

Exam Contingency Policy

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Available policy on Website: Y

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Changes from March 2024

P3 amended

Cyber Security Prevention and Contingency added

Changes made in relation to 9-16 (serious disruption to exams and assessments) to be more robust as per JCQ guidelines

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Annex A: Exam Board emergency Exam Officer contingency service contact details.

Further Guidance to inform and implement contingency planning.

- Ofqual
- JCQ
- Gov.UK
- National Cyber Security Centre

1. Purpose of the plan

This plan examines potential risks and issues that could cause disruption to the exam process. 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 at Thomas Deacon Academy.

Alongside internal processes this plan is informed by the Ofqual **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', 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 2023).

This plan details how Thomas Deacon Academy complies with the JCQ's General Regulations for Approved Centres (section 5.3, Centre management) by having 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 examination cycle. The examination contingency plan reinforces 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 has also been considered.

National Centre Number Register and other information requirements

The head of centre will also ensure that 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. (GR 5.3)

2. Possible causes of disruption to the exam process

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.

Exams officer 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 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 recruited.

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

- invigilators not trained or updated on changes to instructions for conducting 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, for example very late arrival, suspected malpractice, special consideration.
- candidates' scripts not dispatched as required for marking to awarding bodies.

Results and post-results

- access to examination results affecting the distribution of results to candidates.
- the facilitation of post-results services

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

- Cover the absence with Exams Administrators to ensure essential deadline dates/information to staff is not overlooked; They will liaise closely with the Assistant Principal during the period of absence.
- The internal exams key dates calendar is available to all examinations office staff; this details in-house and external deadline dates for entries and coursework submissions. The master exams timetable is available and is published on the all-staff team as well as the public website.

3. SENCO 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 body.
- 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 listed above

- a) The Assistant SENCO with support of the SEND Administrator will cover the absence to ensure essential deadline dates/information to staff is not overlooked. They will be responsible for the deployment of staff within the department for invigilation. They will liaise closely with the Exams Officer and the Assistant Principal
- b) The exams access arrangements folder in the SEND Office will always be kept up to date.
- c) The internal / external exam key dates calendar is available to all allocated staff within the department, in addition, a hard copy is displayed in the SEND Office.

4. 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 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 awarding body submission deadlines.

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The relevant Assistant Principal will ensure departmental continuity by requesting an alternative member of staff to take responsibility for the actions above.

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

Criteria for implementation of the plan

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

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

- Examination Officer will liaise with human resources to recruit new invigilators, whenever necessary throughout the examination year
- Examinations officer to ensure sufficient training is offered and updated regularly. When necessary additional training will be given to individual or groups of invigilators.
- In the event that insufficient invigilators are available for an external exam or an invigilator is absent, all invigilators will be contacted to see if they are available. Exams office staff will cover in the interim until they arrive.
- Examinations Officer to ensure that capacity is never exceeded on any one session to allow, where possible, additional invigilator availability.
- If there are insufficient numbers, and other TDA staff are not available an approved supply agency will be contacted to provide suitable invigilator cover.

6. Exam rooms - lack of appropriate rooms or main venue(s) 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 to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

- Where main exam venue(s) unavailable due to an unexpected incident at exam time) where possible, make use of other available rooms, prioritising candidates whose progression will be severely delayed if they do not take their exam or timetabled assessment when planned.
- Identify whether the exam or timetabled assessment can be sat at an alternative venue, in agreement with the relevant awarding body.

- (where main exam venue(s) unavailable due to an unexpected incident at exam time) where possible, move to alternative venue, prioritising candidates whose progression will be severely delayed if they do not take their exam or timetabled assessment when planned.

Alternative venue details:

Contact other schools within the trust - Thomas Deacon Academy Junior / Queen Katherine Academy and Thomas Deacon Education Trust building to find alternative rooms or contact LEA (Peterborough City Council) for a vacant building (community centre)

- communicate with candidates (and where appropriate, parents/carers) any changes to the exam or assessment timetable or to the venue.

Communication details:

To parents/carers and students via Edulink

- ensure the secure transportation of question papers or assessment materials to the alternative venue
- (after the exam) consider whether any candidate's ability to take the assessment or demonstrate their level of attainment has been materially affected and, if so, apply for special consideration

7. Cyber-attack

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Where a cyber-attack may compromise any aspect of delivery

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

Contact the appropriate awarding body immediately for advice and support.

