughout the year and of changes to procedure set out by JCQ.
- Identification of other members of staff who have experience who could support if necessary. S Bunting (data manager), E Greenwood-Quy (SMT timetable) plus senior lead invigilators who between them have many years' experience working on exams at Notre Dame.

- Contact Sheffield Exams Officer network, other Diocesan/MAT schools and draw on expertise from other Exams Officers.

2. SENCo extended absence at a critical stage of 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*
- *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

- *access arrangement candidate support not arranged for exam rooms*

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- Regular communication between the Examinations Officer (Heather Slater), SLT Exams Lead (Martyn Birch) SENCO (Michael Owczarek), Sarah White (SEN Assessment Administrator) throughout the year so that all parties are aware of procedures and updates as and when they occur, and can ensure that the management and administration of access arrangements takes place in accordance with the guidance in the event of the extended absence of the SENCO.
- Draw on support from SENCOs at Diocesan/MAT schools for guidance and training in the case of unexpected absence to ensure all key tasks are undertaken in a timely manner.

3. Teaching staff (or other key staff essential to the examinationprocess) extended absence at a critical stage of 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

Non-examination assessment (including controlled assessments and coursework) 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

- Subject teacher/Head of department liaison throughout the year in order to ensure more than one person is aware of entry requirements, deadlines and general administration for each subject including any NEA.
- SMT line manager for that department to take a lead on ensuring all key tasks are undertaken in a timely manner

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

Criteria for implementation of the plan

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

- Recruitment is done well in advance in Autumn term 1.
- Annual training for all invigilators-completed in accordance with TEO 24/25 will be in Spring 2025
- Examination timetable produced well in advance of examinations by the Examinations Manager and staffed to ensure that adequate numbers of invigilators are available and that invigilators are aware of the dates that they are required.
- Examinations Manager, SMT, non-teaching staff, LSA and cover supervisors to cover short term absences or invigilator shortages if necessary.

5. Exam rooms - lack of appropriate rooms or main venues unavailable at short notice

Criteria for implementation of the plan

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

- Timetable produced as early as possible in order to identify any key issues well in advance so that measures can be put in place.
- Room bookings to be made as soon as timetable is complete to ensure there are sufficient rooms for students.
- In an emergency, the sports hall, the gym, the Salle, room 201/202, the ELC or Chapel could all be used.
- Identification of other appropriate spaces in local area that could be used in event of major disruption e.g. – local university hire of rooms.

6. Cyber security

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Where any incidents might compromise any aspect of assessment delivery, such as a cyber-attack

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

Notre Dame implements NCSC advice where applicable and employs specialist software to detect and destroy ransomware attacks.

Backups are held offline and the pupil management system containing exam entries is held in a cloud system (which can therefore be accessed from anywhere).

Specialist support for recovery from cyber-attack is available under our RPA agreement to enable as quick recovery as possible.

Notre Dame holds copies of emergency contact details etc offline so that exam students could be allowed on site safely to take exams in the event that the rest of the school requires closure.

In addition:

(GR 3.21) Ensure there are procedures in place to maintain the security of user accounts by:

- a) ensuring that all members of centre staff who access awarding bodies' online systems undertake annual cyber security training...

... The training must include:

- the importance of creating strong, unique passwords for all accounts;
- keeping all account details strictly confidential;
- the critical role of Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) in protecting against unauthorised access;
- how to properly set up and use MFA for both centre and awarding bodies' systems;
- an awareness of all types of social engineering/phishing attempts;...
- the importance of staff quickly reporting any suspicious activity, events, incidents and encouraging a safe and supportive reporting culture.

Certificates of completed staff cyber training must be downloaded and held on file for inspection. The NCSC training resource provides a certificate of completion of cyber training.

- b) developing and maintaining a comprehensive cyber security policy for the centre. The National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) provides resources to assist centres in creating such policies;
- c) implementing and enforcing robust security measures, including:
 - mandatory MFA for all accounts and systems containing exam-related information, including those that interface between awarding body and centre systems, to enhance security and protect sensitive data;
 - regularly reviewing and updating security settings to align with current best practices;
- d) updating any passwords that may have been exposed
- e) setting up secure account recovery options
- f) reviewing and managing connected applications
- g) monitoring accounts and regularly reviewing account access, including removing access when no longer required
- h) ensuring authorised members of staff securely access awarding bodies' online systems in line with awarding body regulations regarding cyber security and the JCQ document *Guidance for centres on cyber security*

Authorised staff will have access, where necessary, to a device which complies with awarding bodies' MFA requirements.

reporting any actual or suspected compromise of an awarding body's online systems immediately to the relevant awarding body

