

# The Heathland School

*A Mathematics and Science College*



<b>Examination Contingency Plan</b>	<b>2023 - 2024</b>
Person(s) Responsible:	<b>Headteacher</b> , Deputy Head Curriculum
Status:	Statutory
Date Approved:	<b>February 2024</b>
Review Period:	As and when required

## Contents

### Purpose of the Plan

- Risk Factor 1. Examinations Officer extended absence at **a critical stage of the exam cycle**.
- Risk Factor 2. ALS Lead/SENCo extended absence at **a critical stage of** the exam cycle.
- Risk Factor 3. Teaching staff extended absence at **a critical stage of** the exam cycle.
- Risk Factor 4. Invigilators - lack of appropriately trained invigilators or invigilator absence.
- Risk Factor 5. Disruption to Public Transport preventing students from reaching Exams Centre.
- Risk Factor 6. Candidates unable to take examinations because of a crisis/Serious Disruption – centre remains open
- Risk Factor 7. **Centre unable to open as normal during the exams period (including in the event of the centre being unavailable for examinations owing to an unforeseen emergency).**
- Risk Factor 7a. Disruption to teaching time in the weeks before an exam – centre closed for an extended period
- Risk Factor 8: Failure of IT systems.
- Risk Factor 8a. Cyber Attack
- Risk Factor 9: Lack of appropriate rooms or main venues unavailable at short notice
- Risk Factor 10. Disruption to the distribution of examination papers.
- Risk Factor 11: Disruption to the transportation of completed examination scripts
- Risk Factor 12: Assessment evidence is not available to be marked
- Risk Factor 13: Centre unable to distribute results as normal or facilitate post results services

### Further guidance to inform procedures and implement contingency planning

Ofqual

JCQ

GOV.UK

Examinations Contingency Plan – The Heathland School

Wales

Northern Ireland

National Cyber Security Centre

## Purpose of the Plan

This plan examines potential risks and issues that could cause disruption to the management and administration of the exam process at The Heathland School. By outlining actions/procedures to be followed 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 schools and colleges and other centres should do if exams or other assessments are seriously disrupted* and the **JCQ Joint Contingency Plan** for the Examinations 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 The Heathland School is compliant with JCQ General Regulation 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 SENCo is absent at a critical stage of the examinations 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-attack should also be considered.

## **National Centre Number Register and other information requirements**

The head of centre will also ensure that The Heathland School as a contingency to enable the prompt handling of urgent issues only, responds to the awarding bodies' 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. Heads 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 absence at a critical stage of the exam cycle**

Where the head of centre may be absent at a critical stage of the examination cycle, main duties and responsibilities will be escalated in accordance with the centre's written escalation process.

## **Risk Factor 1: Examinations Officer extended absence at a critical stage of the exam 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 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
- 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 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

#### Options:

- the Examinations Assistant can be called upon to take over.
- Alternatively, the Examinations Officer of another school can be requested to provide assistance.
- The SMT should nominate a "Deputy" to cover a role or task.
- Consideration should be given to Work Shadowing.
- All procedures should be documented. There are products available via:
- The Key Tasks section of The Exams Office website.
- The Examinations Oracle and Centre Support Service of the Examination Officers Association.
- The Examinations Administration section of the DFE website.
- Examination Board helplines.
- The Exams Office section of the Joint Council for Qualifications website.

#### Risk Factor 2: ALS Lead/SENCo extended absence at a critical stage of the 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
- 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.

### Options:

- Request SENCo assistant to take over until SENCo returns.
- SENCo assistant to Identify any candidates not yet approved by Awarding Bodies and complete.
- Examinations Officer to identify any shortfalls in Invigilation requirements and ensure that gaps are filled.
- Once gaps are filled, Examinations Officer to arrange suitable rooms and SENCo assistant to provide training.

## Risk Factor 3: Teaching staff extended absence **at a critical stage of the 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 submission deadlines

### Options:

- Subject Head of Department or SMT member to provide Examinations Officer with details of Estimated/Final entries.
- Subject Head of Department or SMT member to ensure Examinations Officer is provided with Estimated Grades/Coursework Marks and that Coursework samples are transmitted to Moderators.

## Risk Factor 4: 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

### Options:

- Examinations Officer to maintain a panel of suitable Invigilators which can be called upon in the event of a shortfall.
- Conduct a review of available invigilators and their availability for the next exams series.
- Use provisional timetable and estimated entry information to determine invigilator numbers required.
- Identify where invigilators may be short.
- Request permission to recruit additional invigilators
- SMT member responsible for Cover to provide additional Invigilator resource in the event of a shortfall at short notice.
- Staff agencies to be contacted if none of the above is successful.

## Risk Factor 5. Disruption to Public Transport preventing students from reaching Exams Centre.

- Candidates unable to take examinations due to planned lack of public transport.
- Candidates unable to take examinations due to sudden disruption to public transport.
- Candidates arrive late due to public transport problems.