Report any phishing attempts with reference to awarding bodies/their systems to the awarding body concerned immediately.

Best practice to reduce the risk of a cyber attack

- Create strong unique passwords and don't use the same password across another account.
- Keep all login/passwords/authentication codes secret – never under any circumstances, should you share this.
- If you suspect a password may have been exposed/ become known to another the password should be changed as soon as possible
- Activate any two step verifications (2SV), two factor verification (2FV) or Multi Factor Authentication (MFA) wherever available.
- Regularly review users who access accounts and remove access if they no longer require this.

- Be cautious when granting permission to applications only grant the necessary access for them to function.
- Only download and install applications with established reputations from trusted sources.
- Passwords should not be saved to local web browsers. This is particularly important where there is shared access to a device or web browser.
- When using a shared browser, the browser history and cache should be cleared after use
- Do not click on suspicious links, download attachments or scan QR codes from unknown sources

8. Failure of IT systems

Criteria for implementation of the plan

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

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

- Contact and liaise with in-house IT technical support immediately when the issue has been identified to try to resolve the issue.
- In the event that exam board deadlines may be missed, the appropriate awarding bodies will be contacted to agree an extension or alternative means of supplying data.
- For exams requiring IT, the Exams officer will delay the start of the exam or will suspend the exam until the issue is resolved. Evidence of the incident will be gathered and to enable a special consideration request to be submitted.
- In the event the Academy is unable to access results on site, senior leaders will approve an off site location for results to be downloaded. Any delay will be communicated to learners and parent/carers as necessary.
- Whenever necessary, the appropriate awarding body will be contacted for advice at the time of the issue.

9. Emergency evacuation of the exam room (or centre lockdown)

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- Whole centre evacuation (or lockdown) during exam time due to serious incident resulting in exam candidates being unable to start, proceed with or complete their exams.

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

- refer to and invoke the exams emergency evacuation policy/procedure in line with JCQ's 'Centre emergency evacuation procedure' or invoke the exams lockdown policy.
- contact the relevant awarding body as soon as possible and follow its instructions.
- where accommodation is limited, prioritise candidates whose progression will be severely delayed if they do not take their exam or timetabled assessment when planned.
- (after the exam) consider whether any candidate's ability to take the assessment or demonstrate their level of attainment has been materially affected and, if so, apply for special consideration

10. 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.

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

- 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

Communication details: Email/letter to parent/carers

- 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.

Communication details

- a) The Academy will communicate with parents/carers/students about the potential for disruption to teaching time/examinations and the plans to address this.
 - b) In extreme circumstances, alternative venues to be found off site. Students may need to be advised they can sit exams in the next series.
 - c) Exams office to notify appropriate awarding bodies.
 - d) Senior leadership where necessary to keep the LEA updated.
- 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.

11. Candidates may not be able to take examinations - centre remains open

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- Candidates may not be able to attend the examination centre to take examinations as normal.

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

- take advice offered by the awarding body on the options for candidates who have not been able to take scheduled examinations.
- discuss alternative arrangements with the awarding body if a candidate misses an exam or loses their assessment due to an emergency, or other event, outside of the candidate's control.
- identify whether the exam or timetabled assessment can be sat at an alternative venue, in agreement with the relevant awarding body, ensuring the secure transportation of questions papers or assessment materials to the alternative venue.
- communicate with candidates (and where appropriate, parents/carers) any changes to the exam or assessment timetable or to the venue.

Communication details:

Email via edulink or letter to parent/carers

- a) Exams officer to communicate with appropriate awarding bodies as soon as possible to seek advice and guidance.
- b) The centre will communicate to parents/carers and students regarding a solution to the issue.

Consider whether any candidates' ability to take the assessment or demonstrate their level of attainment has been materially affected and, if so, apply for special consideration

12. 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)

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- Centre may not be able to open as normal for scheduled examinations.

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

- take advice, or follow instructions, from relevant local or national agencies in deciding whether the centre is able to open.
- contact the relevant awarding body as soon as possible and follow its instructions (This could include 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).)
- discuss alternative arrangements with the awarding body if the exam or assessment cannot take place.
- follow guidance provided by the awarding body on the conduct of examinations in such circumstances.
- where accommodation is limited, prioritise candidates whose progression will be severely delayed if they do not take their exam or timetabled assessment when planned.
- communicate with candidates (and where appropriate, parents/carers) any changes to the exam or assessment timetable or to the venue.

