



Exam Contingency Plan

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This policy is reviewed annually to ensure compliance with current regulations

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Purpose of the plan

This plan examines potential risks and issues that could cause disruption to the exams process at Hagley Catholic High School. 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 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* and the **JCQ Joint Contingency Plan in the event of widespread disruption to the Examination System in England, Wales and Northern Ireland**.

This plan also confirms Hagley Catholic High School is compliant with the JCQ regulations that the centre has 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.

Possible causes of disruption to the exam process

1. Exams 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;
- Insufficient invigilators recruited and 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

- 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 e.g. very late arrival, suspected malpractice, special consideration;
- Candidates' scripts not dispatched as required for marking to awarding bodies.

Results and post-results

- No access to examination results affecting the distribution of results to candidates;
- No facilitation of the post-results services.

Action taken at Hagley Catholic High School to mitigate Exams Officer extended absence at key points in the exam process (cycle):

- Principal (SLT) to assign the above duties to a substitute competent person so that the exam process is not interrupted and continues as normal.
- The Exams Assistant, Rosie Olley is trained in all of the above tasks and should be involved in ensuring that all duties are completed.

2. Principal extended absence at key points in 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

- Does not have in place a member of the senior leadership team who will provide support and guidance to the Exams Officer and ensure that the integrity and security of examinations and assessments is maintained throughout an examination series.
- Does not have in place guidance that all local Health and Safety rules are complied with by the school.
- Does not have relevant policies up to date and available for inspection.

Pre-exams

- Inadequate staff recruitment, selection and training.
- Appropriate training to staff not provided.
- Conflicts of interests and awarding bodies not informed.
- Arrangements to co-ordinate and standardise all marking of centre assessed components are not in place.
- NCN register not completed.

Exam time

- Investigation of malpractice not undertaken.
- Exams/assessments not taken under the conditions prescribed by awarding bodies.

Action taken at Hagley Catholic High School to mitigate Principal extended absence at key points in the exam process (cycle):

- In the absence of the Principal the Assistant Head Teacher (Line Manager to Exams Officer) will provide support and guidance to the Exams Officer and ensure that the integrity and security of the examinations and assessments is maintained throughout an examination series.
- In the absence of the Principal and the Assistant Head Teacher who line manages the Exams Officer, the Vice Principal will provide support and guidance to the Exams Officer and ensure that the integrity and security of the examinations and assessments is maintained throughout an examination series.
- In the unlikely absence of all three of the above, the CEO of the Multi Academy Trust will provide support and guidance to the exams officer and ensure that the integrity and security of the examinations and assessments is maintained throughout an examination series.

3. SENCo extended absence at key points in 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 their terms of 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 providing support to access arrangement candidates not allocated and trained.

Exam time

- Access arrangement candidate support not arranged for exam rooms.

Action taken at Hagley Catholic High School to mitigate SENCo extended absence at key points in the exam process (cycle):

- Principal (SLT) to assign the above duties to a substitute competent person so that the exam process is not interrupted and continues as normal.

4. 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;
- 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.

Action taken at Hagley Catholic High School to mitigate staff extended absence at key points in the exam process (cycle):

- Principal to assign another member of the teaching department to deputise and provide the above information, so that the exam process is not interrupted and continues as normal. This would usually be the second in department if there is one.
- Exams Officer to liaise with this person in place of the absent Head of Department.

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.

Action taken at Hagley Catholic High School to mitigate lack of appropriately trained invigilators or invigilator absence:

- Exams Officer ensures that sufficient number of invigilators are recruited and trained;
- On peak exam days or bad weather days, where there are insufficient invigilators present, school staff will be seconded at short notice to act as invigilators.

6. 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.

Action taken at Hagley Catholic High School to mitigate lack of appropriate rooms or main venues unavailable at short notice:

- Exams Officer ensures that sufficient number of exam rooms are available for the planned exam season;
- If the exam rooms are not available, the Exam Officer will inform each awarding body with which exams are due to be taken with as soon as possible. The responsibility for deciding whether it is safe for the school to open lies with the Principal;
- The Principal is responsible for taking advice, or following instructions from relevant local or national agencies in deciding whether the School is able to open;
- If possible, the school will open for examinations and examination candidates only;
- Alternatively, the school may use other venues in agreement with relevant awarding bodies.

7. 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.

Action taken at Hagley Catholic High School to mitigate failure of IT systems:

- Exams Officer to contact relevant awarding bodies to agree alternative methods of transferring the data.

8. Emergency evacuation of the exam room (or centre lock down)

Criteria for implementation of the plan

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

Action taken at Hagley Catholic High School to mitigate the impact of the disruption:

- Invigilator to follow the emergency evacuation procedure (all invigilators trained and guidance available in all exam boxes);
- Exams Officer to make a full report of the incidents and action taken and send to the relevant awarding body;
- Where candidates are unable to return to the building, the Exams Officer to contact the awarding body for advice.

9. 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.

Action taken at Hagley Catholic High School to mitigate the impact of the disruption:

- The Principal with the SLT will facilitate alternative methods of learning, alternative venues or both;
- Prioritise candidates who will be facing examinations shortly;
- Advise candidates, where appropriate, to sit examinations in the next available series;
- The Principal to communicate with parents, carers and candidates about the potential for disruption to teaching time and the plans to address this.

10. 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.

