

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 processes.

Alongside internal processes, this plan is informed by the Ofqual (and Northern Ireland Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment) Exam system contingency plan: England, Wales and Northern Ireland which provides guidance in the publication on what schools and colleges and other centres should do if exams or other assessments are seriously disrupted. The plan is also informed by the JCQ Joint Contingency Plan for the Examination System in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and the JCQ document Preparing for disruption to examinations (Effective from 1 September 2024).

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

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

Contingency arrangements

In accordance with the regulations (GR 3.17-19), Cambridge Regional College must have an up to date written contingency plan.

The contingency plan must cover all aspects of examination/assessment administration and delivery. Senior leaders must have robust contingency arrangements in place that will minimise the risk to examination/assessment administration and delivery and any adverse impact on candidates.

The plan must cover the following scenarios:

- The head of centre, relevant senior leader(s) with oversight of examination and assessment administration, SENCo (or equivalent role), examinations officer or any other key staff essential to the examination process being absent at a critical stage of the examination cycle
- The potential impact of other events such as flooding which could lead to all or parts of the centre becoming unavailable
- Potential issues with the centre's IT systems

As part of the contingency plan the centre must identify an alternative site if examinations cannot be conducted at the registered address. Larger centres may require more than one potential alternative site or different sites for different Year Groups.

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

Cambridge Regional College must ensure that candidates' work is backed-up and should consider the contingency of candidates' work being backed-up on two separate devices, including one off-site back-up. Appropriate security arrangements must be implemented which protect candidates' work in the event of IT system corruption and cyber-attacks.

Operating across more than one centre

As the head of centre and/or examinations officer operates across more than one centre, the head of centre will ensure there is suitable senior leadership team support in place, so they can meet their obligations across all centres for which they are responsible in relation to recruitment, selection, training and support of staff. The arrangements covered in this contingency plan relate to the following centres:

- Cambridge Campus
- Huntingdon Campus

National Centre Number Register and other information requirements

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

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 the UK Health Security 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.

1 Exam Officer extended absence at a critical stage of the exam cycle

- Roles of Planning, Entries, Pre-Exams, Exam time, Results and post-results are shared throughout the team across both campuses. Each officer will have direct responsibility for an area, but the Exams Manager has overall responsibility for the distribution of tasks subject to absences.
- Each awarding Organisation has a process flowchart and large exam series follow an established plan framework.

2 SEND support extended absence at a critical stage of the exam cycle

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Key tasks required in the management and administration of the access arrangements process within the exam cycle not undertaken, including:

Planning

- candidates not tested/assessed to identify potential access arrangement requirements
- centre fails to recognise its duties towards disabled candidates as defined under the terms of the Equality Act 2010
- evidence of need and evidence to support normal way of working not collated

Pre-exams

- approval for access arrangements not applied for to the Awarding Organisation
- centre-delegated arrangements not put in place
- modified paper requirements not identified in a timely manner to enable ordering to meet external deadline
- staff (facilitators) providing support to access arrangement candidates not allocated and trained

Exam time

- access arrangement candidate support not arranged for exam rooms

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- Head of Learning Support and SEND Admin Team, to work closely together in the monitoring and application of Access Arrangements so that both are informed and up to date.
- Exams Team to have regular meetings with Head of Learning Support and SEND Admin Team to keep up to date with Exam Access Arrangement applications.
- Central register of exam entries and agreed Exam Access Arrangements and actions to be taken kept on shared drive so the most up to date list is readily accessible and available to SEND Admin Team, Exams Team, college managers and teaching staff.
- In order to ensure that all candidates are tested it may be necessary to make amendments to assessment team timetables to assess need. Assessments would be prioritised based on those learners with previous known EAA to meet the Equality Act 2010.
- Deadlines are in place to allow sufficient time for evidence to be collated prior to JCQ deadlines. Weekly reminder sent to Assistant Head of Departments (AHOd's) to check outstanding requirements. Evidence is sent to SEND Admin group email address as this allows for multiple staff to access the information and for the evidence to be processed more quickly. Where evidence of need / normal way of working is not received prior to JCQ deadlines alternative arrangements may be considered that can be supported.
- Where a modified paper has not been requested an alternative method of enlargement such as PDF version or in house enlargement would be offered to the candidate to ensure that they are not disadvantaged.
- Communications outlining EAA sent to learners with time to address these with the possibility of providing an alternative solution.
- Member of Send or Send Admin team available as 'emergency contact' to double check any EAA queries from examination team / invigilators on the day of the exam.
- Technology allows for remote working so it may be possible for staff to be contactable even if they are not physically on that site.
- Depending on the exam it may be possible to reschedule once EAA are in place.