### Options:

- Monitor news agencies on a regular basis to identify any potential transportation difficulties.
- Centre to utilise own bus facilities to transport candidates to centre.
- Centre to liaise with candidates to identify whether the examination can be sat at an alternative venue in agreement with the relevant awarding organisations.
- Centres to offer candidates an opportunity to sit any examinations missed at the next available series.
- Centres to apply to awarding organisations for special consideration for candidates Where they have met the minimum requirements.
- Latecomers to be permitted to take their examinations providing they are within the JCQ regulations.

## Risk Factor 6: Candidates unable to take examinations/assessment because of a crisis/serious disruption – centre remains open

- Candidates are unable to attend the examination centre to take examinations as normal
- Centre to liaise with candidates to identify whether the examination can be sat at an alternative venue within the school
- Centres to offer candidates an opportunity to sit any examinations missed at the next available series
- Centres 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 their centre not to attend an examination.
- If a candidate chooses not to sit an examination they should be aware that special consideration rules will not apply.
- JCQ guidance on special consideration can be accessed through the JCQ website
- **Candidates who miss exams in the autumn series**

As in previous years, provided candidates have taken the minimum necessary assessments for their subject in the autumn series, their school or college can apply for 'special consideration' to be awarded if they are unable to attend the remaining assessments for valid reasons. This applies to all scenarios we have mentioned.

The minimum necessary assessments needed for special consideration to apply vary by qualification. For GCSE, AS and A levels, provided candidates have completed a minimum of 25% of the assessments in the subject, they will be awarded a grade if their application for special consideration is accepted.

GCSE, AS and A level exams in the autumn series cannot be rescheduled.

It is possible that some candidates will, very unfortunately, be unable to attend any of their exams. Those candidates who take less than the minimum necessary assessments and therefore cannot be awarded a grade in the autumn series will have the option to enter exams in summer 2021.

**Risk Factor 7: Centre may not be able 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 closed or candidates are unable to attend for an extended period.
- The provision of normal teaching and learning is interrupted.
- Centre closed due to inaccessibility or risk of injury caused by severe weather.

Options:

- It remains the responsibility of centres to prepare students, as usual, for examinations.
- 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.
- The centres to open for examinations and examination candidates only, if possible
- **Hounslow Heath Primary School should be contacted in the event that candidates cannot come to school as an alternative site.**
- Centres 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 exam result can be generated by the awarding body, based on factors such as a child's performance on other assessments in the same subject.
- **Implementing alternative arrangements for the conducting of examinations and notifying the JCQ Centre Inspection Service of an alternative site arrangement by submitting the JCQ Alternative Site form online, using the Centre Admin Portal (CAP).**

**Risk Factor 7a: Disruption to 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

Options:

- Recognise it remains the responsibility of the centre to prepare students, as usual, for examinations
- Facilitate alternative methods of learning
- Communicate with candidates (and where appropriate, parents/carers) information relating to alternative methods of learning
- Candidates (and where appropriate, parents/carers) will be informed/communicated by email/MS teams
- 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

### **Risk Factor 8: Failure of IT systems**

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

Options:

- Awarding bodies to be informed of the situation and an extension to the deadline should be requested.
- MIS contractor and ICT team on standby to repair damage quickly.
- Special Consideration can be applied for in the event of a serious disruption.
- Results can be obtained at an alternative site.

### **Risk Factor 8a: Cyber-attack**

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

Options:

- Awarding bodies to be informed of the situation and an extension to the deadline should be requested.
- MIS contractor and ICT team on standby to repair damage quickly.
- Special Consideration can be applied for in the event of a serious disruption.
- Results can be obtained at an alternative site.

### **Risk Factor 9: Lack of appropriate rooms or main venues 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 expected incident at exam time

Options:

- Identify, working with responsible SMT member, a short – list of suitable rooms including reserves.
- Move pupils from normal classrooms for the duration of the examinations.
- Plan alternative accommodation for the duration of the incident.

### **Risk Factor 10. Disruption to the distribution of examination papers.**

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

#### Recommended Actions:

- Awarding organisations to provide centres with electronic access to examination papers via a secure external network.
- Awarding organisations may be able to fax examination papers to centres if electronic transfer is not possible.
- The Examinations Officer would need to ensure that copies are received, made and stored under secure conditions
- Source alternative couriers for delivery of hardcopies.
- As a last resort, and in close collaboration with centres and regulators, awarding organisations to consider scheduling of the examination on an alternative date

### **Risk Factor 11: Disruption to the transportation of completed examination scripts**

- Delay in normal collection arrangements for completed examination scripts

#### Recommended Actions:

- where examinations are part of the national 'yellow label' service or where awarding organisations arrange collections, centres should seek advice from awarding organisations and should not make their own arrangements for transportation unless told to do so by the awarding body
- for any examinations where centres make their arrangements for transportation, centres should investigate alternative dispatch options that comply with the requirements detailed in the JCQ *Instructions for conducting examinations*.
- centres to ensure secure storage of completed examination scripts until collection