Action taken at Hagley Catholic High School to mitigate the impact of the disruption:

- The Exams Officer is to communicate with relevant awarding bodies at the outset to make them aware of the issue;
- The school to investigate alternative arrangements for candidates to take their examinations in liaison with and agreement of the awarding bodies;
- The Principal to communicate with parents, carers and candidates regarding solutions to the issue.

11. Hagley Catholic High School unable to open as normal during the examinations period (including in the event of the centre being unavailable for examinations owing to an unforeseen emergency)

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- Hagley Catholic High School unable to open as normal for scheduled examinations.

Action taken at Hagley Catholic High School to mitigate the impact of the disruption:

- If the school is unable to open as normal for examinations, the Exams Officer will inform each awarding body with which examinations are due to be taken, as soon as is possible;
- The responsibility for deciding whether it is safe for the school to open lies with the Principal. The Principal is responsible for taking advice, or following instructions from relevant local or national agencies in deciding whether the school is able to open;
- If possible, the school will open for examinations and examination candidates only;
- Alternatively, the school may use other venues in agreement with relevant awarding body (e.g. share facilities with other centres or use other public building, if possible).
- The Principal / SLT are to advise the Exams Officer in a timely manner of the full postal address of any alternative accommodation which affects the full cohort. This will enable the Exams Officer to submit the information to all the relevant awarding bodies to request permission.
- For certain candidates, the school may be able offer an opportunity to sit any examinations missed at the next available series;
- The school may also apply to awarding bodies for special consideration for candidates where they have met the minimum requirements;

- All arrangements would be agreed with the awarding body before being put in place. In such instances, details would be communicated to candidates via the school's website, email and text facilities. Staff involved in exams (including invigilators) would be contacted by email, telephone and text.

12. Disruption to exams in a pandemic

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- Centre closed or candidates unable to attend for an extended period during normal teaching or study supported time, interrupting the provision of normal teaching and learning and exams due to a pandemic.

Action taken at Hagley Catholic High School to mitigate the impact of the disruption:

- The Principal with SLT to facilitate alternative methods of learning following Hagley Catholic High School's Remote Education and Online Policy.
- The Principal, SLT and Exams Officer to follow all DFE, Ofqual and JCQ guidelines relating to exams and keep abreast of all changes.
- The Principal, SLT and Exams Officer to follow all relevant awarding bodies guidelines.
- The Principal to communicate with parents, carers and candidates the arrangements for online learning and the situation with regard to exams and ensures the information is widely shared via school website and relevant means.
- Should exams take place, ensure that Hagley Catholic High School procedures 'Considering Health and Safety while conducting exams in relation to a pandemic' are followed.
- Exams Officer to keep invigilators updated with latest guidelines and trained appropriately.
- If relevant, the Exams Officer to apply for special consideration.

13. Disruption in the distribution of examination papers to Hagley Catholic High School

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- Disruption to the distribution of examination papers to the centre in advance of examinations.

Action taken at Hagley Catholic High School to mitigate the impact of the disruption:

- The Exams Officer will communicate with awarding bodies to organise alternative delivery of papers. They may provide secure electronic access to the papers or they may source alternative couriers to deliver hard copies of examination papers to the school;
- Copies received would be stored under secure exam conditions.

14. Disruption to the transportation of completed examination scripts

Criteria for implementation of the plan

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

Action taken at Hagley Catholic High School to mitigate the impact of the disruption:

- The Exams Officer is to communicate with relevant awarding bodies at the outset to resolve the issue.
- School would seek advice from awarding body regarding yellow label service examination papers.
- Alternative dispatch options to be investigated that comply with requirements detailed in JCQ Instructions for Conducting Examinations for exams where the school makes their own arrangements for transportation.
- In all instances, exam papers would be stored under secure conditions until collection.

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 bodies.

Action taken at Hagley Catholic High School to mitigate the impact of the disruption:

- The Exams Officer is to communicate this immediately to the relevant awarding body and the Principal subsequently to candidates and their parents or carers.
- The Exams Officer to apply for special consideration from awarding bodies.

16. Hagley Catholic High School 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.

Action taken at Hagley Catholic High School to mitigate the impact of the disruption:

- The Exams Officer is to contact awarding bodies about alternative options and if necessary, in agreement with the relevant awarding body, make arrangements for results to be accessed at an alternative site;
- The Principal with the Exams Officer to consider making arrangements to make post results available at an alternative site;
- The Principal with Exams Officer is to communicate with parents, carers and candidates to inform them of the revised arrangements;
- Exams Officer to contact the relevant awarding body if electronic post results requests are not possible.

Further guidance to inform 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

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
- [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 question 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

Establish and maintain, and at all times comply with, an up-to-date, written contingency plan.

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

1. Take all reasonable steps to mitigate any adverse effect, in relation to their qualifications, arising from any disruption.
2. Provide effective guidance to any of their centres delivering qualifications.
3. 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).
4. Promptly notify the relevant regulators about any event which could have an adverse effect on students, standards or public confidence.
5. 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.

[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/examsystem-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 was agreed to reschedule the examinations and the affected candidates will be expected to make themselves available in such circumstances. The decision regarding the re-scheduling 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 JCQ *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 <http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/other-documents>

General Regulations for Approved Centres <http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations>
Guidance notes on alternative site arrangements <http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/online-forms>
Guidance notes concerning transferred candidates <http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/online-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

Emergency planning and response: Severe weather; Exam disruption
<https://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
Teaching time lost due to severe weather conditions
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/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>
Statutory guidance on school closures <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-organisation-maintained-schools>

National Counter Terrorism Security Office

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