

Exams Contingency Plan

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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 Cambridge Regional College. 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 the JCQ general regulations (section 5) in that:

The Centre agrees to *"have in place a written examination contingency plan/examinations policy which covers all aspects of examination administration. This will allow members of the senior leadership team to have a robust contingency plan in place, minimising risk to examination administration, should the examinations officer be absent at a crucial stage of the examination cycle"*.

Monitoring and Review

- This policy will be subject to continuous monitoring, refinement and audit by the Principal
- The Principal will undertake a formal annual review of this policy for the purpose of monitoring and of the efficiency with which the related duties have been discharged, by no later than one year from the date shown below, or earlier if significant changes to the systems and arrangements take place, or if legislation, regulatory requirements or best practice guidelines so require.

Aims of the Exam Contingency Plan

The Examination Contingency Plan is designed to ensure a consistent and effective response in the event of major disruption to the examination system at the Cambridge Regional College in affecting 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. This Examinations Contingency Plan takes into account these processes and procedures and is designed to complement them, not replace them. This also applies to all other qualifications at the Cambridge Regional College.

The plan will be implemented in the event of major disruption to the system, such as widespread illness, travel disruption, bad weather or power failures. Any actions taken will be subject to the advice of the official agencies dealing with the specific circumstances being faced, for example the 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 covered have been implemented on several occasions in response to localised issues in other centres. They would be applied on a larger scale in response to any widespread disruption at a national level.

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

- **delivering assessments to published timetables**
- **delivering results to published timetables**
- **complying with regulatory requirements in relation to assessment, marking and standards.**

If the usual contingencies are no longer sufficient to maintain these outcomes, the College Management Group will agree the additional actions required.

If the situation cannot be resolved, the Senior Management Team will meet to agree further actions outside the scope of the College Management Group

Communications

In the event of local disruption Communication to teachers and students will take place through a member of the Senior Management Team following agreement with the Principal.

In the event of major disruption, details of specific contingencies agreed across Organisations involved in the examinations process will be confirmed on the Ofqual website and proactively communicated to relevant stakeholders.

This includes communications between the organisations involved in the response and communications to stakeholders such as centres, candidates, parents or carers and the public.

www.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.

Disruption of teaching time – college closed for an extended period

- If Cambridge Regional College is 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. It is the responsibility of the College to prepare students, as usual, for examinations.
- In the case of modular courses, candidates should sit the examinations in the next available series.

- The college should plan to facilitate teaching and learning by an alternative method or alternative location.

Guidance on emergency planning, with advice on severe weather, is available on the Department for Education website:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/emergencies-and-severe-weather-schools-and-early-years-settings>

Disruption in the distribution of examination papers

If the distribution of examination papers to centres in advance of Examinations is disrupted

- The awarding organisations to source alternative couriers for delivery of hardcopies.
- The awarding organisations would provide the college with electronic access to examination papers via a secure external network. Awarding organisations would fax examination papers to centres if electronic transfer is not possible. The Examinations Officer must ensure that copies are received, made and stored under secure conditions.

Candidates unable to take examinations because of a crisis - centres remain open

If candidates are unable to attend examination to take examinations as normal. This contingency applies if Cambridge Regional College becomes closed due to extreme issues on the college site e.g. Fire.

- The college can liaise with candidates to identify whether the examination can be sat at an alternative venue in agreement with the relevant awarding organisations. JCQ guidance on alternative site arrangements can be accessed through the JCQ website – <http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/ice---instructions-for-conducting-examinations>
- The college can offer candidates an opportunity to sit any examinations missed at the next available series.
- The college can 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 been fully prepared and have covered the whole course but are affected by adverse circumstances beyond their control.

JCQ guidance on special consideration can be accessed through the JCQ website: <http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-special-consideration>

Centres are unable to open as normal during the examination period

If Cambridge Regional College is unable to open as normal for scheduled examinations it must inform each awarding organisation with which examinations are due to be taken as soon as is possible. The responsibility for deciding whether it is safe for the college to open lies with the Principal (Head of centre). The Principal is responsible for taking

advice, or following instructions from relevant local or national agencies in deciding whether they are able to open.