7. Failure of IT systems

Criteria for implementation of the plan

IT system corruption affecting candidates' work

MIS system failure at final entry deadline

MIS system failure during exams preparation

MIS system failure at results release time

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- Entries processed as early as possible so that MIS failure is known about in advance of deadline, allowing action to be taken to address issues.
- HOC informed and updated throughout.
- Ensure seating plans are printed and displayed well ahead of the exam dates.
- Use where appropriate the IT systems of another Diocesan/MAT school to ensure MIS related tasks are completed in a timely manner.
- (GR 3.19) Ensure where candidates' work is produced electronically that it that candidates' work is backed-up and should consider the contingency of candidates' work being backed-up on two separate devices, including one off-site back-up via the cloud. Implement appropriate security arrangements which protect candidates' work in the event of IT system corruption and cyber-attacks.
- Results are imported to the MIS as soon as they are available. If there was a system failure in school, they would be downloaded at another site where they would be processed to produce simplified results slips in time for release of results to candidates.

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

Criteria for implementation of the plan

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

- See appendix at the end of this policy.

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

Criteria for implementation of the plan

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

- Prioritise examination classes in the case of school running reduced timetable due to bad weather, strike action etc.
- Use of SATCHEL, MS TEAMS and email for staff to support examination students from home if they are unable to attend school.
- Programme of extra lessons once normal service is resumed in order to ensure candidates are completely up to date and any time missed has been compensated for as far as possible.
- Make alternative arrangements for curriculum to be delivered at different venue, prioritising examination classes.

10. Candidates may not be able to take examinations – centre remains open

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Candidates may not be able to attend the examination centre to take examinations as normal because of a crisis.

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- Examination board(s) consulted urgently for advice.
- Consider moving the start time for all candidates including an awareness of the rules for very late arrivals.

- Consideration would be given on an individual basis as to why they were unable to attend the examination centre.
- HOC informed and updated throughout incident by examinations officer.
- Centre to liaise with candidates to see whether the examination can be sat at an alternative venue in agreement with the awarding body.
- Offer candidates opportunity to sit examination at next available series.
- Apply for special consideration where minimum requirements have been met.

11. Centre may not be able to open for examinations

(including in the event of the centre being unavailable for examinations owing to an unforeseen emergency)

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- Centre may not be able to open as normal/hold examinations as per JCQ requirements.

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- Where possible, the centre will open for examinations, even if closed to rest of school, with staff living locally within walking distance in the case of bad weather, providing invigilation.
- HOC consulted and updated throughout incident.
- Examinations held elsewhere, if possible, in potential major venues identified in section 5 above, or other local schools, army drill hall with awarding body informed as a matter of urgency and advice taken from them in terms of the legitimacy of the venue and the examination.
- Advice taken from the relevant awarding body in the case of candidates being unable to take the examination at all.
- Candidates offered opportunity to sit examination at next available series.
- Apply for special consideration where minimum requirements have been met

12. Disruption in the distribution of examination papers

Criteria for implementation of the plan

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

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- Whilst maintaining strict confidentiality throughout. Heather Slater (EO) and Martyn Birch (SLT Exams Lead) would oversee the downloading of electronic papers from the secure site, as well as the printing and copying of the papers.
- Papers would then be stored in the existing secure storage facility until just before the exam session.
- Exams would then be conducted under the normal regulations but also include any additional directives from JCQ/the awarding organisations.
- 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. Delay in collection arrangements for completed examination scripts

Criteria for implementation of the plan

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

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- Scripts remain securely stored in examinations office.
- HOC to be informed.
- Examinations Officer to make daily contact with examination board to request further instruction.
- HOC informed once scripts have been despatched in accordance with awarding body instructions.

14. Assessment evidence is not available to be marked

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Large scale damage to or destruction of completed examination scripts/assessment evidence before it can be marked

Completed examination scripts/assessment evidence does not reach awarding organisations

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- Examinations Officer to contact awarding bodies for advice.
- Awarding organisations to generate candidate marks for affected assessments based on other appropriate evidence of candidate achievement as defined by the awarding organisations.
- Candidates to retake affected assessment at subsequent assessment window.
- Where marks cannot be generated by awarding organisations, candidates may need to retake affected assessment in a subsequent assessment series.

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

(including in the event of the centre being unavailable on results day owing to an unforeseen emergency)

Criteria for implementation of the plan

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

- EM to notify Awarding Organisation.
- EM/HOC to make arrangements to access its results at an alternative site or electronically through the MIS

Further guidance to inform procedures and implement contingency planning

DfE

Meeting digital and technology standards in schools and colleges

Cyber Security Standards for schools and colleges

Ofqual

What schools and colleges and other centres should do if exams or other assessments are seriously disrupted

This document was updated in October 2023 to include Ofqual's final decisions on long-term resilience arrangements, and the Department for Education (DfE)'s guidance for education settings with confirmed reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC),

In addition to this guidance, you will need to be aware of your specific responsibilities for local and national school preparations and contingencies. You should also follow advice from relevant public health bodies.

