

Examinations Contingency Plan

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 Medeshamstede Academy. By outlining actions/procedures to be invoked in case of disruption it is intended to mitigate the impact these disruptions have on our exam process.

Alongside internal processes, this plan is informed by scenarios contained in the *Joint contingency plan in the event of widespread disruption to the examination system in England, Wales and Northern Ireland*.

This plan complies with JCQ General Regulations [for approved Centres 2020-21](#)(section 5.3) in that:

The centre agrees to “*have 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 staff absence. 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.*”

Causes of potential disruption to the exam process

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

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Key tasks required in the management and administration of the exam cycle not undertaken including:

- *Planning*
 - annual data collection exercise not undertaken to collate information on qualifications and awarding body specifications being delivered
 - annual exams plan not produced identifying essential key tasks, key dates and deadlines
 - sufficient invigilators not trained
- *Entries*
 - awarding bodies not being informed of early/estimated entries which prompts release of early information required by teaching staff
 - candidates not being entered with awarding bodies for external exams/assessment
 - awarding body entry deadlines missed or late or other penalty fees being incurred
- *Pre-exams*
 - exam timetabling, rooming allocation; and invigilation schedules not prepared
 - candidates not briefed on exam timetables and awarding body information for candidates
 - exam/assessment materials and candidates’ work not stored under required secure conditions
 - internal assessment marks and samples of candidates’ work not submitted to awarding bodies/external moderators
 - access arrangements are not in place/planned for during the exam, this impacts staffing and rooming. The specialist assessor has not conducted his assessment and the Exams Officer has not submitted an application by the within the timescale.
 - modified paper requirements not identified in a timely manner to enable ordering to meet external deadline
- *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

- access arrangement candidate support not arranged for exam rooms
- *Results and post-results*
 - access to examination results affecting the distribution of results to candidates
 - the facilitation of the post-results services

Centre Actions:

The Secondary Phase Leader (PL) and the Deputy Head of School (DH) have the sufficient knowledge of the process to ensure that the examinations function continues to be performed.

- The annual data collection exercise at our centre is conducted by the EO using a proforma. In this situation the PL could inform the boards of the information.
- Accounts are set up for all online services that the PL/DH will need to use in the EO's absence. eAQA, The Exams Office, SIMS, Edexcel online, Gateway, NCFE, OCR, ASDAN.
- The annual exams plan is in place to highlight actions by required dates, and is distributed to all secondary staff and SLT involved in exams.
- The centre has subscribed to The Exams Office and their tools can be accessed by the PL/DH to support with all aspects of the exams function.
- A planning meeting is held at the beginning of the academic year with the EO/PL/DH/SENDCo to highlight required access arrangement applications in order to inform the specialist assessors workload and deadlines.
- The key documents published by the JCQ are accessible to SLT – kept in the exams file in the school office.
- The centre is part of a group of Academies supported by a central team, the Greenwood Academies Trust. The centre is also located adjacent to another GAT run Academy (COPA centre number 22378) and support for systems and processes could be sought through the EO located there, as well as a number of other GAT academies within the locality.
- The Deputy Head of School and the PL is the phase leader for the secondary students who will be sitting the exams and therefore has sufficient knowledge to inform rooming and invigilation whilst ensuring that the students' SEN do not impact on others within the room, allowing for all of the individual access arrangements and that the teacher involved in delivering the course is not part of the team supporting the examination.
- The Head of school, the Deputy Head of school and deputy Exams officers are the only other members of staff with knowledge of how to access the confidential material within the secure storage location. This will not be shared with any other centre staff, even in this situation.
- The Deputy Head of School has the knowledge to perform the duties of the EO however time constraints may prove a barrier and in this case would be supported by the office staff within the centre. Office staff to shadow EO during key tasks in the cycle.
- All exams related material (apart from historically generated entry files) are saved in the following location which is accessible to SLT and admin support staff: K:\EXAM.

2. Teaching staff extended absence at key points in the exam cycle

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Key tasks not undertaken including:

- *Early/estimated entry information not provided to the exams officer on time; resulting in pre-release information not being received*
- *Final entry information not provided to the exams officer on time; resulting in:*
 - *candidates not being entered for exams/assessments or being entered late*
 - *late or other penalty fees being charged by awarding bodies*
- *Internal assessment marks and candidates' work not provided to meet submission deadlines*

Centre actions:

- Medeshamstede Academy is a small SEN school with no more than 35 students in examination years. The DH and PL are involved in the individual pathway co-ordination of the candidates and therefore is in a position to ensure that the above points would have little impact and can be overcome in the absence of teaching staff.

- Due to the needs of the students and the support they require whilst working we are heavily staffed with learning support who will have the knowledge to inform the EO of the required entry information.
- As we are a part of a multi academy trust with various other academies registered as exam centres who also have staff delivering the same courses, therefore the continued delivery of the course and internal assessments can be supported by bringing in staff from other GAT academies.