- The college should open for examinations and examination candidates only if possible.
- The college should use alternative venues in agreement with relevant awarding organisations (e.g. share facilities with other centres or use other public building, if possible)
- The college may offer candidates an opportunity to sit any examinations missed at the next available series
- The college can apply to awarding organisations for special consideration for candidates where they have met the minimum requirements.

Disruption to the transportation of completed examination Scripts

If there is a delay in normal collection arrangements for completed examination scripts.

- The college will seek advice from awarding organisations and normal collection agency regarding collection.
- The college must not to make arrangements for transportation without approval from awarding organisations.
- The college must ensure secure storage of completed examination scripts until collection.

Assessment evidence is not available to be marked

If due to large scale damage to or destruction of completed examination scripts/assessment evidence before it can be marked.

- The awarding organisations should generate candidate marks for affected assessments based on other appropriate evidence of candidate achievement as defined by the awarding organisations in consultation with the regulators.
- The candidates should retake affected assessment at subsequent assessment window.

Disruption to the scanning process – where completed examination scripts are being scanned in preparation for onscreen marking

If the examination boards scanning process is disrupted, resulting in a risk to the delivery of results by scheduled dates.

- The awarding organisations should implement their existing contingency plans for disruption to on-screen marking process
- The awarding organisations should revert to traditional form of marking
- The awarding organisations should recruit, train or re-standardise qualified new markers

Markers unable to mark examination scripts according to marking schedules

- If the examination board markers are unable to mark examination scripts resulting in a risk to the delivery of results by scheduled dates.
- The awarding organisations should re-allocate scripts to available markers
- The awarding organisations to recruit, train or re-standardise qualified new markers and prioritisation of marking to be based on results dates.

Difficulty in meeting planned schedule or unable, to issue results

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

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

Awarding organisations unable to issue accurate results

Due to system error/failure or attack on systems means significant numbers of results cannot be validated as accurate or are issued and found to be inaccurate.

- The candidates, college and stakeholders will be informed of any incorrect results
- The awarding organisations will re-validation results
- The awarding organisations to re-issue results, via alternative format if necessary.

Centres are unable to distribute results as normal

If the college is unable to access or manage the distribution of results to candidates, or to facilitate post results services. **The college should contact the awarding organisations about alternative options:**

- The college will make arrangements to access its results at an alternative site.
- The college will make arrangements to coordinate access to post results services from an alternative site.
- The college will share facilities with other centres where possible.
- Preparing plans for any disruption to exams as part of centres' general emergency planning.
- Preparing candidates for examinations.
- Ensuring examinations and assessments are taken under the conditions prescribed by awarding organisations.

- Ensuring, where relevant, that assessment materials and candidate work are stored under secure conditions.
- Deciding whether the centre can open for examinations as scheduled and informing relevant awarding organisations if the centre is unable to open.
- Exploring the opportunities for alternative arrangements if the centre cannot open for examinations and agreeing such arrangements with the awarding organisations.
- Assessing and liaising with awarding organisations in the event of disruption to the transportation of papers.

Useful information

Ofqual

Joint contingency plan in the event of widespread disruption to the examination system in England, Wales and Northern Ireland

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/exam-system-contingency-plan-england-wales-and-northern-ireland/joint-contingency-plan-in-the-event-of-widespread-disruption-to-the-examination-system-in-england-wales-and-northern-ireland>

JCQ

General regulations

<http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations>

Guidance on alternative site arrangements

<http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/forms>

Instructions for conducting examinations

<http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/ice---instructions-for-conducting-examinations>

A guide to the special consideration process

<http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-special-consideration/regulations-and-guidance>

GOV.UK

Emergencies and severe weather: schools and early years settings

<https://www.gov.uk/emergencies-and-severe-weather-schools-and-early-years-settings>

Teaching time lost due to severe weather conditions

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/teaching-time-lost-due-to-severe-weather-conditions/teaching-time-lost-due-to-severe-weather-conditions>

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/dispatch-of-exam-scripts-guide>

Document history

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