Contingency planning

Awarding organisations are required to establish, maintain and comply with an up-to-date detailed written contingency plan, to mitigate any incident they have identified may occur. This includes having communication plans for external parties ([Ofqual General Condition of Recognition A6](#)). Schools and colleges should also be prepared for possible disruption to exams and assessments and make sure staff are aware of these plans.

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 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 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 [DfE 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.

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

General contingency guidance

- [emergency planning and response for education, childcare and children's social care settings](#) from the DfE in England
- [handling strike action in schools](#) from the DfE in England
- [school organisation: local-authority-maintained schools](#) from the DfE in England
- [reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete: guidance for education settings with confirmed RAAC](#) from the DfE in England
- [checklist - exceptional closure of schools](#) from the Department of Education in Northern Ireland
- [school terms and school closures](#) from NI Direct
- [opening schools, childcare and play settings in extreme bad weather and extreme hot weather](#) - guidance for schools from the Welsh Government
- [emergency planning and response guidance for education and childcare settings](#) - guidance for schools and education settings from the Welsh Government
- [police guidance](#) from National Counter Terrorism Security Office and partners on preparing for threats
- [cyber security guidance for schools and colleges](#) from the National Cyber Security Centre

(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** (last updated 7 May 2024) <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. CONTINGENCY PLANNING

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>

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 or bodies.

15.3 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 head of centre, examinations officer or SENCo 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 and staff should disruption to examinations occur.

15.4 If the head of centre decides the centre cannot be opened for scheduled examinations, the centre's contingency plan must be invoked, utilising the centre's alternative site(s) and the relevant awarding bodies 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 'contingency sessions' for examinations, summer 2026. 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>

15.6 The designation of 'contingency sessions' within the common examination timetable is for use in the event of national or significant local disruption to examinations. It is part of the awarding bodies' standard contingency planning for examinations.

15.7 In the event of national disruption to a day of examinations in summer 2026, 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 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.

15.8 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. Centres must therefore ensure candidates and parents are aware of the contingency arrangements so that they may take them into account when making their plans for the summer.

(JCQ guidance above taken directly from **Instructions for conducting examinations** 2025-2026

<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

JCQ Preparing for disruption to examinations [www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations/](http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations)

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

Guidance for centres on cyber security (Revised July 2025) [www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations/](http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations)

5 tips to get exam ready and stay cyber safe! www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/blogs/

GOV.UK

Emergency planning and response: Exam and assessment disruption

www.gov.uk/government/publications/emergency-planning-and-response-for-education-childcare-and-childrens-social-care-settings

Dispatch of exam scripts guide: Contingency planning www.gov.uk/government/publications/dispatch-of-exam-scripts-yellow-label-service

National Cyber Security Centre

Cyber Security for Schools <https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/section/education-skills/cyber-security-schools>

Cyber security training for school staff <https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/information/cyber-security-training-schools>

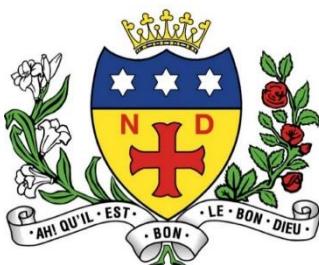
The NCSC's free [Web Check](#) and [Mail Check](#) services can help protect schools from cyber-attacks. Two NCSC cyber security services, which are already helping thousands of organisations to protect their websites and email servers from cyber-attacks, are now available to **all UK schools**. Both 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. [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 schools improve their cyber security](#)
6. [Building Resilience: Ransomware, the risk to schools and ways to prevent it](#)
7. [School staff offered training to help shore up cyber defences - NCSC.GOV.UK](#)



Notre Dame High School

Emergency evacuation procedure for examinations

When dealing with emergencies you **must** be aware of any instructions from relevant local or national agencies.

Reference should also be made to [I Protect UK](#)

The invigilator **must** take the following action in an emergency such as a fire alarm or a bomb alert.

- Stop the candidates from writing.
- Collect the attendance register (**in order to ensure all candidates are present**).
- Evacuate the examination room in line with the instructions given by the appropriate authority.
- Advise candidates to leave all question papers and scripts in the examination room.
- Candidates should leave the room in silence.
- Make sure that 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.
- Make a note of the time of the interruption and how long it lasted.
- Allow the candidates the full working time set for the examination.
- If there are only a few candidates, consider the possibility of taking the candidates (with question papers and scripts) to another place to finish the examination.
- Make a full report of the incident and of the action taken, and send to the relevant awarding body.