3. Teaching staff extended absence at a critical stage of the exam cycle

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Key tasks not undertaken, including:

- Early/estimated entry information not provided to the exams officer on time, resulting in pre-release information not being received
- Final entry information not provided to the exams officer on time, resulting in candidates not being entered for exams/assessments or being entered late/late or other penalty fees being charged by Awarding Organisations
- Non-examination assessment (including controlled assessments and coursework) tasks not set/issued/taken by candidates as scheduled
- Candidates not being informed of centre assessed marks before marks are submitted to the Awarding Organisation and therefore not being able to consider appealing internal assessment decisions and requesting a review of the centre's marking
- Internal assessment marks and candidates' work not provided to meet Awarding Organisation submission deadlines

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- Meeting to be held with Assistant Principal, Head of Department, AHoD's and Exams Department
- Responsibilities to be discussed and allocated
- Implementation of a robust system of absence cover for teaching staff, including those within each department who can step in to replace absent colleagues.
- AHoD likely to take over exam info submission duties
- Exams Department will ensure deadlines and dates are followed and work closely with the AHoD to ensure timely registrations, submissions etc.

4 Invigilators – lack of appropriately trained invigilators or invigilator absence

- A bank of variable hours invigilators is kept within the department and when opportunities arise a recruitment process is followed to fill.
- All staff at Cambridge Regional College are expected to invigilate at key times in the academic year. They are given access to The Exams Office training alongside internal refresher events.
- Additional staff to cover short notice absences or cover unexpected Exam Access arrangements on the day are asked to congregate around the area of paper dispatch at 08.45 on the morning of large exam series.

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

- Exam plan process will identify when at large events which areas will be closed to assist with the accommodation of zonal rooming.
- Each site will utilise all available spaces available at each site to use in the first instance if venues become unavailable.
- If external venues need to be considered, then JCQ Guidance notes on alternative site arrangements for the academic year will be followed.

6 Cyber Attack

- The College has robust security measures in place to prevent unauthorised access with various detection measures which are constantly reviewed and tightened.
- Staff undergo regular staff development, including phishing campaigns and cyber security awareness training.
- In the event of a cyber-attack, the disaster recovery plan (DRP01) will be enacted as appropriate depending on the severity and nature of the attack. This could include but not limited to the isolation of an area of the network, partial shutdown of some services or complete shutdown due to total loss of data or service.
- Any incidents which may compromise any aspect of assessment delivery, such as a cyber-attack, power outage, or malware outbreak, will be reported to the awarding organisation promptly.
- The required arrangements for cyber security include the College's Cyber Security Policy (COM01), IT Acceptable Use Policy (COM01) and IT Disaster Recovery Plan (DRP01). Cyber Essentials Certifications.

- The College ensure the security of users accounts by:
 - a) Users' adherence to the Password Policy (COM06), Cyber Essentials Accreditation and Cyber Security Policy (COM10). Monitoring and reporting on account activity. MFA on accounts by default
 - b) Secure passwords storage either through secure browsers or password vaults.
 - c) Providing annual training for staff on awareness of all types of social engineering/phishing.
 - d) Managing and maintaining additional global security settings on user accounts.
 - e) Comprehensive reporting and monitoring systems to ensure any passwords that may have been exposed are identified and updated.
 - f) Enabling secure account recovery options.
 - g) Firewall monitoring, reporting and managing of connected applications.
 - h) Regular monitoring and reporting on account access, including disabling access when no longer required in liaison with the College's HR department.
 - i) Only authorised members of staff have the ability to securely access awarding bodies' online systems in line with awarding bodies regulations regarding cyber security and the JCQ documentation.