Alternative venue details:

Contact other schools within the trust - Thomas Deacon Academy Juniors/ Queen Katherine Academy and Thomas Deacon Education Trust building to find alternative rooms or contact LEA (Peterborough City Council) for a vacant building (community centre)

Communication details:

- Head of year to communicate with candidates (and where appropriate, parents/carers) any changes to the exam or assessment timetable or to the venue

- consider whether any candidates' ability to take the assessment or demonstrate their level of attainment has been materially affected and, if so, apply for special consideration

13. 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

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

- liaise with awarding bodies regarding the provision of electronic access to examination papers via a secure external network and will ensure when copies are received/made these are stored under secure conditions.
- follow guidance provided by the awarding body on the conduct of examinations in such circumstances.
- understand that as a last resort, and in close collaboration with centres and regulators, awarding organisations will consider scheduling of the examination on an alternative date.
- communicate with candidates (and where appropriate, parents/carers) any changes to the exam or assessment timetable or to the venue.

14. Disruption to transporting completed examination scripts

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- Delay in normal collection arrangements for completed examination scripts/assessment evidence

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

- where examinations are part of the national 'yellow label' service or where awarding organisations arrange collections, seek advice from the relevant awarding organisations and will not make its own arrangements for transportation unless told to do so by the awarding organisation
- for any examinations where the centre makes its own arrangements for transportation, investigate alternative dispatch options that comply with the requirements detailed in the JCQ **Instructions for**

conducting examinations (take script envelopes to nearest post office on Eastfield Road, Peterborough)

- ensure the secure storage of completed examination scripts until collection / drop off at post office.

15. 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
- Completed examination scripts/assessment evidence does not reach awarding organisation

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

- liaise with the awarding body 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 body
- where marks cannot be generated by awarding body, inform candidates they may need to retake the affected assessment in a subsequent assessment series

16. Centre unable to distribute results as normal (including in the event of the centre being unavailable on results day owing to an unforeseen emergency) or facilitate post-results services

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.

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

- make arrangements to access its results at an alternative venue/share facilities with another centre if this is possible, in agreement with the relevant awarding body.
- make arrangements to coordinate access to post-results services from an alternative venue.

Alternative venue details:

Contact other schools within the trust - Thomas Deacon Academy Juniors/ Queen Katherine Academy and Thomas Deacon Education Trust

- make arrangements to make post-results requests at an alternative location
- contact the relevant awarding body if electronic post-results requests are not possible
- inform candidates of any alternative arrangements in place for the distribution of results and the facilitation of post-results services

Communication details:

Head of year to email via edulink or letter to parent/carers.

18. Teacher Strike During Exam Period

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

Exams will continue at the centre with SLT supporting.

Annex A:

Pearson 0344 463 2535

AQA 08001977162

OCR 02476851509

Further guidance to inform procedures and implement contingency planning

DfE

Meeting digital and technology standards in schools and colleges

- Cyber Security Standards in schools and colleges
- Cyber crime and cyber security: a guide for education providers
- DfE Cyber Security Guidance - March 2023

Ofqual

Ofqual guidance extract 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** (last updated 5 October 2023) 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

Links to other JCQ documentation

JCQ Joint Contingency Plan

JCQ Preparing for disruption to examinations

JCQ Notice to Centres - exam contingency plan

General Regulations for Approved Centres

Guidance notes on alternative site arrangements

Guidance notes for transferred candidates

Instructions for conducting examinations

A guide to the special consideration process

Guidance for centres on cyber security (Effective from November 2023)

Information for centres affected by RAAC – the delivery of non-examination assessments and the special consideration process

GOV.UK

Emergency planning and response: Exam and assessment disruption

Dispatch of exam scripts guide: Ensuring the service runs smoothly; Contingency planning

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:

- Further ransomware attacks on UK education by cyber criminals
- Ransomware advice and guidance for your IT teams to implement
- Offline backups in an online world
- Backing up your data
- Practical resources to help schools improve their cyber security
- Building Resilience: Ransomware, the risk to schools and ways to prevent it
- School staff offered training to help shore up cyber defences

