



Tomlinscote School

An Academy within The Prospect Trust



Exam Contingency Plan Policy

Policy Type:	Statutory
Approved By:	AQC
Effective From:	March 2025
Revision Date:	March 2026

Purpose of the plan

This plan examines potential risks and issues that could cause disruption to the examination/assessment process.

By outlining actions/procedures to be invoked in case of disruption it is intended to mitigate the impact these disruptions have on processes at Tomlinscote School.

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 2024).

This plan details how Tomlinscote School complies with the JCQ's **General Regulations for Approved Centres** (5.3 *Centre management*) by having 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

The Centre **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.

The Centre **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.

The Centre **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. (GR 3.17-19)

National Centre Number Register and other information requirements

The Head of Centre will ensure that the Centre 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. (GR 5.3)

Head of Centre absence at a critical stage of the exam cycle

In the event of the absence of the Head of Centre responsibility for implementing JCQ regulations and requirements relating to activities during the exam cycle will be escalated to the Vice Principal (Pastoral and Behavioural) as per our Escalation Process 2024/25

Possible causes of disruption to the exam process

1. 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
- 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

The Centre will:

- Examinations Assistant(s) to assume responsibility for the above tasks with the support of the named Senior Leadership Team (SLT) that has been submitted on the annual NCN Register
- Head of Centre to contact each awarding body to transfer secure website admin rights to the Assistant Exams Officer(s) in the period of absence of the Examinations Officer.

2. SENCo (or equivalent role) 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

The Centre will:

- The SENDCO EAA Assessor and Examinations Officer are to work with SLT to identify students where applications for access arrangements may be required. The employment of outside agencies/professionals may be required.

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 bodies
- Non-examination assessment tasks (including controlled assessment and coursework) 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 Centre will:

- The acting Head of Department will ensure all necessary deadlines are adhered to. Where this is not possible, the EO will liaise with the relevant Awarding Body and act upon advice received.

4. 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

The Centre will:

- The Examinations Officer will review the invigilation staffing at the start of each academic year.
- Newly recruited invigilators will be trained in a timely fashion.
- The EO will be aware of the school staff available for invigilation duties at short notice and for peak exam days and will request cover from other invigilators and/or the Associate Teachers. If sufficient cover is available, the EO will request cover from Teaching Assistants.
- The EO will request Centre staff attend invigilation training when required during the academic year so that they may be used for cover.
- Invigilation will be an ongoing recruitment process throughout the year.

5. 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.

Other criteria:

The SENCo will notify the EO of Access Arrangement requirements for examinations, any EAA requirements may not be actioned if updated within 2 weeks of the start of mock exam or exam season start date to ensure sufficient time is available to identify appropriate rooms and plan appropriately.

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The Centre will:

- (where main exam venue(s) unavailable due to an unexpected incident at exam time) where possible, make use of other available rooms within the Centre, 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 site(s)** details:
Farnborough Sixth Form College
Prospect Ave,
Farnborough
GU14 8JX
- communicate with candidates (and where appropriate, parents/carers) any changes to the exam or assessment timetable or to the venue.
- **Communication** details:
- 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.

6. 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:

- Network Manager/IT department to back up data.
- IT Manager to ensure the school's IT systems are secure and protected against viruses and malware.
- The backups are held offline.
- Systems for restoring services and recovering data from the backups are tested and reliable.
- Contact the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC).
- Contact the local law enforcement and Action Fraud.
- Inform the DfE by emailing: securityenquiries@education.gov.uk.
- Any work completed in an exam situation is stored in a secure location which is not accessible from outside the Academy and only by very few inside.
- Make awarding bodies aware of a possible Centre cyber-attack.
- Exams Officer will work with IT and contact with the relevant Awarding Body to seek further guidance.
- Exams Officer in consultation with SLT and Learning Partners IT Manager, will decide the best and most effective process to ensure entries are made to the Awarding Bodies.
- All staff use a multi authenticator for accessing school emails and SharePoint.

7. Failure of IT systems

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- IT system corruption affecting candidates' work.
- 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

The Centre will:

The EO, in consultation with the SLT, will make entries from another venue direct to the Awarding Bodies. Results may also be accessed directly from the AB. At all times during the system failure the EO will liaise with the AB to minimise disruption and costs incurred. IT will work with the EO to resolve this issue.

8. 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 its (exams) emergency evacuation policy/procedure in line with JCQ's 'Centre emergency evacuation procedure' (or its (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.

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

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:
- 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

10. 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 because of a crisis

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The Centre will:

- focus on options that enable candidates to take their examinations (referencing the JCQ document *Preparing for disruption to examinations*)
- 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:
- 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

11. 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:

- focus on enabling candidates to take their examinations
- 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)
- contact the relevant awarding body as soon as possible and follow its instructions
- 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 site(s) details:**
Farnborough Sixth Form College
Prospect Ave,
Farnborough
GU14 8JX
- **Communication details:**
- 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. 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

13. Delay in collection arrangements for 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 document *Instructions for conducting examinations*
- ensure the secure storage of completed examination scripts until as close to the collection time as possible

14. 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 organisations

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

15. 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 site(s)** details:
Farnborough Sixth Form College
Prospect Ave,
Farnborough
GU14 8JX
- 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.