

# Joint Contingency Plan

For the Examination System in England,  
Wales and Northern Ireland

This plan is jointly owned by:  
Ofqual, DfES, CCEA, AQA, Edexcel, EDI, ICAAE, OCR, VTCT, WJEC, City & Guilds, JCQ, DfE, DENI, QCDA and UCAS.

October 2018

## Joint Contingency Plan

### Aims of the Joint Contingency Plan

The Joint Contingency Plan is designed to ensure consistency of response in the event of major disruption the examination system affecting significant numbers of candidates across several awarding organisations. All awarding organisations are required to have their own well-established contingency plans in place to respond to such disruptions, and these have been implemented already on numerous occasions. This joint contingency plan takes into account these processes and procedures and is designed to complement them, not replace them. The organisations that own this plan are those who have a significant interest in assessments delivered in line with the common examination timetable, but where appropriate these contingencies should be applied to other qualifications.

It will be implemented in the event of major disruption, (which could be the result of widespread illness, travel disruption, bad weather, power failures), to the system and any actions taken will be subject to the advice of the official agencies dealing with the specific circumstances being faced, for example the police, Environment Agency or Health Protection Agency.

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

**The contingencies applied will be selected based on the context of the disruption and have been implemented on several occasions in response to localised issues. They would be applied on a larger scale in response to any widespread disruption at a national level.**

**If it is identified that current contingencies will not be sufficient to manage a situation causing disruption to the system, an identified Crisis Management Team consisting of representatives of all organisations involved will be convened by Ofqual to agree the additional actions required.**

## Communications

The scale of the exams, qualifications and testing system in England, Wales and Northern Ireland is huge, involving more than a million learners each year and thousands of centres. It is vital that a system of this size has robust and co-ordinated contingency plans in place to deal with any major disruption that may affect candidates.

In the event of major disruption, communication is a key factor in ensuring an effective and consistent response across the agencies involved. This includes communications between the organisations involved in the response and communications to stakeholders such as centres, candidates, parents or carers and the public. Details of whether specific contingencies have been agreed across organisations will be confirmed on the Ofqual website.

The Awarding bodies have allocated 26 June 2019 as a '**Contingency day**' for examinations. This day is in the event of national or local disruption to examinations. All students must remain available until Wednesday 26th June should an awarding body need to invoke its contingency plan.

<http://www.ofqual.gov.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.

<b>1. Disruption in the distribution of examination papers</b>	
<u>Criteria for implementation of the plan</u>	<u>Recommended actions:</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Disruption to the distribution of examination papers to centres in advance of examinations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Awarding organisations to provide centres with electronic access to examination papers via a secure external network. Awarding organisations 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.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Awarding organisations to source alternative couriers for delivery of hard copies.</li> </ul>

<b>2. Candidates unable to take examinations because of a crisis - centres remain open</b>	
<u>Criteria for implementation of the plan</u>	<u>Recommended actions:</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Candidates are unable to attend examination centres to take examinations as normal.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Centre to liaise with candidates to identify whether the examination can be sat at an alternative venue in agreement with the relevant awarding organisations.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Centres to offer candidates an opportunity to sit any examinations missed at the next available series.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Centres to apply to awarding organisations for special</li> </ul>

	<p>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.</p> <p>JCQ guidance on special consideration can be accessed through the JCQ website.  <a href="http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams_office/access_arrangements/">http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams_office/access_arrangements/</a></p>
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<p><b>3. Centres are unable to open as normal during the examination period</b></p>	
<p><u>Criteria for implementation of the plan</u></p>	<p><u>Recommended actions:</u></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Centres unable to open as normal for scheduled examinations.</li> </ul> <p><b>A centre which is unable to open as normal for examinations must inform each awarding organisation with which examinations are due to be taken as soon as is possible</b></p> <p>As part of their general planning for emergencies, centres should cover the impact on examinations. The responsibility for deciding whether it is safe for a centre to open lies with the head of centre. The head is responsible for taking advice, or following instructions from relevant local or national agencies in deciding whether they are able to open.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Centres to open for examinations and examination candidates only, if possible.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Centres to use alternative venues* in agreement with relevant</li> </ul>

	awarding organisations (e.g. share facilities with other centres or use other public building, if possible).
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Centres may offer candidates an opportunity to sit any examinations missed at the next available series.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Centres to apply to awarding organisations for special consideration for candidates where they have met the minimum requirements (see item 3 above).</li> </ul>
<b>4. Disruption to the transportation of completed examination papers</b>	
<u>Criteria for implementation of the plan</u>	<u>Recommended actions:</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>delay in normal collection arrangements for completed examination scripts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In the first instance centres to seek advice from awarding organisations and normal collection agency regarding collection.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Centres to ensure secure storage of completed examination papers until collection.</li> </ul>
<b>5. Assessment evidence is not available to be marked</b>	
<u>Criteria for implementation of the plan</u>	<u>Recommended actions</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Large scale damage to or destruction of completed examination scripts/assessment evidence before it can be</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Awarding organisations to generate candidate marks for affected assessments based on other appropriate evidence of candidate</li> </ul>

marked.	achievement as defined by the awarding organisations.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Candidates to retake affected assessment at subsequent assessment window.</li> </ul>

<b>6. Centres are unable to distribute results as normal</b>	
<u>Criteria for implementation of plan</u>	<u>Recommended actions:</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Centres are unable to access or manage the distribution of results to candidates, or to facilitate post results services.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ centre to make arrangements to access its results at an alternative site* (Hertswood)</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ centres to make arrangements to coordinate access to post results services from an alternative site*</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ centres to share facilities with other centres if this is possible</li> </ul>

### Summary of responsibilities in the event of disruption to examinations

<b>Awarding organisations are responsible for:</b>	<b>Examination centres are responsible for:</b>
	Preparing candidates for examinations
Ensuring centres receive examination materials for scheduled examinations	Ensuring examinations and assessments are taken under the conditions prescribed by awarding organisations
	Ensuring, where relevant, that assessment materials and candidate work

	is 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/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/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
	Centres to assess and liaise with awarding organisations in the event of disruption to the transportation of papers
Marking, moderating and grading candidate work	The distribution of examination results to candidates
Issuing results to centres on scheduled dates	



## Useful information

AQA	<a href="http://www.aqa.org.uk/">http://www.aqa.org.uk/</a>	JCQ	<a href="https://www.jcq.org.uk/">https://www.jcq.org.uk/</a>
CCEA	<a href="http://www.rewardinglearning.org.uk/">http://www.rewardinglearning.org.uk/</a>	Ofqual	<a href="http://www.ofqual.gov.uk/">http://www.ofqual.gov.uk/</a>
Pearson	<a href="https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/home.html">https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/home.html</a>	DfE	<a href="http://www.education.gov.uk/">http://www.education.gov.uk/</a>
WJEC	<a href="http://www.wjec.co.uk/">http://www.wjec.co.uk/</a>		
JCQ access arrangements, reasonable adjustments and special consideration			<a href="http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams_office/access_arrangements/">http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams_office/access_arrangements/</a>
JCQ instructions for conducting examinations			<a href="http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams_office/instructions_for_conducting_examinations/">http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams_office/instructions_for_conducting_examinations/</a>
DfE guidance on dealing with disruption to teaching and learning			<a href="http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/adminandfinance/emergencyplanning/a0069425/advice-on-severe-weather">http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/adminandfinance/emergencyplanning/a0069425/advice-on-severe-weather</a>