### **Risk Factor 12: 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 does not reach awarding organisation

#### Recommended Actions:

- 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



### **Risk Factor 13: Centre unable to distribute results as normal or facilitate post results services**

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

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

Recommended Actions:

#### **Distribution of Results**

- Centre to make arrangements to access its results at an alternative site in agreement with the relevant awarding organization.
- Centre to make arrangements to coordinate access to post result services from an alternative site.
- Centre to share facilities with other centres if this is possible, in agreement with the relevant organization.
- Centre to send candidate results by email and coordinate post results services electronically with agreement with the relevant awarding body/bodies

#### **Facilitation of post results services**

- Centre to make arrangement to make post results requests at an alternative location.
- Centre to contact the relevant awarding organization if electronic post results requests are not possible.

## **DfE**

### **Meeting digital and technology standards in schools and colleges**

[Cyber Security Standards for schools and colleges](#)

[Cyber crime and cyber security: a guide for education providers](#)

[DfE Cyber Security Guidance – March 2023](#)

## **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**

You should prepare for possible disruption to exams and other assessments and make sure staff are aware of these plans.

#### **General contingency guidance**

- [Emergency planning and response](#) from the Department for Education in England
- [school-organisation-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
- [school terms and school closures](#) from NI Direct
- [Opening schools in extremely bad weather](#) - guidance for schools from the Welsh Government
- [police guidance](#) from National Counter Terrorism Security Office and partners on preparing for threats

## 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:

[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

- Contact the relevant awarding organisation and follow its instructions.
- Take advice, or follow instructions, from relevant local or national agencies in deciding whether your centre is able to open.
- 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.
- Where accommodation is limited, prioritise students whose progression will be severely delayed if they do not take their exam or timetabled assessment when planned.
- In the event of an evacuation during an examination please refer to JCQ's [Centre emergency evacuation procedure](#).
- Communicate with **students**, parents, carers and students any changes to the exam or assessment timetable or to the venue.
- Communicate with any external assessors or relevant third parties regarding any changes to the exam or assessment timetable.

#### After the exam

- 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.
- Advise students, where appropriate, of the opportunities to take their exam or assessment at a later date.
- Ensure that scripts are stored under secure conditions.
- 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

- Establish and maintain, and at all times comply with, an up-to-date, written contingency plan.
- 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

- Take all reasonable steps to mitigate any adverse effect, in relation to their qualifications, arising from any disruption.
- Provide effective guidance to any of their centres delivering qualifications.

- 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).
- Promptly notify the relevant regulators about any event which could have an adverse effect on students, standards or public confidence.
- 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 Regulations 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
- exceptional closure days from the Department of Education in Northern Ireland
- checklist - exceptional closure of schools from the Department of Education in Northern Ireland
- school terms and school closures from NI Direct
- opening schools as well as 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 (updated 5 October 2023) <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>

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 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 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 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/exam-system-contingency-plan-england-wales-and-northern-ireland>

The designation of a 'contingency sessions' 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 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 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 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 2023-2024 <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](http://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/)

JCQ Notice to Centres - Examination contingency plan/examinations policy [www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations/notice-to-centres--exam-contingency-plan/](http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations/notice-to-centres--exam-contingency-plan/)

General Regulations for Approved Centres [www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations](http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations)

Guidance notes on alternative site arrangements [www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/online-forms](http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/online-forms)

Guidance notes for transferred candidates [www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/online-forms](http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/online-forms)

Instructions for conducting examinations [www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/ice---instructions-for-conducting-examinations](http://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](http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-special-consideration/regulations-and-guidance)

Guidance for centres on cyber security (Effective from November 2023) [www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations/](http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations/)

Information for centres affected by RAAC – the delivery of non-examination assessments and the special consideration process [www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/non-examination-assessments/](http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/non-examination-assessments/)

## **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](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>

## **Wales**

School closures: examinations [gov.wales/school-closures-examinations](http://gov.wales/school-closures-examinations)

Opening schools in extremely bad weather: [www.gov.wales/opening-schools-well-childcare-and-play-settings-extreme-bad-weather-and-extreme-hot-weather](http://www.gov.wales/opening-schools-well-childcare-and-play-settings-extreme-bad-weather-and-extreme-hot-weather)

## **Northern Ireland**

Exceptional closure days [www.education-ni.gov.uk/articles/exceptional-closure-days](http://www.education-ni.gov.uk/articles/exceptional-closure-days)

Checklist for Principals when considering Opening or Closure of School – exceptional closure of schools  
[www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/checklist-exceptional-closure-schools](http://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/checklist-exceptional-closure-schools)

## **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. [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 risks to schools and ways to prevent it](#)
7. [School staff offered training to help shore up cyber defences - NCSC.GOV.UK](#)