7 Failure of IT systems

The College endeavours to minimise any IT disruption. In the event of an issue this would be dealt with in accordance with the current College IT Disaster Recovery Plan which is reviewed and updated regularly. Where such failure impacted on scheduled exams, steps would be taken to move these exams wherever possible to another centre or to take them "offline". Where this is not possible the College's Examinations Department would liaise with awarding bodies and students to arrange rescheduling.

All user data is backed up daily and secured in multiple locations on and off site. User files are also synchronised with M365 OneDrive.

All staff have access to devices which complies with awarding bodies' multi-factor authentication (MFA) requirements. All staff accounts are MFA by default.

All staff are expected to report any actual or suspected compromise of an awarding body's online systems immediately to the relevant awarding body as soon as they become aware.

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

- In the event of an emergency which results in the students not being able to start, proceed with or complete their exams, all efforts will be made to keep the students and their papers safe following the latest guidance in the JCQ – Instructions for conducting examinations which are in the Invigilation packs given out at every exam.

9 Disruption of teaching time in the weeks before an exam– 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.

10 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>

11 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.

12 Disruption in the distribution of examination papers

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

Awarding organisations to provide centres with electronic access to examination papers via a secure external network. Centres would need to ensure that copies are received, made and stored under secure conditions and should have plans in place to facilitate such an action. Awarding organisations would provide guidance on the conduct of examinations in such circumstances. As a last resort, and in close collaboration with centres and regulators, awarding organisations to consider scheduling of the examination on an alternative date.

13 Delay in collection arrangements for completed examination scripts

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.

14 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 not reaching awarding organisations.

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The Centre will:

- It is the responsibility of the Head of Centre to communicate this immediately to the relevant Awarding Bodies and subsequently to candidates and their parents or carers;
- Liaise with the Awarding Organisation to determine if candidate marks for affected assessments may be able to be generated based on other appropriate evidence of candidate achievement as defined by the Awarding Organisation.
- Where marks cannot be generated by Awarding Organisation, inform candidates they may need to retake the affected assessment in a subsequent assessment series.

15. Centres are unable to distribute results as normal or Facilitate Post-Results Services

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

16. Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

- All results are initially communicated via electronic means which can be accessed from off-site if required.
- Contact the relevant Awarding Organisation if electronic post results requests are not possible.
- The College will explore other options to print results, such as using another Centre to download results from Awarding Bodies' secure websites.
- Make arrangements to make post results requests at an alternative location.
- Inform candidates, via email to students' college email address, of any alternative arrangements in place for the distribution of results, and the facilitation of post-results services.
- Information to be posted on the College website/myCRC App.

Useful information

Ofqual

What schools and colleges and other centres should do if exams or other assessments are seriously disrupted (last updated 7 May 2024)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/exam-system-contingency-plan-england-wales-and-northern-ireland/what-schools-and-colleges-should-do-if-exams-or-other-assessments-are-seriously-disrupted>

JCQ

Instructions for conducting examinations 2025-26 <http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/ice--instructions-for-conducting-examinations>,

JCQ Joint Contingency Plan www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/other-documents

JCQ Preparing for disruption to examinations www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations/

General Regulations for Approved Centres www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations

Guidance notes on alternative site arrangements www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/online-forms

Guidance notes for transferred candidates www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/online-forms

Instructions for conducting examinations www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/ice---instructions-for-conducting-examinations

A guide to the special consideration process www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-special-consideration/regulations-and-guidance

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

GOV.UK

Emergency planning and response: Exam and assessment disruption
www.gov.uk/government/publications/emergency-planning-and-response-for-education-childcare-and-childrens-social-care-settings

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

Document history

Date	Issue number	Change/Comments	Date Approved	Approved by
20/04/2023	2	Annual Review – No change	20/04/2023	Exams Manager
22/09/2023	3	Addition of sections pertaining to failure of IT systems and cyber attack	22/09/2023	Exams Manager
04/09/2024	4	Annual Review change of JCQ section number	18/10/2024	SMT
17/07/2025	5	Annual review change to JCQ section recommendations plus minor changes	12/08/2025	Deputy Principal Finance and Resources