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

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- *Failure train sufficient invigilators to conduct exams*
- *Invigilator shortage on peak exam days*
- *Invigilator absence on the day of an exam*

Centre actions:

- The centre does not plan to recruit external invigilators due to the nature of our candidates, taking their major need of ASD into consideration.
- The centre has a high number of learning support staff who will be our main staffing resource for invigilation for exams and to deliver access arrangements where required.
- The centre will hold staff training as necessary in each season as it is likely that all students will require a form of access arrangement. Also this is to ensure that the whole team have a comprehensive knowledge of the process and the plans for our centre as the candidates will be split up in to separate rooms/small groups/individuals for invigilation, depending on their arrangements.
- On the morning of each exam day a staff briefing will take place to ensure that everyone involved has the chance to ask questions around their role or the centre's arrangements for the exams, taking in to account any last minute personnel changes that may occur.
- Staff from other local centres within the Academy chain can be brought in to support the invigilation in the event of extreme staff shortage.
- EO and Deputy Head of school receive training and disseminate this using Exams office supporting materials and could deliver this to other staff in the evening prior to the examinations.

4. 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:

- Whilst we have the luxury of a large number of rooms in which to hold exams, The centre could apply to the JCQ in advance to use an alternative site such as another Academy within the GAT group or the shared sports hall (shared with centre ref 22378)

5. Failure of IT systems

Criteria for implementation of the plan

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

Centre actions:

- The centre's SIMS is server based so can be accessed from any location with GAT network access. Therefore in any of these situations above the EO could relocate to an alternative Academy within the Greenwood Academies Trust, and be supported by the central team.
- Support can be obtained from the SIMS SBS helpdesk if the above fails.

- The EO could use alternative systems such as MS Excel could be used to manually collate, record and distribute results.

6. 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

The centre to communicate with parents, carers and students about the potential for disruption to teaching time and plans to address this. [Joint Contingency Plan (JCP) scenario 1]

Centre actions:

- Where there is disruption to teaching time and students miss teaching and learning, the centre will do it's upmost to continue to prepare students, as usual, for examinations.
- In the case of modular courses, the centre may advise candidates to sit examinations in the next available series
- Should the centre be closed for an extended period of time, learning could still take place in an alternative GAT academy, or in some cases tuition in the home could be provided by teachers and learning support staff.

7. Candidates unable to take examinations because of a crisis – centre remains open

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- Candidates are unable to attend the examination centre to take examinations as normal

The centre to communicate with relevant awarding organisations at the outset to make them aware of the issue. The centre to communicate with parents, carers and candidates regarding solutions to the issue. [JCP scenario 2]

Centre actions:

- Wherever possible the examinations will be conducted according to the centre's published examination timetable.
- The centre will communicate with relevant awarding organisations at the outset to make them aware of the issue. The centre to communicate with parents, carers and candidates regarding solutions to the issue.
- The centre will consider every solution possible and reasonable to continue to enable candidates to sit the examination whilst weighing up the anxiety and stress caused to them should unplanned changes to expected routines occur, as due to the candidates SEN, this may overall become too distressing for them and sitting examinations in such circumstances would not be beneficial for them in any way.

8. Centre unable to open as normal during the examination period (including in the event of the centre being unavailable for examinations owing to an unforeseen emergency)

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- Centre unable to open as normal for scheduled examinations

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. [JCP scenario 5]

Centre actions:

- If the centre is unable to open as normal for examinations, we will inform each awarding organisation with which examinations are due to be taken as soon as is possible.
- If conditions are so severe that a decision is made to close the academy, or where the academy remains open but some individual candidates are unable to reach it because of extreme weather conditions, and no alternative arrangements can be made to take the examination at a different location, then the options are:

- Where candidates are entered for examinations but this is not their terminal (final) examination series, they may be entered again for the next series.
- Where candidates are sitting units as part of their terminal examination series or no further re-sit opportunity is available, then an application for Special Consideration may be made.
- At all times the Academy shall communicate regularly with candidates and parents/guardians to ensure that candidates anxiety levels are not unnecessarily increase.

9. 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

The centre to communicate with awarding organisations to organise alternative delivery of papers. [JCP scenario 3]

Centre actions:

- In such cases the centre will communicate with the relevant awarding organisations to devise alternative delivery of papers, the solution will depend upon the specifics of the occurrence.

10. Disruption to the transportation of completed examination scripts/assessment evidence

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- Delay in normal collection arrangements for completed examination scripts

The centre to communicate with relevant awarding organisations at the outset to resolve the issue. [JCP scenario 4]

Centre actions:

- In all cases the papers will remain in the secure storage facility.
- In such cases the centre will communicate with the relevant awarding organisations to devise alternative delivery of papers, the solution will depend upon the specifics of the occurrence.

11. 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

It is the responsibility of the head of centre to communicate this immediately to the relevant awarding organisation(s) and subsequently to students and their parents or carers. [JCP scenario 6]

Completed examination scripts/assessment evidence does not reach awarding organisations

Centre actions:

- In such cases the centre will communicate with the relevant awarding organisations to devise a solution, the solution will depend upon the specifics of the occurrence.

12. 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

Centres to contact awarding organisations about alternative options. [JCP scenario 11]

Centre actions:

- In such cases the centre will communicate with the relevant awarding organisations to devise alternative delivery of options, the solution will depend upon the specifics of the occurrence.
- The centre's systems are server based and therefore secure communication to candidates of the results could be managed from any facility with internet access, be that another Academy within the GAT group, the head office or a residential location.

Causes 7-13 – all scenarios, criteria and specific communications have been taken directly from the *Joint contingency plan in the event of widespread disruption to the examination system in England, Wales and Northern Ireland*

NEW FROM HERE

Further guidance to inform procedures and implement contingency planning

Ofqual

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

1. Contingency planning

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

When drafting contingency plans, you should consider the following guidance:

1.1 Covid specific guidance:

- [Guidance for schools Covid-19](#) from the Department for Education in England (subject to frequent updates as the situation changes)
- [Responsibility for autumn GCSE, AS and A level exam series](#) from the Department for Education in England
- [Action for FE Colleges](#) from the Department for Education in England
- [Public health guidance to support autumn exams](#) from the Department for Education
- [Education and childcare: coronavirus](#) from Welsh Government
- [Covid-19 - guidance for school and educational settings](#) from Department of Education in Northern Ireland

1.2 General contingency guidance

- [Emergency planning and response](#) from the Department for Education in England
- [Opening and closing local-authority-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 closures](#) from NI Direct
- [Opening schools in extremely bad weather](#) - guidance for schools from the Welsh Government
- [Procedures for handling bomb threats](#) from the National Counter Terrorism Security Office.

2. 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:

- [JCQ Joint Contingency Plan for the Examination System in England, Wales and Northern Ireland](#)

3. Steps you should take

3.1 Exam planning

Review 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.

3.2 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 parents, carers and students any changes to the exam or assessment timetable or to the venue.
7. Communicate with any external assessors or relevant third parties regarding any changes to the exam or assessment timetable.

3.3 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 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.

4. Steps the awarding organisation should take

4.1 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.

4.2 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 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.

4.3 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.

5. 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.

See also:

- [JCQ's guidance on special considerations](#)

6. Wider communications

The regulators, [Ofqual](#) in England, [Qualifications Wales](#) in Wales and [CCEA](#) in Northern Ireland, will share timely and accurate information, as required, with awarding organisations, government departments and other stakeholders.

The [Department for Education](#) in England, the [Department of Education](#) in Northern Ireland and the [Welsh Government](#) will inform the relevant government ministers as soon as it becomes apparent that there will be significant local or national disruption; and ensure that they are kept updated until the matter is resolved.

Awarding organisations will alert the [Universities and Colleges Admissions Service](#) (UCAS) and the [Central Applications Office](#) (CAO) about any impact of the disruption on their deadlines and liaise regarding student progression to further and higher education.

Awarding organisations will alert relevant professional bodies or employer groups if the impact of disruption particularly affects them.

7. Widespread national disruption to the taking of examinations / assessments

The governments' view across England, Wales and Northern Ireland is education should continue in 2020/21 with schools remaining open and that examinations and assessments will go ahead in both autumn 2020 and summer 2021.

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 exam timetables.

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

(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 01 October 2020) <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, JCQ 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/what-schools-and-colleges-should-do-if-exams-or-other-assessments-are-seriously-disrupted>

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 Centres should prepare plans for any disruption to examinations as part of their general emergency planning. It is important to ensure that relevant centre staff are familiar with the 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 day' for examinations, summer 2021. 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 day' 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 2021, 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 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 this contingency arrangement so that they may take it into account when making their plans for the summer. However, the awarding bodies will not insist upon candidates being available throughout the entire timetable period as a matter of course.

(JCQ guidance above taken directly from Instructions for Conducting Examinations 2020-2021 <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

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

GOV.UK

Emergency planning and response: Severe weather; Exam disruption www.gov.uk/guidance/emergencies-and-severe-weather-schools-and-early-years-settings

Opening and closing local-authority-maintained schools www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-organisation-maintained-schools

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

Opening schools in extremely bad weather gov.wales/opening-schools-extremely-bad-weather-guidance-schools

Northern Ireland

Exceptional closure days www.education-ni.gov.uk/articles/exceptional-closure-days

Checklist for Principals when considering Opening or Closure of School www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/checklist-exceptional-closure-schools

School closures www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/school-closures

National Counter Terrorism Security Office

Procedures for handling bomb threats www.gov.uk/government/publications/bomb-threats-guidance/procedures-for-handling-bomb-threats